**Deconstructing China’s Response to the Yasukuni Shrine Issue: Towards an IR-grounded Theory of Sino-Japanese Relations**

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**Abstract**

The period of Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s tenure as prime minister of Japan from 2001 until 2006 was marked by a significant downturn in Sino-Japanese relations. One of the major causes of this deterioration was his repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine, a controversial Shinto shrine in Tokyo that honours Japan’s war dead, including a number of ‘class A’ war criminals. China’s response was to seek to isolate the Japanese leader and refuse to allow formal bilateral summits whilst he continued the practice of visiting the shrine. Despite a handful of brief meetings in third countries, this meant that China and Japan went for a period of five years without a formal summit, representing the frostiest period of relations since the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978. This thesis explores China’s response to the shrine issue at this time through a combination of methodologies including content analysis across different categories of Chinese media reports and a series of in-depth interviews with policy-makers, advisors, analysts, diplomats and academics in both China and Japan. It posits a theory rooted in the constructivist school of International Relations (IR) that is influenced by the notion of *structuration* posited by Anthony Giddens. Using this theory it hypothesises that a normative or ideationally structural relationship guides the behaviour of both China and Japan as actors within the bilateral relationship, whilst simultaneously allowing both to retain the agency to affect these structures through their own actions, either consciously or otherwise. Through the analysis of the Yasukuni Shrine issue and a further case study of the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands the results support this hypothesis, showing that China not only retains agency within these ideational and normative structures but actively strategises in order to shape them in its own interests.

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**List of Abbreviations**

ADIZ – Air Defence Identification Zone  
APEC – Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation   
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
ASEM – Asia-Europe Meeting   
CAJ – China Academic Journals  
CASS – Chinese Academy of Social Sciences  
CCG – China Coast Guard  
CCP – Chinese Communist Party   
CICIR – China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations  
CIIS – China Institute of International Studies  
CMS – China Marine Surveillance   
DPJ – Democratic Party of Japan  
EEZ – exclusive Economic Zone  
FALSG – Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (of China)  
ICJ – International Court of Justice  
IMTFE – International Military Tribunal for the Far East  
IR – International Relations   
JCG – Japan Coast Guard   
JMSA – Japan Maritime Safety Agency   
LDP – Liberal Democratic Party (of Japan)  
MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of China)   
MOFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of Japan)  
MSDF – Maritime Self Defence Force (of Japan)  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation  
PLAN – People’s Liberation Army Navy  
PRC – People’s Republic of China   
ROC – Republic of China (Taiwan)   
SASS – Shanghai Academy for Social Sciences  
SDF – Self Defence Force (of Japan)  
SIIS – Shanghai Institute for International Studies  
SOA – State Oceanographic Administration (of China)  
UN – United Nations   
UNSC – United Nations Security Council  
US – United States

**Note on Romanisation of Chinese and Japanese Words, Places and Names**

Throughout this thesis Chinese and Japanese names are given in the traditional way of family name first. The only exceptions to this are in reference to authors who have published in English and give their own names with the family name last. All Chinese words are presented in standard pinyin without tonal markings. Names of Taiwanese people are an exception and are given in the most-commonly used form, for example Ma Ying-jeou. All Japanese words are transliterated under the Hepburn system including the use of macrons, except in place names that are commonly used in English, such as Tokyo. All translations are the work of the author, with the exception of those journal article titles which provide their own English translation.

**1. Introduction**

Yasukuni Shrine has been a significant site of commemoration of Japan’s war dead since the 1860s. Under the Shinto belief system the shrine is considered to contain the *kami* – perhaps best understood in English as ‘soul’ – of every person who has died fighting for Japan since its inception. Included in the more than two million *kami* are a number of convicted ‘class A’ war criminals who were held responsible for some of the most heinous actions of Japan during its invasion and occupation of much of East Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. It is these individuals who are usually invoked as the reason for Yasukuni Shrine’s controversial nature.[[1]](#footnote-1) This is particularly true in the eyes of Japan’s East Asian neighbours, and visits to the shrine by prominent Japanese are a cause of frequent objection by political leaders in the region, most notably from China and South Korea. The six visits by Koizumi Jun’ichirō during his five-year tenure as Japan’s prime minister between 2001 and 2006 were considered especially antagonistic and each visit was accompanied by both an internal, as well as an external, outpouring of nationalist rhetoric from the official organs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The tensions over his visits to the shrine, against the background of wider issues of Sino-Japanese tensions at this time, were at the root of one of the most serious deteriorations in the political relationship between the two countries since they normalised diplomatic relations in 1972.

The complicated and seemingly difficult relationship between Japan and the People’s Republic of China needs better consideration to understand its nuances. This project seeks to contribute to this by considering the Sino-Japanese relationship, analysed through the prism of China’s response to Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine throughout his tenure, as its focus. It seeks to deconstruct China’s reaction in order to better understand the workings of this complex but important bilateral relationship. By breaking the reaction down into its constituent parts and assessing the roles of various actors and sectors of society in producing that reaction, it aims to provide the foundation for a constructivist theory of Sino-Japanese relations. Through a combination of analyses from a variety of methodological bases, it traces the structural format of the Chinese response to what are ostensibly perceived as historical slights, and seek to shed light on how this also shapes, and is itself shaped by, the external structures of the bilateral relationship. It is intended that this study can contribute to one particular area of scholarship on this relationship by exposing the position of the shrine and the actions of the Japanese elite in the deterioration of bilateral political relations, particularly within China itself. Furthermore, the project posits a hypothesis of an International Relations (IR)-grounded theory of Sino-Japanese relations, rooted in constructivism, that is tested in this work. Specifically, the hypothesis is that the Sino-Japanese relationship is structurally governed by norms and behavioural expectations that have been created and re-created through repeated interactions surrounding specific issues. These interactions take place not only in the state-to-state bilateral relationship, but within the domestic spheres of both states and across state boundaries. Both China and Japan retain a level of agency to act within the confines of the structural expectations, but are always either guided or restricted in their behavioural choices as a result. The agency that both retains means that the structures are not fixed or permanent and can evolve or be deliberately altered by either side. It is the contention of this thesis that the reaction of China to Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine can be best understood in this way, reacting as it did within the structural confines of previously constituted relationship-norms, particularly in response to a perceived challenge to those norms by Koizumi’s actions, leading to competition to re-establish the norm of Japanese prime ministers avoiding visits to the shrine whilst in office.

The project began with a number of original research questions designed to explore the issue: How did China respond to the Yasukuni Shrine issue during Koizumi’s tenure? Why did it react the way that it did? Did this response change over the course of the five years he was in office? What drove this change? Has this period of time and the difficult interaction between the two countries altered the nature of the bilateral relationship in any way? Can the interaction be explained by using or adapting existing IR theory? Thus, through addressing these research questions this project seeks to lay the foundations of a theory that will contribute to better understandings of China, the Sino-Japanese relationship, and constructivist IR theory in general.

**1.1 Sino-Japanese Relations during Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s Tenure**

The period of Koizumi’s tenure lasted from April 2001 until September 2006, making him one of Japan’s longest-serving prime ministers. He enjoyed relatively high approval ratings throughout his time in office, despite often being associated with controversial attempts to carry out structural economic reforms, particularly in terms of the Post Office. In foreign policy, Koizumi’s premiership was characterised by a continued move towards the normalisation of Japan as an actor in international affairs commensurate with its economic status by the involvement of Japan’s Self Defence Force (SDF) in United States (US)-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However it was also marked by a sharp deterioration in Japan’s relations with neighbouring countries in East Asia, particularly China and South Korea, driven by tensions over historically-rooted disputes among which the issue of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine was the most prominent.[[2]](#footnote-2) By the end of Koizumi’s tenure, the Sino-Japanese relationship had reached what many considered to be its lowest point since the two countries normalised diplomatic relations in 1972. Despite the political friction between the two, trade continued to grow throughout Koizumi’s tenure. Less than one year after he left office it was revealed that China had become Japan’s largest trading partner, and Japan China’s second largest. It was this phenomenon that became commonly described in Chinese as *zhengleng, jingre* (cold politics, hot economics) particularly within Chinese academic writings and media commentary. The rest of this section will outline the major events of the period in which Koizumi was prime minister, including his pledge to patronise Yasukuni Shrine during his campaign for election as leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), the six visits he made to the shrine during his time in office and the effect these had on the relationship, and a series of other tensions that contributed to a difficult bilateral relationship at this time.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**1.1.1 Koizumi’s Election Pledge**

On April 6th 2001, Mori Yoshirō resigned as prime minister of Japan following a period of time in which his personal approval ratings had suffered from a series of a funding scandals. His resignation necessitated a leadership election in the ruling LDP. The leading candidate in the election had been thought to be Hashimoto Ryūtarō, who had previously been prime minister from 1996 until 1998, while Koizumi was considered to be an outsider (Lincoln, 2002, p. 68). Nevertheless, Koizumi won the election convincingly and succeeded Mori on April 26th.

Prior to the election campaign, Koizumi paid a visit to a kamikaze pilot museum in Chiran, Kagoshima Prefecture. Apparently inspired to go after reading a book about the sacrifice of these pilots, Koizumi was reportedly moved to tears by his visit to the museum. According to Katō Kōichi, who went on to become chief cabinet secretary under Koizumi, it was during this moment that he made the decision to visit Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister should he ever have the opportunity (Kim, 2007). Koizumi decided not only to visit the shrine as prime minister, but to do so on August 15th, the date considered to mark the anniversary of Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II. He made this intention public on April 18th 2001 by declaring: “If I become prime minister, however much criticism there is, I will definitely worship on 15 August” (cited in Seaton, 2007, p. 163). It has been suggested that this was done in an attempt to garner extra support for his leadership bid from those parts of Japanese society that were likely to oppose the main thrust of his domestic reform policy (Lai, 2013, p. 133-4). Even if his own personal conviction were the main motivating factor behind his desire to visit the shrine, the fact that this pledge was made during an election campaign suggests that he expected to get some support in return.

**1.1.2 Koizumi’s Visits to Yasukuni Shrine and Sino-Japanese Relations**

Koizumi took office on April 26th 2001 and his election pledge to visit the shrine immediately became a focus of attention. The question of whether or not he would fulfil the commitment was the subject of speculation both in Japan and abroad with even Koizumi himself taking something of an ambiguous stance on the issue in order to “develop political space” (Przystup, 2001, p. 102). Ultimately, Koizumi elected to visit the shrine on August 13th, suggesting some level of compromise in avoiding the controversial date of the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in 1945. Indeed, several sources have indicated that this change of date was in direct response to secret meetings between Chinese and Japanese diplomats in which it had been indicated that China would tolerate a visit provided it were made on a date other than August 15th (Lai, 2013, p. 133).[[4]](#footnote-4) The change of date avoided almost none of the controversy that had been threatened and domestic opposition registered immediately.[[5]](#footnote-5) One of the main sources of controversy in Japan was over the constitutionality of the visits, since any official patronage of the shrine by a prime minister could be interpreted as breaching the separation of religion and state. The key, then, was whether or not the visit could be described as ‘official’ or not.[[6]](#footnote-6) Koizumi’s decision to sign the guestbook using his title of prime minister implied that the visit was of an official nature. The decision to change the date from the 15th to the 13th of August also did not prevent his visit being problematic in Japan’s international relations. The act was condemned by a number of countries, including China, South Korea, and North Korea. China summoned the Japanese ambassador to register its objections and the media in China roundly denounced the act. It did not, however, prove to be an immediate barrier to continued political relations and Koizumi visited Beijing just two months later for a meeting with Jiang Zemin, the then-president of China.

Koizumi did not wait long to return to the shrine. He made his second visit on April 21st 2002 in an act that had again had both domestic and international implications. Notably, the shrine visit came less than two weeks after Koizumi had again visited China, though he had gone there to attend the Bo’ao International Forum rather than to conduct a bilateral meeting with Jiang. Domestically, Koizumi was struggling to push through his postal reform bill and the visit could be interpreted as a distraction from that or an attempt to shore up support. Just as with the first visit, Koizumi signed the guestbook at the shrine using his title of prime minister, implying that he was acting in that capacity and leaving open the interpretation that this was an official visit. Internationally, his visit impacted relations with both China and South Korea, with the visit coming just months before Japan was due to jointly host the football world cup with the latter. With regard to China, strong protests were lodged with the Japanese ambassador in Beijing as well as in Tokyo by China’s ambassador to Japan. Jiang Zemin himself held a meeting with a delegation from New Komeito, the junior partner in the Japanese coalition government, in which he made clear that the visit was “unacceptable” and that the matter was a “state-to-state issue” (Przystup, 2002, p. 3). He added that Koizumi’s act was “something I absolutely cannot forgive” (Uchiyama, 2010, p. 99). Just two weeks after the visit, Sino-Japanese relations were complicated further when five North Korean asylum seekers attempted to gain entry to the Japanese consulate in the north-eastern Chinese city of Shenyang. Armed Chinese security forces forced their way into the compound to seize the North Koreans, in apparent breach of the Vienna Convention.[[7]](#footnote-7) Plans for Koizumi to visit China later in the year to mark the 30th anniversary of the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the two countries were cancelled as a result of these incidents.

Koizumi’s third visit was made on January 14th 2003 in an act that was much less surprising than his second visit had been. Following his second visit, Koizumi had indicated that he intended to visit the shrine “at an appropriate time” (Japan Times, 2003a) in each year of his premiership and it is thought likely that he elected to visit early in the year in order to prevent speculation over the date of any likely visit from overshadowing the chance to improve relations with an incoming Chinese leadership (Lai, 2013, p. 140). Koizumi intentionally made this visit more low key than the previous two in order to address some of the criticisms he had received within Japan. Notably, China reacted with strong condemnation through the embassies in both Beijing and Tokyo again. Nevertheless, Koizumi did manage to meet with Hu Jintao just two months after he assumed the Chinese presidency. The two met in St Petersburg on the side lines of a multilateral gathering that was held to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding the Russian city, but Chinese officials refused any formal bilateral summit (Wan, 2006, p. 250). A further meeting took place in October 2003 in Bangkok, where Koizumi managed not only to get an audience with Hu Jintao but also with then-Premier Wen Jiabao. However, the day after his meeting with Wen, during which the Chinese premier had pressed him not to continue the shrine visits, Koizumi made a public announcement that he would not cease his patronage of the shrine, leading to a perceived loss of face for Wen.

Koizumi’s fourth visit to Yasukuni Shrine took place on January 1st 2004, immediately fulfilling his prior commitment that he would visit in each year he was in office and leaving the rest of the year free from speculation about when he would go. However, China’s response began to escalate in the aftermath of this visit. Not only were protests lodged once more at ambassadorial level, but a planned joint naval visit was symbolically cancelled. Public protests also began to emerge at this time, although they were relatively small in size and quickly dispersed (Wan, 2006, p. 252-3). Koizumi’s visits to the shrine also continued to become more controversial domestically, with the Fukuoka District Court ruling them to be unconstitutional in April 2004.[[8]](#footnote-8) Further court rulings provided mixed results, with Osaka High Court ruling them to be unconstitutional while Tokyo High Court considered them to be personal and not in breach of the separation of religion and state. Koizumi seemed to have deliberately confused the issue by signing the guestbook with his title, but using his own money to make donations and not following standard Shinto practice during his visits.[[9]](#footnote-9) China continued to refuse bilateral meetings and Wen Jiabao also refused to meet Koizumi in Hanoi at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). However, Koizumi did meet with Hu in Chile at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting at which the Chinese president emphasised the importance of the Yasukuni visits in blocking improved relations between the two countries (Wan, 2006, p. 255). In the days following this meeting Koizumi did not repeat the declaration that he would continue his visits.

Koizumi did not visit the shrine again for almost two years after his fourth visit, returning on October 17th 2005. In part, this may have been a response to the situation in China. In April of that year a series of anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out across China in the culmination of societal displeasure with Japan’s perceived failure to atone for its historical wrongdoings against China. The catalyst for these demonstrations was the approval of a series of a history textbooks that are viewed by many as downplaying many aspects of Japan’s invasion of China, combined with Japan’s own campaign to obtain a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In May 2005, the most senior member of the Chinese government to visit Japan during Koizumi’s tenure, Vice Premier Wu Yi, who was in Japan for the World Expo, cut short her visit just before a scheduled meeting with Koizumi in Tokyo. It was later revealed that she had done so in response to Koizumi declaring in the Diet that he would continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine.[[10]](#footnote-10) 2005 was a sensitive year for Sino-Japanese relations, marking the sixtieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat, and Koizumi’s decision to stay away from the shrine during August was certainly influenced by this. Against the backdrop of the previously described tensions, a decision to mark the sixtieth anniversary with a visit to Yasukuni Shrine would have been incendiary. When he finally did visit, it was after the LDP had won a victory in a general election called in order to achieve a mandate for postal reform and after Koizumi had finally succeeded in passing the postal reform bill. Notably, Koizumi made a clear effort to make the visit appear less official than his previous visits, signing the register with his name only rather than his title, as he had done on previous visits (Wan, 2006, p. 259). Whether this was in response to the growing domestic controversy over the legality of his visits – certainly he had made repeated statements to the effect that his visits should be seen as the prime minister acting in a private capacity – or in an attempt to lessen the effect they were having on Sino-Japanese relations at the time is not entirely clear. Certainly if it were the latter, it did not succeed. A proposed meeting between Hu and Koizumi in Pusan in November during the APEC summit was cancelled, as was a suggested meeting between Li Zhaoxing and Asō Tarō, the respective foreign ministers.

On August 15th 2006, a little over a month before he was due to leave office after serving the maximum term allowed under the LDP’s constitution, Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine for the final time as prime minister, fulfilling his original election pledge that he would do so on the anniversary of Japan’s surrender. Clearly emboldened by the knowledge that he had only weeks left as prime minister, Koizumi returned to the practice of signing the guestbook with his title, in an act that was a deliberate thumbing of his nose to critics both in Japan and abroad. Though this visit received widespread media coverage in China, there was relatively little in terms of diplomatic response. This was for the simple reason that was little left for China to withdraw from a leader who would leave office the following month. There were no scheduled meetings left to cancel and the threat of refusing any future summitry with Koizumi would have been pointless given the impending end of his tenure. Nevertheless, China’s rhetorical reaction was as strong as ever, and included ambassadorial and foreign ministry statements decrying Koizumi. After an unusually lengthy premiership of five and a half years, Koizumi had left Japan’s relationship with China in what was widely considered to be the worst state since the two countries normalised diplomatic relations in 1972. When his successor, Abe Shinzō visited Beijing in October 2006, it brought to an end a five year absence of formal bilateral summits between China and Japan, the longest since the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978.

**1.1.3 Other Sino-Japanese Tensions**

The period of Koizumi’s tenure was one of generally increased tension within the Sino-Japanese relationship. While this can be explained to some extent by the repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine outlined above, there was a number of other issues that affected the relationship between the two countries both at the political level and in terms of mutual societal perceptions. In general, a move by Japan towards becoming more involved in international affairs was a source of concern for many in China. This was especially problematic when Japan passed laws in order to allow its armed forces to take part in logistical support operations for the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. With Japan being constitutionally bound not to engage in armed conflicts, this represented a significant shift in its stance that raised fears among some in China that Japan might attempt to fully normalise its armed forces and remove the article of the constitution that prevented it from declaring war.

In conjunction with the support of the US-led operations, Japan’s attempts to become more active in the international arena also extended to a campaign to reform the UNSC so that it could obtain a permanent sear on an expanded version of the council.[[11]](#footnote-11) It was against this backdrop that another of the tensions emerged, with a recurrence of the textbook issue, whereby Japan’s Ministry of Education authorised for use in schools a history textbook that many in China felt downplayed some of the worst atrocities committed by the Japanese military in China during the occupation of the 1930s and 1940s. These two issues reached a head in 2005 when an online campaign appeared to force the Chinese government to publicly declare opposition to Japan’s proposed reform of the UNSC while street protests broke out over the textbook issue in which Japanese business interests and citizens were attacked, with even Japan’s embassy in Beijing becoming a target of violent protests.

The tensions were not all rooted in perceived historical injustice. In 2004 a Chinese nuclear armed submarine was detected in Japanese waters close to Okinawa and chased by the Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) for approximately two hours until it left. This incident was the most serious in a series of mutually provocative acts in the East China Sea, mostly connected to the dispute over sovereignty of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the concomitant unresolved Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) disagreement.

These events combined with the repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi to create a widespread sense that Sino-Japanese relations were stuck in their worst downward spiral since relations had been normalised in 1972. Despite the previously-noted continued increase in economic interdependence between the two sides, there seemed to be no end in sight to the political tensions. However, when Koizumi left office in September 2006, having served the maximum term allowed under the LDP’s constitution, the return to stability in the bilateral relationship was notably rapid. Within weeks of taking office, Koizumi’s successor, Abe Shinzō had visited Beijing and brought to an end the diplomatic impasse between the two countries. Until the recurrence of the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute in 2010 and, more seriously, in 2012, it appeared that Sino-Japanese relations during the period of Koizumi’s tenure were uniquely challenged.

**1.2 The Structure of the Thesis**

The remainder of this chapter will outline the structure of the thesis, explaining how the work has been divided and ordered. The second chapter of this thesis is a wide-ranging literature review, designed to assess the current state of the field in terms of academic analyses of this subject. It is divided into several sections, each considering a different aspect of the topic of this thesis. These sections include discussions on general aspects of IR, particularly surrounding foreign policy making and IR theory, as well as more specific areas of academic work on Chinese foreign policy production, its linkage to the issue of political legitimacy in China, and the various issues within Sino-Japanese relations that have attracted attention in academia. It also includes a section providing a general review of the literature in Chinese academia on Sino-Japanese relations, including a particular focus on how the Yasukuni Shrine issue has been dealt with. The chapter ties all of these areas together to indicate where this thesis is intended to contribute. The study is not intended to establish some objective 'truth' about Yasukuni, or pass judgement on Koizumi's visits to the shrine, neither of which would represent a worthwhile academic contribution. Instead, it fills a gap in the current academic literature by exploring the role of the shrine and the visits to it by a Japanese prime minister in the wider process of China’s production of its relationship with Japan. In so doing, it provides an insight into how China seeks to manage the bilaterally-constructed relationship norms that determine Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter three addresses the theoretical construction of the thesis. In order to do this it begins with a thorough discussion of the development of IR theory since the inception of the discipline, showing how debates between the dominant realist and liberal schools have shaped the way the subject has been taught and researched for the majority of its existence. It then outlines the challenges to this dominance in recent decades from, among other areas, a broad basket of approaches rooted in the constructivist tradition of sociology. The remainder of the chapter takes a holistic constructivist position, influenced by Anthony Giddens’ *structuration* approach to sociology that was prominent in the 1980s in that discipline, to develop a theoretical approach to this subject along similar lines. It does this by positing that a normative or ideationally structural relationship governs the behaviour of both China and Japan as actors within the bilateral relationship, whilst simultaneously allowing both to retain the agency to affect these structures through their own actions, either consciously or otherwise. The chapter includes a review of recent Chinese academic work on IR theory, showing that it remains dominated by realism but has begun to show interest in constructivism and also a growing trend towards developing a coherently *Chinese* approach to IR. The chapter ends with a brief explanation of the two methodologies employed in this study, namely a detailed content analysis of reports across three different categories of Chinese newspapers aimed at illustrating the evolution of the Yasukuni narrative in China, and a series of wide-ranging semi-structured interviews with practitioners, analysts and observers to provide an explanation for the afore-mentioned evolving narrative.

Chapter four is devoted to the issue of Yasukuni Shrine itself in broad terms. This includes providing historical background and analysis of its place within Japanese society as an important symbolic and religious institution since the middle of the 19th century. It explores the roots of the controversy surrounding the shrine, not only as an issue in Japan’s international relations with China and other neighbouring countries, but also a source of domestic debate in Japan. The chapter considers the enshrinement of war criminals at Yasukuni Shrine, using records from the original trials of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE)[[12]](#footnote-12) to show that the commonly-cited ‘14 class A war criminals’ are incorrectly identified in this way as only 11 of them were convicted of ‘class A’ war crimes.[[13]](#footnote-13) Nevertheless, the enshrinement of these fourteen individuals is at the root of the controversy between China and Japan over the shrine. The chapter presents a history of prime ministerial visits to the shrine, showing how they were common and relatively uncontroversial until the early 1980s and also how they stopped as a direct response to pressure from China, making the issue one that clearly goes deep into the structures of Sino-Japanese relations. The chapter ends with an explanation of China’s responses to Yasukuni Shrine and how they have been formulated through the processes of Chinese foreign policy making prior to Koizumi’s tenure.

Chapter five presents the findings from the first section of the research completed for this project, namely the media analysis of Chinese reporting of Koizumi’s visits to the shrine. This begins with a much more detailed outline of the methodology used for this research than was provided in the earlier section in chapter 3, showing how the content analysis was designed and implemented. This includes a justification for the division of Chinese media into three categories of ‘official’, ‘semi-official’ and ‘non-official’, as well as the selection of *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily), *Huanqiu Shibao* (Global Times), and *Nanfang Dushibao* (Southern Metropolis Daily) to represent each category respectively for the sampling used for this research. The chapter explains the intended use of computer-aided technology and the difficulties encountered that rendered this ultimately unachievable, meaning that the analysis was actually conducted manually. The presentation of the results is largely in chronological order of the publication of the media reports, showing the evolution of tone in reporting in China across the three categories both in relation to Japan and also to Koizumi. It concludes that there is a clear pattern of reporting tone that shows a concerted effort to apply pressure following the first two and the final two visits, with a demonstrable downturn in the level of condemnation following the third and fourth visits. Furthermore, it shows that there is a strong correlation between the three sections of media in this evolution of tone, with no clear driving force behind the shift in reporting tone, suggesting that a relationship exists between the differing sections, but without the chance to firmly conclude whether it is one that is mutually reinforcing or uni-directional.

Chapter six presents the findings from interviews conducted as the second part of the research for the project. As with the previous chapter it begins with a more thorough explanation of the methodology used, giving details on how the interview process was conducted during a six month fieldwork trip to China and Japan. It then goes on to present the findings as a collation of all the data recorded in a lengthy process comprised of 39 interviews conducted across a six month period of time between November 2011 and May 2012 in China and Japan. The results are distilled down to six broad themes that emerged from these interviews relating to China’s handling of the Yasukuni Shrine issue during Koizumi’s tenure which inform the conclusions reached in this thesis: the anticipation of Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni Shrine in August 2001; the misunderstanding or misjudgement of Koizumi’s visit to Beijing in October 2001; the importance placed by both sides on maintaining functionality of the bilateral relationship; unexpectedly high levels of pressure from the societal level in China on the government; hope that Koizumi’s behaviour could be affected by China continued until 2004 or 2005; and a strategy that was employed by China following the fifth and sixth visits in 2005 and 2006 aimed at Koizumi’s potential successor. These themes help to flesh out the understanding of the previously outlined evolution of the Chinese narrative of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, showing why the narrative evolved the way that it did. It lends support to the original hypothesis that China acts within previously determined ideational structures in order to handle this bilateral issue but with a level of conscious agency that allows it to at least seek to reshape the norms of the relationship in its own interests.

Chapter seven seeks to test out the hypothesis outlined in chapter 3 and then developed through the findings of chapters 5 and 6 by applying to it another recurring and seemingly intractable issue in Sino-Japanese relations: that of the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The chapter takes as its focus the most recent incarnation of the dispute, beginning in 2012 with the Japanese nationalisation of three of the islands, as a test case for examining the wider validity of the theoretical approach and findings of this work. Employing the *structuration* framework, it outlines the previously-determined bilateral norms and ideationally created structures over this issue within the Sino-Japanese relationship by considering the background to previous outbreaks of tension over the islands and assessing the actions and responses of both sides on each of these occasions. It then uses data from the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) annual reports on Chinese activity in the waters surrounding the islands as well as other publicly available data in order to explore and explain the way these bilaterally-constituted norms have been challenged by the most recent dispute. It shows that China has taken an opportunity presented to it by Japan’s perceived challenge to the status quo on the islands dispute to launch its own attempt at reshaping the structures of the relationship in its own interests by increasing its own activity around the islands and raising the international awareness of the dispute. As a result, Japan’s position that no territorial dispute exists has been undermined at both the bilateral and international levels.

Finally, chapter eight concludes the thesis with a review of the findings and a postscript to the period studied. After revisiting the research results it seeks to put them into a more contemporary context by briefly considering the ways in which Koizumi’s successors dealt with the Yasukuni Shrine issue during their time in office. Japan’s next six prime ministers all avoided a recurrence of this issue by staying away from the shrine during their time in office, apparently suggesting that the reshaped norms of the relationship that followed Koizumi’s tenure were holding. Some did this through diplomatic ambiguity in avoiding direct answers to questions over possible visits to the shrine, while others explicitly committed themselves to staying away in order to neutralise the issue from the outset of their premiership. However, this section of the chapter concludes with consideration of Abe Shinzō’s visit to the shrine on December 26th 2013, when he became the first serving prime minister to do so since Koizumi’s final visit in August 2006. Although this is clearly a significant event in terms of the focus of this thesis, the timing of it means that it is not examined in detail here as it occurred during the latter stages of writing the thesis. The chapter ends with a consideration of how the work in this project could be developed further in terms of future research into the Sino-Japanese relationship or of China’s international relations more generally.

**2. Literature Review**

This section will introduce and review the relevant academic literature on this topic, assessing its relevance both to this project and the wider academic debate. It will explore the work thematically, before outlining the areas to which this study is intended to contribute. The literature has been divided into three broad categories: foreign policy making and political legitimacy in China; Sino-Japanese relations; and Yasukuni Shrine. Following these sections are some concluding remarks that seek to show the direction in which this study will proceed, by identifying the key themes that can be drawn out of this literature review, and the niche into which the study itself is intended to fit.

**2.1. Chinese Foreign Policy Making[[14]](#footnote-14)**

China’s foreign policy was, for a number of years, characterised by the famous phrase “*taoguang yanghui*” (loosely translated as “bide our time, hide our capabilities”),[[15]](#footnote-15)which is often attributed to Deng Xiaoping.[[16]](#footnote-16) Certainly China kept a low profile in international affairs during most of the 1990s, though the Taiwan Straits crises of 1995 and 1996 could be said to be notable exceptions to this position.[[17]](#footnote-17) However, there are those who argue China has, in recent years, displayed an “increasing global political activism and self-confidence that amounts to a new Chinese foreign policy” (Collins & Cottey, 2012, p. 153). Shaun Breslin agrees that China has moved away from the idea of keeping a low profile and has developed a “more activist inclination” (Breslin, 2013, p. 615). Breslin also notes that China retains a level of caution, particularly to assuage “foreigners who already see China as a danger” (Breslin, 2013, p. 261). In other words the previous tactic of *taoguang yanghui* has finally been abandoned, in practice if not in rhetorical terms. A particularly nuanced exploration of the evolution of the *taoguang yanghui* strategy noted that Hu Jintao’s subtle discursive shift of declaring that China should “continuously keep a low profile and proactively get some things done” expresses well the gradual move away from earlier incarnations of the concept without its total abandonment (Chen & Wang, 2011, p. 212).

Nevertheless, despite China’s increased willingness to involve itself in international relations, few see it as challenging the status quo, at least in terms of the shape of the international system, though John Mearsheimer is a notable exception to this (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 402).[[18]](#footnote-18) This can be seen in China’s fairly dramatic increased inclusion in international organisations through the 1990s, though it should be noted that the obsession with territorial sovereignty has led to a reluctance to submit itself to restrictive institutions in the field of military capabilities (Saich, 2011, p. 338-340). Such a commitment to involvement in international institutions has led one scholar to argue that China could be incorporated into a global legal system akin to a Kantian peace, though for this to be realised it remains necessary for significant domestic political reform to be enacted (Suri, 2013, p. 255).

Despite the obvious rise in China’s power and influence within the international system, not all are convinced of its ability to ‘lead’ the world, at least in the foreseeable future. Mark Beeson, while acknowledging the shift in power within the international system towards China, cautions that its “ability to provide ‘international leadership’ is limited” (Beeson, 2013, p. 234). Beeson goes on to explain that the reasons for this limitation are both domestic and external, including mistrust from potential allies stemming from the contradiction between providing the stability and economic growth on which the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP)[[19]](#footnote-19) legitimacy rests, and its ability to persuade the outside world of its benevolent intentions (Beeson, 2013, p. 242-245). This desire to present an image of benevolence is one of the motivations behind what Zhiqun Zhu has called China’s “new diplomacy”, which he also describes as “active diplomacy” (Zhu, 2010, p. 7). For Zhu, China’s motivations are not limited to assuaging fears of foreign states but include “providing genuine assistance to developing nations” (Zhu, 2010, p. 14).

Scholars have begun, in recent years, to pay attention to the idea of Chinese ‘exceptionalism’, a self-conceptualisation that is frequently associated with the US, but which, it is argued, can also be applied to China’s own identity in international relations. This exceptionalism is said to be characterised by three components: “great power reformism, benevolent pacifism, and harmonious inclusionism”, and it is “immediately obvious that these designations overlap with some of the imperial and revolutionary precedents” (Zhang, 2013, p. 310). Though Zhang acknowledges that the political elite of China exploits this discourse, he sees the possibility for the concept to become a genuinely new form of global leadership, labelling the approach “neo-tianxiaism” (Zhang, 2013, p. 313).[[20]](#footnote-20) The discrepancy between this sort of analysis and the “China threat” theories is explained by Shih & Yin as a question of whether one chooses to analyse China’s capabilities or its intentions (Shih & Yin, 2013, p. 60). In other words, it is essentially an epistemological question. A different approach is taken by Taylor Fravel, who considered that the lack of benefit for China in posing a serious military threat to its regional neighbours will prevent it from becoming a belligerent power (Fravel, 2010, p. 526).

Understanding Chinese foreign policy is not only about grasping its overall strategy or approach, but also about the practicalities of the policy-making process. It has been argued that the complications of China’s bureaucracy can make it difficult to identify a coherent foreign policy strategy. Wang Jisi laments the complex array of actors involved in articulating China’s foreign relations, involving virtually every institution at both central and regional government levels to one degree or another, making it “virtually impossible for them to envisage China’s national interest in the same perspective or to speak with one voice” (Wang, 2011, p. 79). This was illustrated to some extent in Lu Ning’s exploration of Chinese foreign policy (Lu, 1997). Lu, who had personal experience of the foreign making process through a previous career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), made clear that the ultimate determinant of foreign policy direction remained the “paramount leader and leadership nuclear circle” (Lu, 1997, p. 8).[[21]](#footnote-21) Nevertheless, many other areas of both official and unofficial government structures play an important inputting role for the making of foreign policy, with the MFA perhaps somewhat surprisingly not among the most significant contributors (Lu, 1997, p. 9-17). More recently Hongyi Lai noted that the death of Deng led to “a team of national leaders (instead of a single dominant one), national institutions and bureaucracies, and even public opinion [being able] to take more of a role in external policy making” (Lai, 2010, p. 150). Though the central leadership remains the ultimate arbiter, there is now a plethora of other groups and institutions that are part of the policy-making process. One of the most significant is the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG), which was led by Hu Jintao for most of his leadership (Lai, 2010, p. 153).

The reform of Chinese foreign policy making since Deng Xiaoping’s death, in terms of the increased levels of input from a diverse array of interests and institutions, taking the power away from a single individual and his whims, has made it “increasingly predictable, stable, and transparent” (Lai, 2010, p. 171). As such, analysis of its direction ought to be more useful for understanding China’s foreign policy and its possible future direction. This is true both in terms of the overall trends in China’s general foreign policy and also of its specific policies in its relationship with Japan. The rest of this section will explore these ideas, bringing into focus the various actors and processes that contribute to the making of China’s Japan policy.

**2.1.1 Political Legitimacy in China**

The question of the CCP’s legitimacy as a ruling party in China has received much attention in Western academic writing in recent years. A common theme that runs through much of this work is the idea that as a result of the economic reform process which began at the end of the 1970s, China can no longer be considered a communist state. This, rather obviously, begs the question of whether or not a communist party can continue to justify its position as the political ruler of a non-communist state. That it remains in control of the PRC begs the further question of exactly how it has managed to achieve this. While the answers to this question are certainly not uniform, with assessments ranging from those that predict the “collapse” of the PRC ([Chang, 2002](#_ENREF_16), p. 187) to those who see party control strengthened through reinvention ([Nathan, 2003](#_ENREF_105), p. 6-7), something approaching a consensus emerged in the 1990s by which most academics would agree that the CCP’s legitimacy came to rely to a significant extent upon the twin pillars of economic growth and nationalism, though the degree of emphasis is a matter of continuing disagreement ([Unger, 1996](#_ENREF_152), p. xi; [Shambaugh, 2008](#_ENREF_130), p. 3). Indeed, it has been noted that nationalism has *always* played a role in the CCP’s process of legitimation ([Mitter, 2004](#_ENREF_99), p. 295-314).

One of the first to identify this trend in Chinese politics was Xueliang Ding, who considered the CCP to be facing a “legitimacy crisis” by the time of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 ([Ding, 1994](#_ENREF_25), p. 16). Ding focused on the battle for control of the political direction of the country between the "elite", by which he means those in the upper echelons of the CCP, and the "counterelite", a loose group of mostly intellectuals who favoured political reform to complement the economic reform that was being enacted. For Ding, the reform-era rendered communism and Marxism "bankrupt" as legitimating ideologies that had previously underpinned the CCP, and the party is credited with both recognising this, and also realising that "patriotism became the only symbol capable of integrating political society". There was, however, a “tension” in the application of patriotism in China at this time, particularly in the way that the CCP explicitly presented loving the motherland as subservient to loving the party. Ding felt that this allowed the counterelite space to compete for the patriotic mantle, threatening to further undermine the party’s legitimacy in the process.

The idea that ideology no longer plays a role in the CCP’s legitimation is directly challenged by David Shambaugh ([Shambaugh, 2008](#_ENREF_130)). Shambaugh, while acknowledging the centrality of both economic development and nationalism to the re-legitimation of the CCP over the reform era, explicitly challenges the notion that the party is ideologically dead. Whereas most commentators have concluded that the current regime pays only lip service to Marxism-Leninism and the various other strands of ideology that have been placed at the centre of party discourse[[22]](#footnote-22) Shambaugh claims that the ideology has retained its importance in the survival of the CCP as the party of government in China. Its role has evolved into something quite different in that it is no longer used to *determine* the policy path that should be pursued, but to *justify* the path that has already been chosen based on empirical observations and analysis of what is in the best interests of China's all-round development. Shambaugh successfully demonstrates that the CCP, far from being the out-of-touch archaic organisation it is often caricatured as, understands the threats it faces perhaps more clearly than any outsider, though its conclusion of how these can be mitigated may differ somewhat from other analysis. He cites Wang Xuedong, director of the CCP Central Committee's Institute of World Socialism, as telling him "We know there are those abroad who think we have a 'crisis of ideology', but we do not agree" ([Shambaugh, 2008](#_ENREF_130), p. 104). Heike Holbig ([2009](#_ENREF_53), p. 13) also challenges the "conventional wisdom" in Western academia that ideology is dead as a legitmating force in modern China. Through analysis of the "Three Represents" campaign of Jiang Zemin era[[23]](#footnote-23) and its reinterpretation under Hu Jintao she shows how the discourse of ideology is still very much relied upon as a legitimising factor for the CCP. She concludes that any wholesale revision of ideology risks "mass withdrawal of popular consent" to CCP rule, though this assertion appear to rest on the assumption that the CCP’s belief that ideology still matters is correct.

The contestation of nationalism as a unifying ideology, outlined by Ding, has also been identified elsewhere. Barmé notes that the 1990s saw a decrease in the ability of the CCP to determine the nature of Chinese patriotism, although its employment continues to be of benefit to the party ([Barmé, 1996](#_ENREF_7), p. 185-6). Rose describes how the government's own use of patriotism actually allowed the space for it to be taken out of its control ([Rose, 2000](#_ENREF_116)). The rise of what she calls “cultural nationalism” in China was actually facilitated by the government’s patriotic education campaigns, which provided room and space for discussions to take place in nationalistic discourse, thus providing the opportunity to criticise the state using authorised language (Rose, 2000, p. 170). Nationalism is, therefore, revealed to be multifaceted in terms of impact and ownership.

Much of the earlier analysis of the nature of Chinese nationalism in the latter part of the twentieth century categorised it mainly as ‘top-down’, that is predominantly state-led and driven by governmental actions and interests ([Zheng, 1999](#_ENREF_184), p. 87-110; [Zhao, 1998](#_ENREF_182), p. 291-300; [Fitzgerald, 1996](#_ENREF_34); [Townsend, 1996](#_ENREF_151)), though others did argue that it should be considered more as ‘bottom-up’, a process driven by the grassroots level in which the government is more reactive ([Zhang, 1996](#_ENREF_177), p. 121-2). However, the necessity to apply this dichotomy at all has been challenged ([Xu, 2007](#_ENREF_168); [Gries, 2005b](#_ENREF_42), p. 87), and some argue that two distinct, yet occasionally overlapping, nationalisms coexist ([Guo, 2004](#_ENREF_44), p. 24-71). Gries, in particular, complained that too many Western academics focussed on the role of the CCP and ignored the emotions of Chinese people collectively and individually, while Chinese analysts tended to go to the other extreme, ascribing agency almost exclusively to the masses. Gries insisted that neither approach was satisfactory since “both the Party elite and the popular nationalists participate in nationalist politics, and both emotional and instrumental concerns drive their behavior” ([Gries, 2005b](#_ENREF_42), p. 87). Suisheng Zhao's concept of "state-led pragmatic nationalism" places greater emphasis on the role of the state, but he also makes the case for a position within the process for those outside of the political elite ([Zhao, 2004](#_ENREF_180), p. 209; [Zhao, 1997](#_ENREF_181)). He notes that during anti-Japanese protests in the 1990s over the issue of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, the protests were most severe in Taiwan and Hong Kong, implying that the feelings invoked by this dispute run deeper than mere communist propaganda.

By allowing for the agency of the masses in the creation and reinforcement of the nationalist ideology it is possible to view it as a force that has been unleashed by the government but that is now, or may soon be, out of its control ([Zhao, 2005](#_ENREF_183), p. 132). Jungmin Seo explains how this unintended consequence manifests itself in “the opening up of the path for the subordinates to the higher authority, the nation, to resist the state” ([Seo, 2005](#_ENREF_128), p. 182). Robert Weatherley, while acknowledging the success of the CCP’s exploitation of nationalism, considers that it has already become something of a millstone around the party’s neck ([Weatherley, 2006](#_ENREF_157)). In fact, this has led to an adjustment in strategy by the government, shifting emphasis to stability – both political and social – as a legitimating factor. By presenting stability as the precondition for economic growth and national strength, rather than as a result of them, the party makes itself essential to the aims of virtually all Chinese, individually and collectively. Weatherley feels that stability may indeed have a longer lifespan as a legitimating ideology than nationalism, especially given the latter’s tendency to become, using a well-worn phrase, a “double-edged sword” ([Weatherley, 2006](#_ENREF_157), p. 157). While insisting that it should not be characterised as either purely ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’, Weatherley makes it clear that he believes the process of the radicalisation of Chinese nationalism began with the CCP in the post-Tiananmen era, and was only later expropriated by what he terms “grass-roots” nationalists.

Simon Shen seeks to expose the essence of Chinese nationalism, focussing specifically on the Chinese discourse of the Sino-American relationship since 1999 ([Shen, 2007](#_ENREF_131)). For Shen, nationalist discourse is "a channel for different players in China to advance their personal and group interests" and “most nationalist rhetoric is basically a coded way of directing dissent at the Chinese state itself" ([Shen, 2007](#_ENREF_131), p. 2). Despite this, Shen believes that far from being a threat to internal and external stability, nationalist debate and direct action could actually prove to be a stabilising force for the internal political structure.[[24]](#footnote-24) The former of these claims is supported by Shen's analysis of how the discursive interplay in China allows an element of popular political participation, particularly among those who are passionate about so doing, without moving towards a democratic transition. Shen argues that the control of nationalist discourse rests, in many ways, outside of the governmental elite. However, the government's ability to engage in, and in most instances to regain control of the discourse previously defined by grassroots nationalists, renders this not a challenge to its authority but, on the contrary, a well-developed and understood tool for entrenching party legitimacy and promoting political stability. Shen concludes that one of the party-state's "major achievements" has been "re-entrenching its legitimacy by speaking the same language as the public" ([Shen, 2007](#_ENREF_131), p. 188).

Christopher R. Hughes’ examination of political discourse in China in the reform era demonstrated how nationalism, based around national reunification and the defence of Chinese sovereignty, was explicitly linked to the legitimacy of the CCP, but was never the sole domain of the political elite ([Hughes, 2006](#_ENREF_58)). Citing the series of student-led protests of the 1980s that culminated in the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 as an example of parties outside of the elite grasping the nationalist mantle, Hughes also describes how the government’s attempts to regain control through its patriotic education campaign of the 1990s were successful in the short term but also sowed the seeds for further struggles, particularly vis-a-vis the US and Japan. Hughes concludes that the CCP cannot maintain its one-party system without relying, at least in part, on nationalism as a key factor in its legitimacy, and that this will always have the potential to be problematic at both domestic and international levels.

Examining the ways in which Japan has been used as a subject of Chinese nationalist expression during elite struggles since 1949, Hughes argues that the use of Japan-focussed nationalism as a tool of legitimation should be understood as "similar to the investment policies that a bank needs to maintain the confidence of depositors" ([Hughes, 2008](#_ENREF_59), p. 246). It is exploited by the elite for purposes of legitimation both at the level of the political system itself as well as at the level of the individual leaders. Hughes cites the way perceptions of Japan were massaged in Chinese discourse after the normalisation of relations in 1972 as demonstrating how waves of anti-Japanese sentiment can be ridden, but then dampened down by the elite, though he acknowledges that wider access to information has made this process harder to control in recent times. The implication of this is that this has made the leadership more reactive to grass roots expressions and sentiment on nationalism generally, meaning that flows of information have had a visible impact on the complex interaction of Chinese nationalism in the process of political legitimation in China ([Hughes, 2008](#_ENREF_59), p. 248-253). Hughes believes that Japan-focussed nationalism will always be a potential tool in intra-elite politics in China, suggesting that the actions of Japanese leaders, while certainly not irrelevant, do not necessarily have a directly causative link to the rhetoric and actions of the Chinese political elite. The diverse ways in which popular perceptions of Japan, and in particular the memory of the Second Sino-Japanese War, are manipulated and exploited at governmental level, is illustrated in Annie Hongping Nie’s study of the online gaming industry in China (Nie, 2013). Nie shows how the dual forces of popular nationalism and state-led propaganda reinforced each other to strengthen the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment displayed through role playing games that depict the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance. She notes that this phenomenon “also resulted from the attempts to profit from the nationalistic impulse of the gaming public”, something that “proves that contemporary Chinese nationalism is indeed a complex phenomenon rather than an occurrence single-handedly orchestrated by the Party-state’s propaganda” (Nie, 2013, p. 500-1). A separate analysis of online Japan-focussed nationalist discourse, revolving around the anti-Japan protests of 2005, concluded that in addition to “state-led nationalism” it is possible to identify a “popular nationalism” that is both distinct and relatively autonomous ([Liu, 2006](#_ENREF_83), p. 147).[[25]](#footnote-25)

**2.1.2 Implications of the Legitimisation Processes for Foreign Policy-making**

There are a great many factors to take into consideration when analysing the foreign policy-making process of any state. If, in the case of China, one such factor is indeed the nationalism that forms part of the basis of the CCP’s legitimacy, and if Japan does play a role in that nationalism, then it is important to consider the impact of this phenomenon on China’s foreign policy generally, and its Japan policy specifically. Such a deconstruction has implications for the understanding of international relations in East Asia and beyond. With that in mind, it is worth considering some of the literature that has already been produced in the area of Chinese foreign policy-making, particularly with regard to the domestic considerations that impact it.

The rather opaque nature of the Chinese political structure has been somewhat illuminated in recent years, though it would be inaccurate to say that the foreign policy making process is fully understood in academia. This is evidenced by the disagreements among scholars over where the decision-making power lies. While Kenneth Lieberthal believes that the power remains concentrated in just one or two individuals at the top of the party ([Lieberthal, 2004](#_ENREF_80), p. 175), David Lampton has argued that there is an increased number of actors involved, including not only high level party cadres and working groups but also analysts working within think tanks and academics based in the top universities of Beijing and Shanghai. He notes that the level of professionalism and experience of these actors is increasing at a similar rate, though he acknowledges that this has not necessarily produced a better, or more coherent, foreign policy ([Lampton, 2001](#_ENREF_77), p. 7-12). This diversification of foreign policy-making actors has also been acknowledged elsewhere ([Glaser and Medeiros, 2007](#_ENREF_39)). However, Samuel Kim felt that the centrality of nationalism to regime legitimation in China, and the concomitant need to express this internationally,[[26]](#footnote-26) meant that a return to centralised foreign policy-making was inevitable ([Kim, 1998](#_ENREF_71), p. 12-15).

That domestic considerations play a part in constraining the options available to foreign policy makers in China is well documented. This linkage between domestic considerations and stakeholders and the foreign policy making apparatus was the subject of Quansheng Zhao’s attempts to formulate a theory of Chinese foreign policy ([Zhao, 1992](#_ENREF_179), [Zhao, 1996](#_ENREF_178)). What Zhao termed the “micro-macro linkage approach” takes into account the international system and the domestic environment (the macro) and the individual decision-makers (the micro) that operate within it. Neither dominates the other and both are fluid, allowing for alterations in Chinese foreign policy to be explained by any one, or a combination of these factors. Zhao’s explanation of this linkage is convincing, but it doesn’t appear to offer anything particularly unique to *Chinese* foreign policy-making and it is certainly possible to imagine it being applied to almost any other state in the international system. Zhao’s work does, at least, serve to debunk the myth that China’s foreign policy is solely the domain of a small number of highly powered individuals operating in something of a vacuum. In this he is supported by Zhiqun Zhu, who has identified “high-ranking government officials and military officers to scholars, researchers, business people, the media, large energy companies and netizens” as all having a role to play in a complex process that produces Chinese foreign policy (Zhu, 2011, p. 188-9).

Analysis of how different societal forces can play a role in China’s foreign policy formation has mainly focussed on the Sino-American relationship, and sees the internet and an emerging civil society as playing a much greater role in ways that are not yet fully understood ([Hong, 2005](#_ENREF_54); [Liu and Hao, 2005](#_ENREF_81)). Analyses of the dispute over the Diaoyu, or Senkaku, islands show that nationalism plays a significant role in constraining policy options ([Deans, 2000](#_ENREF_22)) and has seriously “complicated China’s diplomacy” (Zhao, 2013, p. 537) though it is also argued that economic considerations ultimately take priority, and that China’s foreign policy does not necessarily have to be forced down an aggressively nationalistic path as a result ([Downs and Saunders, 1998](#_ENREF_27), p. 116). The impact of public opinion is considered increasingly significant in foreign policy formation ([Roy, 2009](#_ENREF_122), p. 27-30) and this is particularly salient with regard to Japan ([Drifte, 2003](#_ENREF_29), p. 76-80; Roy, 2005, p. 191-2), but it has also been pointed out that too much attention can be paid to the role of nationalism in this process, and a wider consideration could help to identify greater societal schisms that may impact on China’s external relations ([Carlson, 2009](#_ENREF_14), p. 26-30). Exactly how these domestic factors affect China’s foreign policy is a matter of disagreement. The classic argument is advanced by Christopher R. Hughes, who opines that nationalism in China makes compromise with neighbouring states more difficult for the political elite to consider ([Hughes, 2005](#_ENREF_57), p. 133). However, an interesting counter-argument to this suggests that domestic friction actually makes the regime more likely to compromise in disputes with neighbouring states ([Fravel, 2005](#_ENREF_35)). While this seems both counter-intuitive and incompatible with the former position, it is worth noting that Fravel’s study was centred on the resolution of territorial disputes with China’s neighbouring states, and that none of the compromises identified were with major regional powers. It is, therefore, possible to imagine circumstances whereby domestic threats to the regime create an environment conducive to compromise with weaker states, while nationalist sentiment makes such compromises more difficult to envisage with powers such as Japan or India.

**2.2 The Sino-Japanese Relationship**

This section will discuss some of the major works that have explored the Sino-Japanese relationship itself. It will initially focus on the debate over competition and cooperation, noting a tendency to express optimistic or pessimistic views on the state of, and prospects for, the relationship. It then goes on to consider some of the strongest themes that come out of the literature, in particular the ways in which the issue of history has been presented in analysis of Sino-Japanese relations. Finally it will offer some brief insight into a selection of Chinese language academic works, published in mainland China over the last decade. Although this section will address the Sino-Japanese relationship within the context of IR theory, these theories are not explored in great detail in this section. Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical contribution of this study and, as part of that explanation, offers a detailed consideration of the roots of the IR theories that contribute to our understanding of international relations generally, as well as the foundations of the theory employed in this thesis.

The field of the study of Sino-Japanese relations is lacking in work towards an IR-driven theory of the relationship and the body of work has been criticised for tending to compartmentalise it, rather than taking a holistic approach ([Deng, 1997](#_ENREF_23), p 373). Of those that do consider the relationship within the wider context of the study of International Relations (IR), an overemphasis has been placed on the role of the US ([Christensen, 1999](#_ENREF_19); [Mochizuki, 2007](#_ENREF_100); [Shin, 2010](#_ENREF_137)), a common problem in many areas of IR generally. Among those studies that do examine the relationship itself in detail, there are examples of blind optimism – such as the suggestion that a Sino-Japanese axis could dominate Asian geopolitical and economic affairs for the benefit of the whole continent ([Taylor, 1985](#_ENREF_148), p. 1) – and unnecessary pessimism – calls for the respective governments to give up the “illusions” of friendship and acknowledge the impossibility of reconciliation ([Self, 200](#_ENREF_127)2, p. 88) are not useful. Most, however, fall somewhere between these two extremes.

Much of the recent writing has focussed on the risk of conflict, particularly in light of the deterioration of political relations in the early 2000s. Mel Gurtov believes that the Sino-Japanese rift of the early 2000s, while serious, is manageable. He proposes a series of possible actions that could be taken at various levels, but considers ‘Track I’, the highest political and diplomatic level, to be the most important and largely ignores domestic factors. His proposals, including the "unilateral" support of China for Japan to take a permanent seat at the United Nations (UN), put him firmly in the optimists’ camp, and he feels that the relationship would be improved instantly by greater recognition of its significance on both sides (Gurtov, 2008, p. 96-108). Even in areas that are noted for having caused high levels of tensions, some find cause for optimism over the relationship. While both countries have expressed public and private concern about each other's military development and long term strategic intentions, it has been claimed that neither has viewed the other as a serious, imminent threat ([Austin & Harris, 2001](#_ENREF_5), p. 89-98). In particular, Manicom and O’Neill ([2009](#_ENREF_91)) argue that the disputed area of the East China Sea, although a source of significant tension, has been addressed sensibly by both sides and the possibility of confrontation has been constrained by policy making elites. They seek to challenge what they perceive to be the conventional view that conflict is inevitable between China and Japan (Manicom & O’Neill, 2009, p. 213-4). The argument that both competition and cooperation are possible between the respective governments is convincing, though it is perhaps worth noting that this assessment was made prior to the escalation of tension in this area in September 2010. Similarly, an analysis of the Chinese perceptions of Japan’s security policy during the 1990s also concluded that, despite the rhetoric, the relationship is largely characterised by pragmatism ([Li, 1999](#_ENREF_78)).

Not all analyses are so positive about the nature of the relationship. Elena Atanassova-Cornelis argues that even during times of apparent thawing in tensions, such as the post-Koizumi period, Sino-Japanese relations are characterised by an inherent fragility. This is illustrated by the mutual mistrust that has been displayed throughout China’s period of military modernisation and Japan’s continuing internal debates on a return to a more active role in international affairs (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2011, p. 169-172). Christopher W. Hughes cautions that Japan needs to handle the rise of China as a major power in the region with care, or risk a military confrontation ([Hughes, 2009](#_ENREF_60), p. 855). June Dreyer ([2006](#_ENREF_28)) makes the point that behind thinly-veiled rhetoric of ‘win-win’ cooperation lies fierce competition and rivalry for both resources and political influence. This is particularly evident in the competition between the two in their dealings with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also in Latin America (Dreyer, 2006, p. 538-9).[[27]](#footnote-27) For Dreyer, this behaviour is proof of a ‘zero sum’ mentality on the part of policy-makers on both sides, though she seems to believe that this applies specifically to the bilateral relationship and that both countries are capable of mutually beneficial cooperation with other states or regions. James Reilly has identified a potential for greater Sino-Japanese cooperation through the two countries’ aid policies, driven by a need to obtain access to resources, in Myanmar (Reilly, 2013, p. 154).

Yong Deng examined Chinese relations with Japan in the context of Asia-Pacific regionalism, identifying the way the two countries relate to each other as a key factor that has greatly predisposed their respective postures toward Asian regionalism, and shapes the pace and structure of Asia-Pacific regional cooperation ([Deng, 1997](#_ENREF_23)). He concludes that the uniquely "emotional" dimension in this bilateral relationship that often defies "rational" calculations of economic and political interests underpins a mutual suspicion stemming from present irritants and historical enmity, engendering an inherent rivalry in shaping the regional order (Deng, 1997, p. 385-6). In a later work, Deng contended that the centrality of status (‘*guoji diwei*’) in China’s foreign policy-making could be detrimental to a relationship with another power in the region such as Japan. However, although issues of regional and global concern play their part in each determining its policy toward the other, and the competition and rivalry is both real and potentially destabilising, the relationship is not set in a pre-determined structure that preordains either conflict or cooperation. The individual behaviour of governments, both with regard to domestic issues and international considerations, plays a larger part in determining the course of the relationship. Furthermore, there is optimism in the interdependence of the two countries which "goes well beyond economics, thus generating cooperative potentials that could transform the bilateral interaction, regional order, and world politics" ([Deng, 2008](#_ENREF_24), p. 199).

The high level of economic interdependence between the two countries is, for many, both a causative factor in the absence of military conflict and also a reason to work to ensure that this remains the case ([Sun, 2003](#_ENREF_142), [Lam, 2005](#_ENREF_76), [Heazle, 2007](#_ENREF_49)). However, Michael Yahuda has been a consistent dissenting voice on this, arguing that not only does a high level of economic interdependence fail to mitigate the problems in Sino-Japanese relations, it is actually the source of many of the strains ([Yahuda, 2006](#_ENREF_171)). He rightly points out that the enormous levels of trade between the two countries did not prevent the anti-Japanese riots in China in 2005, and cannot be relied upon to resolve the problems in the bilateral relationship in the future ([Yahuda, 2008](#_ENREF_172), p. 127). Yahuda believes that there are structural impediments to improving Sino-Japanese ties, fundamentally rooted in the shift in the domestic and international identities of both countries, that can only be mitigated through strong and skilful leadership on both sides. A similar argument put forward by Denny Roy suggests that the same structures that impede significant improvements in the relationship also prevent “seismic” deterioration ([Roy, 2005](#_ENREF_121), p. 210).

A similar, though not identical, stance was taken by Ming Wan ([2006](#_ENREF_156)), who analysed trends in the bilateral relationship between China and Japan since 1989 in order to reveal the driving forces behind its evolution in this period. Combining detailed empirical data with information gleaned from private interviews within the political elites of both countries, Wan offers “systemic explanations” of what he perceives to be an emerging rivalry (Wan, 2006, p. 208). Wan argues that undeniable difficulties of the bilateral relationship are, on the whole, handled well by both sides with communication channels kept open through some of the periods of most heightened tension (Wan, 2006, p. 232). Through detailed case studies of Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits Wan demonstrates that the perceived nationalist reaction at the societal level in China *did* play a part in the decision-making process within the Japanese government, and that this reaction was considered *in addition* to the representations of the Chinese government. This provides evidence in favour of the idea that multiple actors are involved via a multitude of linkages in the evolution of the relationship (Wan, 2006, p. 235-261).

**2.2.1 The ‘History Issue’**

The issue of history – specifically the memory, and memorialisation, of Japan’s invasion and occupation of China during the 1930s and 1940s – as the biggest obstacle in the relationship is a recurring theme and, perhaps, receives more attention than any other. James Hsiung attempted to place the mutually reinforcing perceptions of mistrust and resentment over modern history into the context of classic IR theory ([Hsiung, 2007](#_ENREF_55)). Hsiung characterisation of this phenomenon as a typical ‘security dilemma’ somewhat stretches the definition; the very essence of the security dilemma is that a state does not know the intentions of another state, and therefore must assume the worst in order to be prepared for it, yet Hsiung's analysis focuses on reactions at the societal level to perceived slights from the other side (Hsiung, 2007, p. 16-17). While such reactions are unquestionably part of the wider process by which foreign policy is formed, the reaction described is more of an emotional response rather than the rational and calculated increase in one's relative power that the ‘security dilemma’ portrays. This should not, however, detract from his salient point that responses on either side are fed by, as well as contributing to, the perceived reaction of the other.

Shogo Suzuki argues that Sino-Japanese reconciliation can only be achieved by greater recognition of the “deeply embedded” emotions in China over Japan’s wartime atrocities, and a forthright apology from Japan, something which he perceives as much to be in Japan’s national interests as something that is morally required ([Suzuki, 2007](#_ENREF_144), p. 24). Suzuki does not discount the idea that emotions are exploited in China for political gain, but warns that scholarship too often focuses narrowly on nationalism in the Sino-Japanese relationship. For Caroline Rose ([2005](#_ENREF_117)) the failure to address mutual misperceptions of shared history lies at the root of what has come to be termed ‘the history issue’. It is this failure – for which elites on both sides of the dispute are culpable – that remains the biggest obstacle to reconciliation between China and Japan (Rose, 2005, p. 6). Similarly, Yinan He’s thorough examination of the legacy of the war in Sino-Japanese relations supports Rose’s premise that reconciliation has not been achieved because of missed opportunities to address historical misperceptions ([He, 2009](#_ENREF_48)). Through her development of “national mythmaking theory”, He identifies the 1970s as a golden – perhaps unique – opportunity to address the divergence of historiography between the two societies but opines that it was shunned in order to pursue the normalisation of diplomatic relations (He, 2009, p. 122). She agrees with others that the tensions of the 1980s came about because of the domestic exploitation, and reinterpretation, of the history issue by factions seeking to maximise their own interests ([Rose, 1998](#_ENREF_115); [Mitter, 2000](#_ENREF_97); [2003](#_ENREF_98); [Coble, 2007](#_ENREF_20)).

The reaction of China to Japanese actions with regard to the ‘history issue’ is frequently assessed as having more to do with domestic considerations than any actual feeling of injustice on the part of the Chinese leadership. Hidenori Ijiri declared that the outcry over then-Prime Minister Nakasone’s August 15th 1985[[28]](#footnote-28) visit to Yasukuni Shrine had much more to do with the growing imbalance and accompanying societal friction in China caused by the economic reforms than the controversial nature of the visit itself. Furthermore, that this was not clearly understood by Japan led to unnecessary backtracking over the issue, and a commitment not to return, which, in turn, laid the foundations for a structural pattern of Sino-Japanese interaction whereby the Chinese side always expected concessions over the ‘history issue’, and the Japanese felt compelled to provide them ([Ijiri, 1990](#_ENREF_62), p. 650-2). Such exploitation of history in the relationship by the Chinese was identified much earlier by Chalmers Johnson, though he considered the Japanese to be in much stronger control of their own response ([Johnson, 1986](#_ENREF_67), p. 403).

**2.2.2 Yasukuni Shrine and the ‘History Issue’**

This section will introduce some of the literature on Yasukuni Shrine, both in the West as well as in China. It begins with a brief outline of some of the work on the shrine itself, and the reasons for its apparently controversial nature, before going on to discuss the literature that already exists surrounding Koizumi’s patronage of it during his tenure.

Yasukuni Jinja, translated as ‘the shrine of the peaceful country’,[[29]](#footnote-29) has long been a site of controversy both inside and outside Japan. The most important Shinto shrine since its establishment almost 150 years ago, Yasukuni is believed to be the resting place for almost 2.5 million *kami*,“often inadequately translated as ‘gods’” ([Breen, 2007](#_ENREF_11), p. xv), of those who have died in the service of their country. Though it officially commemorates all those who have died since its foundation, it is inextricably tied to Japan’s imperialist wars, with over 2.1 million of those commemorated having died between 1941 and 1945 ([Fukatsu, 1986](#_ENREF_36), p. 21). Most significantly, the enshrinement of a number[[30]](#footnote-30) of Class A war criminals in 1978 has helped to invoke the belief among many, both in Japan and its neighbouring countries, that the shrine is a symbol of its failure to face up to its past. The adjacent and associated museum, the Yūshūkan, does much to reinforce this image, with exhibits that are often deemed to glorify Japan’s actions, and which tell a story few respectable historians would recognise.[[31]](#footnote-31) It is “an ambitious but deeply flawed attempt to rewrite history", and together with Yasukuni Shrine “indelibly embodies the nexus of imperial expansionism, militarism, and the cult of the emperor during the war years” ([Kingston, 2010](#_ENREF_72), p. 498).

Yasukuni’s role in Japanese nationalism is undoubtedly problematic, and numerous works have demonstrated its position in reconstructing a past in order to shape modern debates on patriotism and Japan’s place in the world ([Akaha, 2008](#_ENREF_2); [Sherif, 2007](#_ENREF_133)). However, even amid slightly hysterical claims that the “victor’s justice” of the ‘Tokyo Trials’ ([Minear, 2001](#_ENREF_96), p. 1),[[32]](#footnote-32) was based on a “hatred” of Japan ([Sakurai, 2005](#_ENREF_125), p. 1), the end of the Cold War has brought about a re-examination of history and historiography in East Asia ([Jager and Mitter, 2007](#_ENREF_63), p. 2). Carol Gluck has argued that this has resulted in a “transnational memory” beginning to supplant the memories of the war that had been formed almost entirely on an individual, nation-by-nation, basis ([Gluck, 2007](#_ENREF_40), p. 49). While this has not ended the contestation of history (and Gluck did not claim that it had), there is evidence that Japanese are more aware of their country’s history and, in particular, the negative impact of its imperialist foreign policy on its neighbours than is commonly assumed ([Gries et al., 2009](#_ENREF_43)), although the caving in of cinemas across Japan’s major cities to right wing pressure not to show a film by Chinese filmmaker Li Ying on Yasukuni’s controversial nature[[33]](#footnote-33) shows that a willingness to engage in this debate publicly is still lacking in large parts of society ([Moller, 2008](#_ENREF_102); [Li, 2008](#_ENREF_79)).

Yasukuni’s role in Japan’s international relations, particularly with China and South Korea, generates much interest and comment but has yet to be fully deconstructed, though it is clear that the shrine *itself* causes little commotion. It is the patronage of it, and the perceived concomitant veneration of the class A war criminals enshrined there, by prominent Japanese, in particular by serving prime ministers,[[34]](#footnote-34) that has been criticised so strongly both domestically and internationally. The political turmoil of Japan’s relations with China and South Korea during the Koizumi years is a particularly extreme example of this, but it is worth noting that between 1945 and 1985 there were 50 visits to Yasukuni by 12 serving prime ministers,[[35]](#footnote-35) yet it was not until the August 15th 1985 visit by Nakasone that particularly vociferous objections were raised at the official level by China ([Ryu, 2007](#_ENREF_124), p. 711). As previously noted, the visit was considered particularly controversial because of its declared official capacity and the opposition came not only from China. Correspondence to the *Asahi Shimbun*, a liberal Japanese newspaper, showed that opposition within Japan was also strong and its editor warned that it was merely one step in a wider campaign that had its eyes set on getting the emperor to visit Yasukuni, something that may ultimately have posed a threat to Japanese democracy itself ([Fukatsu, 1986](#_ENREF_36), p. 24).

The response in China was a mixture of official representations, media condemnation, and visible student protests, the like of which had not been seen in China for some time. Many commentators at the time speculated that the protests were either being instigated and exploited by the Chinese government in order to extract greater economic concessions from Japan, or were using the Japanese as a surrogate target in order to express dissatisfaction at their own government ([Ijiri, 1990](#_ENREF_62), p. 650-2). Allen Whiting questions these assessments, wondering why so few accepted that the students “acted spontaneously on the basis of genuine anti-Japanese sentiments”, and reports his own research as uncovering the “authenticity” of the students’ emotions ([Whiting, 1989](#_ENREF_163), p. 5 & 21). Other major analyses of the events of the early 1980s, including the apparent revision of Japanese history textbooks as well as the Yasukuni visit by Nakasone also conclude that the reaction of China can only be understood by considering the domestic situation. Caroline Rose’s analysis of the response to the textbook issue[[36]](#footnote-36) concluded that it was mainly driven by the internal politics of China, specifically a power struggle in the leadership and a desire to indicate a shift in its foreign policy stance away from ‘pro-Western’ to a more central position ([Rose, 1998](#_ENREF_115), p. 124-128). Rose also pointed out that a three week gap between the emergence of the story in Japan and the official response from China implied Allen Whiting’s conclusion that it was an “automatic response” was incorrect ([Whiting, 1989](#_ENREF_163), p. 41). Whiting himself acknowledged that China’s response did not accord with reality, but insisted that it could be ascribed primarily as a response to the provocations of the Japanese, although he also acknowledges a desire to promote national unity as a possible explanation ([Whiting, 1993](#_ENREF_164), p. 927). Whiting is right to identify that the correlation between public protests and media response to Japanese actions, noted by many, has never been empirically proved to have a causative link ([Whiting, 1989](#_ENREF_163), p. 42), though his conclusion that “the syndrome of stimulus and response that generates a loop of political interaction [is] beyond the control of top policymakers” hints at his own belief ([Whiting, 1989](#_ENREF_163), p. 65). Arif Dirlik has offered a slightly different take on these events, insisting that the Chinese government actually tried hard to contain the reaction to the textbook issue in 1982, claiming the revisionism was a short-term issue rather than one that went actually back to the 1960s ([Dirlik, 1991](#_ENREF_26), p. 40). For Dirlik, the response to Nakasone’s Yasukuni visit was also somewhat muted and accompanied by rapid declarations of “unprecedented” good relations between the two countries ([Dirlik, 1991](#_ENREF_26), p. 42). He concludes, somewhat unconvincingly, that it is possible for the history issue to fade with the coming of younger generations ([Dirlik, 1991](#_ENREF_26), p. 58), suggesting that the crux of the issue is really about what actually happened in the 1940s, rather than the symbolism with which it has been imbued and the complex ways in which the this now affects the present.

**2.2.3 Yasukuni Shrine and Koizumi**

Although there were two visits to Yasukuni by serving prime ministers between 1985 and 2001, most attention has been paid to the yearly trips made by Koizumi throughout his tenure from 2001 to 2006. Given the strength of the opposition both domestically and in China to his persistent visits, it is not surprising that Koizumi’s “maverick style” led some to believe he was being deliberately provocative as part of his tactic of using “theater politics” ([Masuyama, 2007](#_ENREF_92), p. 1007). This may be a just assessment of Koizumi’s primary motivation, but it somewhat simplifies the reasoning behind its success. Koizumi’s motivation has been widely debated, and assessments range from the hard end of symbolic international relations – that he viewed them as a deliberate message to the outside world that Japan could not be cowed ([Fulford, 2006](#_ENREF_37), p. 358-359) – to the unsophisticatedly charitable – that he is a “sentimentalist” who became determined to reinstate visits to Yasukuni after a trip to a kamikaze museum moved him to tears ([Tamamoto, 2001](#_ENREF_147), p. 35). Koizumi’s claim that his visits were to pray for those upon whose sacrifice Japan's current well-being had been built is dismissed by Fulford: "surely no 18-year-old, in 1945, crashed into an American destroyer in hopes of making the world a better place for Nissan" ([Fulford, 2006](#_ENREF_37), p. 360). However, better insight can be gained from Pye’s observation that Koizumi’s claim may be "historically and economically...completely false", for the war effort in which they died was catastrophic for Japan, but "within the primal religion of Japan...is easy to understand" ([Pye, 2003](#_ENREF_110), p. 54). Koizumi was, then, appealing to a feeling within Japan that it was right to pay homage to the dead, and in so doing was securing his own political capital in his other domestic battles, particularly his reform agenda ([Hiwatari, 2006](#_ENREF_51), p. 29). However, despite his repeated claims that his actions were personal rather than political, they were, in the context of Sino-Japanese relations, a “confrontational act” ([Hagstrom and Jerden, 2010](#_ENREF_46), p. 719). That this period coincided with a concerted drive towards normalising Japan’s overseas military involvement, albeit in a limited and non-combat capacity, and a shift in alignment towards the USA and away from East Asia only served to heighten suspicion among Japan’s neighbours ([Hughes and Krauss, 2007](#_ENREF_61), p. 158), as well as critics in Japan ([Takahashi, 2007](#_ENREF_146), p. 106).

One analysis of attitudes in Japan regarding Koizumi’s repeated shrine visits found that there was a very clear split among Japanese lawmakers along party lines, with LDP Diet-members significantly more likely to be in favour than non-LDP Diet-members ([Ryu, 2007](#_ENREF_124), p. 717). Similarly, members of the LDP were much less likely to be sympathetic to objections from either China or South Korea, and much more likely to view these objections as motivated by domestic nationalism ([Ryu, 2007](#_ENREF_124), p. 719). The study also considered the reaction in East Asia and concluded that the Chinese leadership was genuinely concerned with Japan demonstrating an appropriate attitude to history, and, although this does not preclude the possibility of domestic issues remaining a part of the equation, Ryu feels that Japan's failure to deal with the Yasukuni issue has become a hindrance to its foreign policy goals ([Ryu, 2007](#_ENREF_124), p. 725). Further support for the idea that the Yasukuni issue is peculiarly linked to the LDP is provided by another study, which considered the role of the so-called ‘rightist’ pressure groups,[[37]](#footnote-37) as well as those on the other side of the argument, including at the international level. It concludes that the right wing pressure groups that advocate prime ministerial and official visits to Yasukuni virtually "overlap" with the LDP, at least at the local level. "It is not going too far to say that the rightist pressure organizations are a part of the LDP" ([Shibuichi, 2005](#_ENREF_136), p. 201). In contrast to Nakasone, who was constrained by the Cold War international system, Koizumi’s refusal to bow to Chinese pressure is explained by the absence of a superpower threat, combined with a need to reinforce his domestic strength in order to force his reform agenda through. Shibuichi’s verdict on the objections of Koreans and Chinese is that the reaction is something over which they "have no choice" and which occurs "naturally" ([Shibuichi, 2005](#_ENREF_136), p. 199 & 213). This is a fairly common understanding among Chinese themselves, but one might question whether there can really be a "natural" reaction to something that is so deeply imbued with symbolism. Certainly Shibuichi does not make clear how this is so, though a cogent articulation of why Chinese might react the way they do is put forward by Seki Hei ([2007](#_ENREF_126)), who ascribes their inability to grasp the spiritual aspect of paying homage at Yasukuni to the materialistic Marxian nature of the modern day Chinese mentality.

Most retrospectives of the Koizumi-era assess his behaviour with regard to Yasukuni to be the particularly damaging to Japan’s relations in East Asia generally, and with China specifically ([Jiang, 2007](#_ENREF_65), [Park and Vogel, 2007](#_ENREF_108), [Yang, 2006](#_ENREF_173), [Rose, 2008](#_ENREF_119)). One linguistic analysis of the apology he issued during the Asia-Africa Summit in 2005 noted that it was the first Japanese apology to be issued in front of an audience of other heads of government, risking a “potential huge face loss”, but qualified this by observing the perceived discord between words and deeds ([Mok and Tokunaga, 2009](#_ENREF_101), p. 83). A recent comparison of Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni and the decision of Abe Shinzō, his successor, not to visit Yasukuni as prime minister during his first spell in office,[[38]](#footnote-38) also identified Koizumi’s domestic political legitimacy as of primary importance ([Cheung, 2010](#_ENREF_18), p. 529). The author argues that previous explanations of his behaviour have been guilty of placing too much emphasis on the personal choice of the leadership, ‘social-ideological’ factors (by which he means the perceived rise of conservative nationalism in Japan), or realpolitik considerations. Cheung elects to employ what he calls the “political survival” approach, which takes as it primary assumption that the base instinct of political leaders is to preserve their own position (Cheung, 2010, p. 533). Cheung may have a point about the overemphasis that has been placed on certain factors in other attempts to analyse Koizumi’s actions, but his attempt to prove his own theory raises questions about his own approach in doing so. He explains Abe’s ambiguous stance over Yasukuni (which was used to thinly disguise the fact that he had privately told China he would not go as prime minister) as seeking to gain domestic political legitimacy; in other words, for all the same reasons that Koizumi visited the shrine, Abe did not (Cheung, 2010, p. 539). Cheung also fails to address the fairly obvious effect of overt Chinese pressure on Abe’s decision, despite alluding to the rewards gained in terms of reconciliatory gestures from China in having agreed to refrain from going to Yasukuni.

Yew Meng Lai conducted a recent examination of Sino-Japanese relations using similar case studies to those explored in this thesis. Specifically he focussed on Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine and also the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute, though he employed a neoclassical realist framework and also sought to understand Japan’s actions rather than China’s reactions as this thesis does. Lai sought to explain each of Koizumi’s six visits to the shrine during his tenure through examining domestic political conditions in Japan at the time, concluding that he manipulated the “symbolic and political values of Yasukuni to his political advantage, to advance his policy agendas” (Lai, 2013, p. 134). This agenda was, according to Lai, dominated by a drive to reinstate Japan as a “normal” state, with the right and ability to build, maintain and deploy its own military power (Lai, 2013, p. 134).

**2.3 The Academic Debate in China**

This section will give an overview of some of the key strands of the academic debate in China over Sino-Japanese relations in general, as well as the Yasukuni Shrine issue specifically.[[39]](#footnote-39) It focuses on work produced by some of the most prominent academics working in the most prestigious universities and influential think tanks in China. While this naturally limits the amount of work covered, this is a necessity given the sheer quantity of academic output in China.[[40]](#footnote-40) It is important to note that Chinese academia is subject to censorship. This clearly takes the form of state-led agency enforced censorship and almost certainly also includes somewhat more subtle forms of self-censorship by which academics instinctively know the boundaries within which they must operate to avoid their work coming under too much scrutiny (Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007, p. 98-99).[[41]](#footnote-41) In addition, many of the academic journals are produced by individual universities or colleges, many of which have a very low standard of academic rigour. Consequently, this review takes into consideration only those journals that are classed as “core journals” on the CAJ database. “Core journals” (*hexin qikan*) are those that are included on the list maintained by Peking University. Even with these parameters, the review cannot be exhaustive and fully comprehensive, but is intended to present a relevant selection of the academic output in China with regard to Sino-Japanese relations.

**2.3.1 Chinese Academic Works on Sino-Japanese Relations**

There is no doubt that within the field of IR in China, two key relationships dominate academic publications: Sino-US relations; and Sino-Japanese relations. That is not to suggest that other aspects of the field are ignored, but these two relationships receive the most attention. For example, searches conducted within the core journals of the CAJ database since 1990 for “Sino-US relations” (*ZhongMei guanxi*) and “Sino-Japanese relations” (*ZhongRi guanxi*) return 3,006 articles and 1,713 articles respectively. These compare with 537 for “Sino-Russian relations” (*Zhong’E guanxi*), 346 for “Sino-European relations” (*Zhong’Ou guanxi*), and exactly 100 for “Sino-South Korean relations” (*ZhongHan guanxi*).[[42]](#footnote-42) A brief analysis of the personnel working in significant academic research institutions also reveals the level of importance placed on Sino-Japanese relations. In a recent in-depth analysis of the importance of Chinese foreign policy think tanks on Chinese foreign policy making, Pascal Abb identified several key institutions, including: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS); China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR); China Institute of International Studies (CIIS); Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS); Shanghai Academy for Social Sciences (SASS) (Abb, 2013, p. 10).[[43]](#footnote-43) Within CASS, there are seven institutes dealing with international affairs, only two of which are devoted to a specific country rather than a region: the Institute for American Studies and the Institute for Japanese Studies.[[44]](#footnote-44) CICR also has institutes devoted to the US and Japan, as well as one for Russia. CIIS, SIIS and SASS do not have institutes or research centres focussed on specific countries, but within the respective organisations those researchers working on Sino-Japanese relations significantly outnumber those working on any other relationship except for Sino-US relations.

Although the subject of Sino-Japanese relations attracts a great deal of attention from academic work, much of what is published follows a formulaic approach designed to satisfy the accepted political line of the moment. Some Chinese analyses seem to suggest that the mere existence of mutual interests guarantees an improved relationship ([Xu, 2002](#_ENREF_170), [Jiang, 2002](#_ENREF_64)), while many offer suggestions of ways in which the relationship could be improved – almost invariably these suggestions involve a ‘correction’ of attitude or action on Japan’s part, and this was particularly so in the wake of Koizumi’s premiership ([Sun, 2008](#_ENREF_143), [Jin, 2005](#_ENREF_66)a). It is not uncommon to find articles that merely outline some of the issues facing the bilateral relationship and conclude with a prediction of improved ties, usually with the added proviso that Japan adopts the ‘correct’ attitude toward history (for example [Zhang, 2004](#_ENREF_175), [2010](#_ENREF_176), [Lu and Zhong, 2009](#_ENREF_84)).

The Sino-Japanese rift of the early 2000s generated much discussion, and was identified as the point when China and Japan needed to “redefine the foundation” of the relationship ([Zhu, 2006](#_ENREF_185)). Lu Zhongwei, of CICIR, offered what he described as “constructive” suggestions to improve the bilateral relationship ([Lu, 2004](#_ENREF_86)). It is clear from his initial outline where he feels the blame lies for the deterioration in ties that occurred in the early 2000s, highlighting Japan’s “wrong” historical views, its “active communication” with Taiwan, and its creation of friction with China over energy and resources. Lu’s suggestions for ways in which ties might be improved are almost exclusively actions to be taken by Japan, particularly with regard to its foreign policy and its attitude towards China’s rising power in the region – something it should simply “accept” – though he also advocates improved Chinese scholarship on Japan. China’s “rise” is a theme that runs through recent Chinese literature on Sino-Japanese relations ([Zhu, 2006](#_ENREF_185), p. 35), and Ma Junwei identifies it as key to the strategy pursued by Japan, in cohort with the US, to “contain” China ([Ma, 2006](#_ENREF_87), p. 31). Ma characterises China and Japan as “two tigers competing for regional leadership” and also notes the role of nationalism on both sides in negatively affecting relations.

Hu Jiping offers an insight into the issue of reconciliation, and opines that the root of the failure of this process lies in the lack of apology from Japan for its past aggression, and the continued lack of acceptance in some areas of Japanese society over the morality of Japan’s actions ([Hu, 2006](#_ENREF_56)). While Hu’s analysis of the wording used in the 1972 normalisation treaty makes a serious point, particularly about the lack of a formal apology, his depiction of Japanese people as unable to differentiate between “just” and “unjust” wars in the way that Chinese people can reveals some of his own prejudices (Hu, 2006, p. 38).

The controversial nature of the debate on China’s Japan policy is illustrated by the furore that erupted over an article written by Ma Licheng, in which he lambasted the attitude of many Chinese nationalists towards Japan and called for the ‘history issue’ to be considered closed ([Ma, 2002](#_ENREF_88)). Ma’s article met with strong academic criticism ([Bai, 2003](#_ENREF_6), [Feng, 2003](#_ENREF_33)) as well as in an internet campaign that included death threats and culminated in his early retirement and a move to Hong Kong ([Gries, 2005a](#_ENREF_41), p. 839). Despite this opposition, Ma’s views did have some support, most notably from Shi Yinhong, whose writing on Japan is characterised by his relatively conciliatory tone. Writing in the same journal as Ma in the aftermath of the controversy Shi specifically advocated greater rapprochement with Japan and praised Ma’s bravery ([Shi, 2003](#_ENREF_134)a, p. 72) and later called for the governments on both sides to prevent popular feeling from colouring the bilateral relationship ([Shi, 2006](#_ENREF_135), p. 39).

It has been suggested for peaceful coexistence between the two states to be a real possibility, the development of a “multi-polar era” (*duojihua shidai*) is necessary (Jiang, 2007, p. 5). Jiang argues that adhering to the Sino-Japanese Joint Statement of 1972 and the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978 will help to develop trust on both sides (Jiang, 2007, p. 6). The history issue was settled by these agreements but “unfortunately, since the 1980s, national conservatism is becoming the mainstream of Japanese politics” (*yihan de shi, 20 shijie 80 niandai yihou, minzu baoshou zhuyi rijian chengwei Riben zhengzhi de zhuliu*) (Jiang, 2007, p. 7). Jin Xide[[45]](#footnote-45) suggested that to improve Sino-Japanese relations will necessarily involve better non-governmental interaction, which is a relatively uncontroversial point, but Jin makes clear that this would be in order to “isolate the right wing” (*guli youyi*) in Japan (Jin, 2006, p. 38), showing again that the Chinese academic view of the problems in Sino-Japanese relations is that they stem from within Japan. Jin lays the blame firmly at the door of Japan, though emphasises the fault of the “right wing” rather than the majority of Japanese, showing that even a relatively balanced view of the relationship from within Chinese academia can revert to the standard formula of highlighting a small minority as the source of the problems in the bilateral relationship (Jin, 2006, p. 37-38).

Jin later identified the post-Cold War period as the fourth “repositioning period” (*chongxin dingwei shiqi*)of Sino-Japanese relations (Jin, 2007, p. 13). The other three periods relate to the First Sino-Japanese War, post-Second World War and the normalisation of Sino-Japanese relations. He also sets three targets: to abide by the agreements of the 1970s,[[46]](#footnote-46) which is the “lowest target” (*zuidi mubiao*); to build on these agreements and develop better institutional processes to deal with bilateral tensions, which is the “medium-term target” (*zhongqi mubiao*); and to build on these institutions in order to achieve reconciliation and promote regional security and economic growth, which is the “highest target” (*zuigao mubiao*) (Jin, 2007, p. 15-16). This work suggests a great importance on the adherence to the joint statements and treaties between the two countries, and Jin later emphasised the potential impact the leadership of Japan can have on the course of Sino-Japanese relations. He argued that the relationship showed steady improvement after Koizumi left, particularly once Fukuda took office (Jin, 2008, p. 39). A similar tone was taken by Jiang Lifeng, who declared that Koizumi was “not worth negotiating with” (*yi buzu yu mou*) but retained hope that future leaders would be able to repair the bilateral relationship once Koizumi was gone (Jiang, 2005, p.4).

In an article discussing the impending election of Abe Shinzō as Koizumi’s successor, Liu Jiangyong specifically warned that a continuance of the practice of visiting the shrine would lead to “cold politics, cool economics” (*zhengleng, jingliang*) (Liu, 2006, p. 12). Liu considered that Abe’s treatment of the Taiwan issue, coupled with his decision on whether or not to visit the shrine, would determine the course of Sino-Japanese relations during his tenure (Liu, 2006, p.12).

Academic works on Sino-Japanese relations are virtually entirely non-critical of the Chinese government, and sometimes take a slightly sycophantic tone. Liu Jiangyong’s appraisal of the domestic background for China’s Japan policy cited the response of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao to the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011 as evidence that the policy is always grounded in building “friendship” (*youhao*) between the two countries, even as he claimed that “the true foundation of Sino-Japanese friendship lies in the people” (*ZhongRi youhao de zhenzheng jichu zaiyu minxin*) (Liu, 2012, p. 4). In another work Liu claimed that the improvement of Sino-Japanese ties would be driven by the people of both countries, but suggested that political visits, such as Hu Jintao’s to Japan in 2008, would be the catalyst (Liu, 2008, p. 53). Liu typifies Chinese works on the relationship by grouping together the issues over history to include Taiwan and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, with the clear implication that it is Japan’s failure to address these problems that is at the root of Sino-Japanese tension when it arises (Liu, 2012, p. 5-7). Liu’s assertion that “China’s patriotic education and Sino-Japanese friendship are not contradictory” (*Zhongguo de aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu yu ZhongRi youhou bing bu maodun*) remains unsupported by any real evidence (Liu, 2012, p. 8-9).

There is a tendency among Chinese academic work to focus on prospects for future relations rather than to analyse events or trends that have already occurred.[[47]](#footnote-47) For example, Pang Zhongying posited during Koizumi’s tenure Sino-Japanese relations were “at a crossroads” (*zhan zai yige shizi lukou*) with opportunities for greater cooperation, but risks of confrontation (Pang, 2003, p. 14). Pang’s recommendations for ensuring that the relationship follows the former rather than the latter are typically formulaic and abstract, including achieving “reconciliation, understanding, and mutual respect” (*hejie, lijie yu hujing*) (Pang, 2003, p. 15). Such abstract suggestions are fairly common (Wang, 2003, p. 9).[[48]](#footnote-48) One of the rare exceptions to this tendency to recommend abstract solutions to the problems of Sino-Japanese relations argued that a concrete way of improving mutual trust and cooperation would be to enhance exchanges between the militaries of the two countries (Yu, 2008, p. 31-32).

The role of the US in assessments of Japan’s relevance to international relations is something commonly identified by Chinese academics as much as it is in Western work. Japan is sometimes presented as little more than a tool of US hegemony (Pang, 2002, p. 48-9). Pang warns that China must not allow Sino-Japanese conflict to aid the US’ cause (Pang, 2002, p. 51). More sophisticated analysis suggests that the US presence in the region is part of a beneficial structure – of which Sino-Japanese relations plays an important part – through which stability in East Asia is ensured (Yan, 2004, p. 13).

Shi Yinhong, one of China’s most well known IR specialists, issued a warning during Koizumi’s tenure that the tensions in Sino-Japanese relations were a risk to China’s interests (Shi, 2003b, p. 10). Shi’s writing is notable for the emphasis that it places on China’s own actions in dealing with the particularly problematic aspects of Sino-Japanese relations, arguing that China should “not forget history, but should also not get stuck in history” (*yinggai ji bu lishi, ye bu tingliu yu lishi*) in order to address matters of strategic importance in the bilateral relationship (Shi, 2003b, p. 10). Nevertheless, even Shi warns that such pragmatism in the relationship should be conditional on Japan not reneging on its previous statements of war responsibility (Shi, 2003b, p.11).

**2.3.2 Chinese Academic Works on Yasukuni Shrine**

The controversy over Koizumi’s visits at the beginning of the century led to a plethora of academic articles on the issue in China. Unsurprisingly, these were overwhelmingly negative in tone. Some focussed on the apparently unique nature of Japanese culture, and the position within it of Shinto in general and Yasukuni in particular, though this was not offered as an excuse for Japan’s inappropriate actions. In particular, the idea that Japanese culture has a unique conceptualisation of death that thereby justifies the veneration of souls of even war criminals is rejected out of hand by some Chinese Japan specialists ([Ma, 2005](#_ENREF_89), p. 39). Others use the very idea that Japan’s culture is unique to support claims that Shinto is merely a justification for neo-nationalism ([Wu & Zhang, 2004](#_ENREF_167)). However, others offer a deeper and more sophisticated analysis. For example, Liu Jiangyong uses Shinto’s own traditions in order to attack the existence of Yasukuni ([Liu, 2005](#_ENREF_82)). Liu argues that, under Shinto beliefs, not only the souls of those who died in the name of Japan need to be venerated; the souls of those who were killed by Japanese soldiers, both in Japan and further afield, also need to be pacified. That this clearly does not happen is, according to Liu, a violation of the very belief system that the Japanese “right wing” considers to underpin the right of Japanese to worship at Yasukuni and reveals the true motivation of such activities lies in the denial of guilt and the promotion of a nationalist ideology (Liu, 2005, p. 62). Liu’s thesis supports Bu Ping’s description of Yasukuni as the “spiritual shackle” of the Japanese people, allowing those who deny Japanese war responsibility a central position in Japanese nationalism ([Bu, 2001](#_ENREF_12), p. 163). For Bu, “ordinary Japanese” who visit and worship at Yasukuni are not individually to blame for the propagation of an ideology that denies Japan’s wartime atrocities, for they seek only to venerate the souls of their loved ones, but their desire to do so is symptomatic of its success nonetheless. Japan, then, will never be free of its militaristic past while Yasukuni continues to play such a central role in Japanese national identity.

Within Chinese academic literature, in specific regard to Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni, there is little sympathy for his stance. He is derided as a “puppet” of Nakasone ([Wu & Zhang, 2004](#_ENREF_167), p. 72) and his actions are critiqued as illogically justifying Japan’s aggressive wars, despite his own words denying this ([Xu, 2003](#_ENREF_169), p. 28). That he used his visits to bolster his own political capital in Japan is widely understood in China among academics ([Gao, 2006](#_ENREF_38), p. 21-2), and there was little optimism that Chinese pressure could have an effect on his decision ([Lu, 2005](#_ENREF_85), p. 57; [Zhai, 2004](#_ENREF_174), p. 26), even among those who continued to call for an end to them ([Kou & Wei, 2004](#_ENREF_74), p. 21).

Although it was a term that was frequently used to describe Sino-Japanese relations during Koizumi’s tenure, the phenomenon of “cold politics, hot economics” has been identified as beginning in the 1990s (Jin, 2004, p. 8). Jin argues that there can be different levels of “cold politics” noting that the most extreme is when two states are at war (Jin, 2004, p. 11-12). Though it is presented here as a form of political theory, it is only applied to Sino-Japanese relations, which seems to suggest that it is a phenomenon unique to that particular relationship. Jin states elsewhere that Koizumi was not responsible for the origins of the phenomenon, but was guilty of exacerbating it, particularly through his visits to Yasukuni Shrine (Jin, 2005b, p. 40). For Jin, Koizumi and other Japanese politicians visiting the shrine became the “major obstacle to the development of Sino-Japanese relations” *(fazhan ZhongRi guanxi de zhuyao zhang’ai*) (Jin, 2006, p. 37).

Retrospectives of the issue in Sino-Japanese relations appear to suggest that the interaction between the two countries over the issue has had a lasting impact. Liu Jiangyong explicitly attributed the cessation of Japanese prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine to China’s refusal to allow rightists to interfere with Sino-Japanese relations (Liu, 2012, p. 4). Tian Ye uses a constructivist IR approach to analyse the mutual perceptions of Chinese and Japanese people and noted that the Yasukuni Shrine issue strengthened mutually negative feelings on both sides (Tian, 2007, p. 29). Thus, in terms of both future political actions of Japanese leaders, and mutual perceptions within the respective publics’ opinions, Koizumi’s actions have been seen to have had an ongoing effect on the bilateral relationship.

A link is also drawn between Koizumi’s drive to normalise Japan in the international system – that is to say his willingness to involve the SDF in military actions overseas, particularly in cooperation with the US – and the Yasukuni visits ([Xu, 2003](#_ENREF_169), p. 24; [Chen, 2006](#_ENREF_17), p. 56). However this is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand his worship at Yasukuni is presented as an attempt to deny Japan’s past aggression in order to gain respectability in the international community; on the other, it is also presented as being the cause of continued, and increasing, mistrust of a Japan that has still not come to terms with its own history, and which will not be allowed to play a full role in the international system until it does so. Such a contradiction may be academically unsatisfactory, but it fits well with the acceptable political line of the time in China.

**2.4 The Literature Review and the Role of this Thesis**

The review of relevant literature was divided into four broad categories: political legitimacy and foreign policy-making in China; the nature of the bilateral relationship between China and Japan; Yasukuni Shrine’s controversial position in Japan and its relations with East Asia; and the academic debate in China. Much of the literature, however, spans more than one of these areas, with some touching on all four. In order to more clearly indicate the areas to which this study is intended to contribute, five themes that cross these original categories can be identified: reconciliation; nationalism; Yasukuni Shrine itself; Koizumi’s tenure as prime minister; and the theorisation of Sino-Japanese Relations. The following section will expand on these themes, before outlining the gaps within them that this project is anticipated to address.

There is no doubt that the issue of history in the relationship between China and Japan has been widely discussed, both in Western academic writing as well as in the respective countries, and the failure of China and Japan to reconcile their relationship in the wake of the events of the 1930s and 1940s is well-documented. The debate over reconciliation continues, but has been dissected well by those that have tackled the subject. A broad consensus on the failure of the two countries to come to an agreed historiography as being the root cause of contemporary friction between the two societies has been reached, though it would be wrong to say that a similar consensus exists on exactly how that schism should now be addressed. While Yinan He’s attempt to put the process of reconciliation into the context of IR theory was a welcome start, better understanding of this from an IR perspective is clearly needed, in particular in assessing the impact of continued feelings of historical injustice upon contemporary political interaction.

The nationalisms of both China and Japan have also attracted much interest. The role of what is usually referred to as the “right” in Japanese nationalism, and its refusal to accept versions of history that are unfavourable to Japan’s role, is widely acknowledged. The proliferation of Western academic writings on Chinese nationalism in recent years reflects, a perhaps understandable, preoccupation with the nature of the state many consider to be the next superpower. This has obvious implications for those concerned with Western, and particularly American, politics generally, as well as with specific regard to the relationship with China itself; a concern that an increasingly nationalistic China will ergo become increasingly uncooperative, even belligerent, underpins much of what is written. Similarly, the preoccupation with the political system of China is evident. In most writing on China’s political system there is an underlying assumption (frequently it is not even underlying) that the continued survival of an undemocratic system needs some kind of explanation, as it represents something unusual and unexpected. The position of modern nationalism in this explanation is an equally common occurrence, as virtually every explanation of the longevity of the CCP as a ruling institution in China at least partly credits the use of nationalism in its legitimation.

Yasukuni Shrine itself has attracted only limited attention in Western academic writing, and much of the focus has been on the controversy within Japan. The few exceptions have offered a good basis for exploring this issue within the context of the bilateral relationship between China and Japan, and the verdict that China’s response cannot be viewed as something ‘natural’, or automatic, is a useful starting point for finding out in greater detail what caused the responses that have emerged. The lack of work on this area has allowed the assumption that Yasukuni has an ‘innate’ ability to invoke a preordained reaction from China and the Chinese to prevail, despite the previously-noted lack of response to earlier prime ministerial visits, particularly prior to Nakasone’s August 15th 1985 visit. The entirety of the Chinese response needs better deconstructing in order to determine how, why and by whom it is conceived. The question of whether the government’s expressions of anger and resentment towards Japan were a result, or a cause, of the public expressions that were observed may be a bit of a ‘chicken and egg’ question, but deserves to be asked nonetheless. It seems likely that both serve to influence each other, but to what extent this is true is simply not known, and the implications for China’s foreign policy – and, therefore, for its relationship with Japan, as well as other major powers – are not clear.

Koizumi’s period in office was exceptional, both in terms of its length[[49]](#footnote-49) as well as in terms of his impact on Japan’s international image and external relations. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the context of relations with China. The ‘Koizumi factor’, as with Yasukuni Shrine itself, has been predominantly explored in terms of his behaviour’s impact on Japan itself, particularly with regard to the process of its normalisation as a state with war-faring powers and, on the domestic level, his often-controversial economic reforms. While it is widely acknowledged that the impact of his premiership on Japan’s relations with its neighbouring states, especially China and South Korea, was particularly negative at the political level, it is not well understood if this period of time affected the structure of China’s Japan policy as a whole. The tone in China of academic work, newspaper and other media reports, as well as comments on the internet certainly suggests that Koizumi’s image is negative at the popular level. However, how his actions affected the perception of him, and the way that perception fed into the response of China to his Yasukuni visits, has not been explained or deconstructed. In summary, while Koizumi’s actions are widely (and correctly) assumed to have damaged Japan’s political relationship with China in the short term, certainly at the highest level of diplomatic contact, the reasons for this, and the process behind it, have not been explored in any great detail.

The study of Sino-Japanese relations has suffered from a dearth of material that places it in within the context of IR theory. The development of theories of Sino-Japanese relations that take into account relevant geographical, cultural, and historical factors, but which are grounded in IR philosophy is needed to advance both research into the specific conditions of the relationship itself, as well as the wider interests of the academic understanding of IR in general. While patterns of interaction between the two states within the international system have been noted and analysed in many fields, this has not been taken to the next level of theoretical development. A theory of Sino-Japanese relations is, therefore, lacking. In order that this is achieved, the patterns of recurring themes that are prevalent in Sino-Japanese relations need to be noted, examined, and explained and it is in this that the relevance of China’s reaction to Koizumi’s Yasukuni Shrine visits lies, and where the contribution of this project to a greater academic quest fits.

**2.4.1 Identifying the Gaps in the Literature**

From within these recurring themes, it is possible to outline the gap in the literature that this study aims to fill, and how it intends to do this. By identifying patterns and processes within the interaction that forms the bilateral relationship, the foundation of a theory – or theories – of Sino-Japanese relations within the context of IR as an academic subject can be constructed. These patterns are to be found in: an exploration of the significance of Yasukuni Shrine in China; an investigation into the responses of China, both at the political and societal levels, to what are *ostensibly* perceived as historically-rooted slights from Japan; and a review of the impact of Koizumi’s period in office on the bilateral relationship. This will be elaborated upon in the remainder of this section.

The position within China of Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of Japan’s lack of repentance over its aggression has not been clearly identified. Though it is widely considered to be a source of irritation, offence, and outrage among the masses as well as the political elite, how it came to be so – or if this is actually an accurate reflection of Chinese perceptions – is not well understood. If the Chinese reaction is not preordained or automatic, it seems equally inaccurate to consider it entirely synthetic and the somewhat unsatisfactory conclusion is, therefore, to consider it to be somewhere between the two: involving both innate feelings of resentment over Japan’s perceived unrepentant attitude towards its aggression in China, combined with manipulation by structurally powerful actors within China. In order that this assessment not be considered a fudge, it is necessary to consider to what extent each of these factors contributes to China’s reaction, and to describe how the two interact. This has, as yet, not been satisfactorily achieved.

The second gap to be addressed is closely related to the first. An analysis of the *ostensibly[[50]](#footnote-50)* perceived historical slights by Japan in the years 2001-2006 gives us the opportunity to expose exactly how the various reactions from within China were formed during that period of time. Such reactions will include significant sections of the media, academia, as well as government advisors and direct consideration of feelings at the popular level. Deconstruction of these responses will help to shed some light on the complex processes of interaction between the elite and popular levels that are often assumed to form the basis of China’s reaction to Japan’s actions in this field. To understand Chinese foreign policy generally, and its Japan policy specifically, it is first necessary to understand what, and who, is driving its direction and determining its tone. Understanding China’s various reactions – and their interactions – during this period will assist greatly in this quest and provide a much sounder foundation for interpreting Chinese foreign policy actions and proclamations.

The third area is a retrospective assessment of Koizumi’s impact on China’s perception of the relationship with Japan. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, the issue of prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine has remained pertinent to Sino-Japanese relations, evidenced by the visit made by Abe Shinzō in December 2013.[[51]](#footnote-51) Secondly, Koizumi’s tenure represents a significant period of time, during which the relationship was a key foreign policy issue for both Japan and China. It would, therefore, be of real benefit to have a greater deconstruction of the processes in China by which Koizumi’s shrine visits were interpreted, presented, and contested within the overall development of China’s Japan policy. A retrospective assessment of this period will help to reveal if the structures of the Sino-Japanese relationship have altered during this time. An assessment of Sino-Japanese relations during Koizumi’s period in office, through the prism of the Yasukuni visits, adds greatly to the overall understanding of how his tactics impacted on the relationship from the Chinese point of view.

**2.4.2 The Academic Contribution of the Study**

The three areas of investigation outlined above are closely interlinked, and together they form the basis of the area to which this project is intended to contribute: the development of an IR-grounded theory of Sino-Japanese relations. The identification of patterns and process within the bilateral relationship is the foundation of empirical observation which can be developed into a theoretical interpretation of the relationship. By placing the findings of this study into the context of previous studies of a similar theme, it ought to be possible to outline longer range patterns of interaction between China and Japan. From such an observation, the structural constraints of the relationship itself could be traced, and an IR-rooted theory of Sino-Japanese relations should emerge. While it would be overly optimistic to suggest that a limited study such as this can produce a theory to explain the relationship in its entirety (it is questionable if such a theory is attainable in any aspect of IR), the focus on such a salient area of Sino-Japanese relations, combined with its aforementioned contextualisation, will offer an opportunity to produce a more detailed hypothesis in the IR tradition than has yet been achieved.

Caroline Rose’s argument that the Yasukuni problem during the Koizumi-era was a domestic issue in both Japan and China, as well as a bilateral consideration sheds light on why this is such a complex matter ([Rose, 2007](#_ENREF_118)). If she is correct that it can serve as a legitimating factor in *both* countries whilst simultaneously damaging bilateral ties (Rose, 2007, p. 25), then it is important to achieve a better understanding of how this happens (or is made to happen). As she correctly points out, many issues in Sino-Japanese relations are cyclical and, at least on the Chinese side, there is an expectation that the issue will return to prominence at some stage. Her conclusion that nothing beyond a stalemate at the bilateral level is foreseeable (Rose, 2007, p. 46) will surely come to pass if the issue is not deconstructed further.

There is no doubt that Japan’s relations with its neighbours deteriorated significantly during Koizumi’s period in office and that, ostensibly, the Yasukuni issue played a significant role in this phenomenon ([Moon and Li, 2010](#_ENREF_103), p. 332). Calls for Japan to simply “reflect” on its history ([Lee, 2007](#_ENREF_138), p. 248) may be understandable, but do not offer any deep understanding of the process, particularly with regard to the reaction in China, which has simply not been explored in any real detail. If it is correct to assert that the popular reaction of the Chinese was provoked, or reinforced, by the government ([Heazle and Knight, 2007](#_ENREF_50), p. 4), then more evidence of causation needs to be presented. Even though Lam Peng-Er was right that post-Koizumi Sino-Japanese relations would be enhanced simply by the absence of the main *provocateur* ([Lam, 2005](#_ENREF_76), p. 275-6), a better comprehension of why China – and the Chinese – responded as they did is needed. As Franziska Seraphim has cogently argued:

The fact that Japan's historical injustices are still hotly debated today speaks less to the severity of the atrocities or "silences" of some abstract "Japanese" memory, and more to the complex process by which the past is absorbed into the ever-changing present as experienced by people themselves - on all sides of the spectrum and beyond Japan as well.  
(Seraphim, 2008, p. 323).

With this in mind, the aim of this study is not to establish the 'truth' about Yasukuni, or pass judgement on Koizumi's visits to the shrine; that would be entirely subjective and not particularly useful in any academic sense. What is needed is an exploration of the role of the shrine – or, more specifically, the visits to it by a Japanese prime minister – in the wider process of Chinese foreign policy making.

The following chapter will explore the theoretical underpinnings of this project, outlining a constructivist IR approach that is informed by Anthony Giddens’ sociological approach of *structuration* theory. It will also outline the methodological tools employed in the research process in order to exploit this approach. The rest of the thesis takes that perspective and assesses the exploration of the Yasukuni Shrine issue through its lens. In so doing, it posits a suggestion of how Sino-Japanese interaction in this field can be understood, particularly with regard to China’s reaction to Japanese ‘provocations’. In this way, the thesis offers the foundations of a theoretical formulation of China’s relationship with Japan that seeks to deal with the relationship holistically, but in the context of an academic study in the field of IR. The findings are then tested by applying the resultant framework to another important issue in the bilateral relationship that also frequently sees outbreaks of heightened tensions: the dispute of the Dioayu/Senkaku islands. Specifically, it takes the *structuration* framework that emphasises multiple structural and normative determinants in combination with the agency of states as entities within those structures and shows that China pursues a policy of strategic norm development in its relationship with Japan to further its own key national interests at both the domestic and international levels.

**3. Towards an IR-grounded Theory of Sino-Japanese Relations**

The theoretical aspect of this project is not intended to break completely new ground in terms of IR theory. That is to say that it is not aiming to produce a new ‘meta-theory’ of IR to rival the traditionally influential schools of thought that predominate. It is not, however, lacking in ambition in respect of the theoretical development it aims to pursue. Rather, this study should be viewed as contributing to the school of constructivism, in the ongoing quest for greater coherence as an approach to the study of IR and of foreign policy, by developing a constructivist-inspired framework of analysis for Sino-Japanese relations. Furthermore, it is unashamedly region-specific in this aim in drawing on the epistemological foundations of constructivist thought in combination with the peculiarities of China and the Sino-Japanese relationship. It is, then, neither an entirely narrow attempt to discuss the Sino-Japanese relationship, nor a meta-theoretical project of grandeur. It uses constructivist ideas and methodological aids in order to posit a hypothesis of the Sino-Japanese relationship which, both within this study and over a longer period of time, can be tested and adjusted to bring about a more coherent theory of the relationship. While contributing most significantly to the study of the particular relationship between China and Japan, it also seeks to add weight to the overall argument for a constructivist-driven epistemology in the wider study of IR. This section will lay out the foundations of that theoretical approach. It does so by first discussing the two biggest schools of thought in the discipline of IR – realism and liberalism – and outlining the inadequacies of these two approaches to the analysis of the Sino-Japanese relationship. It then goes on to discuss the development of constructivism in IR, from its roots in the intellectual challenge laid down to IR theorists by critical theory and postmodernism, highlighting its emergence out of the frustration felt over the sterility of the debate between neo-realism and neo-liberalism. It will then elaborate on the benefits of a constructivist approach for the project being undertaken, before outlining a hypothesis of the intended, resultant, theory of Sino-Japanese relations. The final section gives details of the methodology that is intended to be used, showing how the hypothesis will be tested by drawing on both qualitative and quantitative analysis of written sources in combination with private interviews in order that the hypothesised theory either be disproved, or gain a level of credence that might allow it to form the basis of predictive theory that can be tested further over a greater length of time.

**3.1 Realism and Liberalism**

Since its inception as a formal academic discipline in 1918, the theoretical side of IR has been dominated by two schools of thought: realism and liberalism.[[52]](#footnote-52) The two schools can be said to differ fundamentally in their view of the workings of the international system, though in recent years they have been characterised as ontologically closer to each other than early adherents would, perhaps, have cared to admit ([Cox, 1981](#_ENREF_21), p. 130). Born out of a desire to find a way of preventing a repetition of the events of World War One, but rooted in the centuries-old European philosophical tradition of liberal thought ([Kant, 1991](#_ENREF_68), [Rousseau, 1968](#_ENREF_120), [Mill, 1982](#_ENREF_95)), liberalism focussed on the ability of states to accept the possibility of mutual interests, hoping to demonstrate that the seemingly perpetual state of conflict in the international system was neither natural nor inescapable ([Zimmern, 1936](#_ENREF_186)). Liberals viewed international relations from a state-centric perspective, but allowed for these states to find common ground that would enable them to cooperate for mutual gain that would, in turn, increase the costs of military conflict to a prohibitive level ([Angell, 1910](#_ENREF_3), p. 30-34). This school of thought recognised that the international system was an anarchical one, and that such a condition brought inherent difficulties in managing state-to-state interaction without a higher authority to enforce agreements. In order to counter this, liberalism focussed on the importance of institutionalisation. That is to say that liberals opined the uncertainty of the anarchical system could be mitigated by introducing formal institutions within which states could manage their relationships, ensuring that mechanisms were in place to enforce multilateral agreements. The formalised institutional mechanism was thought to be both a source of rule enforcement, thus mitigating the effects of anarchy, as well as a system to build confidence in relationships between states that would improve the scope for further cooperation. Central to this thought is the idea that cooperation between states can be mutually beneficial, and that interaction does not need to be a zero-sum equation whereby the gains of one party are always at the equal cost of others. Instead of viewing states as trapped in a cycle of mistrust, liberals actively sought ways in which this could be avoided. Liberal IR theory can, therefore, be viewed as normative in that its aim was always to address an issue that existed within international relations and find practical solutions to it. By focussing on cooperation, mutual interests and the ability of states to form regimes that could mitigate the effects of anarchy in the international system, liberalism sought to demonstrate that neither conflict nor cooperation were inevitable, and afforded a level of agency to states that was absent in the position of many of its intellectual challengers.

The development of realism as a theory of IR was motivated in part by the desire to challenge the apparent failings in liberal thought. Drawing on classic texts and analytic works of the past such as Machiavelli ([1974](#_ENREF_90)) and Hobbes ([1998](#_ENREF_52)), and even going back to the great Greek historian Thucydides ([1954](#_ENREF_149)), realists argued that states were primarily selfish entities whose primary instinct was survival, and that to achieve this aim they sought to maximise their own power vis-à-vis any potential rival ([Morgenthau, 1955](#_ENREF_104), p. 4-15; [Kissinger, 1977](#_ENREF_73), p. 9-50). In common with the liberal analysis of the nature of states, realism afforded them a level of rationality, though it disputed the nature of human beings and, by extension, the nature of the states which both viewed as analogous. The analysis of the behaviour of states was based on the principle of human nature being selfish and egotistical and that they operated in a Hobbesian ‘state of nature’. Therefore, states were considered to be belligerent and the system within which they operated a given that could not be altered. In contrast to liberal theory, realists opined that power in international relations was a ‘zero-sum’ game and that cooperation among states was only possible along the lines of alliances, which themselves were specifically aimed at balancing against other threats. This assumption rendered realism dismissive of international institutions and regimes, arguing instead that membership of such institutions was always a matter of expediency and could never be considered to be behaviour-altering. If the nature of human beings, and therefore of the state itself as an entity, is fixed, then no amount of formalised rule creation could change the way in which those states conducted themselves. Such an assessment of international affairs was often characterised as pessimistic but, as EH Carr most notably articulated, such pessimism was supported by the evidence of the failure the League of Nations, a Wilsonian institution that aimed to provide the framework laid out in liberalism (Carr, 1939, p. 97-8). That the League of Nations singularly failed to arrest the spread of fascism, and to prevent the outbreak of World War Two, demonstrated to many the folly of such a ‘utopian’ notion of the international system or, in other words, the naivety of liberals and the prescience of realism. The argument of realists such as Carr and also Hans J Morgenthau was to treat the world as it actually *was* rather than trying to mould it into something we would like it to be. That meant accepting the inevitability of conflict and power politics in international relations.

**3.1.1 The ‘Neo-Neo Debate’ and Its Critics**

While the failure of the League of Nations and the outbreak of the World War Two cemented realism’s dominance in the discipline, the debate did not end there. Although not all theorisations of IR fitted neatly into either category ([Wight, 1977](#_ENREF_165), [Bull, 1977](#_ENREF_13)) the fundamental divide between liberals and realists persisted. However, there were clearly phenomena in international relations that were not satisfactorily explained in either school of thought, particularly as the process of globalisation manifested itself in the form of a much higher level of interconnectedness. It was in direct response to this that Keohane & Nye ([1989](#_ENREF_70)) put forward their model of “complex interdependence”, which became the basis of what has come to be termed ‘neo-liberalism’. Their idea of “complex interdependence” emphasised instead the interconnected nature of the modern international system, and the plethora of actors – no longer limited to states – that were now involved in interaction. Keohane and Nye’s model challenged the assumption that states were akin to ‘billiard balls’ that may bounce against each other without ever penetrating each other and argued, instead, that the number of actors actually involved in international relations had been seriously underestimated by IR theory. While states remained the primary focus of their work, they considered other transnational actors to also have relevance and agency within a cobweb of interrelation. The international system was, then, far more complex than had ever been previously estimated (Keohane & Nye, 1989, p. 83). While this model was groundbreaking in terms of IR theoretical positions, it continued a fundamental liberal assumption: that interaction could be regulated by the development of rule-based institutions or regimes, allowing for cooperation and mutual benefit in the international system and providing a mechanism by which to mitigate mistrust and fear.

The model did not go unchallenged. In what is arguably the most influential piece of work ever written on IR theory, Kenneth Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*, outlined what has come to be known as ‘structural realism’ or ‘neo-realism’ ([Waltz, 1979](#_ENREF_155)). Building on his earlier work ([1959](#_ENREF_154)) which examined the three “images” – the individual, the state and the international system – Waltz emphasised the anarchic nature of the international system and viewed it as *the* key factor in determining the behaviour of states to demonstrate that even if *theoretically* all states could coexist peacefully and cooperatively, in *reality* this could not happen since one could not know the motives of any other power (Waltz, 1979, p. 79-101). For Waltz, and for all those who have followed in his intellectual footsteps, the key determining factor in the course of international relations was the absence of an overarching authority that could regulate state-to-state interaction. The absence of this authority leaves all states in the position of having to assume the worst of all of one’s rivals and prepare accordingly, for failure to do so may result in their own destruction. While the end result of this model – inevitable conflict – was not markedly different from classical realism, it did mark a fundamental shift in the explanatory aspect of the theory. For neo-realists, human nature was no longer the root of conflict in the international system; the centuries-old debate on whether man was inherently good or inherently bad was no longer relevant. What was relevant was the rationality of the state in seeking its own survival within a system of other states all seeking to do the same thing. Thus, seeking maximum power relative to other states within the system was the *rational* course of action. Given that all states would behave this way, conflict would be inevitable. This model of IR theory inverted the previously-held realist view on the most stable structures in differing international systems. In contrast to the views of Carr and Morgenthau, which held that multi-polar systems provided the greatest level of stability, neorealists argued that the most stable of all structures appeared to be the bi-polar system in which two superpowers balanced each other, each holding alliances of roughly equal strength and thus neither were capable of threatening the other’s security without endangering its own.

The development of neo-liberalism and neo-realism marked both a new phase in the long debate between the two schools of thought, and a notable shift in the focus of that debate that rendered the two theories closer to each other than had ever been previously accepted. Indeed, the ‘neo-neo debate’, as it came to be called, was criticised for being too narrow in its focus, and it was noted that both apparently-competing theories had the same epistemological and ontological foundations ([Cox, 1981](#_ENREF_21), p. 130). Both are rationalist and positivist theories that take the nature of the state as a given, without any need for deconstruction or reflexivity. That is to say that both neo-liberalism and neo-realism assume that the state’s core interests are fixed and that they pursue a *rational* course of action in order to achieve their aims. Ontologically, both theories consider the primary and overriding aim of all states to be that of survival. The weakness of the neo-neo debate, certainly with respect to this study, is that such state interests are *assumed* and not deconstructed. They are considered to be outside the realm of IR and the approaches focus on the methods by which such interests are pursued, rather than how those interests are formed. This leaves gaps in our understanding of certain areas of international relations, and this is especially relevant in the case of Sino-Japanese relations. Epistemologically, both theories take a rationalist and positivistic approach to the study of how states pursue these previously assumed interests. While neither theory takes positivism too literally – both are founded on structures or interconnections that are theoretical rather than actual – the ways in which adherents have sought to demonstrate these phenomena is predicated on empiricism.

**3.2 Constructivism**

The frustration with the sterility of the neo-neo debate led to ontological challenges within IR in the form of critical theory and postmodernism. It is neither possible nor necessary to do justice to these broad churches of philosophy here. What is important to note for the purposes of this work is their contribution to IR theory in challenging the very foundation of what was considered ‘knowledge’ in IR, and in calling for a greater exploration of the concepts within the discipline that had long been taken for granted. Taken to its extreme, this type of philosophical standpoint can disappear into a Foucauldian spiral of never-ending foundational questioning, rendering all knowledge entirely subjective and, by extension, analysis of any kind indefensible. For this reason, postmodernists have failed to outline a coherent theory of IR (few would see it as desirable to do so). While the challenge of post-positivist theorisation arguably freshened up the discipline of IR, its value in terms of actual analysis is questionable to say the least. Critical theorists, meanwhile, made little attempt to engage in the mainstream debate over the production of a grand theory of IR and focussed, instead, on normative changes within international relations. For critical theorists, their work was more about human emancipation than sterile explanations of state-to-state interaction; rather than explain why wars occurred, they sought not only to prevent them from occurring but to widen the debate in IR to incorporate other aspects of human security. Accepting that there is no such thing as value-free knowledge may raise questions about the worth of conducting research at all, but a greater level of awareness of the epistemological and ontological foundations of one’s own approach is a benefit to all analysts. Postmodernism, then, contributed to the development of IR theory without ever being capable of producing a coherent, testable theory of state to state interaction. Indeed, as noted, so doing was never really the goal of these areas of thought.

From this irreconcilable debate emerged a new basket of theories that came to be known as constructivism. From the critique of traditional IR theory that had been offered by critical theorists and postmodernists, constructivists identified the need to acknowledge the social production of knowledge and to deconstruct it. This allowed for the development of IR theories that no longer relied upon on basic state interests that were assumed; instead they were socially produced and, crucially, fluid. Given that interests are to be socially constructed – that is, expectations of what is both possible and desirable determined by social interaction – the interests of states across the international system may differ, and may alter across time. This development in IR theory certainly has not ended the debate, and it is reasonable to say that neorealists still dominate both the academic realm as well as the policymaking field, but constructivism did receive a great deal of attention through the 1990s and into the 2000s and has become one of the largest fields in IR theory ([Reus-Smit, 1999](#_ENREF_112), [Hall, 1999](#_ENREF_47), [Welch, 1993](#_ENREF_158), [Philpott, 2001](#_ENREF_109)). As with any IR theory constructivism is not a uniform bloc, and within it there are distinguishable strands of thought that differ fundamentally in their ontological assumptions. Here I use Reus-Smit’s identification of three main strands of constructivism, though it is certainly possible to argue that this is not exhaustive and others may disagree with the distinctions laid out here. The three strands outlined here are: systemic; unit-level; and holistic. The rest of this section will briefly outline the assumptions that underpin each of these before making the case for the employment of holistic constructivism in this study.

Systemic constructivism was the first to emerge in IR literature, and is most closely associated with Alexander Wendt ([1992](#_ENREF_159); [1995](#_ENREF_160); [1999](#_ENREF_161); [2004](#_ENREF_162)). Drawing inspiration both from the ‘English School’ of IR, a branch of realist thought that viewed the international system as a “society” of states and allowed for the possibility of relationships to develop among its members ([Bull, 1977](#_ENREF_13), [Wight, 1977](#_ENREF_165)), as well as Waltzian structural realism, Wendt outlined his vision of a state-centric theory of IR that concentrated on the social interaction within the international system. Wendt sought to address the great failing of traditional IR theories to deconstruct the interests of states in international relations. In line with sociological constructivism, Wendt argued that interests of states were drawn from their identities and that these identities were socially constructed. That is to say that the identity of any given state was produced by its social interaction with other states in the international system. Therefore, in Wendt’s view, the relationship and interaction among a society of states determines their identities and interests, and, by extension, what they deem possible and desirable in their future dealings with other states. He articulated this vision by drawing comparison with Waltz’s structural conception of the international system, but characterised the structures as those that had been established by the previously described processes of interaction. Wendt’s acceptance of some of the assumptions associated with neo-realism, and his continued desire to produce a ‘grand theory’ of international relations, left him open to criticism from some quarters ([Behnke, 2005](#_ENREF_8), p. 48-9). His insistence that IR be an examination of state-to-state interaction certainly gave his work a level of consistency, but it also left questions as to whether he had really risen to the challenge that critical theory had set ([Reus-Smit, 2005](#_ENREF_114), p. 199-200). Wendt remained unapologetic for his state-centric analysis and maintained that such a focus was the very essence of IR. Wendt’s work was certainly groundbreaking, but it was this insistence on maintaining focus at the systemic level that exposed the biggest weakness in his argument: if a particular state’s interests and identity are formed by its interaction with other states, this implies that it enters into such interaction without contribution from the domestic level. That seemed to imply that the state is a ‘blank page’ until it interacts with other states, which seemed illogical to many and was a criticism that Wendt failed to satisfactorily address.

Unit-level constructivism takes as its focus the level of the state. That is to say that in contrast to systemic constructivism – indeed, in contrast to all other mainstream IR theories – it seeks to explore the construction of a particular individual state from within, rather than taking it as a given entity existing in a system that determines its behaviour (for example [Katzenstein, 1996](#_ENREF_69), p. 33-58). Although this is seeking to address the same fundamental issue that Wendt’s work attempted to resolve, namely the deconstruction of a state’s identities and interest formation, it does so from an essentially different epistemological stance. If systemic constructivism considers a state’s identity and interests to be formed by its interaction in the international system, then unit-level constructivism views the creation of identity and interests to be determined by societal level interaction within the state. By breaking the state down into its component parts, thus allowing both conscious and unconscious agency for a multitude of actors and groups not considered in other areas of IR theory, unit-level constructivism seeks to reveal the roots of a state’s identity in ways that are not ordinarily discussed. If the identity of a state is central to its interests and, therefore, to its motivations for action at the international level then the role of unit-level constructivism is to uncover the domestic forces behind this identity. Consideration can, therefore, be given to individuals, companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and media organisations as well as the political classes. The interaction between and among these groups is a complex set of processes that combine to determine the identity of a society. This, in itself, was not a new observation and the idea owes much to sociological research, but the key contribution of unit-level constructivism is to link that societal formation to the identity of a state in the international arena. Once this link is made the roles of those previously-mentioned groupings that are ordinarily marginalised in IR theory in the phenomenon we call international relations comes into focus. While influence from events outside the state in question is not discounted, the identity is shaped by the society’s responses, which may be both collective and contested, to these events, rather than the systemic conception of the state learning from such interaction. Unit-level constructivism certainly shares some basic assumptions with systemic constructivism, particularly with regard to the importance of state identity and the fluidity and diversity of interests in international relations, but the differences between the two, especially in terms of the level of analysis, render them quite distinct as theoretical approaches.

Given the outlines of the two constructivist approaches above, it is, perhaps, self-explanatory that holistic constructivism is something of a combination of the two. It recognises the validity of the concept of states as entities that can conduct their affairs in the international system, thus developing their interests and identities from social interaction with other states, organisations, and entities, as argued by Wendt in his systemic theory. However, it seeks to fill the gap in Wendt’s thesis by incorporating the key contributions of unit-level analysis, in particular by recognising the society-driven identity creation outlined in ‘unit-level’ constructivism ([Kratochwil, 1993](#_ENREF_75), [Reus-Smit, 2002](#_ENREF_113), [Ruggie, 1993](#_ENREF_123)). Blending the two theories together is not easy – as noted earlier, they differ in fundamental ways – and not always successfully done, but skilful application of this process can provide enlightening and powerful explanatory tools for phenomena in international relations ([Reus-Smit, 2002](#_ENREF_113), p. 488). The deconstruction of the state into its domestic components and processes allows us to consider the production of interests from within; placing these interests into the context of international interaction between states, conceptualised as entities, or between those who act as representatives of what we conceptualise as states, completes the picture of international relations in a way that is not achieved in any other approach. One of the biggest contradictions in common understandings of international relations is that of the state as a distinct entity in the global arena as well as, at the same time, a domestic system formed from, and ruling over, a given society. By considering the domestic production of the state simultaneously with its international environment, we can resolve this quandary. This blend allows us to deconstruct the state, identifying actors and groups within a state that interact. If that interaction can be measured – or, at least, described – then the production of a state’s domestic identity and interest-formation that is projected onto the international stage can become clearer. Similarly, allowing our focus to move between the domestic and the international means that the relationships between states can also become a part of the bigger picture of complex interaction. What this means for this study in particular is that, where the traditional schools of IR theory would conceptualise China as some sort of “black box”, [[53]](#footnote-53) a given entity that appears on the international stage without any *a priori* interest development, China can now be deconstructed into groupings of actors and parties that all play some role in what is frequently abbreviated to ‘China’s reaction’. Having examined these processes, consideration can also be made of the relationship between China and Japan as states. It is worth noting at this stage that in addition to the extensive deconstruction of China as an entity that is needed, it would be contradictory to continue to refer to Japan within the international processes without any similar treatment. For that reason, although the actors and processes that constitute Japan will not receive the same level of attention as those of China, a certain amount of deconstruction will also be needed. Once the ontological decision is made that states can be conceptualised as entities, even with the caveat that they are neither fixed nor uniform and that they are not the exclusive drivers of international relations, then it is reasonable to hypothesise that structural relationships are formed between any two given states. A structurally defined relationship is one where norms, expectations, and rules (both explicit and implicit) guide the actions of either party when engaging in interaction. These structures might be quite subtle in that they are frequently unspoken and unwritten, but they provide the framework for expectation of policy-makers on either side. Thus, where these structures are not challenged, the relationship between any two given states will be smooth but where either party seeks to operate outside of the understood format the relationship will become much more difficult.

If the above description of structural relationships is correct, then it follows that the patterns of interaction among states will, at least in part, shape the future interaction not only among those involved but of other state-to-state relationships by providing an experience-led history. Sprout & Sprout’s highly influential conceptualisation of the way in which foreign policy is formulated and conducted outlined two “environments” which are crucial to the process: the “psycho-milieu” or psychological environment; and the “operational mileu” or operational environment ([Sprout and Sprout, 19](#_ENREF_140)68, p. 33-4). The former of these refers to how the policy-maker perceives the world and the various contributory factors of that perception. It includes values and interests but also lessons that have been learned from previous actions and reactions. The latter refers to the world as it actually is and, thus, determines the outcome of the decision that has been made within the psychological environment. It follows that a successful foreign policy is one that is made in a psychological environment that is as close as possible to the operational environment. Indeed, it has been argued that policy-makers’ inability to escape from the psychological environment has resulted in some catastrophic decisions.[[54]](#footnote-54) Holistic constructivism adds a nuance to this interpretation by incorporating the psychological environments of the policy-makers on either side within the operational environment of the relationship itself. In other words, if the perceptions of an actor determine its policy towards another actor, and the reaction of the other actor is, at least, part of the outcome, then it follows that the perceptions of that actor are integral to the outcome of the original policy. Thus, the psychological environments of either side are not only crucial in determining the initial policy, but also the outcomes that follow.

In order to assess the validity of this claim it is necessary to hypothesise a theory, rooted in holistic constructivism, which offers an explanation of the ways in which the Yasukuni Shrine visits played out in the Sino-Japanese relationship during the period of Koizumi’s tenure. Therefore, by dismissing the notion of China as a ‘black box’ and, instead, examining the processes within it, alongside analysis of the interaction of China and Japan in the international system, it ought to be possible to identify patterns of interaction at both the societal and state levels that provide evidence for a holistic constructivist theory of China’s relationship with Japan.

**3.3 IR Theory in Chinese Academia**

As indicated in the literature review of chapter two, this section addresses the literature of IR theory from academics working in the PRC.[[55]](#footnote-55) Though the work on IR theory is still in its relative infancy, it is reasonable to say that it has begun to proliferate in recent years. In similar fashion to the previous discussion on academic literature in China, this section does not seek to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive review of all the available work, something that would be neither achievable nor desirable. Instead, it takes a sample of some of the more influential academic writings in order to provide a flavour of the debate in contemporary China. The remainder of this section is divided into three parts: the first discusses work centred on the traditionally dominant western theories of IR; the second considers a recent trend towards constructivism in Chinese IR; and the third section gives an overview of the debate around developing a genuinely Chinese theory of IR rather than merely interpreting those rooted in western philosophical thought.

**3.3.1 Traditional (Western) Theories of IR**

It would be reasonable to say that realism is the most dominant theory that appears in academic work on IR theory emanating from China. The reliance of this work on Western philosophy is illustrated well in the work of one of China’s most well-known IR theorists, Shi Yinhong. Shi does not focus solely on realism in his work,[[56]](#footnote-56) he has argued that it forms the basis of our understanding of international relations (Shi, 2000, p. 177-8) but has also called for Chinese academics to address the failings of realism through the adoption of characteristics of other approaches (Shi, 2008a, p. 72). Nevertheless, he advocates the study of the history of the discipline of IR history, which almost exclusively means studying North American and European works. Shi draws heavily on several of the key IR texts, particularly highlighting the tendency of empires to rise and fall throughout history (Shi, 2005, p. 23-25). Shi’s argument is coherent and intellectually rigid, but bears more than a passing resemblance to Kennedy’s treatise on great powers (Kennedy, 1987).

Aside from Shi Yinhong, perhaps the other most prominent Chinese IR theorist is Yan Xuetong, a professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Just as with Shi, Yan has employed a variety of approaches in his work[[57]](#footnote-57) but has, on occasion, tended to employ what is largely a neo-realist framework by considering the structural determinants of state interaction as his primary concern. Yan is comfortable in offering prescriptive analyses of the contemporary international system, ordinarily using his work to proffer advice on the strategic direction of Chinese foreign policy. In particular, Yan uses this framework to advocate that China takes advantage of the fortunate position that it has found itself to be in since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, and the subsequent switch of focus that this event triggered in US foreign policy. He argues that the circumstances have brought about a decline in US power and a simultaneous increase in China’s own security within its international environment. Consequently, China should, in his view, take advantage of this set of circumstances in order to advance its own position in the international hierarchy and further increase the stability of China’s own position. However he points out that China faces something of an urgency in the need to employ such a strategy to ensure that this favourable environment can be maintained, since it actually emerged through chance rather than by design (Yan, 2006, p. 9-10).

There are fewer examples of scholars in the liberal school of thought in Chinese academia, and many of those that do address it do so in an explanatory manner rather than in a way that employs the theory as a tool of IR analysis (Wang, 1998; Dong, 2003; Yan, 2005). Nevertheless, Su Changhe provides one cogent example of employing a neo-liberal position in order to challenge the dominance of realism, though the fact that he felt the need to challenge an established American realist serves to underline the paucity of original Chinese literature in this area. Su sought to challenge John Mearsheimer’s well-known realist treatise on great powers,[[58]](#footnote-58) arguing that his failure to take account of the success of international institutions and norm development[[59]](#footnote-59) demonstrates his “fatal error of logic” (*zhiming de luoji cuowu*) (Su, 2003, p. 76). While this critique could not be described as unique – it is something of an internationally standard line in terms of critiquing neorealist positions – Su does demonstrate an ability to attack the flaws of Mearsheimer’s universalist position through a level of critical awareness that is lacking in much writing from PRC-based academics.

**3.3.2 Constructivism in Chinese IR**

Constructivism has begun to receive attention in Chinese academic analyses of IR theory. Fang Changping sets out his argument that Wendtian constructivism,[[60]](#footnote-60) which he considers to represent the “mainstream” (*zhuliu*) of the theory, is interacting with the English School in order to develop a hybrid approach (Fang, 2004, p. 37-38). Fang believes the debate is largely taking place in the US. However, Yan Xuetong feels that constructivism has had a greater influence on Chinese IR scholars than it has had on their American counterparts. He argues that this is because it is closer to the intellectual roots of Chinese scholarship (Yan, 2003, p. 36). Zhang Xiaoming advocated Wendtian constructivism as an addition to mainstream themes, describing it as “a breath of fresh air” (*dai laile yi gu xinxian de kongqi*) but cautioned that, like other traditional IR theories, it cannot be considered a meta-narrative (Zhang, 2001a, p. 18).

In the discussion on IR theory in Chinese academia much of the attention is paid to classic IR texts. For example, Fang & Sun (2008) assess the impact of Locke’s conceptualisation of the ‘state of nature’ on Hedley Bull’s work on international society, concluding that the latter is an overly “simplistic analogy” (*jiandanhua leibi*) (Fang & Sun, 2008, p. 61). Though the English School of IR is praised by Fang Lexian as providing a path between realism and liberalism, he warns that Eurocentric normative foundations mean that it could be exploited in the name of humanitarian intervention as a way of breaching the sovereignty of nations in the modern age (Fang, 2001, p. 22-23), a somewhat prescient analysis given the time that it was written.

Chen & Huang discuss the concept of international norms in specific regard to international intervention in the post-Cold War era. They point out that such a set of norms is “a dual challenge to China” (*zai Zhongguo mianlin de shuangchong tiaozhan*) because intervention goes against China’s core interests while China’s rising international position requires it to play a role in shaping these norms (Chen & Huang, 2009, p.15). This develops a common theme of the identification of international norms as a potential tool to be used in inter-state power competition that cannot be ignored by policy makers in the PRC both in terms of threat analysis and opportunity identification.

Despite this apparent increase in sophistication, even the most well respected scholars are somewhat trapped in a discourse that prevents critical appraisal of China’s international relations, leading to statements such as “China’s development is peaceful development” (*Zhongguo de fazhan shi heping fazhan*) (Shi, 2008b, p. 81) and the liberal sprinkling of academic work with the phrase “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie*), a reference to Hu Jintao’s contribution to China’s ongoing development of its ideological underpinnings. There is no doubt that this is a result of the constraints under which Chinese academics must operate and can be seen, to a certain extent, as merely a method of ensuring that academic work in China can continue without further government interference. Nevertheless, it cannot but detract from the overall quality of scholarship.

**3.3.3 ‘Chinese’ IR Theory**

There has been a debate in recent years over the establishment of a *Chinese* approach to IR theory. This has taken place both in Western academia[[61]](#footnote-61) as well as inside China. Regardless of the nature of a theory employed, it is normal for Chinese scholars to employ at least a rhetorical foundation of Marxism. For example, Chen Yue has argued that Chinese approaches to IR must be grounded in Marxist thought, but with the caveat that Marx’s theory must be “correctly understood and evaluated” (*zhengque reshi he pingjia*) in order that this does not become “empty words” (*yiju konghua*) (Chen, 2005, p. 83). Chen is clear that Marxism itself does not form a complete theory of IR, but is adamant that it must be the basis of any Chinese approach (Chen, 2005, p.84).

IR theory that is rooted in Chinese culture does not receive much attention outside of China. Fang Changping has argued that this is because Western thought on IR has generally characterised it as a universal truth, and Chinese foreign policy is ordinarily examined in terms of realism as a result (Fang, 2005, p. 48-49). Fang makes a good case for the need for Chinese IR, and the need for it to answer important epistemological questions in the process, learning from the ongoing academic debates in the West since the end of the Cold War (Fang, 2005, p. 51).

Pang Zhongying rightly points out that simply putting “China” or “Chinese” in front of “IR” is not sufficient; it must be clarified precisely what it is that makes a theory “Chinese” (Pang, 2005, p. 20). Though Pang’s point is valid, his own answers to the questions that he raises are somewhat vague and ill-defined, arguing only that Chinese scholars must debate the key issues in order to create a Chinese theory (Pang, 2005, p. 24). Shi Yinhong has argued that Chinese foreign policy can be seen in terms of ”realpolitik” (*xianshi zhengzhi*) but that at the same time the “Chineseness” (*Zhongguo texing*)in China’s foreign policy influences China’s outlook on international relations. Shi elaborates further that this comes from China’s historical experiences of dynastic cycles which have demonstrated that leadership is not permanent and mandates can be withdrawn (Shi, 2009b, p. 22-23).

Scholars often focus on understanding why a Chinese theory of IR has yet to emerge, implying that its absence is a puzzle that needs to be solved without explaining why it is *Chinese* thought that should have produced a challenge to dominant western approaches; nobody questions why there is not yet an Indonesian approach to IR theory. Furthermore, much of this consideration is done without actually addressing the apparent issue themselves in any real depth, offering possible explanations of the failure but no progress towards resolving it. For example, Su Changhe offers some thoughts as to why a coherent Chinese IR approach has not been achieved, noting that Chinese scholars have largely grasped the main texts of Western IR theory, he sees the failure to develop theories as stemming from a tendency to describe events, rather than to analyse them (Su, 2005, p. 27-28). Wang Yizhou ascribes the deficiency to a general failing in Chinese social sciences, though he considers the field to have improved greatly in recent years and expects this to continue (Wang, 2006, p. 12). Yu Tiejun laments both the lack of originality in Chinese theorisations of IR as well as the failings in rooting theory in historical research. He urges Chinese scholars to “promote a dialogue between theory and history” (*tuidong lilun he lishi zhi jian de duihua*) (Yu, 2005, p. 52). Yan Xuetong believes that the lack of Chinese IR “inheritance” (*jicheng*) has held back innovation in the field, but expects this to improve(Yan, 2003, p.37). Zhang Xiaoming notes that Chinese IR has a very short history but adds that Western IR is still less than a hundred years old (Zhang, 2001b, p. 98). Zhang also considers inadequate translation and the vagaries of the Chinese language to have been an impediment to Chinese scholars engaging in international debates over theory (Zhang, 2001b, p. 98-99).

It can be argued that a recent move towards employing the concept of *tianxia* (literally ‘all under heaven’) in juxtaposition to western conceptualisations of the world or international system, has provided the foundations of what could become a Chinese theory of IR. This movement has been led by Zhao Tingyang and Qin Yaqing. Qin has argued for the need to understand “relationality” in contrast to the individuality that is the preeminent tendency of western societies that have produced the dominant rationalist narratives of IR theory (Creutzfeldt, 2011, p. 1-2). He considers the recent trend towards constructivism in western IR theory a positive step, but one that is not sufficient to explain and understand Confucian societies such as China, and their role in the world. Both Zhao and Qin have employed the concept of *tianxia* to argue that it provides an alternative understanding to the international system and, therefore, to the study of IR generally (Qin, 2011, p. 42-44; Zhao, 2011, p. 22-30). Though the contributions of Zhao and Qin have certainly begun to advance the cause of establishing a Chinese school of IR theory, it would be difficult to argue that this has yet been achieved. The introduction of concepts such as *tianxia* to the lexicon of IR debates may help to achieve a better understanding of cultural perceptions, but cannot yet be said to have formed the basis of a coherent theory within the discipline.

**3.4 IR Theory and Sino-Japanese Relations**

Having considered this line of development in IR thought from a generalised perspective of the discipline and in terms of both western and Chinese thought, it is important to assess the extent to which this has been mirrored in the much narrower field of the study of Sino-Japanese relations. As has been previously stated, one of the main aims of this thesis is to provide the foundation for an IR-grounded theory of the relationship; but the idea of a ‘foundation’ should not be misinterpreted as a suggestion that the process begins with a blank page. Though work on a specific theory of the relationship has not been extensive, there have been numerous works that consider the relationship within the context of IR theory and seek to offer explanations for various aspects of it through these interpretations. It is possible to identify a pattern of intellectual thought running through these works that has much in common with the general path of IR theory work that was outlined above. This section will, therefore, outline the different interpretations of Sino-Japanese relations that have been produced using IR theory. It will show that the three main schools of thought in IR theory – realism, liberalism, and constructivism – have all been applied, to varying degrees. Moreover, it will identify the branches of these schools of thought that have helped to develop academic understandings of the China-Japan relationship by showing the direction of influence from one school to another, be that in terms of directly building on the intellectual foundations of previous analyses, or through a sharing of aspects of epistemological approaches. Through this outline it is possible to view a progression of IR-grounded interpretations of Sino-Japanese relations, albeit not one that is linear or unidirectional. This thesis seeks to build on this progression, borrowing from several schools of thought outlined in this section and blending them with other theories from IR and social science generally, to produce a constructivist hypothesis of Sino-Japanese bilateral interaction.

**3.4.1 Traditional IR Theories and Sino-Japanese Relations**

Though traditional interpretations of the realist branch of thought have been somewhat out of vogue in most areas of IR research in recent years, its ontological underpinnings have continued to inform many writings. This remains true in analyses of security relations between China and Japan. Notably, the two countries are characterised as in competition for power and influence, particularly in the East Asian region but also further afield (Dreyer, 2006; Suzuki, 2013). Dreyer’s analysis is notable in that it identifies the fierce rivalry and competition between the two countries as being specific to their bilateral relationship, allowing for each to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation with third countries but not with each other. Indeed, she notes that even in cases where mutual benefit is not only possible but can also be recognised on both sides, they are “not able to overcome the barriers to cooperation” (Dreyer, 2006, p.555). More recently, Dreyer has ascribed an increase in tensions in the Sino-Japanese relationship, to a more neo-realist interpretation of shifting structures in the international system (Dreyer, 2012). However, she also notes that, to the extent that stability exists in the relationship, it can also be ascribed to the balance of power relations, which includes the involvement of the US (Dreyer, 2012, p. 426). Thomas Christensen applied the traditional realist concept of the ‘security dilemma’ to Sino-Japanese relations to explain the increased tensions that emerged during the 1990s, but allowed for an added dimension in the “historical legacies and ethnic hatred [which] exacerbate the security dilemma in Sino-Japanese relations” (Christensen, 1999, p. 51). He insisted that the role of the US was vital in ameliorating this dilemma, invoking similar neo-realist notions to that of Dreyer’s work. Japan’s response to the “rise of China” is also said to have evolved as a result of the shifting political dynamics of the post-Cold War international structure. Faced with a choice between employing “offensive realism” or “defensive realism” in its China policy, Japan has chosen the former, but retained the option of shifting to the latter dependent on both China’s own actions as well as the involvement of the US (Mochizuki, 2007, p. 769-773).

Structural explanations of Sino-Japanese tensions have abounded in recent years. Michael Green, addressing the tensions apparently caused by Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine,[[62]](#footnote-62) claimed that “the real source of tensions” was “structural factors”, specifically that the two countries are being “forced to adjust to comparable levels of national power” (Green, 2006, p. 3). Kent Calder invoked Thucydides in a classical realist interpretation of a power struggle, though also cited “Track II” diplomacy as the likeliest source of détente (Calder, 2006, p. 130 & 135).

This theme of the structural nature of the international system impacting on Sino-Japanese relations was well articulated by Akira Iriye, who stated that “Chinese-Japanese security relations have never been purely bilateral” (Iriye, 1996, p. 46). Iriye’s explanation of the relationship during the Cold War was almost entirely structural but he identified “cultural ties” as potentially the most important determining factor in the post-Cold War relationship (Iriye, 1996, p. 59). Reinhard Drifte also identified important shifts in the relationship after 1990, employing various theoretical positions to argue that Japan’s policy towards China shifted from one of seeking to balance against its rise, to one of engagement (Drifte, 2003). Ultimately, he specified forces external to Japan as the key determinant to its future trajectory of China policy, citing the Sino-US relationship as the main factor (Drifte, 2003, p. 180).

Denny Roy, while acknowledging the importance of historically-rooted societal antipathy, considers the question of raw power in the relationship to be the most significant (Roy, 2005, p. 210). More recently, Richard Bush declared that three factors help to explain the relationship: a traditional security dilemma defined as “a general spiral of mutual fear regarding material power”; interaction between the two “on specific points of tension, which inform each nation’s conclusions about broader trends in the other”; and the two countries’ respective “view of the past” (Bush, 2010, p. 24). Although Bush’s overall conclusions on the state of the relationship and its likely trends are derived from neorealist assumptions, this inclusion of interaction and historical views lends his analysis a hint of constructivist thought that serves to develop the ordinarily narrow realist paradigm a little further than most. A slightly different interpretation, but one that still invokes the structure of the international system in its explanation, comes from Ryosei Kokubun (2006). For Kokubun, the structure of the international system, has served as a both a guide and a tool for governments on both sides to manage the relationship (Kokubun, 2006, p. 23-26). However, other factors – in particular the increased level of mutual economic interdependence and potential generational changes in leadership, especially in China – can provide motivation to follow “the road to cooperation” that might not be obvious through a purely neo-realist lens, even if this road is still “incomplete” (Kokubun, 2006, p. 34).

The use of IR theory to suggest a cooperative agenda for China and Japan is certainly not new or unique. Following a liberal approach, which emphasises the role of economic integration generally, and Japan’s role in the modernisation of China’s economy specifically, Robert Taylor has consistently suggested that there could be a Sino-Japanese axis as a force in Asia (Taylor, 1985; 2000; 2012). In fact, despite the tensions that occur, it has been argued that there are numerous examples of state-to-state cooperation and compromise, providing evidence of government-led management of the Sino-Japanese relationship (Austin & Harris, 2001; Hughes, 2009). In particular, the greater integration of the various actors that participate in the bilateral relationship, principally driven by the benefits of trade, has helped to engender higher levels of trust and understanding through a more formalised and structured relationship (Austin & Harris, 2001, p. 21-22). Nevertheless, while cooperation can be demonstrated on a number of levels, such closer interaction between the two carries its own risks; “Japanese responses to China, as well as creating possibilities for cooperation, carry the risk of overstimulating Sino-Japanese competition and creating the very downward spiral of confrontation they are designed to obviate” (Hughes, 2009, p. 838). Lam Peng-Er argued that, despite what he called the “Koizumi factor” that had inspired a much more assertive Japan in terms of its policy toward China, the economic linkages between the two countries ought to mitigate this trend to some degree, though he stressed it was not the only variable in Sino-Japanese relations (Lam, 2005, p. 290). Focussing on the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute, Min Gyo Koo declared with absolute certainty that “both Japan and China have found it in their interest to de-escalate conflicts because of concerns over damaging their economic relationship, thus supporting a liberal peace interpretation”[[63]](#footnote-63) (Koo, 2009, p. 206). A similar emphasis on economic interdependence was put forward by Michael Heazle, though he placed it in the context of rising nationalism and other security factors rather than the personal traits of political leaders that Lam had identified (Heazle, 2007). A more wide-ranging argument set out numerous areas of mutually beneficial cooperation that have not only been recognised by policy-makers on both sides, but which have demonstrably been the basis of Sino-Japanese cooperation over a number of years (Manicom & O’Neil, 2009). While this clearly includes the integration of the respective economies, the need to follow mutual interests in maintaining access to shipping lanes and management of the disputes in the East China Sea have also served to mitigate the unquestionable tensions that erupt over historical disputes (Manicom & O’Neil, 2009, p. 227-8).

A classic liberal internationalist view of international relations is that through a system of regime formation states can be ‘socialised’ into a system in which mutual interests can be pursued. In this perspective both formalised institutions and informal but regularised interaction can have the function of regimes. This was the view of China’s modern international relations put forward by Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang when they declared that “[i]nternational enmeshment facilitates China’s social learning in terms of the values, norms, principles and rules of the international system. China's worldview and definition of national interests can be transformed toward greater compatibility with the rest of the world”, and that this is “a strategy that Japan has been executing all along” (Deng & Wang, 1999, p. 7). It is at this juncture in IR theory that the traditional, state-centric theories meet the basket of perspectives that is constructivism, with its emphasis on norms, identity and interaction.

**3.4.2 Constructivism and Sino-Japanese Relations**

The role of a state’s identity in determining its international relations has been the subject of increasing focus since constructivism became a major branch of IR theory in the 1990s. According to this branch of thought, what determines the actions of a state, in addition to commonly noted – but ordinarily vaguely defined – concepts such as national interest, is the identity of each country, something that is formed through both international and domestic interaction. China’s identity is viewed in some quarters as being largely defined in contrast to both Japan and the US, as well as in the context of its historical international position and current rising power status. It is this self-image that China holds which determines how it conducts itself in its relations with Japan and the US (Deng, 2008, p. 198-9).

Though this branch of thought in the discipline of IR began to be articulated as constructivism in the 1990s, there were academic works that predate this classification which can be seen, retrospectively, to apply. The most notable of these – in terms of the Sino-Japanese relationship – was Alan Whiting’s monograph, in which he opined that China’s own national identity was key to understanding how it dealt with the relationship (Whiting, 1989). Whiting argued that China’s “negative image” of Japan has been replicated and reinforced through domestic processes which reproduce “structured” feelings of mistrust toward Japan (Whiting, 1989, p. 17). Furthermore, the *image* China holds of Japan and its *perception* of events are vital considerations in understanding how it views the bilateral relationship, and goes some way to explaining why it behaves in ways that sometimes appear to contradict the narrow, strategically and economically defined, national interest (Whiting, 1989, p.16-20).

More recent work has followed this theme. The need to explain why economic interdependence has failed to mitigate tensions, confounding traditional theories that suggest the relationship should be a lot more stable than it is, led Michael Yahuda to explore the concept of identity in China’s relationship with Japan (Yahuda, 2006, p. 162-3). To understand this, Yahuda argues that it is crucial to pay attention to both countries’ shifting identities, declaring them to be “major structural impediments to the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations” that require “effective leadership” to mitigate (Yahuda, 2008, p. 112). More recently, this idea has been challenged by Richard Katz who argues that the significant levels of economic interdependence in the relationship have served as an effective stabilising factor during periods of heightened tension (Katz, 2013). Citing examples of both sides employing a pragmatic approach to bilateral issues motivated by the mutually recognised interest in economic development for the purposes of political legitimation, Katz argues that this stabilising effect has prevented already serious disputes from leading to outright conflict (Katz, 2013, p. 19-22).

The identity of a state is a complicated concept that is not easily defined. One way of conceiving it is in the domestic production of external-focussed policy. In other words, the interactions occurring within a state that produce a particular foreign policy, or dictate the general direction of a state’s foreign policy, could be interpreted as one form of state-level identity. It is this interpretation that is most useful in the analysis of international relations, for it helps in the search for understanding of foreign policy production. James Reilly’s work on public opinion and the production of China’s Japan policy provides the most cogent example of this (Reilly, 2012).[[64]](#footnote-64) Though the government retains overall control of foreign policy, as one might expect from an authoritarian government, it has done so through the development of “a mechanism for tolerating and responding to sporadic instances of public emotion while maintaining its overall foreign policy direction” (Reilly, 2012, p.4-5). Though this analysis affords the primary position of policy-maker to the governmental elite, it also shows that societal forces *do* have an input through their own responses to Japan-related controversies (Reilly, 2012, p. 27). It is, then, the interaction of domestic and government forces that serves to produce – and reproduce – China’s Japan policy.[[65]](#footnote-65) This observation, in itself, is not new. Quansheng Zhao noted long ago that “the linkages between Chinese domestic policy and foreign policy … are based on broad social, political, economic and cultural conditions” (Zhao, 1992, p. 159), and went on to develop a framework for addressing this assumption that he termed “the micro-macro linkage approach” (Zhao, 1996). Nevertheless, Reilly’s work provides evidence of societal participation in these processes that was not discussed in Zhao’s work, which focussed more on the role of domestic institutions.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The suggestion that societal-level responses to external events spark a process of internal interaction that influences the direction of a China’s policy towards Japan raises the prospect that the relationship can be viewed as having multiple linkages through which interaction occurs. In other words examining state-to-state interaction is insufficient to understand the Sino-Japanese relationship; linkages between the two societies, the respective governments and their own societies and, crucially, each government and the society of the other state should be might all play a role. In this respect, Ming Wan argued that the relationship should be viewed in a wider context, taking into account not only domestic factors in a narrow sense of national identity or policy prioritisation, but in the way that multiple linkages across the relationship have been forged, increasing the number of actors that play a part in the Sino-Japanese relationship (Wan, 2006). Wan also views the various levels of interaction as occurring in patterns and trends, arguing that, in the field of security, “repeated interaction allows the two countries to quarrel over things within safe limits” whilst also “keep[ing] old wounds open”; this “explains why the bilateral relationship has expressed greater tensions while remaining within acceptable boundaries” (Wan, 2006, p. 44). Utpal Vyas has argued that these linkages have helped Japanese ‘soft power’ to pervade, explaining to some extent the relative stability in the relationship (Vyas, 2011, p. 155-6).

That patterns of interaction can be observed is important to any constructivist interpretation of the Sino-Japanese relationship, particularly one that seeks to understand the state-to-state relationship. If the observations of Wan are correct – that such patterns are not only observable but are a process which stabilises the relationship whilst simultaneously constricting it – then shaping those patterns into a predictive formula is the primary task of an IR theorist. This has been addressed previously most notably in the sphere of the ‘history issue’ as a source of bilateral tension.

Structures in the relationship serve to prevent catastrophe but also impede genuine reconciliation. Mutually constituted and understood roles within a historically-rooted dispute provide a pattern of interaction that guides the behaviour of both sides. Superficial reconciliation and the concomitant cooperation and deepening of cross-national ties are followed by periods of tension and mistrust, usually centring on the unresolved issue of the two nations’ modern bilateral history. This cycle has been observed throughout the 1980s, when the issue of history first really emerged as an overt source of bilateral tension, and beyond the 1990s. While each cycle of tension and superficial reconciliation follows a relatively similar pattern, each has its own characteristics, making the study of such periods more complicated than describing a simply structural nature to the relationship. Each period of tension tends to occur following an apparently perceived[[67]](#footnote-67) act of provocation from either Japan as a state or from a prominent actor within Japan. The pattern of interaction, as described by Hidenori Ijiri tends to follow the well-trodden path of Chinese outrage (whether faux or genuine) expressed as a “high posture” in both internal media as well as international diplomatic forums, with the response from Japan one of a “low posture” (Ijiri, 1990, p. 648). Such a response usually comes from Japan as a state or, rather, high level political or diplomatic representatives acting on behalf of Japan as a state, as opposed to any non-state actor from within Japan (which, nevertheless, may have been viewed as representative of Japan in the first instance)[[68]](#footnote-68) that may have been responsible for the initial offence. Acknowledging a similar outline of the relationship, Chalmers Johnson described Japan’s actions during the period following normalisation as “*fumie* diplomacy” (Johnson, 1986, p. 408).[[69]](#footnote-69) Thus, though the relationship appears at first sight to be one fraught with stress and a hostage to frequent outbreaks of tension and dispute, it actually maintains a high level of equilibrium through this process of outrage and repentance. It is not clear if this stable instability has been developed as a deliberate strategy, either jointly or driven by one side, nor is it clear if either party believes its continuance to be in their interests. However, it forms the pattern of Sino-Japanese interaction that has been documented over recent decades and, therefore, has become an influential aspect of expectation production for individual policy-makers on both sides. In other words, the cyclical pattern of Sino-Japanese interaction is an important part of the psychological environment for these policy-makers who have learned from previous experience that certain actions provoke relatively predictable reactions. This also works in reverse; those same policy-makers also understand what reaction is expected of them when the other party implements a particular action. What this means in practice is that when Japan is perceived to have committed some act of insensitivity, particularly with regard to the issue of history, the response of outrage (faux or genuine) from China is expected *on both sides*. Furthermore, it is understood by both parties that protestations from China will result in Japanese repentance of some kind. The exact nature of both the protestations and the subsequent atonement are not as predictable and are subject to the agency of both sides, taking into account the impact of domestic considerations of the particular time. Nevertheless, the expected cycle of the relationship continues to provide a guide to any potential action or reaction. Thus, structures in the relationship determine Chinese response to Japan’s perceived provocations, and also Japan’s handling of these disputes. Both countries have roles that are non-explicitly defined but clearly understood, which provides an element of stability in a relationship that frequently appears fraught with tension. Ijiri actually viewed this set of structures as a “problem” to which a solution needs to be found (Ijiri, 1990, p. 640). In this thesis, however, I employ the concept as an explanatory tool rather than a predicament from which an escape might be found. This is outlined in detail in the following section.

**3.5 *Structuration* as a Constructivist Theory of Sino-Japanese Relations**

At this juncture it is worth considering how realism and liberalism, as the two dominant theories of IR, might explain the Yasukuni phenomenon in Sino-Japanese relations. Firstly, however, it should be noted that many would argue this is not an appropriate topic for either to be tackling, which raises the question of why they should even be considered in this context. Simply, as the overwhelmingly dominant theories of the subject, it is necessary to show how and why they fail to offer suitable guidance on a topic such as this. Demonstrating that both theories are too narrow to address a subject of clear import in international relations shows why we must look beyond traditional IR theory in this case. A neo-liberal perspective that places so much emphasis on the importance of economic ties and the complex web of interdependence that results from the increased number of actors involved in the Sino-Japanese relationship struggles to explain both Koizumi’s repeated visits to the shrine and also China’s response. With the economic relationship between the two countries at an all-time high, increased interaction at the societal, business and political levels should have produced a relationship based on mutual interests and increased levels of trust. The high level of economic interdependence ought to have led to smoother political ties. The breakdown of the relationship at the highest political level is, therefore, difficult to understand from this approach. From a neo-realist perspective such trivialities as historical slights and symbolic gestures ought not to affect the workings of an inter-state relationship. Neo-realism’s preoccupation with ‘high’ politics and its focus on power as the key determinant in how two states interact shines no light whatsoever on the response of China to an ostensibly domestic event such as a politician’s visit to a shrine. Indeed, neo-realists themselves would probably not even seek to explain such a phenomenon, viewing it as outside the realm of IR and, while this ensures the maintenance of a certain level of intellectual consistency in the approach, it ignores what is clearly an *international* aspect of this issue, which is unsatisfactory. Plainly, neither of these approaches explains why the Yasukuni visits provoked such a response from China, and why the relationship deteriorated to such an extent.

Advocates of both these approaches may point out that armed conflict was never likely, and no amount of blustering on either side should be considered to negate this crucial observation. This would seem to be a fair comment. Similarly, neither school of thought takes this sort of interaction as its main focus and, therefore, to criticise them for failing to explain an aspect of international relations that neither explicitly seeks to do would appear to be unjust, but it is precisely this omission that needs to be addressed in IR theory; when a phenomenon such as the one under consideration here, which is so clearly one of an international nature, falls outside the realm of orthodox IR theory then there is something wrong with that orthodoxy. Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine certainly *appear* to have impacted on the relationship between two very important states in the East Asian region and to dismiss this process as beyond the scope of IR is less than satisfactory. The point, then, is not to entirely dismiss either approach *per se*, for each has its merits and offers insight into analysis of international relations, but to highlight that the approaches offer little in terms of explaining the behaviour of China in this area, or of predicting future interaction. Thus, if one accepts that there is a phenomenon to be explored here, then the tools to do so must be obtained from beyond the two traditional schools of thought in IR.

The neo-neo approaches outlined in the earlier section are not simply to be dismissed. They have much to say about the workings of the international system and, at an absolute minimum, play an important role in shaping the conceptualisation of how international relations work in the eyes of those who play key roles in the political decision-making process. Their sheer dominance of the academic discipline and the perspective of the policy-making elite means they are unlikely to ever be obsolete. However, their analytic weaknesses lie in the narrowness of their foci. Furthermore, their meta-theoretical tendencies cannot do justice to the vagaries of either China or the Sino-Japanese relationship, and render them unhelpful for this particular project. It is, then, to constructivism that we must turn in order to theorise this particular area of international relations.

As was noted earlier, constructivism in IR has its roots in the academic discipline of sociology and it is possible to see the influence that this has had on contemporary IR theory. In particular, the very basis of social constructivism lies in the debate surrounding the ‘agent-structure’ question, in which theorists have attempted to address the issue of what it is that determines individuals’ behaviour. More precisely, it lays out this question as a dichotomy of either the autonomy of an agent to determine his own actions, or the social structures that surround an agent that serve to limit the choices available to him. This debate was brought into IR theory by Alexander Wendt in the work outlined earlier, taking the state as the agent and the assumed structural nature of the international system as the key determinant in its social interactions.

The value of Wendt’s contribution to the IR debate is certainly not universally accepted. His continuance of the rationalist epistemology of dominant IR theories has led some to suggest that his brand of constructivism has not significantly moved the debate on and rather provides an opportunity for this dominance to be perpetuated (Smith, 1999, p. 683). This critique of Wendt, and of constructivism in IR more widely, is reasonable within the parameters of critical theory that seeks to challenge the epistemological foundations of IR theory, but in terms of producing a more coherent and valuable approach to the study of IR the addition of constructivism has increased the explanatory ability of the discipline.

By bringing the agent-structure debate into the development of IR theory, constructivism has allowed the production of a mainstream theory that takes elements of the critique from reflectivist schools without losing the focus on state-to-state interaction that is the central question of IR as a discipline. As Wendt himself put it, “it makes no more sense to criticize a theory of international politics for being ‘state-centric’ than it does to criticize a theory of forests for being ‘tree-centric’” (Wendt, 1999, p. 9-10). The introduction of the agent-structure debate has allowed a greater sophistication in IR theory to evolve and it is in this direction that the theory developed here is intended to travel.

With this in mind, I build on the work outlined in the previous section that has either sought to use IR theory to explain the Sino-Japanese relationship, or has posited observations and hypotheses that could contribute to the development of theory of the bilateral relationship. I place this previous work into the context of more generalised IR writing as outlined earlier, particularly from the holistic constructivist school of thought, in so doing I further consider the importance of the agent-structure debate by borrowing from sociology in much the same way that constructivism has done since its introduction to IR theory. This involves the adaptation of Anthony Giddens’ approach to sociology that he termed “structuration” (Giddens, 1984) to support the ideas of constructivist IR theory. The result is a holistic constructivist hypothesis of Sino-Japanese relations that addresses both the domestic constitution of China’s Japan policy, and the bilateral dimension of the relationship as not only a contributory determinant of that policy, but also a recipient of its influence.

By examining a state’s identity-driven interest formation at both domestic and international levels it ought to be possible to understand the motivations behind actions that are not comprehensible under the previously described methods of interpreting international relations. A caveat is necessary here. This study takes as its focus China’s reaction (at least, what is often *perceived* as ‘China’s reaction’) to Japan’s actions (or, again, what are often *perceived* to be ‘Japan’s actions’). For that reason, the hypothesis and the concomitant methodology that is deployed have a bias within them that may appear to render this an attempt at formulating a theory of Chinese foreign policy, rather than a theory of Sino-Japanese relations. This may be, on one level, a reasonable point. It is certainly not undesirable that this work may contribute to a greater understanding of the Chinese foreign policy-making process in general. However, the analysis is of an important aspect in the chain of Sino-Japanese interaction, and will include consideration of the effects of Japan on China itself, as well as on the relationship as a whole. It cannot be, and does not claim to be, a holistic and comprehensive study of all aspects of the Sino-Japanese relationship. Instead, it deconstructs aspects of the cycle of interaction in order to theorise about China’s role within that process of interaction.

It was previously noted that the strength of the holistic approach to constructivist theorising lay in its ability to address the failing of Wendtian systemic constructivism to explain the domestic aspect of identity-formation while continuing to assess the state as an actor in its own right in the international arena. There is an inherent enigma within this viewpoint in the form of a ‘chicken and egg’ style question: which came first? In other words, if Wendt’s failure was to allow the state to be depicted as a ‘blank page’ prior to its interaction with other states, and if unit-level constructivism’s failure is to ignore the effect of international action on the state’s own self-perception, then holistic constructivism embraces both of these flaws by not pinpointing where the identity-formation processes began. However, this is more a question of historical clarity than analytic validity and may, ultimately, have to be chalked off as one of life’s imponderable philosophical questions. This hypothesis, then, offers no suggestion of which (if either) is the original determinant of identity and interest in this case. Nevertheless, it remains necessary to begin somewhere in terms of articulation and the following section will begin with the domestic deconstruction of China as an entity in international relations.

The ‘reaction’ of China needs some deconstructing itself in order that it be analysed. We can divide this response into four main areas: government; media; academia; and public opinion. If the dichotomy of government and society is to be accepted as valid, then these four categories may be viewed as on a spectrum between the two. Clearly government action, such as political statements, speeches, or other political actions, are all part of the government response. Equally clearly, public opinion is a societal phenomenon that is, by definition, separate from the governmental action described above. In the study of other societies, the categories of media and academia would be less ambiguous, but within the context of China this is not so. The media has a very strong input *from* the government in the form of official and overt censorship, as well as unofficial and less obvious censorship, such as self-censorship conducted by those within the media (Tong, 2009, p. 608-9). Within the media there is a distinction to be drawn between those outlets that have a greater level of freedom to write about sensitive subjects, and those that are more closely controlled (in some cases directly) by government departments. These are divided along the same lines that Daniella Stockmann drew into “official”, “semi-official” and “non-official” media (Stockman, 2010a, p. 272). This will be elaborated upon in the methodological section, but for now it is sufficient to say that unofficial media appears to have gained a level of agency to shape the discourse on controversial topics such as the one under examination in this paper that official media simply has not. Academia’s linkages are complex in a different way. Chinese academics working at elite institutions have the opportunity to be directly involved in the decision-making process of government, though this is not equally true for all. However, they also operate within the confines of government censorship (and consequent self-censorship) meaning they both affect, and are affected by, government action.

There are many ways in which ‘society’ may be broken down into its constituent parts and the selection outlined here is neither exhaustive nor definitive. What is important in terms of this study is to be able to assess sentiment coming from within society and, for that reason, it is necessary to base the selections on observable expression. One such example of this is the apparent outpouring of nationalist, patriotic, or anti-Japanese feeling that was witnessed on the streets of several Chinese cities at various points in time during the period studied. While it is not intended that this group is viewed as homogenous, I have termed this group of people ‘nationalist protestors’. [[70]](#footnote-70) It is clear that this group has a role in the processes that are under analysis in this study, for the images of these protests were shown around the world. This had particular resonance in Japan, where such images are deemed, in several quarters, to be the ‘reaction’ of *China*, and have a demonstrable effect on public opinion at the very least, and potentially on the views of political and economic actors too. For that reason alone they have a position within what we consider to be ‘China’s reaction’, and there is no doubt that these actions have both a direct and an indirect impact on Japanese assessments of the relationship with China. What needs to be demonstrated is the linkage between these events and the action taken by China (as a state) in its relationship with Japan. This group represents a particularly vocal and visible part of Chinese society, but one that is quite small in the overall context of China. Wider public opinion may be represented, either accurately or inaccurately, by such displays, certainly in the way in which they are presented externally, and for that reason, ‘public opinion’ is identified in this hypothesis as an overarching factor that partially incorporates the ‘nationalist protestors’ but is also involved in interaction with them. As seen in James Reilly’s work, these expressions of sentiment from vocal societal forces may not directly drive the formation of Chinese foreign policy, but the need to maintain a delicate balance between social order, authoritarian control, and a political legitimacy that is partly rooted in its nationalist credentials, leaves the CCP with a limited range of options in any given foreign policy situation (Reilly, 2012, p. 208-210).

The government is, therefore, bound by the structures that have been determined in no small part by itself, as well as by the interests and desires of the other parties within this process. The government-determined censorship, and government-inspired self-censorship, has shaped the debate in both academia and the media. If one is limited in what one can say, it follows that any debate conducted under these conditions is limited in terms of its scope (Bourdieu, 1991, p.43). The discussions over Japan generally, and the Yasukuni Shrine issue specifically, were determined by what had gone before, in terms of the previous bilateral interaction over the history issue, but the issue of agency of those involved cannot be ignored. Neither academics nor journalists are passive, robot-like contributors and helped to shape the discussion too.

It is this process that is termed ‘structuration’. The creation and reinforcement of structures within the identity of China as a state is the product of interaction of the actors identified above operating within the already defined structures. It follows that any of these actors may have agency to alter the future shape of the structures of the relationship, but that they can only do this by operating within the system. This may appear to be a kind of organic process in which the structures of China’s identity and interest-formation evolve but is actually the product of action taken by those operating within the system, either consciously or subconsciously. Structuration is, therefore, the process by which structures are created, reinforced, and altered by the agency of those that operate within them.

Anthony Giddens outlined his theory of structuration[[71]](#footnote-71) in an attempt to address the quandary faced by all sociologists of the relationship between agent and structure. Giddens rejected the idea that one needed to have primacy over the other; in other words, it was not necessary to define agents as the constituents of social structures, nor to view social structures as the determinants of agents’ actions (Giddens, 1984, p. 14-16). To address the apparent contradiction of agency within structures, Giddens developed what he termed “the duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25-27). Under this premise, social structures guiding the behaviour and expectations of agents operating within them are themselves created by the very interaction that they also guide. Thus, the ‘duality’ of the structure lies in the agency of those that are seemingly constricted by it, in combination with the constriction of the structural element of the social knowledge. For Giddens, the meaning of this ontological leap is that sociological analysis requires “studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). This idea was further explained by Ira Cohen:

“Since systems have a concrete existence in articulated series of interactions reproduced across time and space, their patterns may be discerned in the ongoing course of social events. But structure cannot be apprehended from a concrete point of view. Specific sets of rules and resources exist only in the moment when the reproduction of specific practices, or reciprocal practices comprising a mode of interaction, are carried out. While structural rules and resources are no less ‘real’ as a result, to conceive structural patterns requires a bracketing of procedures of social conduct so that inferences can be drawn regarding how rules and resources mesh together”.

(Cohen, 1989, p. 88).

Though the idea was developed with sociology in mind, its applicability to IR was identified by Alexander Wendt, who defined structuration as “a relational solution to the agent-structure problem that conceptualizes agents and structures as mutually constituted or co- determined entities” (Wendt, 1987, p. 350) and used it to critique neo-realism and world systems theory.[[72]](#footnote-72) Wendt identified four key tenets of the approach: “accept the reality and explanatory importance of irreducible and potentially unobservable social structures”; “the need for a theory of practical reason and consciousness that can account for human intentionality and motivation”; the “joining [of] agents and structures in a "dialectical synthesis" that overcomes the subordination of one to the other”; and that “social structures are inseparable from spatial and temporal structures, and that time and space must therefore be incorporated directly and explicitly into theoretical and concrete social research” (Wendt, 1987, p. 356).

Though Wendt called for IR theorists to experiment with structuration as a perspective to inform research (Wendt, 1987, p. 369), very few have done so. One exception is a case-study of a boundary dispute between the US and Mexico that employed structuration theory in comparison with dependency theory and strategic coalition theory (Mumme & Grundy-Warr, 1998). The analysis concluded that structuration theory brought the specific benefit of requiring the analyst to consider interplay between various actors across different fields and across both time and space (Mumme & Grundy-Warr, 1998, p. 981). Though this study was limited in its scope to one particular case study and did not attempt to use their findings to offer wider theoretical observations of the US-Mexico relationship, the authors did conclude that the application of structuration as a concept in IR theory was more useful in bilateral relationships than it would be in multilateral situations (Mumme & Grundy-Warr, 1998, p. 984).

In this thesis, structuration is used as the constructivist perspective through which to theorise about the Sino-Japanese relationship. It argues that psychological importance of Yasukuni Shrine had been previously determined through the veneration of *kami*, including the class A war criminals, by prominent Japanese politicians, in public and formal demonstrations of the significance of the shrine in Japanese national identity. Following the objections raised to Nakasone’s visit in August 1985 – objections that were themselves the product of internal machinations in China at both political and societal levels – the shrine became the subject of a norm that was implicitly understood in both China and Japan. The repeated adherence to that norm, in the form of prime ministers continuing not to visit whilst in office, recreated and reinforced this structure in Sino-Japanese relations.[[73]](#footnote-73) On the occasion that this norm was challenged through the expression of agency by Hashimoto when he visited the shrine in 1996, it was the response of China that ensured that the norm remained a part of the fabric of structural considerations in Sino-Japanese relations. Thus, even when the previously understood structure appears not to have driven and determined outcomes, it continues to play a significant role in the responses of the actors involved. In the case of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, the norm was breached repeatedly, creating a new pattern of interaction that resulted in a significant shift in the understanding of roles of each party in the relationship. Furthermore, there appears to have been a strategy from China to ensure that post-Koizumi relations would return to the previously understood rules of interaction, demonstrating both the importance of the structurally-determined understanding of norms and expectation-production as well as the agency of those involved in the interaction that produces those norms to affect change. In short, the application of structuration to the Sino-Japanese relationship during the Koizumi period allows us to see the importance of norms over specific repeated issues of interaction, as well as revealing how those norms are created, reinforced, and altered over time through the agency of actors on both sides.

While this perspective clearly implies an acceptance of the existence of states as actors – that there is a discernible entity we call ‘China’, which can be observed and analysed – it also acknowledges the plurality of other actors involved in both the international realm and the production of what we discern to be ‘China’s reaction’. The aim is not, therefore, to produce a meta-theoretical explanation of international relations as a whole, but to provide one aspect of the foundation, grounded in a more-widely applicable IR framework, of a theorisation of the Sino-Japanese relationship itself. The proposed theory of Sino-Japanese relations will, therefore, both be informed by, and contribute to, the basket of ideas that constitutes holistic constructivism.

Thus, the central hypothesis of this study is that prior interaction, ostensibly between China and Japan as states but which actually involved all of the parties identified here (and possibly more), set in place a psychological structure of the relationship that determined the expectations of all parties. This structure, while neither physical nor fixed, guided the reactions of these parties during the period of Koizumi’s tenure to help shape their individual and collective reactions. The interplay between all of these differing reactions not only produced the wider effect that we commonly think of as ‘China’s response’, but also helped to reshape the psychological structures of the relationship in a way that may impact future interaction in this area. Japan’s *perceived* attitude to China, in particular with regard to the powerful image of its aggressive history, maintains its centrality in the discourse of Sino-Japanese relations by which societal and elite interaction occurs within China. The centrality of this issue to Chinese notions of identity combined with the actions of Koizumi during his tenure as Japan’s prime minister to give Yasukuni Shrine a potent position within this interaction; the repeated discussions of it in China both prompted, and were incited by, the state-level protestations against the paucity of Japanese repentance on the ‘history issue’. Both Yasukuni Shrine specifically, and the ‘history issue’ more generally, have a position in China’s relationship with Japan at the political level, and both can obviously be influenced and affected by the behaviour of Japan, whether at a societal or elite level. However, due to the previously mentioned nature of the production of China’s response, it is wrong to think that Japan’s behaviour alone can alter the position of these issues in the bilateral relationship, contrary to the rhetoric that emerges from China.

Thus, China’s reaction to Japan is a product of competing and complementary domestic forces operating within a structurationist pattern of bilateral relations formed, and reformed, over decades of Sino-Japanese interaction around the issue of history, among others. No single actor within this complex process can claim ownership of it, but each has agency within it to either reinforce the existing pattern of the relationship, or to seek to alter it.

**3.6 Methodology Overview**

The final section of this chapter seeks to provide an overview of the methodological tools employed in the research and analysis of this work. Since chapters 4 and 5 each provide more detailed information about the individual methodologies employed in the respective work for these sections, this section aims only to provide a brief insight into the mix of methodological approaches that has been developed in the course of this research.

This study falls into two quite distinct parts that were intended to provide insight into the research focus from different angles but also to complement each other in the process. Thus, two broad approaches were selected: one with the intention of exploring the domestic construction of China’s response to the Yasukuni Shrine issue during Koizumi’s time in office; and the other to understand how the two countries interacted with each other and, more importantly, why they did so. The former of these was a content analysis of newspaper reports regarding Koizumi’s visits to the shrine across varying sections of the Chinese media, while the latter was a series of interviews with analysts and policy advisers in both China and Japan.

The content analysis involved data from three newspapers – *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily), *Huanqiu Shibao* (Global Times), and *Nanfang Dushibao* (Southern Metropolis Daily) – selected in order to provide a cross section of the Chinese media reporting of the Yasukuni issue. A total of 231 reports published in the aftermath of each of Koizumi’s six visits made during his premiership were analysed using a dictionary of negative and positive connotated words in Chinese created and provided by the National Taiwan University. This dictionary was used to measure the number of positive and negative terms in close proximity to terms such as *Riben* (Japan) and *Xiaoquan* (Koizumi). Each article was then given a ‘score’ to denote the tone used to describe Japan and Koizumi, with a higher total suggesting more positive reporting. These scores were then used to map the evolution of the tone of reporting across the six visits and across the three sections of the media represented by the chosen newspapers. The intention was to reveal both a pattern of general reporting in China on the issue and also to uncover any possible relationship between the tone of reporting in the different sections of the media.

A particular difficulty that I encountered during the newspaper analysis revolved around technology. The methodology had been designed with a piece of software called Yoshikoder in mind that would, in theory, complete much of the necessary analysis automatically. However, despite personally consulting the designers of the software as well as an experienced academic who had previously successfully employed the programme in analysing Chinese media tone, I was unable to achieve a satisfactory result from the software. The issue appeared to revolve around the software’s inability to identify what ought to be classed as a ‘word’ in Chinese.[[74]](#footnote-74) For example, the software identified only 27 occurrences of the word 日本 (*Riben;* Japan) in a dataset of several hundred articles, each one reporting on Yasukuni Shrine. This was clearly illogical. However, the software also identified numerous other ‘words’ beginning with or containing 日本, such as 日本的 (*Ribende;* Japan’s or Japanese) and 日本首相 (*Riben shouxiang;* prime minister of Japan) among many others. It thus became impossible to use the software in the way in which it had been intended, since it could not isolate the terms appropriately and could not, therefore, be relied upon to provide an accurate measure of the tone of each article. As a result, the newspaper analysis was completed manually; each article was individually coded by highlighting positive terms in green and negative terms in red, before a count of the number of positive and negative connotated references to the target nouns was completed. This process was very time consuming, but also provided an opportunity to pay closer attention to the articles than would have been allowed by automated analysis. Though it can be said to carry the risk of human error, it ultimately proved to be the only way to eliminate what had proved to be an otherwise insurmountable barrier to the process. This methodology is explained in greater detail in chapter 5.

The second part of the research consisted of in-depth interviews conducted in China and Japan over a six month period from December 2011 to May 2012. The interviews were conducted with analysts, diplomats and policy advisers from both China and Japan, as well as some from third countries with a specific interest in the relationship. The interviews were largely conducted using the ‘snowball’ method, in which each participant is asked to recommend another appropriate and willing person to engage. Although this method led to several ‘dead ends’, it did yield a satisfactory number of contributors with a total of 39 interviewees. The interviews varied in length but averaged around ninety minutes each, with the shortest being 45 minutes. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Chinese.[[75]](#footnote-75)

I encountered several difficulties with the interviewing process. The first of these was gaining access to the people to whom I wanted to speak. This was much less of a problem in Japan than in China, where obtaining interviews with decision-makers is incredibly difficult and relies on the establishment of long-term relationships. However, through academic contacts it was possible to speak to many advisers and analysts that were relatively close to the decision-making process, providing sufficient insight to make the interviews worthwhile. Another difficulty was the language barrier. This was a far greater issue in Japan than in China, since my Chinese is reasonably fluent but my Japanese is not. However, there were only a few participants who were not comfortable enough to speak in English and those that were not were willing to communicate in Chinese. The interviews in China were less of a problem, though to ensure that I did not miss nuances of a conversation I employed two techniques. Firstly, a native Chinese speaker accompanied me to around half of the interviews to assist with note-taking and advise me on linguistic nuances. Secondly, on occasions when this assistant could not attend I was able to obtain permission to record the interviews from almost all of the participants,[[76]](#footnote-76) enabling me to review them at a later date with the assistance of the native speaker. Another issue that I faced involved the willingness of those on the Chinese side to engage with the subject matter. A common attitude that I found was a view that my research was attacking the subject from the wrong angle, since the Chinese reaction was “natural”.[[77]](#footnote-77) Nevertheless, almost all were willing to discuss the specific aspects of the issue that I raised, provided that they were allowed to express the view that the root of the problem lay in Japan. The methodology of this section of the research is expanded upon in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Before the research itself is presented in detail in chapters 5 and 6, the following chapter will discuss Yasukuni Shrine in much more detail than has previously been given. It provides a background to the shrine as an institution in Japan as well as explaining some of the many facets of its position in Japanese society that have been the subject of debate. Most pertinently for the purposes of this thesis, it provides context for the roots of the issue of prime ministerial visits to the shrine as a bilateral problem in the Sino-Japanese relationship.

**4. Yasukuni Shrine and Norm Formation within Sino-Japanese Relations**

*“I assure those of you who fought and died for your country, that your names will live forever at this shrine in Musashino.”*

Poem composed by the Emperor Meiji in January 1874 (Yasukuni, 2008).

Yasukuni Shrine, or *Yasukuni Jinja*, has been a significant site of commemoration of Japan’s war dead since the 1860s. Under Shinto beliefs it is considered to house the *kami* of every person who has died fighting for Japan since then. Included in the more than two million *kami* fourteen people who had been indicted on ‘class A’ war crimes at the IMTFE. It is these fourteen individuals and the shrine’s adjoining museum, which is viewed by many as presenting a distorted history of the Japan’s actions during the Second World War in East Asia, that are usually invoked as the reason for Yasukuni Shrine’s controversial nature. This is particularly true in the eyes of Japan’s East Asian neighbours and visits to the shrine by prominent Japanese are a cause of frequent objection by political leaders in the region, most notably from China and South Korea. The annual visits by Koizumi Jun’ichirō during his five-year tenure as Japan’s prime minister were considered especially antagonistic and each visit was accompanied by both an internal, as well as an external, outpouring of nationalist rhetoric from the official organs of the PRC. This chapter explores the origin of the Yasukuni Shrine problem in Sino-Japanese relations. It begins with a brief history of the shrine itself, before going on to outline the interaction that has occurred between the two countries over the issue of Japanese prime ministerial visits to the shrine. A watershed moment can be identified at which visits to the shrine became a potentially serious matter in terms of the bilateral political relationship, namely the visit by Nakasone Yasuhiro on August 15th 1985. Prior to this, visits by Japanese prime ministers had apparently not been a source of tension for the Chinese government. The chapter goes on to identify this as a key point in time that established many of the norm structures and behavioural expectations that, later, played a significant role in political interaction. The chapter goes on to note the only other two prime ministers to visit the shrine post-1985 until the election of Koizumi, and finishes with a brief outline of the challenge that Koizumi’s behaviour posed to the previously outlined norm structures and behavioural expectations from a Chinese perspective.

**4.1 The History of Yasukuni Shrine**

As noted earlier, *Yasukuni Jinja*, is often literally translated as ‘the shrine of the peaceful country’, though it has been noted that a better translation for the word *yasukuni* would be ‘setting the country at peace’ (Pye, 2003, p. 52). The shrine was established in 1869, the second year of the Meiji era. Though the shrine is now ostensibly presented as being the site of commemoration for all of Japan’s war dead, its foundation was in order to commemorate those who fought on behalf of the Meiji emperor during the Boshin War, a civil war that saw the imperial family’s power returned from the Tokugawa shogunate. Initially it was called Tokyo Shōkonsha, but was renamed Yasukuni Jinja by the Meiji Emperor in 1879, taking the name from the classical Chinese text Zuo Zhuan.[[78]](#footnote-78)

State-sponsored Shintoism remained an integral part of post-Meiji restoration Japanese politico-societal structures, with Yasukuni at its heart. As Japan engaged in increasing levels of military activity, the promise that a martyr’s soul would be forever venerated at Yasukuni was a powerful bond between state and society. The shrine remained a state-run institution until Japan’s defeat in 1945. As part of the new constitution that it established, the US-led Occupation Authorities decreed a separation of religion and state, ostensibly bringing to an end the process of state-sponsored Shintoism which was widely considered to have been a tool of engaging the Japanese masses in militarist and imperialistic campaigns. The priests of Yasukuni Shrine were thus presented with a stark choice: to sever all ties with the government and become a privately run, self-funded institution; or to reform the shrine into a secular memorial for Japan’s war dead. The former option was considered less heinous (though neither was considered desirable) and since 1945 Yasukuni Shrine has, ostensibly, been a private religious institution. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of a blurring of the lines, with the shrine continuing to receive patronage from those in high-level governmental roles, as well as extensive backing from the Imperial Family, including from Emperor Hirohito himself.

**4.1.1 Yasukuni Shrine’s Controversy**

Earhart has noted that despite the contribution to the war effort of Japanese civilians, explicitly demanded by the Japanese government at the time, not a single civilian from the ‘Great East Asian War’ has ever received the recognition of enshrinement in Yasukuni ([Earhart, 2005](#_ENREF_13)). Earhart explores the "kamikazefication" of the Japanese nation during the war, and details how people were expected – and often forced – to sacrifice themselves for the war effort. Earhart denounces the folly of a Yasukuni ideology, under which anyone who served the nation should be enshrined and venerated as a warrior god who protects those left behind. She claims that in a war in which the entire nation is “kamikazefied”, all should be enshrined and nobody would be left behind to be the nation, the venerators and the protected.

The domestic controversy over prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni is twofold. Firstly, there is the issue of the separation of religion and the state. Yasukuni is a religious institution and the patronage of it by serving politicians, particularly if done so in an official capacity, raises questions about constitutionality, though it is also argued that as the centre of commemoration for those who died in the war it would be absurd for the head of government not to be allowed to pay respects there ([Nitta, 2007](#_ENREF_50)). Secondly, Yasukuni’s role in the image of Japanese nationalism, both at home and abroad, is deeply problematic.

The religiosity of the shrine has received attention from some parts of academia, mainly in reaction to claims that the shrine should not be viewed as a religious institution because of its role as a war memorial – indeed, Tamamoto has claimed that it is the “equivalent” of Arlington Cemetery in Washington ([Tamamoto, 2001](#_ENREF_72)). By demonstrating that Japanese culture has, in common with many societies, the concept of a “bad death”, in which the spirit of the deceased will not be at peace due to an untimely or unnatural death, Antoni shows that Yasukuni’s role is to pacify such spirits in order to protect the living world. For Antoni, this is proof that the shrine is unquestionably, and primarily, of a religious nature ([Antoni, 1988](#_ENREF_2)). The debate over religiosity is simply settled for Pye. The rituals and history of Yasukuni mean it is unquestionably religious, and this is confirmed by the opposition of even those who strongly support its continued position at the heart of national commemoration to its re-nationalisation, on the grounds that this would result in its secularisation and impair its ability to take care of the *kami*. While other war memorials do exist, it is the enshrinement of *kami* at Yasukuni that causes the controversy, therefore it "is a potent location for conflict precisely because it is religious" ([Pye, 2003](#_ENREF_51), p. 51).

Yasukuni Shrine certainly plays a role in the construction of Japanese nationalism, making it both pertinent and problematic, given its inherent links to Japan’s historical imperialism ([Akaha, 2008](#_ENREF_1), [Sherif, 2007](#_ENREF_66)). Despite the continued belief of some elements of Japanese society, both within the political and academic elite and also in wider society, that the IMTFE verdicts do not represent a just and balanced view of that period of Japan’s history ([Sakurai, 2005](#_ENREF_58)), this refusal to accept Japanese responsibility remains a minority ([Jager and Mitter, 2007](#_ENREF_30)). Awareness of Japanese actions during the 1930s and 1940s is actually wider than often assumed (Gries et al., 2009). However, even among those who do accept the IMTFE verdicts, the commonly held view outside of Japan of Yasukuni Shrine as inextricably linked to war crimes is far from universally accepted domestically. The response to Li Ying’s film on Yasukuni, when the vast majority of cinemas across the country refused to show it, demonstrates that a willingness to engage in this debate publicly is still lacking in large parts of society ([Moller, 2008](#_ENREF_47), [Li, 2008](#_ENREF_37)). A recent poll also showed that a large proportion of young Japanese were unaware that prominent war criminals were enshrined at Yasukuni (Asahi Shimbun, 2013).[[79]](#footnote-79)

John Nelson has conducted a detailed exploration of the ways in which rituals have solidified Yasukuni's meaning in Japanese consciousness and, consequently, profoundly affected social memory in Japan ([Nelson, 2003](#_ENREF_49), p. 452). He challenges the commonly-held Shinto notion that once enshrined all *kami* are as one, a concept that is used to explain why the fourteen war criminals cannot simply be ‘de-enshrined’. Nelson notes that this is both misunderstood by bereaved families who go to Yasukuni to worship and remember *individuals*, but also contradicted by the shrine itself that places a clear hierarchical distinction between commoners and those of imperial descent ([Nelson, 2003](#_ENREF_49)). Interestingly, this is also evident in the "complementary" role of the Yūshūkan, which, through its use of artefacts, personal letters, and photographs, allows the *kami* to “take the form of individuals once more” ([Nelson, 2003](#_ENREF_49), p. 454). For Nelson, the rituals of Yasukuni Shrine have allowed and enabled the Japanese to not re-evaluate the destruction of the 1940s by helping to "recontextualize social memories and attitudes that redeem those who participated in the war and who supported the ideology behind its initial goals" ([Nelson, 2003](#_ENREF_49), p. 463), which explains the oft-cited belief among bereaved families that even war criminals deserve their enshrinement and, by extension, veneration. Nelson ends with a caution to fellow academics whose work on Yasukuni is frequently grounded in a particular discipline that leads to, perhaps, inevitable conclusions that are not necessarily helpful to understanding Yasukuni’s role in Japan’s social memory. Such interpretation is, and always will be, a matter of conjecture.

Though the Shinto-roots of Yasukuni make it, arguably, uniquely Japanese in its nature, its essence as the focal point of commemoration for the nation’s war dead is far from unique. Virtually every country has at least one site at which political leaders, representatives of armed forces, bereaved families and members of the public can pay tribute to those who have died in the name of their country. Indeed, in defence of its continued position at the centre of Japanese commemoration it has been compared with other significant national memorials such as Arlington in the US (Tamamoto, 2001; Nitta, 2007, p. 130; Doak, 2007, p. 55-6; Prestowitz, 2013). [[80]](#footnote-80) The controversial aspect of Yasukuni lies at the nexus between religious institution and war memorial. The decision to enshrine the souls of all those who died in the name of the country means that even those convicted of some of the most infamous crimes of Japan’s invasion and occupation of its neighbours during the 1930s and 1940s are commemorated at the shrine. Though many of those convicted of war crimes were not immediately enshrined, throughout the 1950s and 1960s the vast majority of these people were. By 1978, only fourteen names remained that had not yet received the honour. In that year, Matsudaira Nagayoshi, who had recently replaced his father as High Priest of Yasukuni Shrine, elected to enshrine the *kami* of these remaining fourteen, including some of the most notorious names from Japan’s invasion of its East Asian neighbours. Furthermore, the Shinto explanation that each of the *kami* becomes an inseparable part of the whole upon enshrinement makes it difficult for separate commemoration to be understood. When one claims to be paying tribute to a particular individual or group of individuals at Yasukuni, one must somehow differentiate them in ways that are apparently not possible according to the priesthood. Resultantly, the enshrinement of a number of ‘class A’ war criminals in 1978 renders all those who pay tribute at the shrine open to the accusation that they are worshipping the very worst of Japan’s wrongdoers. It is this ambiguity that is ordinarily cited as the grounds for opposition to official political visits (or from high level political figures acting in an ostensibly unofficial capacity) from those both inside and outside of Japan.

There is a discrepancy in the literature regarding the ‘class A’ war criminals enshrined at Yasukuni. Most sources simply cite the number as fourteen. It is certainly true that fourteen individuals were enshrined in 1978, and that the revelation of their enshrinement the following year was the source of great controversy within Japan and beyond. However, the definition of them as ‘class A war criminals’ is problematic. The IMTFE indicted a total of 28 individuals on charges of ‘class A’ war crimes. Two of those indicted – Matsuoka Yōsuke and Nagano Osami – died during the trial and were, therefore, never convicted. Another – Okawa Shumei – had his trial dismissed on grounds of ill health. Thus, the number was reduced to 25. All were convicted of at least one of the charges they faced.[[81]](#footnote-81) Nevertheless, only those that died in the course of serving Japan’s war effort would be deemed to qualify for enshrinement at Yasukuni. Thus, only those that were executed, or who died in prison whilst serving their sentence, could be enshrined at Yasukuni. These fourteen individuals included Matsuoka and Nagano, both of whom, though indicted on ‘class A’ charges, were never convicted. It is possible that the mere indictment of these individuals is deemed sufficient to place them in the same category as those convicted; it may seem highly unlikely that they would have been acquitted. However, the issue is further complicated by the inclusion in these fourteen criminals of Matsui Iwane, the general who was held responsible for the Nanjing Massacre. Despite being indicted on 7 counts of ‘class A’ war crimes, Matsui was only found guilty on one count of ‘class BC’, or “conventional war crimes or crimes against humanity” (Pritchard, 1998b, p. 49,816). Given that Matsui was charged – but acquitted – with several counts of ‘class A’ crimes, it seems historiographically unsatisfactory to assume that both Matsuoka and Nagano would have been found guilty had they survived. Thus, although it is widely accepted that Yasukuni Shrine enshrined ‘14 class A war criminals’ in 1978, it is not historically accurate. Nevertheless, all fourteen were enshrined at the same time, more than three decades after their deaths and almost twenty years after all of the apparently lesser war criminals had been enshrined with substantially less controversy.[[82]](#footnote-82) It should be noted that by identifying this discrepancy regarding Matsui, I do not seek to downplay either the severity of the crimes with which he was convicted, or the significance of his place in the historically-rooted ill feelings between China and Japan. His role in the Nanjing Massacre makes him one of the most infamous players in the war from a Chinese perspective and the somewhat arbitrary nature of the classification of his crime as ‘BC’ rather than ‘A’ did not prevent his execution, whilst several of those convicted for multiple counts of ‘class A’ crimes received prison sentences. Their simultaneous inclusion suggests that, despite the differing degrees of convictions, the fourteen remain associated with one another both inside and outside of Japan. It is also certainly correct to assert that these individuals were indicted on ‘class A’ war crimes charges, and the fact that only the twenty eight charged at the IMTFE were charged with the most serious classification of crimes[[83]](#footnote-83) does offer some explanation as to why they might be referred to in this way. For these reasons, I refer to the ‘14 war criminals’ in this thesis, rather than identifying them with the ‘class A’ tag with which they are commonly associated.

**4.1.2 The Role of the Emperor**

The enshrinement of these war criminals was not without opposition in Japan itself. Indeed, the fact that the ceremony was conducted in secret and not revealed until the following year is testament to this. Much of this opposition was domestic in its consideration; that is to say that the basis of the opposition to their enshrinement revolved around considerations of Japan’s internal politics. However, there was one highly significant indication of the understanding of the international element of this development in the form of the emperor’s response. From the inception of the shrine in the 1860s, the patronage of the emperor had been a key part of its legitimacy and a highly symbolic indication of the importance of its role in Japanese war memorialisation. After Japan’s defeat in 1945, Emperor Hirohito continued the practice of paying tribute at the shrine on important occasions and visited the shrine every few years prior to the enshrinement of the war criminals, before abruptly ceasing the practice. He did not visit the shrine again before his death in 1989 and his successor, Emperor Akihito, has never been to the shrine since his accession. Though he never made any public pronouncement on the matter, it seemed clear that this change in behaviour had been in response to the war criminals’ enshrinement given that he had previously visited the shrine on seven occasions in the post war era, never leaving a gap of more than six years between visits (Tanaka, 2008, p. 125). This assessment appears to have been borne out by two revelations that were made in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Firstly, former Grand Steward to the Imperial Household Tomita Tomohiko’s diaries were serialised in the Nihon Seikai Shimbun and showed an entry from April 28th 1988 detailing a meeting with Emperor Hirohito in which the then emperor had expressed his displeasure with the decision to enshrine the war criminals in 1978 (Japan Times, 2006). This was backed up in 2007 when the diaries of another aide, Urabe Ryōgo, were revealed in a major Japanese newspaper, the Asahi Shimbun. Urabe’s diaries had recorded a meeting with the emperor on exactly the same day as Tomita, with a similar content. Urabe also specifically referred to the emperor’s consideration of China’s opposition to the enshrinement (Kyodo, 2007). Official publicity from Yasukuni Shrine itself continues to emphasise the “deep relationship with the Japanese imperial family” by, for example, stressing that tributes are still sent by the emperor during both Spring and Autumn rites (Yasukuni, 2008).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Convictions | | Death |
| Doihara Kenji | | Class A (6 counts); Class BC (1 count) | Executed |
| Hiranuma Kiichirō | | Class A (6 counts) | Died in prison |
| Hirota Kōki | | Class A (2 counts); Class BC (1 count) | Executed |
| Itagaki Seishirō | | Class A (7 counts); Class BC (1 count) | Executed |
| Kimura Heitarō | | Class A (5 counts); Class BC (2 counts) | Executed |
| Koiso Kuniaki | | Class A (5 counts); Class BC (1 count) | Died in prison |
| Matsui Iwane | | Class BC (1 count) | Executed |
| Matsuoka Yōsuke | | - | Died awaiting trial |
| Mutō Akira | | Class A (5 counts); Class BC (2 counts) | Executed |
| Nagano Osami | | - | Died awaiting trial |
| Shiratori Toshio | | Class A (1 count) | Died in prison |
| Tōgō Shigenori | | Class A (5 counts) | Died in prison |
| Tōjō Hideki | | Class A (6 counts); Class BC (1 count) | Executed |
| Umezu Yoshijirō | | Class A (5 counts) | Died in prison |

Table 4.1: The War Criminals Enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine in 1978. Source: Collated from Pritchard (1998a, p. 2-13; 1998b, p. 49,773-49,858)

However, the refusal of both Emperors Hirohito and Akihito to have paid a visit to the shrine in the 35 years since the enshrinement of the war criminals has clearly altered the relationship, and the acknowledgement that this alteration came about, at least in part, as a result of a consideration of Japan’s relationship with China demonstrates that what is sometimes presented as being a purely domestic issue has clear international dimensions and a specific role within the Sino-Japanese relationship. Although it cannot be said to be solely a Sino-Japanese issue – it has a position in other bilateral relationships, notably Korea-Japan, as well as being the subject of significant domestic debate and controversy – it is this role that is explored in this thesis.

**4.2 Prime Ministerial Visits and China’s Response**

Visits to Yasukuni Shrine by serving prime ministers were the norm rather than the exception up to 1985. In fact, despite the US-enforced constitutional separation of religion and state previously noted, Yoshida Shigeru even made the first of his five visits as prime minister during the period of US occupation. Most of his successors continued the practice of making multiple visits during their tenures, with Satō Eisaku making a record ten visits during his time in office.[[84]](#footnote-84) Despite the decision of the emperor to cease his visits after the enshrinement of the war criminals in 1978, the practice of prime ministerial visits continued until Nakasone Yasuhiro made what was his tenth visit in less than three years as prime minister. Nakasone chose to make this visit on August 15th 1985, the fortieth anniversary of what is considered to have been Japan’s surrender, [[85]](#footnote-85) and to announce it as an official visit, in what was a challenge to the separation of religion and state in Japan. It provoked a furious reaction externally and Nakasone determined not to return to the shrine during his tenure in a direct response to Chinese requests.

**4.2.1 Pre-1978 Prime Ministerial Visits**

The first post war prime minister of note to visit Yasukuni Shrine was Yoshida Shigeru,[[86]](#footnote-86) Japan’s second longest serving post war prime minister. Yoshida had two spells as prime minister, from 1946 to 1947 and then again from 1948 until 1954. He did not visit the shrine in his first period in office and refrained from paying tribute during his second spell until 1951. However, thereafter, he made five visits in just two and half years. All of these visits were made during either Spring or Autumn Rites and there is no record of any discontent lodged by the PRC at this time, either through diplomatic channels or in the domestic official media. There was a similar pattern with Yoshida’s successors, though an exception was Ishibashi Tanzan, who left office after just 64 days due to ill health. However, both Kishi Nobusuke and Ikeda Hayato continued the practice, visiting the shrine three and four times respectively during their times in office. None of these prime ministers met with any public protest from the official organs of the PRC, though this is, perhaps, because the two countries had not yet established diplomatic relations.

Ikeda’s successor, Satō Eisaku, not only became Japan’s longest serving post war prime minister but also established the record for the number of visits to Yasukuni as a serving prime minister by racking up a total of eleven. He continued the now-established ritual of paying tribute at Yasukuni during Spring and Autumn Rites and did not visit on any dates that could be directly associated with any of the events of World War II. Satō began his tenure by visiting the shrine once in each of his first four years in office, but thereafter went twice each year, apparently establishing a pattern of visiting during both Spring and Autumn Rites. Satō was succeeded by Tanaka Kakuei, who visited the shrine on six occasions during his two and half years in office, continuing the trend of both spring and autumn visits.[[87]](#footnote-87)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | No. of Visits | Dates of Shrine Visits |
| Yoshida Shigeru | 5 | Oct 18th 1951; Oct 17th 1952; Apr 23rd; Oct 24th 1953; Apr 24th 1954 |
| Hatoyama Ichirō | 0 | - |
| Ishibashi Tanzan | 0 | - |
| Kishi Nobusuke | 2 | Apr 25th 1957; Oct 21st 1958 |
| Ikeda Hayato | 5 | Oct 18th 1960; Jun 18th; Nov 15th 1961; Nov 4th 1962; Sep 22nd 1963 |
| Satō Eisaku | 11 | Apr 21st 1965; Apr 21st 1966; Apr 22nd 1967; Apr 23rd 1968; Apr 22nd; Oct 18th 1969; Apr 22nd; Oct 17th 1970; Apr 22nd; Oct 18th 1971; Apr 22nd 1972 |
| Tanaka Kakuei | 6 | July 8th; Oct 17th 1972; Apr 23rd; Oct 18th 1973; Apr 23rd; Oct 19th 1974 |
| Miki Takeo | 3 | Apr 22nd; Aug 15th 1975; Oct 18th 1976 |
| Fukuda Takeo | 4 | Apr 21st 1977; Apr 21st; Aug 15th; Oct 18th 1978 |
| Ōhira Masayoshi | 3 | Apr 21st; Oct 18th 1979; Apr 21st 1980 |
| Suzuki Zenkō | 8 | Aug 15th; Oct 18th 1980; Apr 21st; Aug 15th; Oct 17th 1981; Apr 21st; Aug 15th; Oct 18th 1982 |
| Nakasone Yasuhiro | 10 | Apr 21st; Aug 15th; Oct 18th 1983; Jan 5th; Apr 21st; Aug 15th; Oct 18th 1984; Jan 22nd; Apr 22nd; Aug 15th 1985 |

Table 4.2. Post-war Visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Serving Prime Ministers, 1948-1985. Source: Collated from Ishihara (2002, p. 120-3).

The Satō and Tanaka tenures are important for the consideration of Sino-Japanese relations, because the process of rapprochement was ongoing throughout this time and diplomatic relations were finally established once Tanaka became prime minister. It is known that Satō was not considered an acceptable person to deal with in terms of China establishing relations with Japan and that the succession of Tanaka was a catalyst for Sino-Japanese rapprochement (Hook, 1973, p. 26). Yet both prime ministers made patronage of Yasukuni Shrine an important consideration as part of their tenures, so it could be deduced from this that the shrine remained exogenous to political relations between the two countries at this time. This is further evidenced by the reporting in *Renmin Ribao*. During Satō’s eight year tenure there were just four articles that even mentioned the shrine, none of which were reporting Satō’s visits. Nevertheless, the shrine was cited as a potential tool for remilitarisation in one piece that warned Satō was “clearing the way for a military build-up” (“*gei kuojun beizhan sao qing daolu*”)*,* showing that there was a recognition of Yasukuni’s particular potency in terms of promoting a certain kind of Japanese national identity long before the controversy of the war criminals’ enshrinement in 1978 (Renmin Ribao, 1969). It should be noted that the shrine was in no way the main focus of the article which mainly addressed the perceived support of the Satō administration for “US imperialism and Soviet revisionism” (“*Meidi Suxiu*”). Just three articles mentioned the shrine during Tanaka’s tenure, with none of these reporting on prime ministerial visits.

It could be argued that the nature of the visits changed with Prime Ministers Miki and Fukuda. Miki Takeo, who was in office from 1974 until 1976, became the first serving prime minister to visit Yasukuni Shrine on August 15th, the date considered to be the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in 1945. Miki was marking the thirtieth year since the surrender. Previous visits by prime ministers had been conducted to coincide with important traditional Japanese festivals, such as Spring and Autumn Rites. As such, it was easier to argue that the visits were part of Japan’s tradition and cultural heritage rather than any act associated specifically with Japan’s invasion of East Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. However, Miki’s decision to visit on this important anniversary inextricably associated the act of prime ministerial visits to the shrine with the events of World War II. The precise nature of that association is certainly open for debate and, to a great extent, a matter of personal interpretation but the choice of that date left no ambiguity as to the presence of a link of some kind.

Miki’s visit came at the end of a debate that had been running in Japanese politics over the government’s role with Yasukuni Shrine. The Yasukuni Shrine Bill, which proposed that the shrine would return to an element of government control – including placing the responsibility for determining who would be enshrined there directly with the prime minister – went before the Diet on five occasions between 1969 and 1974. Though it was finally defeated, the very essence of the bill demonstrated a movement in the conservative political elite to regain some sort of authority over the historical consciousness of the Japanese people. Miki’s decision to patronise Yasukuni Shrine on August 15th 1975 can be viewed in this light (Seraphim, 2006, p. 258-246).

The decision to visit on August 15th, therefore, represents something of political manoeuvre on the part of the LDP to regain a level of control over commemoration of Japan’s war dead. This had some success and there was a demonstrable shift in the consciousness of the Japanese nation with regard to commemorating the dead of the Greater East Asian War and the Second Sino-Japanese War. Beatrice Trefalt has noted that this shift occurred across the 1950s and 1960s so that, by the early 1970s, there was an evident “psychological fracture of the Japanese population” (Trefalt, 2002, p. 132). Trefalt believes that the treatment of “stragglers” – soldiers that were found not to have returned at the end of war and to have continued to hide in various parts of the Asia-Pacific – shows that by the mid-1970s Japan’s collective memory of the war had moved away from glorification and towards adopting the idea of victimhood for all those that died in the war. For Franziska Seraphim, the 1970s was “a critical decade in which the dynamics of the public contest over the past changed” (Seraphim, 2006, p. 246). Certainly no prime minister had deemed it either necessary or appropriate to make a visit to the shrine on this anniversary until Miki in 1975. It was subsequently adopted as one of the occasions that a prime minister would visit the shrine, with three out of four the prime ministers that succeeded Miki choosing to visit the shrine at least once on this date.[[88]](#footnote-88) Nakasone’s visit in 1985 was the fifth time in six years that a serving prime minister had made the visit on this date.

Fukuda’s contribution was just as significant in terms of the development of the issue as a particular problem in Sino-Japanese relations. Firstly, Fukuda followed the example set by Miki by also choosing to pay tribute at Yasukuni on August 15th. However, whereas Miki had specifically signed the guestbook as “*shijin toshite*” (“private person”), Fukuda confirmed his position as “*naikaku sōri daijin*” (“Prime Minister of the Cabinet”). It has been assessed that this represents the first official visit to Yasukuni Shrine by a Japanese prime minister after the end of the war (Hielscher, 2004, p. 199).

Despite these developments, there was virtually no reaction from China to these visits. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Perhaps most obviously these visits occurred prior to the enshrinement of the war criminals. China’s official declarations on this issue have consistently referred to the war criminals’ enshrinement as the root cause of the problem, and the lack of reaction to these visits would appear to support that, even with the added potentially aggravating factors of the sensitive date and the apparent officialisation of the visits. It is also important to consider the positive developments in Sino-Japanese relations that occurred during this period of time. In fact, Fukuda’s official visit on August 15th 1978 came just three days after the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and two months before Deng Xiaoping’s state visit to Japan. Negotiations between Deng and Fukuda had proved more fruitful than most observers had expected given the impasse over inserting an ‘anti-hegemony’ clause into the treaty that had lasted several years (Kim, 1979, p. 303-306) and the issue of Yasukuni was clearly not a barrier to the development of relations between China and Japan at that time.

**4.2.2 Prime Ministerial Visits 1978-1985**

Though the fourteen war criminals had been enshrined in October 1978, this was not immediately made public. It was only in April 1979, just prior to the beginning of the shrine’s spring rites, that the enshrinement was publicly acknowledged. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi was not deterred and visited the shrine on April 21st of that year though elected not to continue the practice of making a visit on August 15th. As Hielscher notes, Ōhira’s actions established a “precedent” for the prime minister to visit Yasukuni and “pay his respects also to the memory of those 14 convicted war criminals” whilst also “de-emphasizing the relationship to World War II” (Hielscher, 2004, p. 193-4).

After Ōhira’s death during the election campaign of 1980, Suzuki Zenkō was elected as prime minister with a landslide victory. On the back of this, Suzuki made what were unprecedented shows of support for the institution of Yasukuni and the patronage of it by the Japanese government. On August 15th of that year, the 35th anniversary of Japan’s surrender, Suzuki visited the shrine with no fewer than 15 of his cabinet colleagues, five times as many as the previous highest and leaving just five members of the cabinet not included. The following year this was even more extensive, with Suzuki accompanied to the shrine by eighteen cabinet members. Of the two who did not join him, one had been the previous day and the other was on an overseas trip (Hielscher, 2004, p. 200). These massive displays of support for the shrine gave the appearance of official visits, though Suzuki was able to argue that he had not fulfilled all of the criteria to make them official. Though travelling in his official car and, on the second occasion, signing the guestbook under his official title, no cabinet vote had been called to confirm that these were official visits (Hielscher, 2004, p. 201). Despite this, the impression given to both domestic and international observers by virtually the entire cabinet paying tribute *en masse* was that the Japanese government was giving the shrine official support in the wake of the war criminals’ enshrinement.

Suzuki’s 1980 visit was also notable for the fact that it was the first prime ministerial visit to be reported in China, with *Renmin Ribao* also reporting the enshrinement of the war criminals for the first time (*Renmin Ribao*, 1980, p. 4). However, though the article did refer to the suggested links between the shrine and Japanese militarism,[[89]](#footnote-89) it focussed on Japanese domestic controversy surrounding the constitutional questions over the shrine visits. There was no mention of any international opposition at all, and no reference to China’s position on the matter. The coverage of his second visit, exactly one year later, was almost identical (*Renmin Ribao*, 1981, p. 6).

Suzuki refused to countenance changing the constitution to allow official visits, but continued to conduct his visits in a way that gave the impression of them being official. His final visit as prime minister in 1982, which was also carried out on August 15th, was similar to his previous visits in the mass participation of cabinet members. It was, for the first time, also reinforced by a large-scale delegation of Diet members that visited the shrine on the same day. It was, then, under Suzuki that the apparent tradition of turning Yasukuni Shrine into an “annual circus” on August 15th each year began in earnest (Nelson, 2003, p. 459).[[90]](#footnote-90) China’s reaction to this final visit was quite muted, though it was covered in *Renmin Ribao* but without the previous attention to the Japanese domestic protests.That the response from China was so low-key is significant as it came in the midst of the first textbook controversy and before a resolution had been reached. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that, while Yasukuni Shrine had begun to be noted in connection with Japan’s attitude towards its history and any potential for remilitarisation, it was not yet an issue central to determining how Sino-Japanese relations proceeded.

If the “floodgates” had been opened by Suzuki (Hielscher, 2004, p. 200), then Nakasone Yasuhiro, his successor, certainly had no intention of closing them. Nakasone would fall just one short of equalling Satō’s record number of eleven visits to the shrine as prime minister, but managed to do so in just two and half years. In addition to continuing the annual visits on August 15th, Nakasone also began to visit during Spring and Autumn Rites, as well as at New Year. This meant that in 1984 he made no less than four visits, having also made three in the previous year. On August 15th 1985 he made what was his third of four planned visits for the year, but what actually proved to be the last visit he made as prime minister, despite holding office for a further two years. The chief cabinet secretary, who had been tasked with assessing whether or not official visits to Yasukuni would contravene the constitutional division of religion and state, declared shortly before the anniversary that in his opinion official visits were not, after all, unconstitutional. As a result, Nakasone conducted his August 15th visit not only in the company of virtually his entire cabinet, but also declared it to be *kōshiki sanpai*, an official visit. It is worth noting that Nakasone’s position on the shrine was somewhat nuanced. Even on his final visit, when he declared it to be “official”, High Priest Matsudaira refused even to greet the prime minister due to Nakasone’s refusal to undergo Shinto purification prior to praying and also his unorthodox way of praying (Breen, 2007, p. 10).

Given the apparently inexorable march towards officialising the visits, and the increasing normality of them in terms of their frequency, this abrupt end to the practice needs some explanation. China’s response was the strongest it had ever been and included the symbolic cancelation of a Japanese film festival scheduled to take place in Beijing, but also included an official request that the visits cease. Declarations in official media in China also made it clear that a red line had been reached. Charts 4.1 and 4.2 give an indication of how in depth the Yasukuni Shrine issue was reported in *Renmin Ribao* in the post war era, and also after the revelation of the enshrinement of the war criminals in April 1979. It is clear that the matter was not really acknowledged until Suzuki began his visits, and that it was only when Nakasone finally declared an official visit on August 15th 1985 that the CCP went public over its objections. Indeed, of the four visits that Nakasone had made in 1984, only the one made on the anniversary of Japan’s surrender even merited a mention. When it came to the autumn and Nakasone’s expected fourth visit of the year, a public declaration that it had been “postponed” was explained to the Chinese later in October: a barely credible statement from Nikaido Susumu, who was secretary general of the LDP, was given to the Chinese ambassador stating that Nakasone “had not known that class A war criminals are worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine” (cited in Hielscher, 2004, p. 203). The cabinet later approved a written statement that was sent to China to advise that official visits to Yasukuni had not been “institutionalised”.

China’s frustration with the shrine issue may have been exacerbated by the re-opening of the Yūshūkan, the museum based within the grounds of Yasukuni that is notorious for its presentation of history, which High Priest Matsudaira had been pivotal in bringing about.[[91]](#footnote-91) What is quite clear is that Nakasone, having previously been intent on making regular visits to the shrine and advancing the cause of establishing the legality of official visits, dramatically altered his behaviour in response to pressure from China. Nakasone himself confirmed this decision had been made in direct response to a request from the then-General Secretary of the CCP Hu Yaobang.[[92]](#footnote-92) The two leaders had a good personal relationship and both wished to advance the cause of deepening Sino-Japanese ties, so it is understandable that Nakasone would be willing to respond to a reasonable request if it appeared to be in Japan’s greater national interests. However, such an abrupt shift in behaviour regarding the shrine, in the face of seemingly unstoppable domestic momentum towards the regularisation of prime ministerial visits, indicates three things: firstly, that seeking not to provoke a backlash from China, either at the governmental or societal level, was considered to be a key national interest of Japan, surpassing the domestic imperative of the support for the shrine visits; secondly, that the apparently inexorable move towards officialising and regularising the visits had been identified as an unacceptable development within the Chinese government; and thirdly, that this unacceptability had been clearly and effectively communicated by the Chinese elite to their Japanese counterparts. The result was that Nakasone publicly ‘postponed’ all of his subsequent visits whilst in office.[[93]](#footnote-93) It should be noted, however, that despite Nakasone’s

Chart 4.1: Number of Articles Mentioning Yasukuni Shrine in *Renmin Ribao* 1951-2011

Chart 4.2: Number of Articles Mentioning Yasukuni Shrine in *Renmin Ribao* since the Revelation of the War Criminals’ Enshrinement.

decision not to continue his visits, his fellow cabinet members continued with the practice and made clear that they were acting in their respective official capacities.

Nakasone’s successor, Takeshita Noboru, became the first prime minister of Japan for three decades not to visit the shrine whilst in office. However, since Nakasone had refrained from the practice for the final two years of his premiership, Takeshita’s abstention did not mark a change in behavioural patterns. In this way, by the end of Takeshita’s time in office, four years had passed without a prime ministerial visit to the shrine, the longest absence since Yoshida Shigeru made the first post-war prime ministerial visit in 1951. Moreover, the break in this practice came about as an explicit acceptance of China’s view that the practice was unacceptable in the context of the bilateral relationship. Thus, prime ministers refraining from patronising the shrine during their time in office became a part of the mutually understood relationship norms that governed bilateral interaction. While there was clearly no formal or written agreement on the issue, it was clear that the act would now constitute a transgression of this bilateral norm and would, therefore, require some sort of reaction from China that would signify a level of deterioration in the relationship.

**4.2.3 Post-1985 Prime Ministerial Visits**

In purely factual terms, the next serving prime minister to visit the shrine whilst in office was Miyazawa Kiichi. However, Miyazawa’s visit in 1992 was significantly different to the other visits paid by serving prime ministers either before or since, as he went in secret and the event was not made public until four years later, after he had left office (Shibuichi, 2005, p. 209). As a result, there was no reaction from China to speak of. Thus, in terms of publicly visible prime ministerial visits, there was a full eleven years between Nakasone’s final visit and the next prime minister to pay tribute at the shrine. Hashimoto Ryūtarō had paid tribute at Yasukuni as a cabinet minister prior to becoming prime minister, signing the guestbook in one of his other key capacities of Chairman of the Japan Society of Bereaved Families. Given this connection it was not entirely surprising that the issue of Yasukuni re-emerged once he was elected prime minister two years later.

Hashimoto visited the shrine in July 1996, avoiding the issue of an August 15th visit that inevitably raises questions over links with Japan’s militaristic past. Nevertheless, the event was a challenge to the apparently understood relationship norms from a Chinese perspective. It provoked criticism in both the spheres of diplomacy and public relations, with the return of Yasukuni to the agenda in terms of the official Chinese discourse. China used a meeting at the UN headquarters in New York in September of that year to lodge a formal objection and request assurances that such an act would not be repeated.

Though Hashimoto broke the established pattern of relations on this issue by making the first (public) prime ministerial visit to the shrine since Nakasone’s ceased the practice in 1985, he also followed the example set by seeking to reassure China and compensate it with sufficient symbolic capital to prevent the issue from causing a major rift in the relationship. He did this by becoming the first post-war prime minister to visit China’s northeast region of Manchuria. Known in Chinese as *Dongbei*, literally ‘Northeast’, the region which includes the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, formed the bulk of Japan’s puppet state of Manchukuo during its occupation of China in the 1930s and 1940s. On September 18th 1931 the Manchurian Incident,[[94]](#footnote-94) in which Japanese military personnel staged a railway explosion in order to develop a pretext for invading the rest of the *Dongbei*. Hashimoto, visiting China as part of a programme of events to mark the 25th anniversary of the normalisation of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, went to *Dongbei* after meeting President Jiang Zemin in Beijing. Whilst in the region, Hashimoto made the highly symbolic gesture of visiting the *Jiuyiba* *Shibian Jinianguan* (9.18 Memorial Hall), where the events of the Manchurian Incident and its aftermath are commemorated.

Koizumi was the next prime minister to visit Yasukuni Shrine during his time in office when he visited on August 13th 2001. In doing so he partially fulfilled a commitment made during his campaign for election to the leadership of the LDP.[[95]](#footnote-95) During his five and half years in office Koizumi visited in each year, making a total of six visits, with the final visit being on August 15th 2006, just one month before he stood down. The events surrounding these visits and their ramifications are the main focus of this thesis and are discussed at length in chapters 1, 5, 6 and 8. None of Koizumi’s six successors visited the shrine during their time in office. However, Abe Shinzō broke this pattern on December 26th 2013,[[96]](#footnote-96) marking one year since his return to the post of prime minister. In visiting on this date, Abe fulfilled a pledge that he would do so within one year of taking of office. Although this visit falls outside of the original scope of this thesis, it is discussed in chapter 8.

**4.3 Chinese Foreign Policy Making**

This section will explore the processes of Chinese foreign policy making, highlighting the actors and institutions that play significant roles in the formation of China’s strategies and policies in the international arena. It does so in order to illustrate the position of Yasukuni Shrine as a foreign policy issue for China’s policy-makers. It will go on to place this in the context of China’s Japan policy, explaining how the Chinese system produces a fairly coherent approach to relations, before going into further detail about the specific issue of Yasukuni Shrine within that relationship, showing the kinds of responses that China has produced with regard to this issue. In doing so, this section seeks to expand on much of the previous three chapters that have provided background to the general understanding of all of these processes and the actors involved therein.

**4.3.1 The Actors and Processes in Chinese Foreign Policy Making**

Fundamentally, political power in China remains concentrated in a small number of individuals, despite a discernible pluralisation that has occurred in the last twenty years. Thus, China’s ultimate foreign policy direction or overall strategy continues to be determined to a large extent by the leader of the day.[[97]](#footnote-97) That is not to suggest that one person entirely dominates the process as might have been the case during parts of the Mao era. The president[[98]](#footnote-98) is at the centre of the most powerful individuals in the Chinese political system, with a number of other elite leaders forming the politburo standing committee.[[99]](#footnote-99) Beyond that, the politburo itself consists of 25 people, including the standing committee, with these 25 individuals constituting the core of the political decision-making process in China.

Contrary to expectations, the foreign minister is not ordinarily a senior policy-maker. The MFA, which is headed by the foreign minister, is subordinate to the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG) of the CCP (*Zhongyang Waishi Gongzuo Lingdao Xiaozu*), on which it is common for the minister not to have a seat. This group is ordinarily (though not constitutionally) chaired by the president. Thus, although foreign policy strategy is determined at the highest level in the standing committee of the politburo, the FALSG represents the link between the central party hierarchy and the bureaucracy of the ministry, assuming much of the responsibility for developing policy and determining reactions to events in China’s international affairs. The purpose of this group is to allow senior and experienced bureaucrats working in foreign affairs to advise and consult with the senior leadership in order to produce a coherent and strategically efficient foreign policy (Sutter, 2013, p. 123-4). It should be noted that exclusion from the FALSG does not necessarily eliminate an individual from the policy-making process if that person has structural influence or connections elsewhere in the party-state apparatus. For example, Wen Jiabao was considered to be more active in the field of foreign affairs despite Hu’s leadership of the small group (Sutter, 2012, p. 46).

Feeding into this small group are contributions to analysis and policy suggestion from a variety of think tanks based in Shanghai and Beijing. A network of these elite think tanks and academic institutions, with varying degrees of influence, plays a crucial role in the foreign policy-making process in China. This has been analysed in depth by Pascal Abb, who identifies more than ten think tanks and institutions that all have direct links to China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Abb, 2013, p. 8-10). Thus, the role of those working within these think tanks is not entirely analogous to their Western counterparts. This is cogently articulated in the form of a “pluralistic elitism approach”, which allows both for independence of thought within the think tanks which are not government controlled in the ways they might be imagined, but which make a direct and ongoing contribution to the foreign policy of China (Liao, 2006, p. 4-5). It is this process that David Lampton described as “corporate pluralization”, under which various actors, such as think tanks and academic institutions, are “licensed” to participate in the process of foreign policy-making (Lampton, 2001, p. 12). The result of this is a greater array of opinions being heard in the overall decision making process which, in turn, has increased the role of public opinion in Chinese foreign policy.

**4.3.2 China’s Japan Policy**

China’s Japan policy since normalisation has undergone a number of shifts in direction but has retained some key guiding principles that give it a level of observable consistency since relations were established.[[100]](#footnote-100) Taken together, these principles can be said to form something of a coherent strategy that China has taken towards its relationship with Japan over the last four decades. They also highlight the areas that represent some of China’s core interests. Three of these principles are identified and briefly outlined here. The order in which they are presented should not be taken to represent the relative priority placed on each.

Firstly, China has consistently prioritised the economic relationship with Japan since normalisation. This has taken different forms throughout the varying stages of China’s own economic development but the value placed on it has not diminished. This began with China seeking development aid from Japan in the early stages of economic reform, something that underpinned the Sino-Japanese relationship for more than two decades as Japan provided significantly more development assistance to China than any other state or multilateral institution (Takamine, 2006, p. 94). Though the flow of aid from Japan to China ended in 2008,[[101]](#footnote-101) and the relative importance of Japan as a trading partner has declined slightly in the years since that event, this element of the relationship remains a matter of core interest to China and efforts to ensure that even during periods of very seriously heightened tensions the trading relationship is not adversely affected have been evident. The most recent example of this was the blocking of the words “*dizhi Riben*”(“boycott Japan”) from Weibo following the Japanese nationalisation of three of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands (Katz, 2013, p. 20).

Secondly, China prioritises the sovereignty issue in its relationship with Japan. This has two important elements. Firstly, there is the dispute over the sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, a tiny uninhabited archipelago in the East China Sea over which both countries claim sovereignty.[[102]](#footnote-102) Japan has retained administrative control of the islands since control of Okinawa reverted from the US. Although China has not sought to alter the status quo over the islands until recently, it has maintained a stance of opposing any move to formalise Japan’s claims. Secondly, the question of China’s sovereignty over Taiwan plays a central role to even the most basic of diplomatic interaction. Though this is far from being a uniquely Sino-Japanese issue – no state in the world is permitted to have diplomatic relations with both Taipei and Beijing, and vowing to adhere to the ‘one China policy’ is a non-negotiable prerequisite of relations with the latter – Japan’s position as the former colonial power in Taiwan makes it of even greater import.

Thirdly, China seeks to ensure that the ‘history issue’ is dealt with appropriately by Japan throughout the numerous changes of administration in Tokyo. What might appear to be a preoccupation with the issue of history can lead to diplomatic failures. Perhaps the most well-known of these was then-President Jiang Zemin’s trip to Japan in 1998, when he attempted to extract a written apology from then-Prime Minister Obuchi, who refused. The joint statement issued at the end of this visit was signed by neither leader and the visit was widely viewed to be a diplomatic failure and an embarrassment (Self, 2002, p. 79; Fewsmith, 1999, p. 111).[[103]](#footnote-103) There is disagreement over what extent China can be said to actually value the goal of making Japan take the appropriate stance towards their bilateral history. Some argue that it is not a foreign policy goal in itself and consider it to be little more than a tactic that can be employed in order to bring about pressure on Japan in pursuit of other aims (Roy, 2005, p. 210). Certainly there are clear examples of China using the issue in order to extract concessions from Japan (Yang, 2003, p. 68-9), but such a tactic would be of no use if it were not rooted in a genuine sense of injustice (Suzuki, 2008, p. 321).

Yasukuni Shrine clearly is part of the history issue element of China’s Japan policy strategy. Seeking to prevent prime ministers visiting the shrine has become something of a priority for China’s Japan policy since 1985 and is frequently used as a kind of litmus test for how Japan is currently dealing with the ‘history issue’. In the absence of any meaningful resolution of this issue due to the failure to achieve reconciliation between the two sides, the ‘history issue’ remains one that is open to re-interpretation at any time. In other words, it never really goes away and it is left to Japan to constantly and consistently assure China that it recognises the historical wrongdoings and does not seek to repeat them, whilst China is left to police this behaviour by monitoring actions and statements that are of symbolic value in this field. This is where China’s policy on the Yasukuni Shrine issue fits into the wider Japan policy.

The visits to the shrine in the early 1980s, described earlier in this chapter, were met with increasingly vocal criticism from China in the form of official media criticism and also statements from the foreign ministry. Nakasone’s final visit as prime minister on August 15th 1985 led to direct intervention by China when a personal plea from Hu Yaobang to Nakasone led to the Japanese prime minister ceasing the visits and establishing the non-visitation norm in Japan-China relations. When Hashimoto visited the shrine in 1996, the response from China was similar, with foreign ministry spokesperson Cui Tiankai declaring that Japan had “hurt the feelings” of the Chinese people and would have to work to “win their trust” (Renmin Ribao, 1996, p. 1). Consistently, the very highest leadership of China does not talk about the shrine issue in public. Even when negotiations are known to have taken place, such as with Hu and Nakasone, the statements released from China are limited to foreign ministry officials and spokespeople. This should not be taken as signifying a lower priority for this issue but simply shows how potent the matter can be. If a leader were to rhetorically tie himself to the pressure on Japan over the shrine and be seen to fail to stop future visits, this would be immensely damaging in terms of domestic political legitimacy both with regard to internal party machinations and also wider public opinion. Nevertheless, the issue of the shrine has demonstrably remained a Japan policy priority for China since 1985.

**4.4 The Established Norms and Behavioural Expectations**

It is the premise of this thesis that these previous occasions of prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine had established a pattern of behaviour that produced behavioural expectations on both sides. Having acquiesced to Chinese requests to cease visiting the shrine, Nakasone played a crucial role in this. Not only did he establish the accepted norm that prime ministerial visits to the shrine, whether official or unofficial, were beyond the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, but he did so with the explicit recognition that such a decision had been taken with China in mind. In other words, he acknowledged that the Yasukuni Shrine debate was not purely a Japanese domestic matter, but had an important international element that specifically connected it to the Sino-Japanese bilateral relationship. In fact, the Japanese domestic debate had remained unresolved by the time Nakasone made his final visit and it could be argued that what domestic opposition to his visits there was had little effect; certainly it did not prevent him from continuing. Chinese opposition, on the other hand, categorically altered his behaviour, suggesting that in a multi-faceted process of decision-making over the issue of shrine visits, Nakasone considered Chinese opposition to be the over-arching factor. Through this process, in which there was a “solidification of the symbolic meaning” of prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine, it became a “structural factor” of Sino-Japanese relations (Tanaka, 2008 p. 128).

Nakasone also contributed another major part of the pattern of interaction that had connotations for later incarnations of the dispute. He recognised that China needed not only reassurance on the issue but a symbolic gesture that would provide a form of compensation for the perceived slight of his “official” visit to Yasukuni. This was provided in the form of the written statement given to the Chinese asserting Japan’s (new) position that prime ministerial visits to the shrine had not been “institutionalised”. Doing this allowed China to accept Nakasone’s apparent remorse at face value and to continue the process of improving Sino-Japanese relations at the political level.

Following Nakasone, there were seven further prime ministers who chose not to reopen the debate, following the established norm that visiting Yasukuni Shrine during their time in office was taboo.[[104]](#footnote-104) Thus, by the time Hashimoto decided to break this taboo, it became a serious breach of an understood pattern of behaviour. The response from China indicated that this was the case, with reactions from both societal forces as well as through official government diplomatic channels and public pronouncements. Hashimoto, though clearly a prime minister with specific vested domestic interests surrounding the shrine in terms of his connections to the Japan Society of Bereaved Families, also recognised the international dimension of the shrine issue that had been established by Nakasone. As a result, Hashimoto sought to offer China the symbolic gesture it needed to provide enough reassurance that the visit was a one-off.

Hashimoto’s visit to China the following year was his opportunity to provide this. By becoming the first serving Japanese prime minister to visit *Dongbei* since the end of Japanese occupation and also appearing at the 9.18 Memorial Hall, Hashimoto compensated China with a significant amount of symbolic capital. This allowed China to present him to its own domestic audience as something of a reformed man who had done wrong but sought to make amends. Hashimoto received what was considered to be a “remarkably friendly reception” (Fukui & Fukai, 1998, p. 31) and, during his visit to Beijing, successfully proposed a schedule of regular bilateral visits. This allowed him to provide tacit assurance to Jiang Zemin that he would not repeat the provocative act of paying tribute at the shrine,[[105]](#footnote-105) whilst simultaneously establishing a framework for ensuring that the political relationship could be better managed. As a result, the Yasukuni Shrine issue of Hashimoto’s tenure was only a relatively minor disruption to Sino-Japanese relations when placed into the context of what had gone before and what came later.

Thus, two clear norms can be identified from this pattern of interaction across two decades over the Yasukuni Shrine issue in Sino-Japanese relations: that it is outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for a serving Japanese prime minister to visit Yasukuni Shrine whilst in office; and secondly, that when the relationship is suffering as a result of this issue, a large symbolic gesture is required to provide sufficient symbolic capital with which to mend the fissures in the relationship. Both of these norms were bundled together with a series of expected behaviours associated with either the adherence to the norm, or the breach of it.

The apparently problematic visits to the shrine of both Nakasone and Hashimoto could not be said to have been a surprise to China. In the case of Nakasone, he was following a well-established pattern of visits, albeit one that deviated slightly in the open declaration of the visit to be an official one. With Hashimoto, his position as Chairman of the Bereaved Families, coupled with his previous visits to the shrine in his earlier governmental posts, meant that seasoned observers of Japan would have calculated his visit to be likely. Both visits were followed by particularly strong rhetoric from China, both at the bilateral diplomatic level and also at the domestic level through official media. It is reasonable to say that such a reaction would have been expected within Japan, particularly after Hashimoto’s visit, making China’s rhetorical reaction part of the understood interaction between the two counties over this issue. Just as importantly, both Nakasone and Hashimoto provided highly visible and significant displays of apparent remorse, backed up with words and actions that could be interpreted as assurances that there would be no recurrence. It can, therefore, be argued that the second norm outlined here is a response to any potential breach of the first norm. In other words, a prime minister should not visit the shrine but, where domestic Japanese circumstances are such that a visit becomes inevitable, there is a path that must be followed in order to repair the relationship with China. Given that this path had been followed previously, and that neither Nakasone nor Hashimoto returned to the shrine during their tenures after providing the symbolic gestures, it was unclear what would happen should this understanding be breached. Thus, Koizumi’s actions in *repeatedly* visiting the shrine despite China’s expected rhetorical response broke new ground and challenged the foundations of the psychological environment in which Chinese foreign policy makers acted with regard to Japan.

**4.5 Conclusion**

The Yasukuni Shrine issue, in the context of Sino-Japanese relations, did not emerge until several years after the enshrinement of the war criminals in 1978. Against the background of a perception from within China that historical revisionism was a potential force within the Japanese domestic context that could possibly lead to greater potential for remilitarisation, the drive towards officialisation of visits appears to have been the greatest cause for concern. That this drive was linked with a standardised practice of visiting the shrine on August 15th reinforced the idea that prime ministerial visits to the shrine could be viewed as something of an indication of Japan’s trajectory in its relations with China. Consequently, Nakasone’s declaration of his visit in 1985 to be an official one proved to be a red line as far as the Chinese government was concerned. Nakasone’s administration appeared to have been caught slightly off guard by China’s objections, which is somewhat understandable given the relatively low-key responses that previous visits to the shrine had provoked. Nevertheless, an appreciation of the importance of the bilateral relationship coupled with a clear understating of the role symbolic capital relationship played in Sino-Japanese interaction, led the Japanese government to take the necessary steps to soothe tensions over the issue relatively quickly.

However, the concessions made to China in 1985 set a precedent within the relationship over how the issue of Yasukuni Shrine ought to be dealt with. This was then reinforced by an eleven year absence of prime ministerial visits to the shrine. [[106]](#footnote-106) When Hashimoto felt that he had to go outside of the established pattern of acceptable behaviour by visiting Yasukuni Shrine, it might be considered that a challenge to these established norms had been made. His actions in seeking to appease Chinese protests, however, merely served to reinforce the idea that prime ministerial visits to the shrine were not acceptable and that when such a breach of expected behaviour occurred, a suitable symbolic concession must be made. Hashimoto, then, not only followed the blue print created by Sino-Japanese interaction in this field during the 1980s, but reinforced its relevance in so doing. Consequently, by the time of Koizumi’s election as prime minister in 2001, there was a firm understanding of the path that interaction over this issue would follow.

**5. Chinese Media Coverage of the Yasukuni Shrine Issue**

This chapter analyses and assesses the relationship between different sections of the media in China in the response to Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine between 2001 and 2006. It uses manually conducted content analysis in order to assess the relative tone of three newspapers, each chosen to represent a segment of Chinese society, in their coverage of each of the six visits. The analysis is a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies that have been selected to provide an insight into the media coverage at this time that could not be achieved through either system alone. The results are then displayed in tabular and graphical form, along with analysis of the trends that can be observed within them. By assessing parallels and contrasts in the discursive shifts in each newspaper’s coverage of the issue, both in relation to Japan itself and Koizumi as an individual, it seeks to shed light on any evidence of a relationship between the evolution of opinion in the different sections of society represented by the chosen newspapers. It then takes these results and places them in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter concludes that three important insights can be attained from this analysis. Firstly, an apparent narrative in the collocations of Japan emerges from the data that can be interpreted as showing the presence of *structuration* in the formation of the China’s reaction to Japan over this issue. Secondly, it is possible to observe a disconnect between the discourse on Japan and that relating to Koizumi, suggesting his role in the overall narrative may be more nuanced than first thought. Finally, there is a close correlation between official, semi-official and non-official rhetoric that might have significant implications for our understanding of the production of nationalist sentiment in China vis-à-vis Japan, suggesting that the ‘top-down or bottom-up’ dialectic is not a sufficient method of analysis in this sphere.

The chapter begins with a justification of the selection of the three newspapers used in this analysis, before outlining the hypotheses that were made prior to the research being conducted. The following section details the methodology, explaining how the tone of each article was calculated and providing examples of ways in which the manual application of this methodology holds some advantages over the less time-consuming computer-aided analysis. The results are then presented in detail, including charts and tables alongside discussion of the observations gleaned from them. Following the detailed results is a more comprehensive examination of how these figures and graphical representations of data can be interpreted for the purposes of this study. The final section offers some potential applications for the results in terms of developing the theoretical aspect of this thesis further.

**5.1 The Different Sections of the Media in China**

Though the Chinese media is occasionally characterised as being monolithic and uniform, stifled by censorship and direct government control that renders it little more than pro-CCP propaganda (Song & Chang, 2012), many academic analyses have begun to draw distinctions within what is a rapidly commercialising sector (Stockmann, 2010a; 2010b; Shirk, 2007; Abels, 2005, p. 10). There is no doubt that all forms of media reporting remain subject to scrutiny and intervention by the government but what has begun to be recognised is that the nature and extent of this intervention is not uniform (Reilly, 2012, p. 114-116). The implication of this identification is that it is possible to discern different sections of the Chinese media that can be considered representative, to a certain extent, of different interests within China.

For the purposes of this study, the newspaper market in China has been divided into three sections: official; semi-official; and non-official. By its very nature, such a division is subjective, qualitatively assessed and not definitive. The categories identified are not surrounded with neat boundaries that render all inside uniformly ‘official’, ‘semi-official’ or ‘non-official’ but the division remains useful nonetheless. The distinctions were drawn from research that was conducted during the time that is under consideration in this study, where a number of publications were assessed on a two-way sliding scale that rated them from “commercialised” to “official”, and their respective space for news reporting as “open” to “closed” (Stockmann, 2010a, p. 271-272). Thus, those newspapers most tightly controlled by government organs were rated as more “official”, with those that have a greater commercial focus rated as more “commercialised”. There was a broad correlation between “official” and “closed” newspapers, but this was not precise and therefore both factors could be taken into account in order to select the most appropriate newspapers.

Three newspapers were selected from this sliding scale, in order to represent each of the three categories outlined. The ‘official’ newspaper selected was *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily), the official newspaper of the CCP, which was rated at the very top of the scale for both ‘closed’ reporting and ‘official’ control. *Renmin Ribao* has been used in numerous studies of China, particularly with regard to establishing the official line of the CCP in relation to either domestic or international affairs (Sandby-Thomas, 2011). It is not an ordinary newspaper in the common, western understanding of the concept and is often read by Chinese people in order to comprehend the government line on important issues, rather than as a source of news (Cong, Chang & Chen, 2008). The newspaper selected to represent the ‘semi-official’ media was *Huanqiu Shibao* (Global Times), [[107]](#footnote-107) which registered halfway up both scales in the overall analysis. The position of *Huanqiu Shibao* within Chinese media is a somewhat contradictory one as it is sometimes cited as an example of relatively independent reporting and representative of public opinion, albeit in a limited way.[[108]](#footnote-108) There are certainly examples of the newspaper exercising its rights to report freely on some controversial matters, however it is directly owned by the CCP meaning that its apparent relative freedom remains constantly tempered. Finally, the category of ‘non-official’ is represented by *Nanfang Dushibao* (Southern Metropolis Daily), a sister publication of the weekly *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekly),[[109]](#footnote-109) well-known for its investigative reporting and willingness to report on matters that the authorities would prefer it did not. *Nanfang Dushibao* is based in Guangzhou, providing it with a greater level of reporting freedom than papers based in Beijing, though it is available nationwide. In the original analysis it was assessed as being one of the most commercialisednewspapers available, and as having the most space for open reporting.

Underlying the methodology of this study is a key assumption: the more commercialised and open a newspaper is, the more responsive to its audience it will be. Conversely, the more official and closed a newspaper is, the less responsive it will be to the public at large and the more representative it will be of government discourse. This is largely accepted in terms of *Renmin Ribao*, as it is widely acknowledged to be the “mouthpiece” of the CCP (Wu, 1994, p.195; Abels, 2005, p. 10; Feng, 2013, p. 9). Where shifts in the pattern of discourse, or the tone of reporting, are visible within its pages, they are not due to the editors reacting to its readership. Instead, it is reasonable to conclude that discernible alterations in the reporting style or tone of *Renmin Ribao* are signifiers of fairly direct influence from the higher echelons of the CCP and can therefore be interpreted as the party’s position, or what the party desires its perceived position to be, on any given issue. This is particularly true in the case of those topics that are considered to be especially sensitive, and there can be little doubt that relations with Japan fall firmly into this category. For this reason, it is reasonable to equate the tone of reporting and the pattern of discourse in *Renmin Ribao* with the accepted public face of government policy.

Such an equation is not so neat with the commercialised, non-official media. Even in countries where the freedom of the press is significant and evident, it would not be possible to directly compare the discourse of the commercialised media with that of an abstracted ‘public opinion’; there are multiple factors that contribute to the direction that any given publication pursues in its reporting style. However, commercialisation is a vital consideration in this as any newspaper in a competitive market has, by necessity, to appeal to its target readership in order to gain and maintain market share (Stockmann, 2010a, p. 279). In this way, commercialised media ought to reveal something of the pattern of public opinion evolution when measured over a period of time. The measurement is imperfect, but other empirical measures that might be used to try to draw out the shape of public opinion in China are, arguably, even more flawed. For example, opinion polls conducted in China are still at a very limited stage, and drawing on these data to attempt to assess the progression of opinion over a period of time necessitates multiple polls conducted within that time period using comparable methodologies. Such data is not available. Similarly, conducting new research through surveys of targeted demographic groups in China today poses two significant issues. Firstly, there is the difficulty of obtaining a wide enough range of responses that would allow valid conclusions to be drawn. Aside from the obvious problems over the practicality of such a project, it is likely that any such survey would have questions surrounding its legality in China.[[110]](#footnote-110) Secondly, any survey conducted now would need respondents to accurately recall not only their opinions from a period of time that began eleven years before the research began – a significant challenge in itself – but also the ways in which those views evolved over a five year period. It is highly unlikely that this could be achieved in any reliable fashion. Finally, much greater interest has been paid in recent years to data available on the internet, in particular personal blogs and micro-blogging platforms such as Sina Weibo. While these present researchers with potentially rich and valuable new sources, their validity for this particular project is questionable in two key respects. Firstly, the greater the length of time between the event under examination and the survey of the data, the less reliable obtaining data from internet sites becomes. Assessing the authenticity and completeness of the available data is not possible when the period of time being researched begins more than a decade earlier. This would be true in any jurisdiction but becomes especially pertinent in China, where the internet is subject to a high level of scrutiny and direct censorship.[[111]](#footnote-111) Secondly, it is difficult to ascertain how widespread concurrence is with an opinion expressed in a blog, on a forum, or on Sina Weibo.[[112]](#footnote-112) Whereas newspaper sales offer an insight into the influence that a particular publication might have, potentially including the demographic across which this influence is spread, there is no such luxury for the researcher on the internet. Consequently, there is a danger that data with little or no meaning is included in the analysis. Finally, with specific regard to this study, there is the issue of the period under study. Usage of the internet has grown exponentially in China over recent years, meaning that its significance now can sometimes distort its value as a resource. For example, the number of internet users in China in 2012 was reported to have exceeded half a billion, equating to 40.1% of the population (Internet World Stats, 2012). However, in 2001, the year at which this study begins, the figure was less than 34 million, or just 1.7% of the population (Internet World Stats, 2012).[[113]](#footnote-113) Thus, while being an imperfect source, tracking the tone and discourse of commercialised media offers an insight into the general public view of an issue that is unobtainable elsewhere.

This analysis aims to do more than simply take snapshots of elite discourse and public opinion over Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine. It seeks also to draw the shape of the evolution of these views over the period he was in office. Crucially it hopes to expose relationships that may exist between these evolutions and explore any that are found. In other words, the research was designed to reveal not only how, and by how much, the tone and discourse surrounding the Chinese reporting of Koizumi’s actions changed over the course of his six visits to the shrine, but to ascertain if there is a driving force within the dynamic of elite and popular presentations of this issue. Put simply, it is an attempt to answer the question of whether the Chinese reaction can be said to fall into either category of ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ and, if so, which one.

**5.1.1 Hypothesis**

The point of this research was to test a central part of the thesis’ hypothesis in the wider attempt to formulate a constructivist IR-theory of Sino-Japanese relations. If the theory is to have any validity, then it must be possible to show that what we consider to be China’s reaction to the apparent provocation of Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine is, at least in part, domestically constructed through interaction between government and society. This implies that the analysis would be expected to show strong correlation between the patterns of evolution in the official, semi-official and non-official tone and discourse of reporting.

Thus, the hypothesis of this aspect of the research project is that it will be possible to discern a relationship between the three categories of media in their various coverage of the Yasukuni Shrine issue during Koizumi’s tenure. It would be expected that the level of coverage would alter across the six visits, and that the pattern of change would be reflected at all three levels of the media. Failure to show any correlation between these categories would call into question the idea that there is any validity in referring to ‘China’s reaction’ on this matter, at least in any meaningful constructivist sense; if there is neither unity between the various section that have been discerned within China, nor any demonstrable influence by one section to another in terms of articulating the reaction, then constructivism at the level of the unit would seem to have no foundation. Conversely, demonstrating such a relationship would show that the ideas of unit-level constructivism have, at the very minimum, some basis for further exploration in the case of China’s reaction to Japan.

Assuming that correlation could be demonstrated, a deeper hypothesis would be necessary. Given that the data used in this research allows the government and society to be represented in the analysis, it is worth considering how the relationship between elite and popular opinion might contribute to such a correlation. As has been discussed earlier in this thesis, there is a tendency to frame questions of nationalist or patriotic expression in China[[114]](#footnote-114) along the lines of it being either ‘top-down’ – that is, driven by the government with popular opinion taking its lead from elite-level instruction, either implicit or explicit – or ‘bottom-up’ – in which the government is responsive to society-led discourse and pressure in order to protect its own legitimacy from the threat of a perceived failure to engage sufficiently with popular nationalism. While the importance of this debate should not be ignored, in order to explore the constructivist ideas that underpin the proposed theory of Sino-Japanese relations, it is vital to go beyond this dialectic.

The top-down/bottom-up debate suggests that there are two possible hypotheses that could be posited here. Firstly, that the pattern of evolution in the official discourse will be closely reflected by the semi-official and non-official, implying that it is the official discourse that leads the way. Such a result would appear to show that the ‘top-down’ analysis carries much weight, with the government-led reaction to Japan and Koizumi being followed by those apparently representing sections of society further down. Secondly, it is possible to hypothesise that the driving force goes in the opposite direction. In other words, it might be that the non-official discourse leads the evolution, with the official discourse reacting to changes either perceived from within the representative media, or through other mechanisms that allow the government to monitor popular sentiment.[[115]](#footnote-115) Clearly, this would support the ‘bottom-up’ argument that the government is responsive to popularly expressed nationalist sentiment.

There is, however, a third possibility. If the assumptions of unit-level constructivism are correct, then it follows that the overall reaction of China is a product of interaction between the different levels within China. Thus, while correlation between the three categories ought to be visible, it does not automatically follow that one end must be leading the other. This hypothesis predicts that neither the official nor the non-official media would be permanently dominant, but that interaction between the two ends of the spectrum will result in a correlated pattern of tone and discourse among the three media types. This implies that elements of both of the previous hypotheses will be present but that neither will correctly predict the overall effect of the interaction between the divisions. In other words, the evolution of the discourse in this field comes about as a result of a form of national conversation between and among elite and popular elements of society. If this is correct, then by focussing on only one direction of influence, both sides of the top-down/bottom-up debate fail to see the bigger picture. This third hypothesis supposes that the government-led official discourse will indeed show a reaction to the non-official and semi-official but that it is not merely passive in so doing. Similarly, it takes into account that the non-official media continues to operate within the constraints of the elite-led structures both in terms of media censorship and discourse domination. If the idea of *structuration* holds any water then one must expect to see elements of society operating within the apparently elite-determined structures but doing so with their own agency to not only act, but to act in ways that subtly challenge the very structures that apparently restrict them. Put simply, in this analysis we would expect to see examples of both the semi-official and non-official media responding to leads from the official media whilst also being able to discern examples of the official media reacting to triggers from societal discourse. Precisely how this could be discerned will be discussed below.

**5.1.2 Methodology**

Having identified the publications to be analysed, the raw data was collated using the Shanghai Municipal Library digitised newspaper collection on a research visit during February and March 2012. Using this collection meant that it was possible to narrow down searches to a particular date range and also to individual articles that included particular terms. Thus, the three newspapers in question were searched for all of the years of Koizumi’s tenure (2001 to 2006) for any article that contained the term “靖国神社” (*jingguo shenshe*, or Yasukuni Shrine). In order to focus more precisely on the reporting of Koizumi’s visits, this search was refined so that it returned only articles published in the four weeks following each visit.[[116]](#footnote-116) This yielded a total of 310 articles, of which 142 appeared in *Renmin Ribao*, 77 in *Huanqiu Shibao*, and 91 in *Nanfang Dushibao*.

As was noted in chapter 3, the original design of this research had been one that incorporated the use of a computer software package called Yoshikoder, an open-source content analysis programme. However, several difficulties with this particular software rendered its use inappropriate for the project. Specifically, the programme failed to correctly differentiate Chinese ‘words’ within sentences, resulting in highly inaccurate reports concerning the content of individual articles and the dataset as a whole.[[117]](#footnote-117) Having been unable to resolve this, it became necessary to conduct the analysis manually.

The next stage was to code the articles according to their respective tone. First, each mention of a key word was highlighted. In this instance, the key words were 小泉 (*Xiaoquan*, or Koizumi) and 日本 (*Riben*, or Japan), which were both highlighted in different colours so that they were easily identifiable and distinguishable. The reasons that the two terms were used in this way was so that the tone of each article could be measured both in reference to Japan as a country and Koizumi as an individual. Next, it was necessary for all words with positive connotations to be highlighted in green, and all those with negative connotations to be highlighted in red. A dictionary of positive and negative words used in Chinese newspaper reporting has been developed in a collaborative project overseen by the National Taiwan University in Taipei. The dictionary was designed for precisely this sort of content analysis, specifically of Chinese language newspapers. Though it was developed to be used in conjunction with Yoshikoder, it is available in the form of a text document that simply lists words as either ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ and can therefore be used in isolation without any difficulty. Given the nature of the Chinese language it is worth noting that there may be some dispute as to whether each entry constitutes a ‘word’ and some entries would certainly better be described as ‘phrases’.[[118]](#footnote-118) The dictionary has a total of 8276 negative and 2812 positive entries.

Computer aided content analysis has certain advantages over manually performed analysis such as this, most notably in terms of the amount of time required for it to be conducted. However, manual analysis does allow for anomalies to be identified and addressed in ways that computers would not identify. Included in the list of positive terms of the dictionary are several that also appear in the list of negative terms but in their negative form, and vice versa. For example, 有能力 (*younengli*, meaning ‘capable’) appears on the list of positive terms, but 没有能力 (*meiyounengli*, meaning ‘not capable’) appears on the negative list. Computer software counting positive terms and negative terms separately would register this twice, but manual analysis allows for this to be assessed correctly.[[119]](#footnote-119) In order to ensure that this did not create a false count all negated terms[[120]](#footnote-120) on both the negative and positive lists were highlighted last, ensuring that even if有能力 had been highlighted in green, it would be changed to red when没有能力 was highlighted later. Consequently it is possible to be confident that only truly negative terms are counted as negative, and likewise with positive terms.

Once the appropriate terms had been highlighted in all the relevant articles, the tone of each article was assessed both in terms of its reporting of Koizumi (小泉) and of Japan (日本). This was achieved by counting the number of positive and negative terms within an eight-character range of the two respective words. The number of negative terms within this range was then subtracted from the number of positive terms to provide a numerical indication of the tone of an article in relation to a particular word. Each article was measured in this way to produce a numerical representation of its tone in relation to both Koizumi and Japan.[[121]](#footnote-121) For example, in the following sentence the count for Koizumi (小泉) is -1 (0 positive - 1 negative = -1), while the count for Japan (日本) is -2 (2 positive - 4 negative = -2):[[122]](#footnote-122)

声明说，**小泉**的参拜不仅会**严重伤害**因**日本发动侵略战争**和**进行殖民**统治而**遭受巨大灾难**的中国、韩国等亚洲国家人民的感情，还**严重伤害**了**日本**人民的感情，同时还必然会**严重损害日本**同亚洲国家的**信赖**关系。

*Shenming shuo,* ***Xiaoquan*** *de canbai bujin hui* ***yanzhong shanghai*** *yin* ***Riben******fadong qinlue zhanzheng*** *he* ***jinxing******zhimin*** *tongzhi er* ***zaoshou******juda******zainan*** *de Zhongguo, Hanguo deng Yazhou guojia renmin de ganqing, hai* ***yanzhong shanghai*** *le* ***Riben*** *renmin de ganqing, tongshi hai biran hui* ***yanzhong sunhai******Riben*** *tong Yazhou guojia de* ***xinlai*** *guanxi.*

The statement said that **Koizumi**’s shrine visit not only **seriously hurt** the feelings of the people of China, Korea and other Asian countries that **suffered great disaster** through the **aggressive war** and **launch** of **colonial rule** by **Japan**, but also **seriously hurt** the feelings of the **Japan**ese people and is bound to **seriously damage** the **trust** in its relations with Asian countries.

Where terms were within an eight-character space but in a different sentence they were not included. For example, in the following sentences there is both a positive and a negative term within an eight-character gap of Koizumi (小泉), but both belong to the previous sentence and are, therefore, not counted:

这些甲级战犯已经遭到了历史的**公正审判**。**小泉**参拜靖国神社，是对20世纪历史**判决**和21世纪历史**发展**潮流的公然**挑战**。

*Zhexie jia ji zhanfan yijing zao daole lishi de* ***gongzheng******shenpan****.* ***Xiaoquan*** *canbai jingguo shenshe, shi dui 20 shiji lishi* ***panjue*** *he 21 shiji lishi* ***fazhan*** *chaoliu de gongran* ***tiaozhan****.*

History shows that these class A war criminals were already given a **fair** **trial**. **Koizumi** visiting Yasukuni Shrine is a **blatant challenge** to the **judgement** of 20th century history and to the **development** of historical trends of the 21st century.

Terms that crossed the eight-character boundary were included in the count. For example, in the following sentence the term 罪行 (*zuixing*, meaning ‘crime’) takes up the eighth and ninth characters after Japan (日本), and is, therefore, counted:

**小泉**等人不**承认**，并不等于**日本**在这场**战争**中的**罪行**和责任**不存在**。

***Xiaoquan*** *deng ren bu* ***chengren****, bing bu dengyu* ***Riben*** *zai zhe chang* ***zhanzheng*** *zhong de* ***zuixing*** *he zeren* ***bu cunzai****.*

**Koizumi**’s lack of **recognition** does not mean that **Japan**’s **crimes** and **war** responsibility **do not exist.**

The mitigation of all anomalies would not be possible without entering into a deeper qualitative analysis of each article. The first example cited above contains the phrase “进行殖民” (*jinxing zhimin*, meaning ‘to colonise’). Yet 进行 (*jinxing*, meaning ‘to conduct’) is listed as positive, while 殖民 (*zhimin*, meaning ‘colonial’) is listed as negative. Clearly, when taken together, this has a negative connotation but under the system employed it would carry a numerical value of 0 (1 positive – 1 negative = 0). Furthermore, in the example given above, 进行 falls within the eight-character boundary while 殖民 falls just outside, meaning that in this particular instance a phrase with clear negative connotations is counted as a positive in relation to Japan. However, elimination of all of these anomalies would necessitate an entirely qualitative reading of each article, which would be both prohibitively time-consuming and would undermine the very methodological basis of assessing the articles in a quantitative manner.

It cannot be ignored that identifying the presence of such anomalies does raise questions about the validity of the content analysis methodology. In order to be assured of the validity of the research, two checks were conducted. The first of these was a random selection of ten articles from each of the publications, representing 10% of the total number of articles included in the analysis, qualitatively assessed by a native Chinese speaker, who was asked to rank them in order of negative tone with regard to Japan.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Renmin Ribao* |  |  |
| Participant Ranking | Date of Article | Analysis Rating | Analysis Ranking |
| 1 | 14/08/2001 | -21 | 1 |
| 2 | 19/10/2005 | -11 | 2 |
| 3 | 16/08/2006 | -9 | 3 |
| 4 | 22/04/2002 | -8 | 4 |
| 5 | 27/08/2001 | -3 | 6 |
| 6 | 02/01/2004 | -7 | 5 |
| 7 | 16/01/2003 | -3 | 6 |
| 8 | 21/10/2005 | 1 | 9 |
| 9 | 16/08/2006 | 0 | 8 |
| 10 | 27/04/2002 | 6 | 10 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | *Huanqiu Shibao* | |  |
| Participant Ranking | Date of Article | Analysis Rating | Analysis Ranking |
| 1 | 21/10/2005 | -17 | 1 |
| 2 | 16/08/2006 | -14 | 2 |
| 3 | 15/01/2003 | -8 | 4 |
| 4 | 19/10/2005 | -9 | 3 |
| 5 | 17/08/2001 | -7 | 5 |
| 6 | 21/08/2001 | -5 | 6 |
| 7 | 18/08/2006 | -3 | 8 |
| 8 | 25/04/2002 | -4 | 7 |
| 9 | 24/01/2003 | 5 | 9 |
| 10 | 09/01/2004 | 15 | 10 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | *Nanfang Dushibao* | |  |
| Participant Ranking | Date of Article | Analysis Rating | Analysis Ranking |
| 1 | 18/10/2005 | -18 | 1 |
| 2 | 16/08/2006 | -13 | 2 |
| 3 | 14/08/2001 | -11 | 3 |
| 4 | 22/04/2002 | -7 | 4 |
| 5 | 21/10/2005 | -3 | 5 |
| 6 | 15/01/2003 | -2 | 7 |
| 7 | 21/08/2006 | -2 | 7 |
| 8 | 24/04/2002 | -3 | 5 |
| 9 | 17/08/2001 | -1 | 9 |
| 10 | 09/01/2004 | 6 | 10 |

*Table 5.1 – Sample of Articles by Newspaper Showing Participant and Analysis Ranking*

The articles were given in plain black text, without any highlighting of positive or negative words or of the terms ‘Koizumi’ and ‘Japan’. The participant was asked simply to rank the articles in order of negativity, rather than to assign them numerical values. The results, displayed in table 5.1 show a close correlation with those from the quantitative assessment.

The second check was conducted using a statistical assessment that is recognised among content analysts as a reliable method of ascertaining the validity of a dataset. This also involved taking the random sample of ten articles from each publication and using qualitative methods to ascertain how accurate the previous analysis had been. Terms were divided into two categories of ‘retrieved’ and ‘not retrieved’, with the former representing those that had been included and that latter those that were excluded from the original count. Terms were also divided into either ‘relevant’ or ‘irrelevant’, that is those that were actually negative or positive, and those that were neutral. Thus, those that were both ‘retrieved’ and ‘relevant’ were the only correct inclusions, whereas those that were both ‘retrieved’ and ‘irrelevant’ constituted incorrectly counted terms. Similarly, those that were both ‘not retrieved’ and ‘irrelevant’ were correctly omitted, while those that were ‘not retrieved’ and ‘relevant’ constituted incorrect omissions. This is illustrated in table 5.2.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Relevant | Irrelevant |
| Retrieved | Correctly Included  (a) | Incorrectly Included  (b) |
| Not Retrieved | Incorrectly Omitted  (c) | Correctly Omitted  (d) |

Table 5.2 – Table to Illustrate Correctly Retrieved and Omitted Terms

(Adapted from Krippendorf, 2004, p. 329)

Using this table there are three calculations that can be employed to assess the validity of the dataset. Firstly, to assess the “error of commission”, that is the ratio of terms that have been incorrectly included in the dataset, the calculation is b/(a+b). Secondly, and similarly, to assess the “error of omission”, that is the ratio of terms that have been incorrectly excluded from the dataset, the calculation is c/(a+c). In both of these calculations the result is a figure between 0 and 1, where 0 would be complete accuracy and 1 would be complete inaccuracy. Thus, the closer to 0 it is the more accurate the dataset can be said to be. Finally what is termed “semantic validity” can be calculated using the equation (a+d)/n where n is the total sum of all terms. This provides a ratio of correctly assessed terms across all data and is also a figure between 0 and 1, but in this instance, since the equation measures accuracy rather than inaccuracy, a result of 1 would imply total accuracy. Thus, the closer to 1 that this equation is the more accurate a dataset can be said to be. In all three newspapers the “error of commission” was less than 0.1. The result for the “error of omission” was even better as all three datasets were calculated to have an error rate of 0. This is because there were no relevant terms omitted from the analysis in any of the articles assessed, giving a strong indication that the dictionary used to allocate positive or negative values to terms is quite comprehensive. Finally, the overall value of the “semantic validity” was high, with all three datasets calculated at above 0.95. This means that the datasets can be said to be reliably accurate.[[123]](#footnote-123)

**5.1.3 Testing the Hypothesis**

In order to ascertain the validity of the previously outlined hypotheses, the results were arranged in both tabulated and graphical form. From these statistical and visual representations of the data it would be possible to draw conclusions on the hypotheses in a number of ways. Firstly, the evolution of the tone in relation to both Japan and Koizumi should be clearly visible across the six visits to Yasukuni Shrine both by analysing the numerical values ascribed and by plotting this in line graph form. In particular, a line graph ought to demonstrate whether or not the hypothesis regarding the correlation of tone between all three sections of the media has any basis.

Assuming that such a correlation could be found (as was outlined in the earlier hypothesis) the relationship between the non-official, semi-official and official media can be analysed more closely by considering the day-to-day reporting within each batch of articles relating to the respective shrine visits. In other words, beyond recognising a correlation in the movement of the tone of the reporting, it ought to be possible to discern where the shifts occur by displaying the data relating to each day. Once laid out in this way, it would be possible to see if there was a consistent driving force behind shifts in the tone of reporting, offering an answer to the top-down/bottom-up question outlined earlier. Consistent mirroring of changes in tone from one section of the media by another would imply the existence of such a driving force.

**5.2 Results**

The results of this work are outlined in this section in chronological order, with each visit first introducing the tone relating to Koizumi, followed by that in relation to Japan. Each visit also includes samples of the language used in order to illustrate this process. The results begin with an overview of the trends across the six visits and are then given in chronological order with the tone of reporting of each of the six visits described individually. A summary is provided at the end of the section.

**5.2.1 The Overall Trend**

On each occasion, in the two weeks following a visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi, *Renmin Ribao* posted the largest negative reaction measured by the overall total of numerical value ascribed to reporting on Koizumi across the three newspapers. In fact, the total was at least 50% higher than either of the other two newspapers on each occasion except for the final visit in August 2006. By far the most negative reaction in respect of Koizumi was from *Renmin Ribao* following the first visit to Yasukuni Shrine in 2001. In the two weeks following Koizumi’s visit, the newspaper amassed an overall count of -165, dwarfing the responses of both *Huanqiu Shibao* (-25)and *Nanfang Dushibao* (-34). It is worth noting that the disparity between *Renmin Ribao’s* most negative and its second most negative was vast; 2005 had the second most negative reaction with a total of -65. Though 2001 was the most negative for *Renmin Ribao’s* reporting of Koizumi, this was not true of either of the other two newspapers; *Huanqiu Shibao’s* most negative period was 2006 when it registered -39, while *Nanfang Dushibao* peaked in 2005 with -43. *Renmin Ribao* easily surpassed both newspapers in both of these years with totals of -65 in 2005 and -50 in 2006.

*Chart 5.1 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) by Year*

Another significant outcome was the disparity between the totals of all three newspapers in 2001, 2005 and 2006, and those that were recorded for 2002, 2003 and 2004. This disparity was most notable in *Renmin Ribao*, in which the average negativity recorded for the first, fifth and sixth visits (-80) was around three times the level recorded for the second, third and fourth visits (-25). A similar level of disparity was noted in both *Huanqiu Shibao* and *Nanfang Dushibao,[[124]](#footnote-124)* though with less severe overall levels of negativity (-32:-9 and -30:-8 respectively). Somewhat hidden within that statistic is *Nanfang Dushibao’s* coverage of the visits in 2003 and 2004, both of which totalled just -2 in overall negativity count. While this is particularly low, it can be explained to some extent by the fact that there were only two articles in each of these two periods of time that contributed to the data. This paucity of data explains the low overall result, but also provides an insight in itself; the lack of coverage of these two visits in the newspaper may be exceptional, but it also fits with the pattern of the other two newspapers whose reporting was also relatively low key during this time.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Renmin Ribao | Huanqiu Shibao | Nanfang Dushibao |
| 2001 | -165 | -25 | -34 |
| 2002 | -27 | -6 | -19 |
| 2003 | -19 | -8 | -2 |
| 2004 | -29 | -13 | -2 |
| 2005 | -65 | -34 | -43 |
| 2006 | -50 | -39 | -12 |

*Table 5.3 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) by Year*

Having considered the overall negativity counts for Koizumi across the six visits, some perspective can be gained by looking at the average tone of articles during this period of time. The average tone was calculated by dividing the total negativity count for each period by the number of articles that contributed to the data in that period. Thus, for example, the exceptional total level of negativity recorded in *Renmin Ribao* after the first visit can be explained to some extent by the number of articles that contributed, which in this case was 52, the greatest number of any newspaper for any of the six periods under consideration. As a result, the average tone for the first visit of -3.17 was only the third most negative result relating to *Renmin Ribao*, with the fifth and fourth visits recording averages of -3.61 and -3.22 respectively. The calculation of the averages also revealed that despite the overall total negativity count being consistently higher in *Renmin Ribao* than either of the other two publications, the average tone relating to Koizumi did not follow this same pattern. In fact, on only two occasions – 2002 and 2004 – was the paper the most negative of the three, whereas *Huanqiu Shibao* was so on three occasions (2001, 2003 and 2006), with *Nanfang Dushibao* the most negative only in 2005.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Renmin Ribao | Huanqiu Shibao | Nanfang Dushibao |
| 2001 | -3.17 | -3.57 | -1.31 |
| 2002 | -1.93 | -1.00 | -1.19 |
| 2003 | -2.38 | -2.67 | -1.00 |
| 2004 | -3.22 | -0.67 | -1.00 |
| 2005 | -3.61 | -2.27 | -4.30 |
| 2006 | -2.17 | -2.44 | -1.33 |

*Table 5.4 – Average Tone (Koizumi) by Year*

When the patterns of change in average tone of the three newspapers are plotted together on one graph, shown in chart 5.2, it appears that there is little correlation between the three. In fact, each has a distinctive characteristic. *Renmin Ribao* shows relatively little fluctuation and, despite the previous note that it was the most negative on only two occasions, certainly retains the highest level of negativity with the greatest level of consistency, staying between -1.93 and -3.61 throughout the six visits. *Huanqiu Shibao*, on the other hand, demonstrates a high level of inconsistency with noticeable shifts in average between each visit. *Nanfang Dushibao* is by far the most consistent with five of the six visits registering within the very narrow range of -1.00 to -1.33. However, its tone in 2005 is something of an outlier in this analysis with the most negative average of any newspaper in any visit, at -4.3. Without this, it would have been almost entirely constant throughout the six visits.

*Chart 5.2 – Average Tone (Koizumi) by Year*

There are striking similarities between the tone of coverage relating to Koizumi and that relating to Japan, but there is also a clear distinction, particularly with regard to the third and fourth visits in 2003 and 2004. The overall levels of negativity that were measured in *Renmin Ribao’s* coverage in relation to Japan across the six visits are notable for the extremely high measurement in the first year, with a total of -420, the most severe result by a large margin. The following three visits are noteworthy for their relatively low levels of negativity but what is most striking about the official coverage is the clear and sustained increase in the final two, though the severity remains a long way behind that seen in 2001. Though there is a similar pattern in the other two newspapers, there is a subtle difference in the course of the semi- and non-official reporting. The evolution of tone in both *Huanqiu Shibao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* shows a negative reaction to the first two visits, followed by an almost total absence of negativity in 2003 and 2004, but a return to fairly strong negativity in both 2005 and 2006. In other words, it appears to follow the same course as *Renmin Ribao*, but without such a steep drop between the first two visits and with an even more pronounced dip in negativity in 2003 and 2004. Finally, the two can be distinguished by a clear disparity in the strength of reaction in these final two years with *Huanqiu Shibao* recording -62 and -92 respectively, compared with -35 and -33 respectively in *Nanfang Dushibao*. Thus, in terms of absolute levels of negativity, *Huanqiu Shibao* very closely correlates with *Renmin Ribao*, with the exception of the first visit in 2001. There is also a correlation in the trend of tone that is visible between all three newspapers that shows a very clear distinction between the first two visits, the third and fourth visit, and the final two visits.

*Chart 5.3 – Overall Tone (Japan) by Year*

As described earlier, the absolute levels of negativity are only a small part of the picture and can be skewed by the volume of articles that any one paper produces. Thus, in order to view the evolution of tone in reporting from a more rounded perspective it is worth considering the average tone of each publication on a year-by-year basis. This is particularly revealing in this instance. Whereas the absolute totals of negativity recorded in relation to both Koizumi and Japan appear to follow a similar path to each other, the average tone of reporting on Japan shows something quite different. *Renmin Ribao* begins with the most negative average tone of any newspaper in any year, with a 2001 average of -8.08. However, the following three years are substantially less negative, with averages of -1.21, -2.75, and -0.22. 2005 and 2006 show a return to strongly negative reporting with averages of -3.50 and -3.67 respectively. Both *Huanqiu Shibao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* follow almost identical paths to each other which also closely correlate to the pattern observed in *Renmin Ribao*. Both newspapers had averages between -2.12 and -4.86 for 2001 and 2002, before showing a fairly dramatic upturn in terms of positivity in 2003 and 2004 with averages ranging between -1.33 and 2.00.[[125]](#footnote-125) However, the visits in 2005 and 2006 were marked by a return to a much more negative tone, with averages ranging from -3.50 to -5.75. Of the two, *Huanqiu Shibao* was consistently the more negative in its average tone, but the pattern of year-to-year alterations in tone was very closely correlated. *Renmin Ribao* was only significantly more negative than the other two newspapers in 2001, and was actually the least negative on two occasions (in 2002 and 2006). In fact, its results for 2002 and 2003 appear to be the outliers in this part of the analysis; had the two been reversed then it would be possible to show a correlation between the patterns of movement in tone between all three newspapers across all six visits. However, even with these seemingly anomalous results the relationship in the reporting is evident in ways that were not visible in the results relating to coverage of Koizumi.

*Chart 5.4 – Average Tone (Japan) by Year*

**5.2.2 Koizumi’s First Visit – August 13th 2001**

Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister was made on August 13th 2001.[[126]](#footnote-126) Chart 5.5 displays the total negativity count for all three newspapers in the two weeks following Koizumi’s first visit in August 2001. It is quite clear in the cases of *Renmin Ribao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* that the majority of negativity around Koizumi came out in the immediate aftermath of the visit, with neither newspaper registering a significant marker after the 18th August, representing five days of particularly negative coverage.

*Chart 5.5 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2001*

It is noticeable that these two newspapers followed a similar path, though *Renmin Ribao* registered much higher levels of absolute negativity, while *Huanqiu Shibao* appears not to have reacted in the same way. As with the assessment of tone relating to Koizumi, the data is also presented here showing the day-to-day totals within a two week period of time following each visit. The following graph shows the breakdown for 2001. There are many similarities with the results observed from the coverage of Koizumi, in particular the prominence of *Renmin Ribao’s* negativity in the immediate aftermath. *Nanfang Dushibao* has a short and less intense reaction, while *Huanqiu Shibao’s* response is most notable for the absence of negativity towards Japan until several days after the visit occurred.[[127]](#footnote-127)

*Chart 5.6 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2001*

The articles that appeared in *Renmin Ribao* in the immediate aftermath of Koizumi’s first visit seemed to be aimed at presenting an image of widespread condemnation of his actions, with numerous articles about criticism from South Korea and also within Japan. The phraseology used to describe the response from China was typical of that which appeared throughout the five year period studied here, inextricably tying the response of the “government” (*zhengfu*) with the “people” (*renmin*): “*Zhongguo zhengfu he renmin dui Xiaoquan canbai biaoshi qianglie fenkai*” (“the Chinese government and people expressed strong indignation at Koizumi’s visit”) (Renmin Ribao, 2001a, p. 4). Several other articles in the following days outlined other international opposition, including from “overseas Chinese” (“*haiwai huaren huaqiao*”), Taiwan and Singapore. Explicit linkages were made between Koizumi’s actions and the failure of Japan to deal correctly with its history and, in particular, with the attempts of the “right wing forces” (“*youyi shili*”) to reshape “national consciousness” (“*minzu yishi*”) with the “denialof crimes of aggression” (“*dilai qinlue zhanzheng zuixing de xingjing*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2001b, p. 6). *Huanqiu Shibao* also focussed on the opposition to Koizumi’s actions from within Japan, including from within the government, and used a similar technique (and identical phraseology to that in *Renmin Ribao*) of presenting the reaction as coming from an abstract united front of Asian people: “*suiran Xiaoquan canbai bikaile ba yue shiwu ri, tade zhe yi judong reng ji qile Yazhou renminde qianglie fenkai*” (“Although Koizumi avoided visiting on the 15th of August, he still aroused strong indignation among the people of Asia”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2001a, p. 4). It went further days later, declaring that Koizumi’s visit was “denounced domestically and abroad, with neither left nor right wing willing to accept it” (“*guonei guowai yitong shengtao zuoyi youyi dou bu maizhang canbai zao ren hen*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2001b, p. 5). Reflecting the more commercialised nature of *Nanfang Dushibao*, its own reporting used somewhat more colourful language, lambasting Koizumi’s decision as further condemning Japan to remain a “political dwarf” (“*zhengzhi aizi*”), though it also placed this in the context of the international reaction by declaring that his actions had “hurt the feelings of Asian people” (“*shanghai Yazhou renmin ganqing*”) (Nanfang Dushibao, 2001a, p 24). The identification of Japan or Koizumi “hurting the feelings of [Chinese or Asian] people” is a common thread and could be described as a standard phrase which is never used with any credible evidence to demonstrate this has actually occurred. Though the statistics show a low negativity count with regard to Japan in the newspaper in the immediate aftermath of the visit, qualitative readings do give some examples of the reporting tying Koizumi’s actions to the overall failure of ‘Japan’ to deal with its history appropriately. The day after Koizumi’s visit it published a special report on how Germany has dealt with its own responsibilities, declaring that “Germany [should be] Japanese people’s teacher” (“*Deguo shi Ribenrende laoshi*”) (Nanfang Dushibao, 2001b, p. 23).

**5.2.3 Koizumi’s Second Visit – April 21st 2002**

Something similar to the pattern observed following the first visit occurred in the reporting of the second visit in April 2002. Chart 5.7 illustrates this.

*Chart 5.7 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2002*

While the daily totals clearly differ, the overall trend in the days following the visit is matched between *Renmin Ribao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* again. The figures for *Huanqiu Shibao* suggest much lower key response, though there is something of an anomaly in this result that should be noted. Though the graph appears to show no response at all, this is slightly misleading. There were two articles on the day following the visit but both recorded an overall negativity score of 0 for collocation with Koizumi.[[128]](#footnote-128) With regard to the tone relating to Japan, the chart for the two weeks following the April 2002 visit is similar to that of the first visit, though the less severe levels of negativity that emerged from the analysis of *Renmin Ribao* leave the reporting of *Nanfang Dushibao* looking particularly negative in the first three days. However, both of these newspapers continue to follow the similar pattern of around three or four days of strong negativity followed by a sharp drop off. *Huanqiu Shibao’s* coverage has much less of a formulaic shape to it.

*Chart 5.8 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2002*

*Renmin Ribao* illustrated the usual claim of acts “hurting the feelings of Chinese people” in a particularly vivid and explicit way, citing a number of survivors of the Nanjing Massacre as declaring that “Koizumi has once again hurt the feelings of the victims of the Nanjing Massacre!” (*Xioaqun zaici shanghaile Nanjing Datusha shouhaizhe de ganqing!*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2002a, p. 4). It was notable that this was given as a direct quote, something that is not always the case when comments are reported in the newspaper, and that no fewer than six people were all attributed with the words. There was also a continuance of the theme of highlighting objections from outside China, particularly from South Korea. A week after the visit *Renmin Ribao* also ran a piece outlining the motivations behind Koizumi’s actions. As is common in these articles, it was highlighted that only a minority of Japanese society fail to treat history in the correct manner, but also emphasised the importance of “conservative forces in Japan” (“*Ribende baoshou shili*”) which, the article firmly suggested, Koizumi hoped to exploit in order to shore up what the paper viewed to be his declining popularity (Renmin Ribao, 2002b, p. 3). The paper specifically mentioned the Bereaved Families Society as being key to this. *Huanqiu Shibao* initially reported the visit in a dispassionate manner, simply reporting that the visit had taken place and that it had been unexpected.[[129]](#footnote-129) However, it was notable that the same article also reported on legislation put before the Japanese Diet, known as the ‘Emergency Law’,[[130]](#footnote-130) designed to clarify Japan’s right to defend itself from armed attack. Though the article did not explicitly link the Yasukuni visit with the bill, the presence of this story alongside the reporting of the visit certainly gave an impression of a link between Koizumi’s actions and any possible move towards remilitarisation.[[131]](#footnote-131) That the bill went before the Diet four days before the visit also raises questions as to why these two events would be reported concurrently in a daily newspaper. A few days later the newspaper published a similar piece to the one that appeared in *Renmin Ribao*, citing the Bereaved Families Society as an important facet of “Japan’s social atmosphere” (“*Ribende shehui fengqi*”) in which “politicians are pandering to the right wing” (“*zhengzhijia que yinghe bufen youyi xinli*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2002b, p. 16). The same piece also accused Koizumi of carrying out this visit with “the apology from Marco Polo Bridge still ringing in our ears” (“*zai lugouqiao pan de daoqian yu fanxing yanyouzai’er*”). *Nanfang Dushibao* also reported the objections of South Korea with as much prominence as those of China. Interestingly, all three newspapers reported China as expressing “strong dissatisfaction” (“*qianglie buman*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2002c, p. 2; Nanfang Dushibao, 2002, p. 21; Renmin Ribao, 2002c, p. 4) as opposed to the “strong indignation” (“*qianglie fenkai*”) that had accompanied the first visit. It could be said that “*qianglie buman*”has a slightly less negative connotation than “*qianglie fenkai*” but it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to why this shift occurred. Reporting in the following years returned to the use of “*qianglie fenkai*". It is most notable that the shift occurred in all three newspapers, perhaps showing a level of coherence between the differing sections of the media that one would not ordinarily expect. Nevertheless, the evidence is not sufficient to declare this unequivocally here.

**5.2.4 Koizumi’s Third & Fourth Visits - January 14th 2003 & January 1st 2004**

The reactions to the third and fourth visits follow a similar pattern with regard to *Renmin Ribao* in that the negativity registered in the immediate aftermath was strong but fell away quickly. The coverage in the other two newspapers was particularly limited and, therefore, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions in terms of the evolution of the tone of the coverage, but the very limited response to these two visits is, in itself, a notable aspect of this analysis. The data from 2003 and 2004 is quite sparse in all three newspapers, though this is especially noticeable in *Huanqiu Shibao*. While the immediate reaction from *Renmin Ribao* continues to be brief and negative, albeit in a greatly scaled down fashion compared with the previous years, the reporting in the semi- and non-official media actually goes further in its reduction, particularly in 2004 when *Huanqiu Shibao* actually did not register a single negative article in relation to Japan.[[132]](#footnote-132) However, the most striking aspect of the aftermath of both of these visits is the lack of *any* kind of reporting, with all three newspapers paying much less attention to the issue than on the previous two occasions.

*Chart 5.9 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2003*

*Chart 5.10 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2004*

*Renmin Ribao* emphasised from the opening paragraph of its coverage of the 2003 visit that Koizumi’s actions were being condemned from within Japan. Though the opposition to his visits in Japan had previously been covered, this was the most prominent to date, explicitly linking the “people of Japan with insight and people from neighbouring Asian countries” (“*Riben guonei youshizhishi he Yazhou linguo renmin*”)

*Chart 5.11 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2003*

who united to “strongly condemn” (“*qianglie qianze*”) Koizumi (Renmin Ribao, 2003a, p.3). The paper also returned to the use of “strong indignation” (“*qianglie fenkai*”) to convey China’s reaction to the visit (Renmin Ribao, 2003b, p. 4). The coverage of this visit in *Huanqiu Shibao* continued its practice from the previous year with a particularly dispassionate tone, even raising the prospect that Koizumi had elected to visit the shrine in January in order to allow possible visits to South Korea and China not to be overshadowed by speculation over when or if he would go again (Huanqiu Shibao, 2003a, p. 3). The paper limited itself to just three articles concerning the visit, though one of these included a polemic that ridiculed Koizumi’s vow that his visit represented a “new year, new mood”, arguing instead that it “in fact, once again exposed his stubborn view of history” (“*shiji shang shi qi wangu shiguande you yici baolu*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2003b, p.3).

*Chart 5.12 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2004*

In the aftermath of Koizumi’s visit on January 1st 2004 *Renmin Ribao* used rhetorical questions to seek to undermine the justifications he had offered for his continued practice of visiting the shrine in the face of widespread opposition. Noting that Koizumi had declared it a duty to honour those on whose sacrifice Japan’s modern day prosperity had been built, the paper asked: “Could it be that Japan’s postwar peace and prosperity are also based on the contribution of class A war criminals?” (“*Nandao shuo zhanhou Riben shixian heping yu fanrong yeyou jia ji zhanfande jichu gongxian?*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2004, p. 3). Accompanying this were articles outlining opposition voiced from South Korea, China’s Foreign Ministry, and NGOs in Japan, but the coverage was limited in scope. *Huanqiu Shibao* continued its own pattern of reporting, with a single piece outlining the events of the day and noting various opposition to the visit (Huanqiu Shibao, 2004, p. 2). However, it followed this several days later with a lengthy opinion piece by a Japanese commentator, Honzawa Jirō,[[133]](#footnote-133) who lambasted Koizumi for his patronage of Yasukuni Shrine and also for his increasingly assertive foreign policy. *Nanfang Dushibao* was notably low key in its coverage of both of these visits, though it also ran a lengthy opinion piece following Koizumi’s fourth visit. It showed that the Yasukuni Shrine issue was now an inseparable part of the wider, and even more intractable ‘history issue’ which had “already become a bottleneck to the development of bilateral relations” (“*lishide wenti yijing chengwei zhiyue liang guo guanxi jinyibu fazhan de pingjing*”) (Nanfang Dushibao, 2004, p. 2).

**5.2.5 Koizumi’s Fifth Visit – October 17th 2005**

The coverage of the fifth and sixth visits shows a clearer pattern and has echoes of that which was seen after the first two visits. Following the fifth visit in October 2005, strong negativity was recorded in all three newspapers for a period of four days, after which coverage was only intermittent and not noticeably negative. This followed the same pattern that emerged from the first two visits, with both *Renmin Ribao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* registering negativity for three days, while *Huanqiu Shibao* was slower to react. The negativity in the semi- and non-official reporting lasted a day longer than in the official media, but none of the three newspapers gave a great deal of space to the issue after the fourth day.

*Chart 5.13 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2005*

*Chart 5.14 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2005*

Against the background of the relatively low key reaction from all three newspapers to the previous two visits, the response to Koizumi’s fifth visit was notable for its quite dramatic increase in the sheer volume of reporting that emerged in the days after. This was particularly pronounced in *Renmin Ribao*, which carried eleven articles in three days on the subject. This included the usual collection of pieces outlining opposition to the visit from South Korea, overseas Chinese and groups within Japan, as well as – for the first time – an article reporting the objections raised by the chairman of the KMT, Ma Ying-jeou,[[134]](#footnote-134) but it also included opinion pieces from notable commentators such as Liu Jiangyong. Liu’s piece was typical of the tone taken, concentrating on disputing Koizumi’s justifications for visiting the shrine. Liu took the argument that the class A war criminals could not be removed from the shrine since their inclusion was akin to placing several drops of water into a sea, in order to challenge Koizumi’s claim that he was not there to worship the war criminals; “Yasukuni Shrine cannot separate the ‘martyrs’, only when Koizumi visits can a distinction be made” (“*nandao jingguo shenshe wufa fenkai de ‘yingling’, zhiyou Xiaoquan zhouxiang canbai qubie kai*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2005, p. 3). *Huanqiu Shibao* produced significantly less content related to the visit, but continued the theme of tying China’s condemnation of the act to that of South Korea: “[Koizumi’s visit to the shrine] has again provoked a strong protest from the people and government of both China and South Korea, and has deepened the crisis of tension between Japan and its neighbours” (“*Ci ju zaici yinqile ZhongHan liang guo zhengfu he minzhong de qianglie kangyi, jiashenle Riben yu linguo guanxi jinzhang de weiji*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2005, p. 16). It also highlighted opposition within Japan, specifically naming some of those with political objections, including Kanzaki Takenori, the leader of the LDP’s coalition partner Komeito, as well as Murata Yoshitaka, the minister for disaster management. This was a slight departure from previous coverage which had not been so specific in the area of condemnation of Koizumi from within Japan. Nevertheless, Jin Xide[[135]](#footnote-135) was quoted in the same article as warning that Koizumi was trying to normalise the visits in the minds of Asian people in order to “lay the foundation for the next right wing government of Japan to go even further” (“*wei xia yi jie Riben youyi zhengfu de geng yuan daxia jichu*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2005, p. 16). *Nanfang Dushibao* suggested that the timing of Koizumi’s visit to the shrine might have been intended to coincide with the success of Shenzhou VI, China’s second manned spacecraft which had completed a four day orbit of the earth one day previously (Nanfang Dushibao, 2005a, p. 2). The paper also produced several articles outlining the objections from South Korea and Taiwan, as well as from within Japan itself. It made clear that the blame lay with Koizumi himself: “the stalling of political relations between China and Japan is due to Koizumi’s repeated visits in recent years” (“*ZhongRi zhijian de zhengzhi guanxi zheng shi youyu Xiaoquan duo ci canbai de xingwei er ji nianlai tingzhi bu qian*”) (Nanfang Dushibao, 2005b, p. 11).

**5.2.6 Koizumi’s Sixth Visit – August 15th 2006**

Koizumi’s sixth and final visit to the shrine was marked by three days of high levels of negativity from both *Renmin Ribao* and *Huanqiu Shibao*, after which the coverage ended abruptly. However, *Nanfang Dushibao* registered significant negativity only on the day following Koizumi’s shrine visit. This final visit is notable both for the short period of time that the negativity was focussed on Koizumi, but also for its intensity across all three newspapers; the 16th August 2006 was the only day across coverage of the entire six visits that saw all three newspapers reach double figures for negativity count.

The final visit in August 2006 has a notable difference from the apparently established pattern of reporting in all three newspapers. *Renmin Ribao* reacts with the highest level of negativity surrounding Japan that had been recorded in a single day since 2001, but the level dropped immediately, with the following two days registering fairly mild levels. *Nanfang Dushibao* registered a similar result by equalling its own severest level of negativity of -30, previously only recorded following Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni Shrine. However, in contrast to its previous habit of maintaining this for three or four days, the newspaper recorded no further significant levels in the following days. *Huanqiu Shibao,* which had previously not sustained negative reporting across several days in the way that the other two newspapers had, on this occasion registered the most sustained level with three days of particularly negative reporting on Japan, representing three of its five most severely negative days across the six visits.

*Chart 5.15 – Overall Tone (Koizumi) 2006*

*Chart 5.16 – Overall Tone (Japan) 2006*

It is clear that *Renmin Ribao’s* coverage follows a consistent pattern throughout the six visits of a short period of very negative coverage of Koizumi, lasting between three and five days, before the coverage ends fairly abruptly. Though similar characteristics can be observed in the semi-official *Huanqiu Shibao* and the non-official *Nanfang Dushibao*, the pattern is not followed in such a formulaic manner.

*Renmin Ribao* was again notable for its dramatic increase in the breadth of coverage. Across the two days immediately following Koizumi’s final visit the newspaper produced eighteen articles on the issue. This included the established pattern of reporting on reactions from South Korea and opponents within Japan, but also included objections from Russia and Australia for the first time. On August 16th it printed a lengthy commentary on the issue, citing Hu Jintao directly as emphasising the blame for the issue lay not with Japanese people, but with Japanese leaders who insist on visiting the shrine. This is reminiscent of much of the language used by official Chinese commentary on the “history issue” in Sino-Japanese relations and has echoes of the repeated identification of a “handful of militarists” that bore responsibility for Japan’s actions in the 1930s and 1940s in China (Dirlik, 1991, p. 52). The commentary made it clear that the shrine issue was now a key principle of Sino-Japanese relations: “to break the deadlock in Sino-Japanese political relations, certain Japanese leaders must end their insistence on visiting Yasukuni Shrine” (“*yao dapo ZhongRi zhengzhi guanxi jiangju bixu shouxian xiaochu Riben gebie lingdao ren jianchi canbai jingguo shenshe zhege yingxiang ZhongRi guanxi gaishan de zhengjie wenti*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2006a, p. 3). The commentary was noteworthy for its emphasis on “certain Japanese leaders” (“*Riben gebie lingdao ren*”) as opposed to merely “Koizumi”. The commentary concluded with the warning that “if Japanese leaders really want to improve relations with their neighbouring countries, the issue of Yasukuni Shrine should not be opened” (“*Riben lingdao ren zhenxin yao gaishan yu linguo de guanxi, jiu rao bu kai canbai jingguo shenshe wenti*”). The paper also carried a vox-pop article giving views of people apparently interviewed on the streets of Beijing, as well as including some comments from the newspapers’ own online forum, *Qiangguo Luntan*.[[136]](#footnote-136) The comments were uniform in their condemnation of Koizumi, but also in their emphasis on the importance of China’s relationship with Japan. Typical of this was a comment from one of the forum users that considered Koizumi’s repeated visits to the shrine as “having serious political consequences for both China’s and Japan’s national interest” (“*qi suo daozhi de yanzhong zhengzhi houguo, wulun dui Zhongguo haishi dui Riben de liyi lai shuo*”) (Renmin Ribao, 2006b, p. 3). *Huanqiu Shibao* emphasised the growth of opposition to Koizumi’s actions, notably in North American and Europe. It went on to criticise him for ignoring the “mainstream of public opinion” (“*zhuliu minyi*”) in Japan that opposed his visits (Huanqiu Shibao, 2006a, p. 2). Similarly, a reporter who was present at Yasukuni Shrine when Koizumi visited noted the attendance of groups protesting against the visit and “I wonder if Koizumi found the time to listen to these” (“*buzhi Xiaoquan zhe ji tian choukong tingle zhexie shengyin meiyou*”) (Huanqiu Shibao, 2006b, p. 2). Unusually, the majority of the coverage in *Nanfang Dushibao* was reprinted from Xinhua. It is quite possible that this was due to an internal directive that media coverage of Japan should be less negative that was issued after the anti-Japan protests of 2005. The directive, not officially confirmed but widely known about, instructed all media outlets to tone done criticism of Japan in the wake of these protests (Stockmann, 2013). It is conceivable that *Nanfang Dushibao* either elected to use Xinhua commentary in order not to fall foul of a directive that was open to different levels of interpretation,[[137]](#footnote-137) or was directly instructed to do so.Almost certainly as a result of that, the reporting was similar to the line taken in *Renmin Ribao*, with the criticism focussed squarely on Koizumi’s personal decision making. Two articles were devoted to debunking the ideas that apparently underpinned Koizumi’s own justifications for continuing the practice, with the tone unequivocal: “Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine a matter of personal choice? Simply, they are not” (“*canbai jingguo shenshe shi Xiaoquan de “geren” ziyou ma? Genben bushi*”) (Nanfang Dushibao, 2006, p. 2).

**5.3 Interpreting the Results**

One of the aims of this research was to try to establish whether or not there was a relationship between the different sections of the media in respect of their reaction to Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine. The results unquestionably demonstrate a correlation between all three sections of the media in the overall tone of their coverage in the weeks following each visit. Although there are clear – sometimes profound – differences between the newspapers’ absolute levels of negativity, when they are considered together, as an evolution of reporting tone across six visits, the patterns of change in all three show a clear correlation. This is true for the absolute levels of negativity in relation to both Japan and Koizumi, and also the average tone in relation to Japan. It is not true for the average tone in relation to Koizumi, and this discrepancy will be addressed below.

From this we might infer that there *is*, as hypothesised, a discernible relationship between the three sections of media considered. However, a correlation cannot be considered to constitute a relationship unless it is possible to ascertain that interaction between the parties involved has had a demonstrable effect on the outcomes from those parties. In other words, though a pattern of reporting tone emerges from this analysis, the absence of a clear causation of the correlation between the three sections means that the inference from this aspect of the analysis must be more conservative. It is not possible to prove beyond question that a relationship exists between the three sections of the media from this analysis alone, but it *is* reasonable to consider that the observed correlation is more significant than a mere coincidence.

In other words, that there is a definite pattern in the reporting tones of the three sections of the media visible over the six visits demonstrates that either there is an influential relationship between the different sectors of the media on each other, be it mutually reinforcing or uni-directional, or that these different sections were each independently reflecting a similar mood in both the elite and societal levels of China at this time. Any of these conclusions would be significant for this study. If it could be shown that the elite were driving the discourse at a societal level, this would provide grist to the mill of the argument that China’s reaction to Japan on this issue was top-down. Conversely, demonstrating a causative effect of the societal level reaction through the commercialised media on the elite level discourse would be evidence that something of a bottom-up nature had occurred. However, failure to prove either of these phenomena would suggest that either the interaction is mutually reinforcing, with neither end of the spectrum providing the driving force behind the discursive shifts, or that the elite and societal levels simply responded in a similar fashion to each of the six visits. Intuitively, the latter of these seems unlikely and would suggest that the two ends of the societal spectrum act entirely independently of each other whilst simultaneously producing similar responses.

In order to address the question of whether or not there was any influence between the different sections of the media and, if such influence was a factor, in which direction it predominantly flowed, the daily reporting following each visit was individually broken down. If the daily total levels of absolute negativity recorded, as well as the average tone of each day, consistently showed a pattern of one section following another then it would be reasonable to conclude that there is a directional influence between these two sections. The results displayed above do not show this. Where there is correlation, it is largely on a day-by-day basis, not showing any lead from either end of the spectrum. Thus, it would be inaccurate to speak of interaction between different sections in terms of a driving force behind discursive changes.

Within the daily breakdown, there is a very clear correlation between non-official and official media, with both following a relatively consistent pattern throughout three of the six visits. Following each of the first two visits, as well as the fifth, both *Renmin Ribao* and *Nanfang Dushibao* produced between three and five days of strongly negative coverage of both Japan and Koizumi, before dropping coverage sharply. The final visit in 2006 drew only one day of reaction from *Nanfang Dushibao*, while the third and fourth visits received very little attention of any kind.There is no evidence that either led the way in ending the coverage, or even in toning it down, and they appear to have followed similar paths independently. Thus, it might be concluded that the two ends of the spectrum are behaving in the same way because they are representing similar views held by different sections of Chinese society. It would seem to be possible to discount the notion that the official rhetoric responded to that which appeared in the non-official media, given that the shifts occurred at the same time. However, there is an alternative interpretation that cannot be ruled out. It is possible that there is a greater influence of censorship than has been assumed in the methodology of this research on the commercialised media, so that it is possible that the shifts in non-official tone were in fact driven by the government in the same way that those observed in the official media were. However, if official controls were directing the changes in tone in the commercialised media in this way, this ought to have been demonstrated in the semi-official media as well; indeed, it would be expected that a semi-official publication would be even closer to the official line. *Huanqiu Shibao* did not display the same pattern of reporting and was consistent with the pattern of day-to-day official reporting only following the final visit in 2006, one of the occasions on which *Nanfang Dushibao* actually differed. Therefore it seems that both the grassroots and the official media were independently reacting in a similar fashion. There remains the issue of self-censorship to consider. It has been noted that Chinese journalists and editors do not rely solely on explicit instruction from government organs to determine what content should be removed or retained in their coverage of sensitive subjects, but instead use a combination of instinct and experience to ascertain what is acceptable in the relevant political climate (Tong, 2009). In other words, it is possible that the non-official media may be reflecting what its journalists and editors believe the government wants it to say, rather than what its readership wants to see. However, it seems unlikely that a newspaper which is so commercially successful would be particularly far removed from its readership in terms of tone. Thus, it can be tentatively concluded that the tone on Japan in the official rhetoric was shared by the general opinions at grassroots level during this period of time.

One of the most notable results of the research was the difference between the tone used in relation to Koizumi and that used in relation to Japan. Though, as previously noted in the presentation of the results, there was a degree of similarity in the absolute levels of negativity recorded in regard to Koizumi, when this was assessed as an average tone of each article during the period under consideration the result was quite different. The pattern seen across all three newspapers in the evolution of tone regarding Japan was not replicated in the analysis of that regarding Koizumi. In fact, it would be inaccurate to talk of a ‘pattern’ in the discursive shifts regarding Koizumi.

Both the official and non-official media remained negative at a fairly consistent level, though the two levels differed in their respective severities. *Renmin Ribao* was significantly more negative on average than was *Nanfang Dushibao* but the fluctuations within the tones of the respective newspapers were relatively minor.[[138]](#footnote-138) Thus, the treatment of Koizumi in these two sections of the media remained fairly constant throughout the previously described fluctuations in the coverage of Japan. This has two significant implications. Firstly, it provides another example of similarities between the two ends of the spectrum of media coverage that had not been predicted. As with the average tone of coverage relating to Japan, the official and non-official media shared a relatively similar pattern despite the difference in severity and the disconnect from the Japan coverage. As has already been noted, such a similarity seems to suggest that the elite and societal discursive patterns on this issue were following comparable paths. Secondly, this would seem to suggest that Koizumi himself was treated differently in terms of coverage of the Yasukuni Shrine issue. In other words, Koizumi and Japan were not considered to be interchangeably responsible for the insults to China that the shrine visits were considered to constitute. Even when coverage of Japan improved in tone, the collocations with Koizumi remained fairly stable in their negativity. Similarly, when the tone relating to Japan turned sharply more negative, such as in 2005 and 2006, there was no concomitant downturn[[139]](#footnote-139) in the presentation of Koizumi. The pattern in the semi-official media did not show the same level of consistency in tone in relation to Koizumi. However, it also did not follow the pattern seen in all three newspapers’ coverage of Japan, suggesting that the discursive treatment of Koizumi was different from that of Japan in all three levels of the media, albeit not in a uniform way. Thus, it can be concluded that Koizumi was not regarded – or, at least, presented – as analogous with Japan at any level of the spectrum of Chinese society. Furthermore, at both elite and societal levels the perception and presentation of Koizumi remained consistently negative even during periods of time that attempts were made not to view Japan itself in a particularly bad light.

These conclusions are somewhat tentative and need to be treated with a degree of caution. One could not definitively answer all of the research objectives through this piece of data analysis. Nevertheless, it has provided an insight into the reactions from different parts of the spectrum of media reporting in China and remains useful in that regard. Furthermore, it has raised three key questions that need to be addressed through further research. Firstly, why was the pattern of alterations in the average tone in relation to Japan so consistent across all three sections of the media? The existence of a consistent pattern might suggest that there was a narrative of some kind that was consumed across the spectrum of society in China during this period. The discursive shifts at both elite and societal levels mirrored each other, suggesting that all were observing and presenting this narrative in a similar fashion. This has implications for understanding what we perceive to be *China’s reaction* to Japan over the Yasukuni Shrine issue. Secondly, what was different about the third and fourth visits that provoked such low levels of attention? While the responses to each visit have observably different characteristics to the others, it is notable that the reaction across all three sections of the media to the visits in 2003 and 2004 was on a much smaller scale. This is somewhat counter-intuitive as there is no obvious reason why a third or fourth occurrence of something that provoked such sentiment on two previous occasions would suddenly become less emotive. It is possible that a repeated event could gradually become less noteworthy as people become used to its occurrence, but that would not account for the resurgence in hostility displayed after the final two visits in 2005 and 2006. It is clear that there are other factors involved in the response beyond any notion of it being a ‘natural’ reaction to a provocative act. Finally, why was Koizumi treated differently? It is conceivable that the coverage of a country can be distinct from the coverage of its leader, though this would be quite unusual. For the coverage to differ so starkly *within* reporting about an act viewed as so provocative suggests that, for at least some of the time that this issue was receiving media attention, Koizumi played an individual role within the narrative. Precisely what that role was and why it was distinct could have implications for our understanding of how China responded to the Yasukuni Shrine issue, and even for how it deals with the Sino-Japanese relationship more generally.

**5.3.1 Application of Theory**

There are four related strands of this analysis that speak to the theoretical approach of this thesis. Each of them offers opportunities to develop the approach, though further research is required in each case. Firstly, it gives a picture of the *production of reaction* from China that took place during this time. One of the aims of this overall project was to deconstruct the concept of the ‘China’s reaction to Japan’, a shorthand phrase that is often used without explanation. This media analysis has provided an insight into the nature of that reaction. What is significant about it is that there is a much greater level of harmony between the societal and elite response than is often implied when this is addressed in terms of a ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ response. Expressions of popular nationalist sentiment are frequently characterised in these terms, with the ownership of the movement presented in binary terms that determine it as one-way process; the government is stoking and containing nationalism as it sees fit in order to further its own foreign policy goals and shore up its domestic legitimacy, or the sentiment that comes from the societal level limits governmental responses in certain areas of foreign policy. Only the direction of this process is questioned and the sentiment emanating from within China is almost dismissed as a by-product of power struggles between elite and society. Few, if any, contemplate the idea that such expressions of nationalistic anger, or of affronted patriotism, could be produced predominantly in response to the perceived external insult and not simply used as a tool by either section of society in an ongoing struggle for influence. Further research is certainly needed to understand why both societal and elite level reaction to Koizumi’s repeated actions was so closely correlated, but these results offer a suggestion that it is meaningful to talk of ‘China’s reaction’ and that the debate over the binary, one-way process that underpins such a reaction may well be missing a crucial aspect.

The second strand, closely related to the first, is the very idea of a constructivist interpretation of Chinese foreign policy formation. This project has advocated a holistic constructivist approach that considers domestic processes and identity formation in tandem with systemic level interaction of the state as an entity itself. From the media analysis conducted in this chapter it is possible to discern a correlation between some of the sharper turns to negativity within the domestic discourse surrounding Japan and the state’s more severe bilateral actions at this time. For example, the increased negativity surrounding Koizumi’s fifth visit in 2005 coincided with a period of time during which China’s state-to-state actions towards Japan were more assertive in a diplomatic sense. Notably during this time bilateral cooperation at the highest political level was withdrawn almost completely by China. This included the early return to China of Vice-Premier Wu Yi in May 2005 prior to a planned meeting in Tokyo with Koizumi, openly explained by the Chinese as being a direct response to the Yasukuni Shrine issue, as well as the ending of all third-country meetings between either Hu Jintao or Wen Jiabao and Koizumi. There is undoubtedly a question around causality that needs to be addressed here. A blinkered application of a constructivist lens might lead one to conclude that the more assertive policy vis-à-vis Japan was a result of the domestic production of the reaction to Japan on the Yasukuni Shrine issue, that the foreign policy applied at this time was merely the outcome of the various processes that occurred at the unit level. However, it is possible that the domestic response described actually stemmed from a signal given through the more assertive treatment of Japan. In other words, a decision taken at the highest level of government to alter the policy toward Japan might have been the catalyst for the downturn in the presentation of Japan, rather than the other way round. It would not be reasonable to firmly conclude either way based on the research in this chapter.

The third strand that emerges from this analysis is some evidence of structural factors in China’s response. There is a similarity in the responses to each of the shrine visits in both the societal and elite level discourse, both being characterised by short, sharp spells of negativity lasting a few days. This is not to describe such reaction as either ‘natural’ or ‘knee jerk’ but to say that it was consistent with expectations in two important ways. Firstly, it demonstrates that there is a breach of what is perceived as a mutually constituted norm in Koizumi’s actions. The perception that a Japanese prime minister should not visit Yasukuni Shrine while in power was not based solely on the notion of it being morally wrong, though certainly it was considered that way. More importantly, there was perceived to be an understanding between China and Japan (conceptualised as nuanced entities constituted of myriad societal and governmental actors and individuals) that this action would not occur. Secondly, as previously outlined, this norm involved two parties: China and Japan. Though it is clear that the breach of the norm would be perceived to have been committed by Japan, there is a role for China in this process. Without a reaction from China, it could be argued that no norm had been breached. Thus, the response from the different elements in China was neither ‘natural’ (that is, preordained and entirely unavoidable as a human response that would have occurred under any circumstances) nor ‘manipulated’ (that is, determined by conscious calculation of agents either at a governmental or societal level), but was a structurally determined facet of a process that involved both China and Japan as well as their respective constituent parts.

Finally, it is possible to identify some processes of *structuration* closely related to the third strand described above in this analysis. If the responses to the first and second visits were structurally determined to some extent, then the reaction to the third and fourth visits in 2003 and 2004 requires some explanation. *Structuration* offers precisely that. If a norm is breached once then it is an unexpected event to which there is required to be a reaction for the reasons outlined previously. However, if the same ‘norm’ is breached on multiple occasions, it could be argued that the norm no longer exists, or at the very least that it is no longer perceived as a norm by both parties. It is possible, then, that during the time of the third and fourth visits to Yasukuni Shrine that a new norm was becoming established in the Sino-Japanese relationship, specifically that Koizumi’s yearly visits to the shrine were an expected[[140]](#footnote-140) facet of that relationship. It is perfectly plausible that this is what Koizumi had hoped, though this is not considered in this thesis. This, in itself, would be evidence of the process of *structuration* occurring in the relationship, as a previously-accepted norm is challenged and gradually altered by agents acting within the structures that define it. However, the strong reaction to the fifth and sixth visits in 2005 and 2006 provide even more evidence of this process and could even be said to show competition to re-establish this norm. Rather than merely accepting the apparently redefined custom regarding Yasukuni Shrine, the various parties acting on behalf of China employed their own agency to reaffirm the need for a strong response, thus re-establishing the previous pattern of interaction. It could not be enough alone to prevent Koizumi from continuing his visits to the shrine, but it ensured that the mutual understanding of this process was not converted to one of acceptance on both sides. Through a process of *structuration* the mutually-constituted understanding of the meaning of a Japanese prime ministerial visit to Yasukuni Shrine evolved and altered the structures that determined the limits of agency for actors on both sides.

**5.4 Conclusion**

There are unquestionably limitations to the conclusions that can be reached out of this research. It relies on sections of the media to represent different elements of Chinese society and in each instance this is clearly neither a perfect fit nor comprehensive. Nevertheless, it remains valid to consider *Renmin Ribao* as an important indication of official discourse and political tone, particularly with regard to sensitive foreign policy matters. Similarly, using commercialised newspapers as a signifier of societal opinion has strengths that cannot be found in other measures. In the absence of reliable public opinion polling it may be one of the most useful tools that can be employed in this area. Thus, with that caveat noted, some useful observations can be drawn from this analysis. There are three key facets of the research results that have implications for the understanding of this issue generally and the development of the theoretical aspect of this thesis specifically. Firstly, the pattern of the tone relating to Japan across the reporting of the six visits suggests that there was a narrative that was shared between both the elite and societal levels in China. The greater levels of hostility displayed across the spectrum of media in the early and latter stages of the narrative suggest that a process of *structuration* may have been taking place. Secondly, the gap between the tone applied to Japan and that associated with Koizumi suggests that a distinction was made in both the presentation and consumption of this narrative at all levels. Koizumi appears to have been viewed with a relatively consistent level of negativity, while perceptions of the relationship with Japan evolved across the five year period. Finally, the close-correlation between the official rhetoric and the presentation of the issue in a commercialised newspaper shows that there is less of a disconnect between the perceptions of the elite and grassroots than might have previously been thought. This has implications for the debate over the nature of production of nationalist reaction in China, which, perhaps, has focussed too narrowly on a binary question of the driving force behind such responses.

What also appears to have emerged from this research is a narrative arc of the six visits made to Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi during his tenure as prime minister. The first two visits in 2001 and 2002 seem to have provoked a much more significant response from the Chinese media than the following visits in 2003 and 2004. The lull that occurred during this time was replaced by a particularly strong reaction to the final two visits. Furthermore, the qualitative reading of these articles, examples of which have been given throughout this chapter, appears to show a relative softening toward ‘Japan’ as an abstract concept at this time, with a clear effort to identify Koizumi as the main cause of antagonism in the Sino-Japanese relationship. This, to some extent, is counter-intuitive in that initial assessments of the relationship between the two countries during this time would suggest that it was at its lowest point since normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972. Nevertheless, the reporting across the official, semi-official and non-official media made a clear attempt to distinguish between the actions of Koizumi as an individual, and of other parties within Japan. This was a slightly more nuanced version of the discourse that is often displayed with regard to Japan’s behaviour towards China over the ‘history issue’, whereby difficulties are often blamed on a just a few individuals while the greater mass of Japanese society – and political opposition within Japan – can be seen to be largely innocent.[[141]](#footnote-141) What that meant in the context of this issue was that what had been presented as largely a Japanese problem in 2001 had, by 2006, been transformed into an issue that had been caused by one individual. That this individual was known to be leaving office just one month after the August 2006 visit allowed for a potential resolution to what had been a seemingly intractable problem. The following chapter explores this narrative arc in greater detail by seeking to understand the viewpoint of advisers and policy-makers at the time.

**6. Interviews**

This chapter seeks to build on the previously outlined media analysis by drawing on a series of interviews conducted over a six month period in China and Japan in late 2011 and early 2012. It outlines six key themes that emerged from the interviews: the anticipation of Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni Shrine in August 2001; the misunderstanding or misjudgement of Koizumi’s visit to Beijing in October 2001; the importance placed by both sides on maintaining functionality of the bilateral relationship; unexpectedly high levels of pressure from the societal level in China on the government; hope that Koizumi’s behaviour could be affected by China continued until 2004 or 2005; and a strategy that was employed by China following the fifth and sixth visits in 2005 and 2006 aimed at Koizumi’s potential successor. Taken together, these themes help to shed some light on questions raised by the results of the previous chapter and to strengthen the theoretical understanding of Sino-Japanese relations during this time. The pattern in the tone of reporting that was identified in the previous chapter, which showed a clear move towards downplaying the criticism of the third and fourth visits, needed to be understood in the wider context of Chinese strategic thinking over the issue at the time. The interview process helped to explain how that thought process influenced the Chinese response as evidenced in the media output, with a process of learning that occurred over the five years in terms of China’s ability to influence Koizumi’s behaviour over the shrine. Furthermore, it shows not only that the concept of *structuration* is relevant for analysing this issue, but that Chinese policy-makers demonstrated an awareness of this process and actively sought to strategise within it to achieve an outcome that was as close to satisfactory as was possible.

**6.1 Aims of the Study**

There were four main aims of the research outlined in this chapter: to gain understanding; to obtain information; to contrast perspectives; and to build on the theoretical aspect of this thesis. The first of these aims was to gain an understanding of Chinese analyses of the situation both from a domestic and a bilateral perspective. While Chinese analyses of Koizumi’s persistent visits to Yasukuni Shrine had been previously considered through the use of media analysis and reviews of academic publications from China, a more detailed and comprehensive assessment of the general views of those either indirectly involved in the processes, or observing them from close quarters was needed. This was sought both from a domestic and a bilateral perspective. That is to say that interviewees were asked to assess the significance of Koizumi’s actions for China internally, considering implications for the relationship between society and the state. Understanding how participants viewed the ways in which elements of society that expressed a view interacted with apparatus of the state to create an overall ‘Chinese reaction’ would be a useful contribution to the wider assessment of a constructivist interpretation of China’s Japan policy at this time. However, of equal importance to the domestic analysis was that of the international situation. If China’s actions and responses to Japan over this period are to be understood, then it is crucial to gain an insight into the ways in which Chinese observers considered the international dynamic of this situation. This was not intended to be an assessment of how close the ‘psychological environment’ of Chinese analysts was to the ‘operational environment’ in which policy was made,[[142]](#footnote-142) but more an understanding of just what the landscape of that ‘psychological environment’ looked like from a Chinese perspective. Thus, the importance of this external series of events for the internal machinations of China as a dynamic entity was sought alongside the view of China’s position within a bilateral and international system of interaction.

Secondly, it was hoped that information not available elsewhere could be gained from interviewees with access to decision-makers or who were actively engaged in contemporaneous analytical activities during the time being studied. While much can be garnered from thorough examination of news reports and academic studies, there is no question that aspects both of the domestic production of China’s reaction and also of the bilateral engagement between China and Japan would not have been publicly acknowledged. For example, it is widely known that meetings between politicians at the highest level continued throughout much of the five year period, but the publicly available reports on these meetings are, understandably, short on detail on the actual content of any discussions. Similarly, at the domestic level, the private assessments made at the political elite of societal views and actions relating to Koizumi and Japan are significant factors in understanding the processes by which China’s reaction was produced, but are not readily accessible. For this reason, a key aim of the interviews was to obtain information relating to these aspects that could inform the analysis overall, or at least guide the general direction of further research. A caveat is certainly needed here: though it is legitimate to attempt to enrich the available pool of information in this way it needs to be noted that any disclosures must be treated with caution, since many participants may have their own reasons for selectively divulging private information.[[143]](#footnote-143) Furthermore, since the information being sought is that which is not in the public domain, it is difficult to ascertain precisely what is ‘unknown’ and, by the very nature of unreleased information, is likely to be considered sensitive. With these potential issues noted, it remains a worthwhile supplementary source.

Thirdly, by considering perspectives not only from China but also from Japan, it was hoped that any disconnect between the respective perspectives over the processes and meanings of the events of 2001 to 2006 could be identified and assessed. While the main focus of this project has been the Chinese reaction and response to Japan and Koizumi, the theoretical consideration of a structural bilateral relationship necessitates some account of Japan’s actions within this issue. If the hypothesis of such a norm-based, experience-led structure of behavioural expectation is correct, then it follows that both Chinese and Japanese policy makers believe that they share a perception of the outline of that structure. It does not necessarily follow that what either side perceives is identical. In fact, should there be a significant difference in the two perceptions then this would offer some insight into how a relationship guided by rules can be so unstable. For this reason interviews were undertaken in Japan as well as in China, to ascertain if such a shared belief in structural expectation production existed and, if so, whether or not there was a disconnect between the Chinese and Japanese perceptions in this regard.

Finally, the research was designed to build on the media analysis outlined in the previous chapter in order to inform the theoretical assessment of China’s relationship with Japan at this time. By using findings from an earlier pilot study of the media analysis,[[144]](#footnote-144) the interviews were designed to draw on these tentative conclusions to explore some of the unanswered questions that it produced. In particular the apparent lull in the response to the third and fourth visits from across the spectrum of Chinese society was addressed. By drawing on all the data obtained during the interview process in conjunction with the media analysis from the previous chapter it was hoped that the theoretical underpinnings of the project could be strengthened with empirical data.

**6.1.1 Methodology**

The research was conducted over a period of six months from November 2011 to May 2012. This period included one month in Japan, based in Tokyo, with the remaining five months spent in China, where time was predominantly divided between Shanghai[[145]](#footnote-145) and Beijing. No fixed target number of interviews was set, with the ‘snowball’ method of reaching interviewees employed. This method involves building a set of participants through obtaining recommendations from previous interviewees, ordinarily at the end of an interview. It has the advantage that the most recent participant will have a reasonable understanding of the kinds of participants that will be both relevant to the research and also willing to participate. It has a particular salience in conducting research in China because of the widely understood social system of *guanxi*, (usually translated as ‘connections’), by which networks of contacts are developed and utilised. This ‘snowball’ method has been employed effectively across disciplines and geographical areas as a method of obtaining high quality interview data, as it gives a higher likelihood that the participants will be willing to engage in the interview process (Goodman, 1961). However, the method also comes with inherent shortcomings. In particular there is the danger of similarity and narrowing of focus within the research process. For example, by following one network of connections through a lengthy interview process it is likely that a particular set of interests or knowledge-base would be prioritised over others. While the network of connections that one follows is useful in building a base of participants in the research process it does, by its very nature, lead to the exclusion of other potential interviewees to the possible detriment of the research data. There are other issues with this method, including duplication of recommendations and the ‘drying up’ of recommendations altogether, both of which would lead to something of a dead-end in the research process. To counter all of these issues, it was necessary to begin with multiple starting points across various fields. Each chain of connections was explored as far as possible, accepting invitations to conduct interviews and less formal discussions with all participants that were recommended. Each initial contact was made through either direct contact using publicly available email addresses or telephone numbers, with further contacts gained directly from the initial sources. In this way, the multiple chains of connections mitigated the earlier outlined problems of narrowing the base and of the unwillingness of some participants to continue the ‘snowball’ effect by passing on contacts.

This method led to a total of 39 interviews. Of these, 8 were conducted in Tokyo, 19 in Beijing and 12 in Shanghai. There was a mix of participants that included senior academics, analysts at policy-advising think tanks, diplomats and government officials. The think tanks and academic institutions visited included six of the most important and influential in terms of Chinese foreign policy as identified by Pascal Abb (2013, p. 10). Within each of these institutions at least one of the most senior specialists in China’s relations with Japan was interviewed. Though it was not possible to interview anyone from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a diplomat from Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had been based in China during the period of Koizumi’s tenure, did consent. Additionally, some diplomats from Western embassies in Beijing who are tasked with monitoring Sino-Japanese relations were also included. The majority of interviews were conducted in Chinese,[[146]](#footnote-146) though 10 of the interviews in total were conducted in English. The use of English was either because a participant was more fluent in English than Chinese or, in two cases, because a Chinese participant expressed a preference for speaking English.[[147]](#footnote-147) Of the 29 interviews that were conducted in Chinese, a native Chinese speaking research assistant attended 12. This was not only to assist with any unfamiliar linguistic nuances, but also to aid in note-taking during those interviews that were not recorded. Of these 12 interviews, only one participant gave permission for the interview to be recorded. Of the 17 interviews conducted without the research assistant present, 16 were recorded,[[148]](#footnote-148) with the transcription of these interviews later conducted in conjunction with the research assistant. As a result of this, there can be confidence that the participants’ views and information were not misunderstood.

Not all participants were comfortable with the subject of the research and a common response to initial outlines of the subject under consideration was to advise that the wrong aspect was being researched. A typical response of this nature came from a policy analyst in Beijing who said: “The Yasukuni Shrine issue needs to be analysed at the root of the Japanese side. China simply responds to it and is not the cause of the problem.” His colleague went further: “Your research is wrong-headed. You should be in Japan finding out why Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine. This is nothing to do with China.” When it was explained that the focus of the research was China’s *reaction*, rather than Japan’s *actions*, he responded by simply stating that “China’s reaction was natural”. Without exception each of the Chinese interviewees made it clear that they felt any blame for the deterioration of relations between China and Japan during this period should be placed on Koizumi personally. However, the majority of participants were willing to engage with the subject of the research once they had placed that feeling on the record.

All interviews were conducted on a semi-structured basis. This was to ensure that they remained focussed on similar issues in order that broad themes could be drawn from the obtained data, whilst also allowing for the conversations to take the course that most suited the particular participant and their respective specialist knowledge. All interviews were divided into two broad sections, with the first focussing on the specific issue of Koizumi’s visits to the shrine and China’s response, and the second tackling Sino-Japanese relations more generally. It is important to note that the themes referred to in the introduction and expanded upon in the remainder of this chapter were not identified prior to the interview process. The interviews were conducted in as open a way as was possible to allow the participants to contribute whatever they felt was relevant and to express whatever opinion they had on the issues raised. It was from the results of these interviews that the themes were drawn, through a process of qualitative analysis of the data once the interviews had been transcribed. Nevertheless, the structure of the later interviews was influenced by some of the issues raised in the earlier interviews. For example, it was mentioned early on in the interview process that there was a possibility of a misunderstanding between Koizumi and Jiang over the visit by the former to Beijing in October 2001. Though the visit itself had been raised, the possibility of a misunderstanding was not a specific question in these initial interviews. As a result of the early mentions of this possibility, later interviewees who did not raise this themselves were specifically asked if they thought this was a reasonable explanation.

Regarding the specific issue of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, all participants were asked to consider to what extent these events confounded expectations within China at all levels, and whether this altered over the course of the five years. Significant events of the period were discussed; in particular Koizumi’s visit to China in October 2001, the handover of power from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao in 2003 and the public protests against Japan’s bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC in 2005. The questions also addressed the issue of the media’s coverage of the events and of Japan in general at the time, as well as the assessment by both academic and political elites of the societal perception of the events. In the general discussion of Sino-Japanese relations participants were asked to consider concepts such as structurally determined expectations, any potential cyclical phenomena, and the importance of personal connections between political leaders on either side. Participants were also asked specific questions designed to assess their understanding of Japan’s motives[[149]](#footnote-149) in any bilateral dispute, such as the arrest of a Chinese fishing boat captain close to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in 2010. As noted earlier, there was something of an evolution in the questions asked to take account of some of the repeated issues raised in earlier interviews, meaning the final interviews conducted had a different structure to the originals. Nevertheless, the broad areas of discussion did not change.[[150]](#footnote-150)

**6.1.2 Hypotheses**

It is difficult to hypothesise results of research such as this, which can provide large amounts of data on a wide spectrum of views and types of information. However, some key themes were expected to emerge from the interview process and three broad hypotheses were outlined: firstly, that China’s reaction would not have been thoroughly deconstructed among the Chinese elite and would, therefore, be considered to be ‘natural’ or, at least, ‘normal’; secondly, that there would be evidence of the structurally defined relationship between China and Japan in terms of experience-led expectation production, though without it being explicitly defined in these terms; and finally, that there would be explicit recognition that the range of responses available to the Chinese government was limited by the actions and perceived opinions of Chinese society, even while acknowledging that governmental influence over such opinions continues.

The first of these hypotheses stemmed, in part, from prior reading of Chinese academic work on international relations that generally presents the Chinese state as a monolithic and unitary actor. It is certainly not a uniquely Chinese trait to conceptualise and present the state as a singular being, existing and acting in the international system as a rational actor; a similar simplification is present in much Western rationalist interpretations of international relations (Cox, 1981). However, it is particularly pronounced in Chinese writings and, therefore, seemed likely to be replicated in discussions with analysts. In addition to this consideration, previous studies of the Sino-Japanese relationship, both in Chinese and English, have considered the actions of China in regard to matters relating to the ‘history issue’ to be ‘natural’, ‘knee jerk’ or ‘automatic’ (for example, Sun, 2008; Jin, 2005b).

The hypothesis regarding the structural nature of the relationship refers to this evidence being present without explicit recognition of its significance. That is to say that it was predicted that examples of expectations of behavioural patterns, driven by prior experiences that had created those expectations, would be recognised by analysts, policy-makers and academics without the recognition of a constructivist IR theory that underpinned their understanding. In other words, examples of previous interaction between Japan and China over the issues under consideration would be cited as evidence of what *ought* to be expected to have happened during the Koizumi era, with the failure of Japan to behave in the expected fashion being cited as the causative factor in the deterioration of relations.

Finally, the hypothesis regarding the domestic situation of China also predicted that observations of society and state interactions would not be framed in terms of a constructivist production of foreign policy, despite offering evidence that might support such a theoretical interpretation. It has become relatively well accepted in recent years, both inside and outside of China, that the actions and opinions of the societal level, particularly with regard to matters of nationalist passions, act as a limiting factor on the range of options that the Chinese government has in many foreign policy situations (Reilly, 2010; Shen 2007). With the range of interviewees being targeted including many who would have direct contact with both sides of this interaction it was expected that there would be a clear articulation of the impact that one has on the other. This ought to be as relevant for societal limitations on government policy options as it would be for government-led influence on societal outlook-formation.

**6.2 Results**

Though the interviews produced a large amount of data, it was possible to draw a series of themes from within the information provided that ran almost entirely consistently across all of the interviews. In chronological order these themes were: the anticipation of Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni Shrine in August 2001; the misunderstanding or misjudgement of Koizumi’s visit to Beijing in October 2001; the importance placed by both sides on maintaining functionality of the bilateral relationship; unexpectedly high levels of pressure from the societal level in China on the government; hope that Koizumi’s behaviour could be affected by China continued until 2004 or 2005; and a strategy that was employed by China following the fifth and sixth visits in 2005 and 2006 aimed at Koizumi’s potential successor. In the following section these themes are expanded upon with examples of each.

**6.2.1 Expectation of the First Visit**

During the election campaign for the leadership of the LDP in 2001, Koizumi made a firm commitment that he would visit Yasukuni Shrine on the August 15th anniversary of Japan’s surrender if he became prime minister “however much criticism there is” (cited in Seaton, 2007, p. 163). Nevertheless, there were two possible reasons to doubt that he would fulfil this pledge. Firstly, the only serving Japanese prime minister to have visited the shrine publicly[[151]](#footnote-151) since Nakasone ended the practice at China’s behest in 1985 was Hashimoto in 1996, an act which he made clear would be an isolated one following criticism from both China and South Korea (Kunihiro,1997). It would, therefore, have represented a departure from the accepted norm within a Japanese domestic context, albeit not one without precedent. Secondly, Koizumi himself had never previously visited Yasukuni, either in a private or public capacity. His apparent conversion to the importance of paying tribute at the shrine occurred after a visit to a museum dedicated to kamikaze pilots in Kagoshima in February 2001. Koizumi is reported to have wept upon reading a collection of letters written by pilots sent on suicide missions and this event is reputed to have convinced him that, if he were to become a future Japanese leader, he would have a responsibility to pay his respects at Yasukuni (Tamamoto, 2001). It was perfectly conceivable, therefore, that Koizumi’s pledge had been made purely to gain support in the LDP leadership election and that he would not fulfil this promise once elected. Certainly, from the perspective of the theory employed in this thesis, it would be predicted that regardless of whether or not he planned to visit the shrine Beijing would expect him not to. However, this was not the conclusion of any of the interviewees.

The interviewees were unequivocal on this matter. One Beijing-based professor stated that “the Chinese leadership understood that he [Koizumi] would almost certainly visit the shrine as per his election pledge”. There had been sufficient time between Koizumi’s election and the scheduled visit to Yasukuni for the Chinese to garner a thorough understanding of the likely outcome. The conclusion was that Koizumi would certainly fulfil his pledge. It would not have been politically possible for any level of understanding or acceptance of Koizumi’s plans to visit the shrine to be expressed by any representative of the government at this time. Several interviewees were keen to point out that though they believed public perception to have been an important factor in determining the rhetorical positions taken by the Chinese leadership, the feeling that Koizumi was acting in way that was morally wrong was something that went beyond mere rhetoric. In other words, though the leadership knew they could not publicly express acceptance of Koizumi’s plans, their private views were not far removed from this position anyway.

However, there was something of a contradiction in the position of the Chinese leadership at this time. Whilst both public and private opinions were in accordance in opposing *any* visit to Yasukuni by a serving prime minister, the tactics pursued suggest that the Chinese government felt it needed to take whatever action it could to exercise some influence over the situation, and this came in the form of pressure for Koizumi to avoid visiting the shrine on the provocative date of August 15th, the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in 1945. The very act of trying to influence the choice of date might be interpreted as a level of acceptance of the act.[[152]](#footnote-152) If an action is entirely *un*acceptable, then the date on which it occurs ought not to be relevant; conversely, if one particular date is more unacceptable than another, then it follows that the alternative date is *more acceptable*, thus implying a level of acceptance of the action within the parameters of the understood relationship. There is evidence of this in the public rhetoric of the Chinese government at the time, both prior to the first visit and in its aftermath. In July 2001, then-Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan held a meeting with Tanaka Makiko, his Japanese counterpart, and told journalists afterwards that “if Prime Minister Koizumi pays a visit on August 15th it will draw broadsides from the Chinese people” (cited in Wan, 2006, p. 239). Immediately following the visit, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhang Qiyue described it as “wrongful” and expressed “indignation” (Zhang, 2001). However, despite the strength of the rhetoric, the same statement from the ministry also made a point of noting the change of date from Koizumi’s original pledge “under domestic and international pressure” (Zhang, 2001). Thus, the Chinese had sought to exercise the limited agency they perceived themselves to have in this situation, accepting that Koizumi’s visit was inevitable and instead using their influence to effect some alteration in the nature of this visit. While this cannot be viewed as an unmitigated success, Chinese analysts believed that it demonstrated influence over Koizumi could still be exercised and the success of this pressure was important. One Beijing-based think tank analyst said that “Chinese pressure was the most important factor in Koizumi changing his mind [about visiting the shrine on August 15th], and this was a small victory [for China]”. From this it can be seen that China was consciously working within the confines of possibility in order to maintain a degree of control within the relationship, even though this meant implicitly offering a certain amount of acquiescence to Koizumi’s plan to visit Yasukuni.

**6.2.2 The Misunderstanding of Koizumi’s Visit to Beijing in October**

Despite the vociferous response to Koizumi’s first visit to Yasukuni, illustrated in the previous chapter’s analysis of the media which shows a visibly higher level of negativity than at any other time during his tenure, it is notable that he was afforded a visit to Beijing just two months later. Viewed from the advantageous position of historical perspective, from which it is known that Koizumi would continue his practice on a yearly basis throughout his premiership, this seems incongruent. However, such a privileged view was not available to either policy analysts or practitioners at the time and interpretations of the significance of this visit should be analysed in this context. With that in mind, the second common theme that emerged from the interviews was an apparent failure – arguably on both sides – to fully comprehend the symbolic interaction that occurred during Koizumi’s visit to Beijing in October 2001. The suggestion emerged early in the interview process with several of the first Chinese interviewees expressing feelings of indignation that Koizumi had not kept to the spirit of his visit and speech. Koizumi was described as having been “two-faced” in coming to China to express sorrow and regret before returning to Yasukuni Shrine just months later. As a result of these early expressions of indignation, later interviewees who did not express such an opinion were specifically asked if they felt that such a misunderstanding could have occurred. The vast majority of these concurred that, viewed from a Chinese perspective, Koizumi’s visit had appeared to be an act of symbolic contrition that would suggest he would not continue his visits.

The symbolism of the visit lay in Koizumi’s trip to the ‘Museum of the War of Chinese Resistance against Japanese Aggression’ and also to nearby *Lugou Qiao* (Marco Polo Bridge), the scene of the ‘July 7th Incident’ that marked the beginning of full-scale war between Japan and China in 1937. In a carefully choreographed move, Koizumi designed this visit to pacify the Chinese over the issue of history, using Murayama’s 1995 speech[[153]](#footnote-153) as a template. In doing so, Koizumi became only the second serving Japanese prime minister – and the first from the LDP – to visit the bridge.[[154]](#footnote-154) In choosing that location to issue his own acceptance of Japan’s responsibility for its wartime conduct, he appeared to be offering the large symbolic concession that the Chinese had expected. It is not clear from which side the idea of such an action came, but several interviewees noted the importance of Koizumi visiting Lugou Qiao *before* being granted an audience with Jiang Zemin in Beijing. Whether or not that was specified by the Chinese when arranging the visit, and of those that expressed a view all thought that it would have been – it is clear that everyone involved believed that they understood the symbolic importance of a grand gesture such as this, and of the importance of its timing. In other words, Koizumi had to be seen to be contritely making amends for his previous wrongdoing before he could be accepted by the Chinese leadership. This was, in the eyes of both the Japanese and the Chinese, the concession required to restore stability to the political relationship.

However, despite the apparent shared understanding of the meaning behind this gesture, there was a fundamental disconnect between the interpretations. Both implicitly understood that there were ‘rules’ to the interaction, hence Koizumi’s willingness to appear on *Lugou Qiao* and Jiang’s desire for him to do so. With this gesture complete, the Chinese leadership’s interpretation appears to have been that Koizumi, having fulfilled the requirements of the rules of interaction, would not return to Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister. This was not simply wishful thinking on the part of the Chinese; it was rooted in decades of experience of the bilateral relationship. Viewed from Beijing, on previous occasions this was precisely the outcome that pressure brought to bear on Nakasone in 1985 and, to a lesser extent, Hashimoto in 1996 had resulted in, with neither returning to the shrine during their respective tenures.[[155]](#footnote-155) However, it seems that the Japanese – or, more specifically, Koizumi’s – interpretation of this series of events, was slightly different. Koizumi seemed to believe that a repetitive cycle of provocation and repentance was a feasible and workable strategy. In other words, provided he continued to offer occasional symbolic gestures of this kind, then his subsequent visits to Yasukuni Shrine would not cause any greater disturbance to the political relationship with China. Both sides understood that there was a pattern to be followed on this issue and that they had to abide by the ‘rules’ of interaction, but there was a disconnect over what the ‘rules’ were. It is not uncommon to see such misunderstandings in international relations but this did represent a failure for both China and Japan in terms of their own respective foreign policy analyses.

This became evident in April 2002, when Koizumi paid tribute at Yasukuni Shrine for the second time. It appears that this visit was a surprise to the Chinese in a way that the first simply had not been. According to one Shanghai-based analyst, Jiang believed that there was a *junzi xieding*, or a gentlemen’s agreement, between the two leaders that the shrine visit would not be repeated. However, this *junzi xieding* was never explicitly articulated, and is probably better understood in the Chinese concept of a *moqi*, a word that does not have a satisfactory English translation but which refers to an agreement or understanding that is neither spoken nor written. It is a fairly common phenomenon in China and in East Asia more generally, but has obvious potential for misunderstanding and communication failures. The result of this was a feeling that Koizumi had insulted not only China in general, but Jiang Zemin personally. One Beijing-based professor with connections to the central government indicated that at the time he had believed Koizumi’s visit to the bridge showed that he regretted his visit to Yasukuni, but that his return to the shrine just a few months later demonstrated that this was “fake regret”, and several analysts admitted to feeling anger at what they perceived as duplicitous behaviour. An exceptionally strong analysis came from one think tank analyst in Beijing, for whom Koizumi’s second visit to the shrine is what “broke the high level relationship completely”.

The responses in the interviews were not uniform on this issue and a Japanese analyst based in Tokyo insisted that the misunderstanding was the fault of Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, as well as those that advised them: “this was their misunderstanding; Koizumi never said that he would not go to Yasukuni Shrine again”. Indeed, one foreign diplomat based in Beijing suggested that this would have represented a serious miscalculation on the part of those advising Jiang and was sceptical that such a serious failure of diplomacy could have occurred. It is certainly possible that this apparent misunderstanding did not occur in such a manner, but the loss of face for Jiang within China after the second visit would still have been palpable;[[156]](#footnote-156) even if the political elite had correctly anticipated Koizumi’s continued visits to the shrine, this anticipation was not shared in wider society, or even among academics. This would undermine the idea that there was a disconnect in expectations at the highest political level. However, the disconnect could, in this interpretation, be said to exist between the Japanese political elite and Chinese society, with the Chinese political elite (in this instance Jiang) as the conduit through which such a misunderstanding was interpreted.

**6.2.3 Importance of Maintaining Relationship**

Despite the rhetoric that emitted from within China at the level of the government and also the media, there was a consistent value placed on the maintenance of the relationship with Japan as a key national interest. This was partly a recognition of the crucial economic ties that bound the two countries together, but also for strategic considerations, with China seeking to establish itself as an accepted leader in the region.[[157]](#footnote-157) This led to a policy of seeking to maintain stable relations, even within the context of a worsening bilateral atmosphere. In fact, the apparently exponential growth of bilateral trade during the early years of the decade, combined with the increasingly difficult political relationship and deterioration in mutual societal perceptions, to present something of a contradictory picture. Sino-Japanese relations during the period of Koizumi’s tenure as prime minister was frequently characterised in both academic works and popular media using the four-character Chinese phrase *zhengleng jingre*, literally meaning ‘cold politics, hot economics’. Much focus in Chinese academic works was given to explaining this seemingly unique characteristic of the relationship, and the phrase was repeatedly used in the media.

However, though it was a very successful shorthand description for the situation of Sino-Japanese relations at the time, the concept met with some strong resistance from several interviewees. The strongest objection came from Japan, and a Tokyo-based professor noted that there had been cooperation on many fronts, especially economic but also in the management of the Korean nuclear crisis. He added that “Japanese diplomats used to protest that *zhengleng* [cold politics] is not quite right”. Another noted that “the [top political leaders of China and Japan] were not meeting and that was very problematic, however there are many, many things that Japan and China *were* doing together”. A diplomat from Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed this position, and added that to a large extent the two countries had succeeded in dealing with issues separately, allowing not only the economic relationship but also many “people-to-people” exchanges to flourish, despite the apparent political impasse.

It was not just Japanese analysts who took this view. A retired Chinese professor who had been involved in a Beijing think tank at the time objected to a question about the “breakdown” of the political relationship. He insisted that “it is wrong to say that the relationship had broken down” and cited continued meetings that he had been involved in with Japanese counterparts, as well as lower level political bilateral meetings as evidence. Moreover, he pointed out that as late as 2004, more than three years after Yasukuni Shrine became the problematic issue that it was, Hu Jintao and Koizumi were still managing to conduct meetings in third countries. Another Beijing professor accepted that the ‘cold politics’ label had some justification, given that the relationship between Hu and Koizumi was so strained even when they were still meeting, but also thought that “grassroots” connections had been maintained throughout the five years. Furthermore, he believed this had been at least in part, at the direct behest of the senior Chinese leadership.

The opinions of the interviewees suggest that, viewed from both sides of the dispute, despite the obviously serious ongoing issue that had not been resolved the bilateral relationship was crucial to both countries and maintaining some sort of equilibrium in it was, therefore, paramount. The evidence of these continued attempts to manage the relationship is fairly clear. In line with the recognition of the importance of the relationship, both from a strategic perspective as well as in terms of the economic ties that continued to strengthen, high level meetings continued. Though neither side sought or suggested any state visit, meetings at the highest level of government were not infrequent; Cabinet Secretary Fukuda and Foreign Minister Kawaguchi both visited Beijing in August 2003 to meet Premier Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing respectively. Indeed, even Hu and Koizumi met twice during that year, though neither meeting occurred on either Chinese or Japanese soil; the first meeting took place in St Petersburg, with the second in Bangkok, both on the side-lines of multilateral forums. Premier Wen Jiabao also met with Koizumi on the side-lines of the ASEAN summit in October 2003, but Koizumi had followed that meeting by confirming just twenty four hours later that he would continue to visit the shrine. In direct response to this Wen refused to meet him at ASEM in Hanoi in October 2004, despite Japanese requests (Wan, 2006, p. 254-255). However, despite this refusal, Hu and Koizumi did meet at the APEC summit in Santiago, Chile in November 2004, though this meeting was reportedly dominated by the shrine issue and Hu repeatedly emphasized the importance of the Japanese side addressing the history problem in an appropriate manner (Taipei Times, 2004). Nevertheless, the fact that such meetings continued until the end of 2004 demonstrates the responses from the interviewees outlined above appear to hold some water. The concept of *zhengleng* was certainly rooted in the reality of the situation, but was over-simplified as a description of bilateral ties.

**6.2.4 Role of Society**

During the middle period of Koizumi’s tenure, the Chinese public began to react to Japan in ways, and on a scale, that had not been previously seen. 2003 was what James Reilly called “China’s year of internet nationalism”, noting various campaigns directed predominantly against Japan (Reilly, 2010, p. 46) The summer of 2004 offered a glimpse of the increased antagonism felt among the Chinese public towards Japan when China hosted the quadrennial Asian Football Confederation Cup. The final, in which Japan defeated the host nation, was marred by booing of the Japanese national anthem and violence outside the stadium directed towards Japanese supporters. Though an intense rivalry is only to be expected – the Chinese had more than 5000 police in attendance and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a warning to its citizens not to display overt symbols of national pride including Japanese football shirts – the ferocity of the reaction surprised and concerned both governments.

Other issues also came to the fore at this time, notably the ‘Qiqihar incident’ when abandoned Japanese chemical weapons were discovered in Inner Mongolia, serving as a potent reminder of the most unpleasant aspects of Japan’s occupation. There was also the so-called ‘Zhuhai sex scandal’, in which more than 400 Japanese businessmen were found to have hired hundreds of local prostitutes in a party that coincided with the anniversary of the beginning of Japan’s occupation of China in 1931, and a bizarre skit performed by Japanese students in Xi’an that caused widespread offence and sparked angry demonstrations on and around campus. To some degree these incidents – or the responses of the Chinese public to them – were symptomatic of the deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations, but they also reinforced mutually negative images.

In this atmosphere, Koizumi’s fourth visit to Yasukuni Shrine drew the strongest reaction to date from the Chinese public, with public demonstrations breaking out in Beijing and Shanghai. It was common at the time for these demonstrations to be characterized as being government-led (eg. Gabusi, 2005). However, this is in contrast to the results of the media chapter analysis outlined in the previous chapter which showed that across the spectrum of newspaper reporting this visit drew the lowest level of negativity. It is certainly possible that these demonstrations were *facilitated* by the government, with protestors being allowed and even assisted to conduct their demonstrations, but this is not the same as them being government-led. There is anecdotal evidence that this facilitation occurred during the outbreaks of anti-Japanese protests in 2004 and 2005 across China.[[158]](#footnote-158)

The early part of 2005 was dominated by two issues that had a profound effect on the relationship as well as on Chinese domestic concerns. Firstly, in response to Japan’s campaign for a permanent seat on the UNSC, Chinese internet activism reached a previously unimagined level with a petition reportedly gathering in excess of 10 million electronic signatures in a matter of weeks (Reilly, 2010, p. 63).[[159]](#footnote-159) The Chinese government was taken slightly by surprise over the strength of feeling on this issue and was forced to take a position that it had previously sought to avoid, namely one of overt opposition to Japan’s bid. In fact, despite previously not declaring a firm position on this issue, Wen Jiabao used a visit to India[[160]](#footnote-160) in April 2005 to proclaim China’s opposition, citing Japan’s failure to treat history correctly (Beehner, 2005). The timing and previous ambiguity of China’s position suggest that this was a direct response to domestic pressure. Secondly, Japan’s Ministry of Education approved a series of history textbooks including one that appeared to downplay some of Japan’s actions in China and the wider Asia-Pacific during the occupation.[[161]](#footnote-161) In conjunction with the strong feelings that had already emerged over the UNSC bid, the approval of these textbooks proved something of a tipping point for Chinese popular sentiment and large scale protests occurred across China. The largest of these demonstrations were in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, but many other cities also witnessed anti-Japanese rallies. Many of these turned violent, in particular a protest at the Japanese Embassy that ended with eggs and stones being hurled, breaking windows in the compound. Elsewhere, Japanese business interests and even Japanese citizens were physically attacked by protesters.

It would be incorrect to suggest that neither government had previously understood that there was a role for Chinese society in interaction between the two countries. However, it would be reasonable to say that level of involvement during the various issues that marked Koizumi’s time as prime minister caught both Chinese and Japanese analysts by surprise. An official from Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was clear that prior to the anti-Japanese riots of 2005, consideration of the impact of foreign policy on China was made almost exclusively with the Chinese government in mind. Following this series of protests against it, Japan has been forced to take into account the views and possible actions of Chinese society, since the riots demonstrated that such sentiment can have a material effect on Japanese interests.

From the Chinese perspective, there were unexpectedly high levels of pressure from society to respond. That is not to suggest that societal expressions of anger were a surprise in themselves, but that the level of response to Japan at this time was greater than expected. As noted above, Yasukuni was not the only issue creating tensions between China and Japan but it was a consistent source of these tensions that served as a conductor for sentiment built up over these other issues. A Shanghai-based professor pointed out that the response of the Chinese government to Koizumi’s visits to the shrine was stronger than one might expect if analysed in isolation. In his opinion, this could only be explained by the role of society: “Yasukuni Shrine is not a fundamental issue in the way that the Diaoyu islands are. Therefore it was the pressure from society that caused the government to act as it did.” Another professor from a different university in the same city agreed that “it was public opinion that turned this into a major issue”. He went on to express his view that facilitation in the protests by the government was necessary if it was to appear to be on the correct side of the argument. In other words, the official Chinese response had a range of options that was severely limited by the involvement of societal actors.

Illustrating how the public’s priorities have a higher focus on Yasukuni Shrine than might have been expected, one foreign diplomat based in Beijing conducted an analysis of reactions from users of Chinese internet sites to the election of Japanese Prime Minister Noda in 2011. She concluded that for the overwhelming majority of users there were two key tests that he needed to pass to convince posters on these sites that he would not be a source of trouble for China: Firstly, how he would deal with the history issue and, in particular, his stance on Yasukuni Shrine; secondly, how he would deal with the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

**6.2.5 The ‘Breaking Point’**

Perhaps the most surprising thing to emerge from the set of interviews was the point in time at which the Chinese political and academic elite abandoned hope of working with Koizumi and using its influence to alter his behaviour. It seemed clear that this had happened at some stage, but it might have been expected to have been a conclusion that was reached within the first two years of Koizumi’s premiership. If prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine are as intolerable for the Chinese as had been intimated, then the fact that Koizumi’s third visit to the shrine came before he had been in power for two years ought to point to a relationship that was clearly unworkable. Koizumi repeatedly indicated that he would continue the practice of paying tribute at Yasukuni in each year that he was in office (Lai, 2013, p. 140), and this was backed up with the evidence that he had continued to do this, having been to the shrine in 2001, 2002, and 2003. While the constructivist interpretation of the relationship outlined earlier in this thesis predicted that the Chinese would initially expect to be able to exert some influence and bring about a change in Koizumi’s behaviour, after this amount of evidence to the contrary a new period of learning ought to have occurred. However, this is not borne out by the events of 2003 and 2004, during which time the two governments continued to meet whenever practical. This, as well as the lower-key tone that the Yasukuni issue was given during 2003 and 2004 across the spectrum of media in China, was explained by one Beijing think tank analyst as being because of the “hope that the government still held for Koizumi”. This would appear to suggest that the Chinese government still hoped to exert some influence on Koizumi’s behaviour even up to his fourth visit to the shrine. An official at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo explicitly acknowledged that China could have tolerated one or even two visits but insisted that the third, fourth and fifth visits were “unforgivable” (Sturgeon, 2006, p. 62).

The breaking point finally came in 2005. Wen Jiabao was invited to attend the World Expo that was being held in Japan but with anti-Japanese sentiment growing in strength and vociferousness among the Chinese population, this was deemed not to be possible. Instead Vice-Premier Wu Yi arranged a week-long trip to Japan for May 2005 that would culminate in a meeting with Koizumi in Tokyo. That she would be the highest level Chinese leader to meet Koizumi on Japanese soil since he took office more than four years previous is testament to just how much the Yasukuni Shrine issue had affected the political relationship at the very highest level.

However, Wu’s visit to Japan was marred when the issue of Yasukuni Shrine was repeatedly raised, most notably in the Diet in questions from opposition parties. The day before her arrival, Koizumi, in response to questioning by a budget committee, stated that he did not understand “why I should stop going to Yasukuni Shrine” (China Daily, 2005). This was compounded on the fourth day of her visit when Koizumi responded to a question from a New Komeito[[162]](#footnote-162) lawmaker by insisting that his repeated shrine visits were a private and personal matter and that “Koizumi Jun’ichirō, who is prime minister, is paying a visit as an individual” (Japan Times, 2005). This stance had become Koizumi’s position in response to claims from within Japan that his visits were unconstitutional and inappropriate for a serving prime minister, but they are inexplicable to the Chinese and were never accepted as a serious explanation.[[163]](#footnote-163) Concomitantly, the General Secretary of the LDP, Takebe Tsutomu, paid a visit to Beijing and met with Hu Jintao. On the face of it, these developments could have been a step forward for the political relationship but Takebe reportedly told a senior Chinese official that objections to Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine constituted interference in Japanese affairs, with the implication being that Beijing was violating its own frequently cited cardinal principle of non-interference in international relations. Hu then took the opportunity to publicly chastise Japan over the three important issues that affected the relationship – Yasukuni Shrine, Japanese history textbooks, and Taiwan – hinting strongly that the relationship could be undermined by the incorrect attitude to any one of these “in an instant” (Curtin, 2005). The following day, one day before Wu Yi was due to meet Koizumi in Tokyo, her trip was abruptly cut short and she returned to Beijing. She cited “domestic business” as the reason for her sudden departure but Kong Quan a spokesman for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explicitly linked the cancellation of the meeting with the repeated references to Yasukuni Shrine (Kong, 2005). This was clearly intended to be a very public metaphorical slap in the face for Koizumi. It does not appear that this move was premeditated and seems to have been a direct response to the comments made by Koizumi and Takebe, although one academic suggested that premeditation was a possibility but could not confirm that it was the case. In all other interviews the view was that there was genuine anger at the comments and the cancellation was not premeditated.

This appears to have proved to be the breaking point in the relationship. There was no longer any hope seriously held in China that continued attempts to work with Koizumi in order to change his behaviour might be successful. One think tank analyst who had meetings with government officials during this time stated that it was around this time that the position of the central government changed and the focus shifted to the post-Koizumi era. Several interviewees expressed the belief that had Koizumi simply stopped visiting the shrine after his third or even fourth visit then the relationship would not have suffered to the same extent that it did.[[164]](#footnote-164) An article published around this time also summed up the Chinese position that working with Koizumi had finally become untenable (Jiang, 2005).

**6.2.6 China’s Strategising**

One of the findings from the media analysis outlined in the previous chapter that needed some explanation was the dramatic increase in negative reporting of Koizumi following his final two visits to Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister. This also occurred against the backdrop of an increasingly vociferous public response to Japan and Koizumi that had caused consternation for the Chinese authorities. When combined with the previously outlined ‘breaking point’, at which the Chinese government had reached an understanding that Koizumi’s behaviour could not be altered by its own actions and rhetorical response, this observation becomes even more counter-intuitive.

The answer to this puzzle, according to the responses of the interviewees, is that a deliberate strategy was employed during the final eighteen months of Koizumi’s tenure to bring about pressure that was not aimed directly at Koizumi himself, but at any potential successor. If the attempts to change Koizumi’s behaviour had been a failure, then this policy was designed to ensure that such an issue would not be repeated once he had left office. Thus, there was a conscious effort to ensure that the next Japanese prime minister would find it impossible to continue the practice.

China sought to marginalize Koizumi within the bilateral relationship and to demonstrate that, despite the management of the friction in which both sides had engaged during the earlier part of Koizumi’s tenure, it would not be feasible for future prime ministers to continue in this vein. There was a clear understanding in China that the norms and accepted patterns of the relationship were in flux during this time and a failure to mould them into a form acceptable to the Chinese, at both governmental and societal levels, would have serious consequences domestically as well as for the Sino-Japanese relationship itself. It was noted by a retired think tank analyst that this was a tactic that had been previously used by China in its dealings with Japan. Prior to the normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972, Prime Minister Satō had shown an interest in détente with China but had been deemed unacceptable by China. The Chinese government of the day elected to wait for his replacement, but in the meantime ensured that he would know exactly what was expected of him if he had any intention of dealing constructively with China. In both instances this was a calculated risk on the part of the Chinese; should the successor continue to behave in the undesired way (in this instance if Abe continued the practice of visiting Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister), it would not only represent a foreign policy failure for China, but would also have serious negative consequences for the bilateral relationship as a whole.

One Beijing-based professor posited that there is an accepted and understood pattern of behaviour regarding Japanese prime ministers and visits to Yasukuni: “they go before they take office; they stop going while prime minister; and they recommence visits once they leave office”. He went on to explain that this pattern is not only accepted by China, but also *expected*. In his view, the rhetorical pressure on Koizumi was in response to a break in this expected cycle and was conducted with the clear intention of re-establishing the norm. It can be argued that this was done with some success, since Abe did not visit Yasukuni during his first tenure[[165]](#footnote-165) as prime minister, despite being widely considered to be more conservative than Koizumi. Abe had been a staunch supporter of Koizumi’s stance on the shrine issue and had been a frequent visitor himself throughout his time as a member of the Diet and also whilst in cabinet. He also paid a visit to the shrine shortly before taking office and continued to pay his respects there once his tenure as prime minister had come to an end, thus fitting exactly into the accepted and expected pattern outlined by the interviewee. A think tank analyst in Beijing was clear that Abe’s decision not to visit the shrine as prime minister was because “he learned from Koizumi’s experience”. Though this analyst also noted that the domestic political landscape in Japan also played its part in Abe’s decision, he was clear that China had succeeded in its aim of shaping the possible range of actions available to Koizumi’s successor.

The view from Japan supports this. Virtually all interviewees in Tokyo considered the prime minister’s decision of whether or not to visit the shrine to be a domestic matter. Nevertheless, this was always expressed with the caveat that even domestic decisions are made in the context of the international situation of the time, and China’s stance on the matter will always be a factor in determining whether or not a prime minister visits the shrine. One professor believed that the costs of a prime minister repeating Koizumi’s actions were too high for anyone to seriously contemplate: “we have now learned how troublesome it is”.[[166]](#footnote-166) However, this view was not explicitly shared with foreign ministry officials who were categorical in declaring this to be a domestic matter that is not viewed as a foreign policy-based decision, though clearly any decision would have to be dealt with at the foreign policy level as well.

The picture that emerges from these responses is one that supports the theory outlined in this thesis in that China was acting with agency within structurally defined parameters in ways that would affect the future position and shape of these structures. However, what was not predicted was that the Chinese *themselves* viewed their position in this way – though did not necessarily describe it in these exact terms – and that China consciously strategises within the process of *structuration* to achieve outcomes that are in its own interests. The increased rhetorical pressure and the refusal for any high level bilateral meetings to be conducted during Koizumi’s final eighteen months in power are evidence of this. In this instance it appears that the strategy was a success.

**6.3 Conclusion**

The six themes outlined in this chapter help to inform our understanding of Sino-Japanese relations during the Koizumi era by building on the media analysis presented in the previous chapter. The three distinct periods of time that could be discerned from the tone of media reporting on the Yasukuni Shrine issue take on a clearer meaning in the light of the information and analysis provided by the interviewees. The expectation of Koizumi’s first visit and the attempt to ensure he did not visit on August 15th as originally planned and promised showed that China was acting based on its previous experiences and expectations rooted in learned behaviour. The misunderstanding of the meaning behind Koizumi’s visit to Beijing in October 2001, followed by the shock of his second visit to the shrine in April 2002 provide evidence of an alteration within the expected structures of the relationship, and of the unsettling effects such an alteration can have. That both countries sought to inject a level of stability to the relationship throughout this period of heightened tension also shows that they have agency to pursue their interests even within the structural determinants of the relationship. Chinese society’s role in the series of events and in the production of China’s official reaction to Japan highlights the importance of using constructivism in order to fully understand the formation of its foreign policy formation. The ‘breaking point’ of the relationship at the highest level demonstrated both the enduring effect of prior psychological structures – given that China continued to pursue an aim of influencing Koizumi’s behaviour long after it ought to have recognised such a policy could not succeed – but also the ability to learn when structural changes have occurred, albeit after a longer period of time than might have been expected. Finally, and perhaps most revealing of all, the conscious strategising of the Chinese government to re-establish a norm in the relationship through rhetorical pressure-by-proxy for Koizumi’s successors as prime minister shows not only that the concept of *structuration* is relevant for analysing this issue, but that China understands this and actively pursues its own interests through this recognition.

**7. The Diaoyu/Senkaku Dispute through a *Structurationist* Lens**

If the ideas and findings outlined in earlier chapters of this thesis are to be of significant value to the study of Sino-Japanese relations then it is necessary to assess their applicability in a wider context. For that reason, this chapter aims to apply the structurationist lens to a different aspect of the relationship that is also a common cause of tension: the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. The chapter takes the most recent incarnation of this on-going dispute that erupted in 2012 and continued into 2013, analysing how China has operated in response to Japan’s nationalisation of three of the islands.

This particular issue was selected as a case study because it is offers the chance to test the applicability of the theory in a suitable context of Sino-Japanese tension. The issue is specific and distinct enough to constitute a field of the relationship in which it could be considered that normative structures may govern bilateral interaction, sufficiently removed from the Yasukuni Shrine issue. The islands dispute does have certain aspects in common with the Yasukuni Shrine issue but also has some key – and fairly obvious – differences. Like the shrine issue, the islands dispute has its roots in the 1970s; it is an issue that has never been categorically resolved and is unlikely to have a complete solution that is satisfactory to both sides; it has significant symbolic meaning for nationalists in both China and Japan; and it is an issue that apparently recurs from time to time due to internal domestic forces that then impact on the international sphere. However, in contrast to the shrine issue, the islands dispute can be said to be a more traditional international relations dispute in that it is one of sovereignty rather than the apparently symbolic nature of the shrine; it does not directly relate to the question of Japan’s historical aggression against China;[[167]](#footnote-167) and it carries with it a much more realistic threat of direct, military confrontation between the two states. The islands dispute, therefore, has enough in common with the shrine issue to suggest that a similar approach might be useful, but has enough of a difference to make it a worthwhile exercise in exploring if this approach has a wider validity within the analysis of Sino-Japanese relations.

In order to apply this structurationist lens to the 2012 incarnation of the Dioayu/Senkaku dispute, it is necessary to consider the nature of the structures that would be deemed to have guided the interaction that surrounded it. Thus, we must consider both the historical roots of the issue and the contemporary domestic forces that give it such a prominent position in Sino-Japanese relations. Having identified the norms and behavioural expectations within the relationship surrounding the islands issue, an analysis of which behaviours have met these expectations – and, by extension, which have been outside of these structures – will reveal a picture of how a structurationist lens gives focus to the interaction between China and Japan in this field.

To this end, the chapter first considers the historical roots of the dispute. This includes a brief outline of both countries’ claims on the islands, as well as a review of the various manifestations of the dispute that have occurred since 1978. It will also outline some of the most common academic explanations of the dispute. Having provided the background, the structurationist lens is then applied, outlining the norms and behavioural expectations as they stood prior to the nationalisation of three of the islands by the Noda administration in 2012. In particular, the key understandings of the maintenance of the legal status quo over the islands and an absence of a serious Chinese threat to Japan’s “administration” of the islands are specified as providing a relatively stable structure of the issue. The analysis of the actions of both sides suggests that it was Japan that first acted outside of these norms in seeking to change the legal status quo of the islands through their nationalisation which, in itself, was brought about through domestic forces that were not entirely within the control of the central government in Japan. This breach of one of the key norms not only ensured that China would respond in some way, but actually provided it with an *opportunity* to actively shift the structures of understanding on the status of the islands, both in the context of the bilateral relationship and also in the wider international arena. Thus, the chapter concludes that China can be observed to be consciously working to alter the norms of its relationship with Japan in the area of the islands dispute in order to pursue its own strategic aims with regard to shoring up its own claims of sovereignty.

**7.1 The Diaoyu / Senkaku Issue in Sino-Japanese Relations**

In mainland China the islands are commonly referred to as Diaoyu Dao (钓鱼岛), which is the name of the largest island in the group and ordinarily used as shorthand for *Diaoyu Dao Jiqi Fushu Daoyu* (钓鱼岛及其附属岛屿).[[168]](#footnote-168) The name literally means “Fishing Island”. In Japanese the islands are called *Senkaku Shotō* (尖閣諸島), which is ordinarily translated as the “Pinnacle Islands”. In English language academic works the islands have occasionally been referred to as the translation of the Japanese name[[169]](#footnote-169) but generally the transliterations of either one or both of the Chinese and Japanese names are preferred. In this work I refer to the islands as Diaoyu/Senkaku throughout in order that no bias is implied with regard to the dispute over the sovereignty of the islands; it is not the intention of this work to offer an opinion on who is ‘right’.[[170]](#footnote-170)

**7.1.1 Japan’s Basic Position**

Japan considers the islands to have been part of its territory since January 1895, more than ten years after it claims to have discovered them. The intervening decade was spent surveying the area and ensuring that it was neither used nor occupied and could be confirmed as *terra nullius* (no man’s land). Once this was complete, the islands were incorporated into Okinawa Prefecture after a decision taken in cabinet (MOFA, 2013a). Japan considers that the islands have been part of Japanese territory since that point in time, though they were sold to a private citizen in 1932. The islands were administered by the US from 1945 until 1972. In fact, that the US continued to administer them until 1972 adds some weight to the case that Japan makes as it would support the idea that the islands are part of Okinawa Prefecture, which itself was returned to Japanese control at the same time. Japan’s fundamental position on the islands is that there is no territorial dispute with China. Though this may sound counter-intuitive given that two countries claim sovereignty over the same piece of territory – which might seem to be the very definition of a “territorial dispute” – it is actually an attempt to employ a legal-term to support its position. Japan acknowledges that there is disagreement but since China has never brought the case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) it refuses to accept the term ‘dispute’ (Murase, 2013, p. 1). In theory the ICJ could produce a binding ruling that determined which of the two states has sovereignty over the islands. However, for this to occur both China and Japan would need to give consent prior to the case being heard. Even in the unlikely event of this happening, if China were to lose the case it could exercise a veto in the UNSC to prevent the UN from enforcing the verdict. Nevertheless, such circumstances would set a clear legal basis for Japanese sovereignty over the islands.

Nevertheless, since the most recent outbreak of the dispute Japan has engaged in something of a public relations campaign to put forward its case that the islands are an indisputable part of Japanese territory. The website of Japan’s Foreign Ministry, for example, carries numerous documents and articles to support its claim in Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Arabic, as well as Japanese.[[171]](#footnote-171) The range of languages is highly unusual, as most documents on the website are in only English and Japanese, though a number are also produced in a language that is relevant to the particular issue being addressed. These documents all point out that neither the People’s Republic of China nor the Republic of China (Taiwan) issued any formal claim to the islands until the publication of a UN survey that was conducted in 1968 which suggested the possibility of vast reserves of oil and gas in the area.[[172]](#footnote-172) They also give an example of the islands being referred to by *Renmin Ribao* in 1953 by the Japanese name and as being part of Okinawa Prefecture, reinforced by a map reproduced from a 1958 atlas published in Beijing that also used the Japanese name and indicated the islands were part of Okinawa (MOFA, 2012, p. 12).

**7.1.2 China’s Basic Position**

China’s claim on the islands is complicated by the situation with Taiwan, which also claims sovereignty over them. Given that China considers Taiwan to be part of its territory also, this is not necessarily a contradiction, but it does complicate the question of which government has the responsibility of returning the islands to Chinese sovereignty. Nevertheless, both China and Taiwan agree that the islands were used by Chinese fishermen as far back as the Ming Dynasty in the fourteenth century. Though never permanently inhabited, they were frequently used to shelter from inclement weather. China thus considers the islands to have been a part of the province of Taiwan and accepts that they were, therefore, ceded to Japan under the treaty of Shimonoseki which was signed at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the same year that Japan claims to have formally incorporated the islands into Okinawa Prefecture. Given that, under this interpretation of the islands’ history, they were a part of one of Japan’s concessions that it gained during its imperial history, China considers that the islands were legally returned to it under the terms of Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II.[[173]](#footnote-173) When the PRC and Japan established diplomatic relations in 1972 it has been reported that the issue of the islands was raised in negotiations and that Zhou Enlai suggested that the issue be dealt with later (cited in Suganuma, 2012), though this is officially denied by Japan. According to the reports, Prime Minister Tanaka agreed to this.[[174]](#footnote-174) Similarly, during negotiations for the Treaty of Peace and Friendship that was eventually signed in 1979, Deng Xiaoping famously suggested that the “next generation will certainly be wiser” and that the issue should not be addressed (cited in Suganuma, 2000, p. 138).

**7.1.3 Notable Bilateral Incidents**

Though the dispute[[175]](#footnote-175) over the islands first emerged in 1970, when both China and Taiwan declared their respective claims, there has been a fairly consistent pattern of conflict avoidance around the issue. From the original agreements to “shelve”[[176]](#footnote-176) the issue in the 1970s, the normal state of affairs has been that the islands are not at the forefront of Sino-Japanese relations. Nevertheless, at various times the issue has emerged as a source of heightened tension, ordinarily sparked by a single action taken by either of the two governments, or by other interested parties that seek to represent the country, if not the state. By observing the ways in which these occurrences have been handled and the reactions they have provoked, it is possible to discern the structural norms and behaviour expectations within which the most recent events played out.

The first example of the islands becoming a bilateral problem after the agreements to “shelve” the issue came in 1978 when the *Nihon Seinensha* (Japan Youth Association) landed on the main island and erected a lighthouse. The lighthouse was actually erected prior to the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which occurred in August of the same year. There was a strong reaction from China in the form of a protest led by around 200 fishing boats that sailed to the islands. That the protest was led by fishermen cannot be said to indicate that the response came from a societal level group, particularly given that it was reported that several were armed with machine guns (Dreyer, 2012, p. 414). Given the highly controlled nature of Chinese media and lack of freedom of movement for Chinese citizens, this response ought to be seen as an official one. The ‘protest’ occurred at precisely the time when negotiations between the two sides over the Treaty of Peace and Friendship had encountered some significant difficulty over the proposed anti-hegemony clause, leading to suggestions that the issue was being exploited by China for political gain (Drifte, 2008, p. 16). The reaction from Japan was somewhat more measured but of huge significance: the Japan Maritime Safety Agency (JMSA)[[177]](#footnote-177) elected not to recognise the lighthouse. This mattered because it meant that the agency did not have to ensure it was maintained, something that would have constituted regularised – and official – activity on the islands.

Most of the 1980s were relatively quiet in terms of the islands dispute, but the lighthouse issue re-emerged in 1988, when the *Nihon Seinensha* returned to the largest island to renovate the lighthouse it had built a decade earlier. When the renovations were complete, official recognition was sought for the structure. MOFA instructed the JMSA to defer all applications indefinitely but neither the application nor the response was made public (O’Shea, 2012, p. 13). In 1990, news of the applications emerged in press reports that suggest the JMSA was about to recognise the lighthouse as an official beacon, provoking an official response from China in the form a Foreign Ministry statement that condemned Japan (O’Shea, 2012, p. 13). Taiwanese involvement was also significant at this time, with protesters planting the Republic of China (ROC) flag on the largest island. The JMSA prevented large-scale landings by Taiwanese activists by increasing its presence in the surrounding waters and removed the flag shortly after it had been planted. Anti-Japanese protests also erupted in other Chinese-populated territories, including Hong Kong and Macau. The reaction was, then, not from a unitary actor or even a unitary state, but could be said to be the first occasion on which ‘Greater China’ had reacted to Japanese provocation.

The Japanese government’s reaction was to prevent the JMSA from recognising the lighthouse as an official beacon. Furthermore, Chief Cabinet Secretary Sakamoto Misoji reiterated the agreement from 1978 that the matter should be determined by future generations and Prime Minister Kaifu publicly distanced the government from any movement to have the lighthouse officially recognised. The Japanese response may have been partly driven by the desire for the enthronement of Emperor Akihito[[178]](#footnote-178) not to be overshadowed by what was becoming widespread and overt anti-Japanese sentiment across several parts of the region. Nevertheless, it can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the pressure applied by state and society across Greater China.

The matter became a source of bilateral tension again two years later, though on this occasion it could be said that it was China that made the provocative move. In February 1992, the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress passed the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone. The terms of the law were, for the most part, not particularly controversial in that they mainly referred to the extent of China’s territorial waters and contiguous zones and the right of the Chinese military to engage in “hot pursuit” of unauthorised military vessels, or those that are suspected of breaking Chinese laws. However, article 2 of the law specifically referred to all of the islands that were to be included in Chinese territorial land:

The land territory of the People's Republic of China includes the mainland of the People's Republic of China and its offshore islands, Taiwan and all islands appertaining thereto including the Diaoyu Islands; the Penghu Islands; the Dongsha Islands; the Xisha Islands; the Zhongsha Islands and the Nansha Islands; as well as all the other islands that belong to the People's Republic of China.

(Lehman, Lee & Xu, 1992).

That the law referred to the islands by name was clearly aimed at codifying China’s unsettled claims rather than specifying the actual extent of Chinese territory; Hainan Island, over which there is no disagreement whatsoever, was conspicuous by its absence. Japan’s response was official in tone, consisting of objections lodged at consular level both in Beijing and Tokyo but China did not accede to requests to alter the law in any way. In fact, though Japanese objections to the law were strong, bilateral relations did not suffer greatly from the passing of this law. In April 1992 Jiang Zemin visited Tokyo and confirmed that the Chinese position had not changed from that espoused by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 (cited in Suganuma, 2000, p. 143). In other words, he sought to publicly reassure Japan that China was not aiming to change the status quo on the islands issue. Though there was some debate within Japan about using political capital to pressure China into repealing the law – specifically with regard to postponing the planned visit of the emperor to China later that year – the Miyazawa administration elected not to do so, settling instead for the position of there being “no dispute” (O’Shea, 2012, p. 14).

In the summer of 1996, the issue of lighthouse construction came back to the fore. The *Nihon Seinensha* returned to the island to construct a second solar-powered aluminium lighthouse on the opposite side of the island to the first. It then sought recognition once again from the JMSA. This action drew a protest from societal levels across greater China, with a flotilla of boats from the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong attempting to force their way onto the islands. In the ensuing struggle the JMSA prevented most of the boats from reaching the islands but one Hong Kong protester attempted to swim, drowning in the process. Though Japan continued to resist attempts by protesters to reach the islands, and did not alter its position on the waters surrounding the islands being Japanese territorial waters, the JMSA eased its attentions in the waters, leading to several protesters making it onto the island where flags of the PRC and ROC were planted. Japan informed China directly that it would not recognise the lighthouse but insisted that nothing could be done since the land was officially private (Dzurek, 1996).

These events did not occur in a vacuum, with a number of reasons for increased tensions between China and Japan at both political and societal levels. In the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, an event that resulted in China’s partial isolation from international affairs, the implementation of ‘patriotic education’ in China had begun to increase the focus of nationalist sentiment on Japan (Zhao, 1998, p. 294-296). Furthermore, a realignment in the security situation of the region was underway. The end of the Cold War brought about a need to reassess the purpose and effectiveness of the US-Japan alliance which had underpinned US policy in East Asia for half a century. This, in conjunction with the criticism that Japan received for engaging in “checkbook diplomacy” during the first Gulf War,[[179]](#footnote-179) inspired a reconsideration of Japan’s role in the alliance (Purrington, 1992, p. 165). For the first time since its surrender in 1945, Japan appeared to be moving in the direction of becoming a ‘normal’ country with the ability to employ military power. Such moves quickly became a source of tension and concern among several of its neighbours, including China. This translated into both political level unease and societal level fears. Thus, any move made by Japan (or by any party acting in a capacity that could easily be perceived as representing Japan) to refocus Japan’s claims on the islands triggered angry responses from both societal and elite levels in China.

Japan did alter the status of some the islands to some extent in 2002. Though they remained officially privately owned, three of the islands were leased to MOFA[[180]](#footnote-180) and it was revealed in the Japanese media that a fourth had been leased to the Ministry of Defense since 1972. Evidently, the Ministry of Defense had leased the island in order that it could be used for bombing drills by the US after the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese rule. The leasing of the other three islands to MOFA appears to have been an attempt to prevent any third parties becoming involved either in terms of ownership of the islands or in any potential development of them (Drifte, 2008, p. 8-9). As such, it could be interpreted as an attempt to ensure that the status quo was not challenged by any party outside of the Japanese government’s control. Nevertheless, the move prompted an official protest by China, though it took a full two months before direct contact between the two governments was made over the issue, when then-Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi telephoned Japan’s ambassador (Japan Times, 2003b).

The two most serious cases in recent years, prior to the nationalisation dispute, came in 2004 and 2010 respectively. In both cases Chinese fishing boats were found to be in what Japan considers to be its territorial waters surrounding the islands and this resulted in the crews being arrested. However, the aftermath of each was quite different and explains much about the perceptions of how the dispute should be handled on both sides.

In March 2004 a group of Chinese activists managed to land on the largest island, known as Uotsurishima in Japanese and Diaoyu Dao in Chinese. The successful landing followed several attempts to reach the islands in the previous months, all of which had been repelled by the JCG.[[181]](#footnote-181) This series of attempted landings was notable in that it was the first occasion that mainland activists had attempted to reach the islands, with previous incidents having all involved protesters from Hong Kong or Taiwan. The JCG’s annual report outlined the action that it took once the fishing boat had reached land and the activists had disembarked:

As soon as a report on the incident was received from the patrol vessels on the scene, the 11th Regional Coast Guard Headquarters immediately dispatched all the patrol vessels and aircraft that could be mobilized. In addition to expelling the Chinese fishing boats that had illegally entered Japanese waters, police officers were rushed to Uotsurishima. The activists arrested by the police were sent by aircraft and patrol vessel to Naha port, where seven activists were later handed over by Okinawa Prefectural Police Headquarters to the Immigration Bureau and deported to China.

(Cited in Hirose, 2013, p. 19).

The action taken by Japan in this case was clear in terms of maintaining the status quo around the islands. It expelled the boats and arrested the activists, demonstrating its *de facto* control of the territory, but immediately deported them to China rather than deal with them through the Japanese legal system as one might expect of anyone arrested for illegal activity in Japanese territory. Thus, the *de facto* control of the islands can be seen to come with a caveat that there is an understanding of a Chinese interest that is also taken into consideration in handling issues surrounding the islands in a way that would not be considered in any other part of ‘sovereign’ Japanese territory.

The second incident occurred in 2010, though with some significant differences in terms of the actions taken by the Chinese involved and also in the response from Japan. On September 7th of that year what was originally reported as a “collision” (BBC, 2010) between a Chinese fishing vessel and a JCG patrol boat in the waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands occurred. It was later revealed that the fishing boat appeared to deliberately ram into the JCG patrol vessel, though the video that demonstrated this was never officially released and only became public when it was leaked (CNN, 2010a).

As with the incident in 2004, the captain and all fourteen crew members were arrested and taken to Okinawa for questioning. However, whereas the previous crew had been immediately deported, this did not happen in 2010. China made immediate overtures to Japan in an attempt to ensure the crew and captain were all released including summoning the Japanese ambassador in Beijing on six separate occasions in just twelve days (Hagstrom, 2012, p. 272). Nevertheless, Japan did not release any of the crew for six days and then retained the captain of the boat, Zhan Qixiong, in custody. Zhan’s custody was extended twice by Japanese courts before his eventual release on September 23rd, sixteen days after his initial arrest. Tellingly, his release was confirmed with a statement from the prosecutor in Japan that it would not be appropriate to pursue a prosecution and that he had made his decision with “considerations about the Japan-China relationship” (cited in Przystup, 2010b, p.7).

China’s reaction was the strongest yet in any of the eruptions of this dispute. Official proclamations that Japan’s arrests and detentions were “absurd, illegal and invalid” (Jiang, 2010) and demands that the captain be released immediately were backed up by the symbolic gesture of Li Jianguo, then the vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, postponing a planned trip to Japan (Japan Times, 2010a). During this time, four employees of Fujita, a Japanese corporation with strong business ties to China, were detained by Chinese authorities on suspicion of spying after being found videoing in a restricted military area and some reports linked this to the ongoing dispute over the boat captain (Zhao, 2013, p. 551; CNN, 2010b), though this has since been challenged and it is perfectly possible that the timing was coincidental (Hagstrom, 2012, p. 281). Besides the official reaction there was also a notable response from the societal level. Protests occurred across China’s major cities with protesters demanding action, both from the Chinese government and also from Japan itself. A campaign to boycott Japanese products also emerged.[[182]](#footnote-182)

That Japan so publicly declared that the decision to release Captain Zhan was based on considerations of its bilateral relationship with China rather than Japanese domestic law could be said to undermine its position that it was enforcing Japanese law in its own sovereign territorial space. It is clear that the strength of response from China took Japan by surprise and also that the decision was made in the interests of re-establishing an equilibrium in the relationship. This has led some to suggest that Japan was “weak” (The Economist, 2010; Japan Times, 2010b) and also that China had damaged its own international image with its over-reaction (The Economist, 2010). However, the 2010 incident reveals a perception gap between the decision makers on either side of the dispute. From a Japanese perspective, the Chinese response was unnecessarily strong and departed from the previously established behavioural expectation. In particular, Japanese respondents in interviews expressed shock at the arresting of the Fujita employees.[[183]](#footnote-183) However, from a Chinese perspective it was Japan that had behaved in an unexpected way with the extended detention of the crew and particularly Captain Zhan. An interviewee in Beijing summed this up with the statement that “we expected them to release the crew, as they had done in 2004. We could not understand why they did not”. It has been suggested that the Chinese leadership viewed Japan’s apparent shift in behaviour as an attempt “to force China to accept the legality of Japan’s occupation of the islands” (Cheng, 2011, p. 254).

**7.2 Previous Norms in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute**

From the review of the previous interaction between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute, several broadly defined norms and behavioural expectations can be discerned. In terms of the understanding of the position of the dispute in the bilateral relationship, there are three key norms that have helped to shape perceptions and the course of interaction in this field: firstly, that China tacitly accepts Japan’s administration of the islands; secondly, notwithstanding the first norm, that Japan tacitly accepts China’s position as an interested party in the islands; and finally, that neither side should unilaterally seek to change the status quo of the islands.

It is widely acknowledged that Japan ‘administers’ the islands, and this is usually reflected in media reporting outside of China. It is important to consider what the reality of that administration actually means, given that the islands are uninhabited. Its primary implication is that the waters surrounding the islands have become *de facto* Japanese territorial waters, with JCG patrol boats routinely operating in the area. This was, until 2012, predominantly unchallenged by China, despite the public disagreement on the legality of these operations. Consequently, Japan gives the appearance of being in control of the islands, without ever actually occupying them in the most literal sense. Indeed, the policing of the area for which it takes responsibility mainly revolves around ensuring that nobody does land on the islands. Construction on any of the islands has been limited to the lighthouses that were built by the *Nihon Seinensha*, with no further development since the last of these was erected in 1996. Thus, Japan’s administration of the islands can be seen to be somewhat symbolic, though with the caveat that Japanese access to the surrounding waters is relatively unrestricted in a way that is not true for other claimants to the area.

Japan’s *de facto* control of these waters, however, falls short of it treating the area in the same way that it does the rest of its sovereign territory and this is explained by the second of the identified key norms: that Japan tacitly takes into consideration China’s interests in the islands. One example of this is the lack of exploitation of the natural resources that are believed to exist in the area.[[184]](#footnote-184) It is clear from Japan’s actions in other areas that doing so would be perceived to be in its national interests, but the pragmatism in the dispute with China over sovereignty means that the exploitation remains permanently postponed. This, combined with the resistance to any development of sites on the islands themselves, demonstrates that Japan considers them to be its territory with a caveat. Added to this is the behaviour demonstrated in both the 2004 and – eventually – in the 2010 incidents. In the first instance Japan arrested suspected criminals in what it considers to be its own legal jurisdiction and, instead of prosecuting them according to the law of the territory in which the alleged offences were committed, immediately returned all seven suspects to China. In 2010, despite the initial actions seeming to suggest otherwise, all fifteen of the arrested Chinese fishing crew were returned to China without charge and with explicit acknowledgement that this was done to satisfy China. Thus, it can be seen that Japan treats China’s claims to the islands with some consideration when it takes any action concerning them and that this is expected by both sides.

Finally, there is the norm of maintaining the status quo, which both rests on and reinforces the previous two norms. By not seeking to challenge the symbolic administration of the islands by Japan, China tacitly accepts that norm and simultaneously reassures Japan that it does not seek conflict on the issue. Similarly, Japan’s consideration of Chinese interests in the islands provides China with the reassurance that it needs to continue with its acquiescence in Japanese administration of the islands. It is a somewhat precarious balance that can satisfy neither side entirely, but one that allows for a level of stability to be achieved through a mechanism of symbolic gestures. Each side can repeatedly demonstrate its commitment to the balance by adhering to the norms, but doing so requires the continued commitment of the other party. Ordinarily this is so, even in most of the instances where tensions appear high over the issue since these very eruptions of the dispute actually provide the opportunity for either side to demonstrate its commitment to these norms.

The above outlined norms refer specifically to the bilateral – that is, state-to-state – relationship. However, neither China nor Japan acts in a vacuum. There are multi-layered structural factors that also impact on the range of options available to either China or Japan that may sometimes contradict the bilateral norms. Japan as a state cannot ignore domestic nationalist movements, even relatively small ones. Any government cannot be seen to be surrendering Japanese territory, or even to be compromising on complex questions of international territorial disputes, or it faces an exploitation of this issue by its opponents during elections. This offers something of an explanation for the apparent shift in Japanese behaviour during the early stages of the 2010 fishing boat incident, given that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) was a relatively new government that had something of a reputation for being ‘soft’ on China. Thus, it was caught between two contradictory forces of assuaging public concern that it would fail to defend Japan’s key national interests and the need to reassure China that it was not seeking to change the status quo on the islands dispute through its actions against Captain Zhan. A similar, though not identical, bind restricts Chinese decision making. Clearly the Chinese government does not have to deal with the democratic concerns of electoral posturing from its opponents, but the move towards ‘responsive authoritarianism’, under which an authoritarian government maintains a sufficient level of legitimacy by responding to signals from groups within society over their interests, rests on the ability of the government to satisfy public perception in terms of key nationalist priorities such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. To this end, there are occasions when Chinese protesters or activists may seek to make the dispute a prominent issue on the agenda of Sino-Japanese relations against the wishes of the government. The governmental response is not entirely dictated by such activists, but clearly restricts the range of options available. As such, both China and Japan may be forced into actions that appear to go against the established and understood norms of the bilateral relationship regarding the islands dispute despite neither side – at the governmental level – seeking a conflict.

**7.3 The 2012/13 Dispute**

The most recent incarnation of the dispute could be said to have its roots in the aftermath of the 2010 incident. The strength of the response from China caused concern not only at the governmental level in Japan, but also in the business community and among other societal groups. The perception that Japan had been ‘weak’ in its reaction to China at this time provided capital for then-governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, to begin a campaign to re-nationalise the islands,[[185]](#footnote-185) in order to ensure that they could not be sold into foreign ownership. Ishihara had long campaigned for Japan to be more assertive in its foreign policy generally, and in its relationship with China specifically, having written the best-selling ‘Japan Can Say No’ in the early 1990s. In April 2012, Ishihara announced his intention to use Tokyo governmental funds to purchase the islands from their private owner, despite them actually being part of Okinawa Prefecture under Japanese law. A fund set up to support this action drew in excess of 1.3 billion yen (around US$16 million) from private donations and opinion polls in Japan suggested that as much as 70% of the population supported his plan (Tanaka, 2012, p.2).[[186]](#footnote-186) Ishihara also announced that he would seek to build a harbour and fishery radio relay station on Uotsurishima once the islands had been purchased (Unezawa, 2010).

Initially the campaign did not create a great deal of attention in the sphere of Sino-Japanese relations. However, it gathered momentum with the rapid increase of donations in Japan and became a serious bilateral issue once its success appeared to be a serious possibility. Incidences of activists sailing to the islands during August brought international attention to the issue, although those representing the ‘Chinese’ claim were actually from Hong Kong. They were detained and sent back to Hong Kong immediately by Japanese authorities. Among the approximately 150 Japanese activists sailing to the islands were eight members of the Diet. In Japan, however, pressure began to build on the government to respond to the campaign. The Noda[[187]](#footnote-187) administration, ultimately felt that it was left with a straight choice between allowing Ishihara’s purchase and development of the islands to go ahead or stepping in and nationalising the islands through the central government. It eventually announced that it would do the latter. Although no public statement was made to the effect, it was widely understood that the intention behind the decision was to bring about a conclusion that would be least provocative to China (Tseng, 2013, p. 115; Wang, 2013, p. 11; Lam, 2013, p. 91). Furthermore, it was believed that this motivation would be understood in China and that there would be a minimal need for a reaction from the Chinese government as a result (Daga, 2012). Nevertheless, the announcement in July 2012 that the government planned to purchase the islands prompted a warning that China would take “necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its sovereignty” (Liu, 2012).

China Marine Surveillance (*Zhongguo Haijian*, hereafter CMS) was China’s paramilitary marine law enforcement agency, charged with the responsibility of supervising China’s territorial waters. Organisationally it was overseen by State Oceanographic Administration (SOA) under the Ministry of Transport, making the deployment of its ships less confrontational than if People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels were deployed. It was created in 1998 and in March 2013 China announced that the CMS would be merged into an expanded China Coast Guard (CCG), overseen by the Ministry of Land and Resources (Wu & Pu, 2013).[[188]](#footnote-188) Prior to the creation of the CMS in 1998 ‘incursions’ into the waters around the islands were predominantly by research vessels under the auspices of the SOA.

Japan’s official purchase of the islands was completed on September 10th, prompting immediate diplomatic protests from China. Four days later the shape of China’s reaction began to emerge. Six ships entered the waters surrounding the islands, staying in the area for seven hours. This was the largest presence of Chinese ships in the area since the PRC laid claim to the islands (South China Morning Post, 2012a). This was followed by widespread societal level protests across a number of Chinese cities. Many of these turned violent and involved attacks on perceived Japanese interests in China, such as Japanese owned shops or Japanese-made cars. The demonstrations were reported to be the most serious outbreak of anti-Japanese protests in China since the normalisation of diplomatic relations forty years earlier, surpassing even those demonstrations seen in 2005 in intensity, violence, and geographical scope, though not in longevity (Moore, 2012). The demonstrations were brought to an end in similar fashion to those that have occurred during previous serious outbreaks of tensions in Sino-Japanese relations, with Chinese authorities apparently allowing a period of free expression before preventing further protests through the deployment of law enforcement authorities. The last day of the major protests was September 18th, which seemed to suggest that authorities recognised the need to allow the anniversary of the Shenyang Incident to be marked before ending a movement that had begun to threaten China’s national interests, as well as governmental power structures. There was a demonstrable effect on Sino-Japanese trade relations as some Japanese factories temporarily halted production in China (BBC, 2012) and two-way tourism dropped by more than 40% (Xin & Zhang, 2012).

Though the societal level protests were on a larger scale than ever before, the official reaction surpassed them in terms of longevity. After the initial despatch of CMS vessels, China also announced its intention to submit its planned extension of its continental shelf to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. This move would formalise China’s claim that its maritime territorial sovereignty extended to the edge of the Okinawa Trough, including the Senkaku/Diaoyus. This was formally submitted to the commission in December (US Department of Defense, 2013, p.4). This move is significant as it represented a sign that China was willing to internationalise the dispute, which is a tactic that it has not employed in other territorial disputes and had been previously assumed by Japan not to be in the range of options that China was likely to countenance.[[189]](#footnote-189) Just as significantly, the deployment of CMS vessels in the area was not a solitary event. Indeed, their incursions into the waters surrounding the islands became routine over the course of the next few months.

China’s increased activity in the area was not without consequences. One of the advantages of the previously held understanding that Japanese ships would have relatively unfettered access to the waters was that there was minimal opportunity for the two sides to come into contact with each other in a situation of high pressure. With China’s new levels of activity in these waters this advantage no longer exists. The starkest examples of the implications of this came in January 2013 when a PLAN frigate locked its attack radar system onto a Japanese MSDF destroyer[[190]](#footnote-190) just eleven days after a similar incident involving a Japanese helicopter (MOFA, 2013e). Though the incident took place in the high seas[[191]](#footnote-191) rather in the waters associated with the islands, it occurred just 110km from the area and there is no question that the ships were only in such close proximity because of the increased activity around the disputed area. China’s explanation that the captain of the frigate acted without direct authorisation suggests that this is an example of the increased potential for miscalculation or misunderstanding leading to direct conflict between China and Japan. If, on the other hand, China’s explanation is not true then this would represent a greater willingness to engage in behaviour likely to lead to such a conflict. Either way, it is a stark new reality for Japan to address.

**7.3.1 The Structurationist Explanation of the 2012/13 Dispute**

As outlined earlier, prior to this most recent outbreak of tensions over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands there were three key norms that formed the structures of Sino-Japanese interaction in this field: Japan’s assumed and relatively unchallenged ‘administration’ of the islands; Japan’s unspoken acknowledgement of China’s interests in the area; and a joint commitment to maintaining the status quo. The behaviour of both governments in the 2012/13 dispute can be explained to some extent in terms of adherence to these norms in the context of their own respective domestic restrictions. However, it is also possible to discern the employment of strategic norm development on the part of China, once the dispute had ignited, in an attempt to alter the future shape of those structures in a way that would better enhance its own long term aims. China’s increased maritime activity has, arguably, altered the structures of the relationship in this field by diminishing the position of the first norm – that of Japan’s assumed and relatively unchallenged ‘administration’ of the islands and surrounding waters – and reinforced the second – that of Japan’s implicit recognition of legitimate Chinese interest in the area. It would be a leap of faith to suggest that this has moved China closer to undisputed sovereignty of the islands, but it is clearly in a better position to make such a claim as a result of this strategy.

There are two important assumptions that underpin this analysis and they require a little clarification. Firstly, China’s interest in the islands is a key strategic concern. This may sound uncontroversial, or even obvious, but there are numerous examples of analyses that play down China’s interest in genuinely attaining sovereignty over the islands. They are frequently presented as something of a pressure-release valve through which nationalists can vent and the government can make symbolic gestures to appease its critics, without any real intention of wresting control of the islands from Japan (Manicom, 2010, p. 10). Sometimes China’s interest is dismissed as being opportunistic, stemming purely from the apparent discovery that oil and gas reserves may be significant. This latter point may be true; there is certainly evidence that China showed little concern for the islands prior to that point.[[192]](#footnote-192) Nevertheless, the origins of China’s interest should not detract from the seriousness with which that interest is now taken. Secondly, this analysis considers the initial perceived breach of norms in this round of the dispute to have been Japan’s nationalisation of the islands. It is perfectly arguable that the roots of this dispute go further back than 2012; certainly the impetus for Ishihara’s campaign came from the shock felt in Japan at China’s perceived reaction to the 2010 boat collision. Nevertheless, the relationship had returned to relative equilibrium, certainly in the bilateral sense, and it was the action taken by Japan that was perceived to be the first breach of norms: that of maintaining the status quo.

To say that the Japanese action of nationalising the islands was a response to domestic forces, rather than a proactive foreign policy strategy, is not a controversial one. Indeed, no serious assessment of the Noda administration’s decision to purchase the islands has suggested otherwise. It is clear that such an action was never on the agenda of the national government and that it was considered to be an unnecessarily provocative act, given that Japan’s administration of the islands was relatively unchallenged. However, as outlined in the third chapter of this thesis, a holistic constructivist approach to foreign policy analysis necessitates consideration of the domestic structures that are outside the direct control of the central government. Such structures may guide a general direction of foreign policy or limit the range of options available for a government to pursue its aims. In this instance, Ishihara and his supporters are the very structures that place a limitation on the possible policy choices available to the Noda administration. The Ishihara campaign quite clearly limited the range of options that the central government had to two: nationalise the islands; or allow Ishihara to complete the purchase. Both of these possible choices would have breached the mutual tacit agreement not to challenge the status quo of the islands, but it is widely considered that Ishihara’s plan, which included building a permanent port on the largest island, would be considerably more provocative to China. Thus, the decision of the Noda administration to nationalise the islands was taken in order to prevent a more severe breach of the norms of the bilateral relationship with China. The decision can, therefore, be seen to have been a result of the competing domestic and international structures that shape Japanese foreign policy options. It was also calculated that those responsible for assessing the situation in China would be cognisant of the domestic situation in Japan and would take this into consideration in the development of a Chinese response. In other words, Japan knew that there would need to be a reaction of some kind from China, particularly with regard to the societal forces that would act in a similar limiting fashion to those experienced in Japan, but there was a belief that it would be a proportionate reaction in the circumstances and that the relationship would not suffer unduly. Noda himself stated as much in an interview with Asahi TV: “I understand the nationalisation would bring reactions and tensions to some extent, but the scale is broader than I expected” (cited in South China Morning Post, 2012b).

There is no doubt that the reaction from China was stronger than had been expected in Japan. This is true of not only the reaction from the societal level in terms of the widespread anti-Japanese demonstrations, but also from the government in terms of the consistently expanded activity in the waters surrounding the islands. That Japanese calculations were wrong in this way does not necessarily indicate that the logic was flawed. The Japanese calculations were based on the assumption that China would act according to the same processes by which Japan had reached its own decision to purchase the islands: that its range of options would be constrained by domestic forces but that it would be simultaneously acting within the ideational structures of the bilateral relationship in this field. In other words, Japan expected China to react to some extent in order to appease domestic constituencies that would create pressure for it to do so, but that it would temper its response in order to adhere to the previously understood norm of maintaining the status quo. That China went beyond its expectation indicates that it behaved differently, but when the structurationist lens is applied to this exchange it suggests that China was still cognisant of these structures, but that it was operating with a great deal more agency than had been anticipated.

The domestic factors that shaped the environment in which the Chinese government formulated its response to Japan’s nationalisation of the islands are clearly not identical to those that shaped the initial Japanese action. The concerns of a democratically elected government about public opinion are different to an authoritarian one such as China. Nevertheless, China’s brand of “responsive authoritarianism” necessitates visible actions on the part of the government in order to satisfy public opinion (Reilly, 2012, 1-2). Thus, the response from China was *in part* determined by a domestic structure that demanded China be seen to respond to provocations, particularly in the fields of such sensitive issues as territorial sovereignty. However, the bilateral structure of the relationship also comes into play in that any perceived provocation from Japan would be expected, by both parties, to draw a reaction of some sort from China. In other words, both the domestic structures and the bilateral structures pointed to a reaction from China (though not necessarily of the same severity). It is in this situation that a potentially difficult period of time for Chinese policy makers has been turned into an opportunity to advance China’s strategic aims, though not in the traditional sense. China took the opportunity created by Japan’s nationalisation of the islands to exercise its own agency in the re-production of the normative and ideational structures that govern the relationship in order to re-shape them in a way that suited China’s own long term aims. By overplaying its reaction, China has been able to make a small but important alteration to the set of norms governing the Sino-Japanese relationship surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. The fact that official reaction went a long way beyond the societal expressions demonstrates that the Chinese government was seeking to alter the situation at the bilateral level, and not just responding to societal pressure to ‘do something’.

The shift in behaviour from China in this area can be illustrated by considering the activity of its ships in the waters surrounding the islands. As has been previously outlined, the general international consensus is that Japan administers the islands, meaning that its own vessels have largely unfettered access to the area that would be considered to be the territorial waters surrounding the islands. As has also been noted, there have been occasions when this has been challenged by China through the deployment of CMS (later CCG) ships in the area. This has, up until the nationalisation of the islands by Japan in 2012, always been in a very limited and restrained way. However, since the nationalisation the situation has altered dramatically. Chart 7.1 shows the number of ‘incursions’ into what Japan considers to be its territorial waters surrounding the islands on an annual basis. The figures are for the total number of ships that have entered the waters; for example, when three ships enter the waters together, this is counted as three incursions. An incursion is only counted once, regardless of how long the ship stays in the area.[[193]](#footnote-193) The figures are collated from a number of annual reports published by the JCG. The final figure refers to the year 2012/13 but is only a twelve month period from September 1st 2012 until August 31st 2013, marking one year after the nationalisation of the islands by the Noda administration.

What is instantly recognisable from these figures is that China has not used CMS or other official vessels as a form of reaction to the various previous outbreaks of the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. In even some of the most heightened periods of tension, the number of incursions by Chinese vessels has not significantly increased as would be expected if this were a tactic used to respond to Japan during these times.

*Chart 7.1 - Incursions into Japan’s “Territorial Waters” by PRC Vessels 1995-2013*  
(Collated from Japan Coast Guard, 2005; 2008; 2012; 2013 Kyodo, 2013d).[[194]](#footnote-194)

Furthermore, not only has the number of incursions remained relative stable even during periods of heightened tension, but even during times of low tension over the issue the same holds true. In other words, the number of incursions by Chinese vessels has not been influenced by either increased or decreased levels of tensions over the islands. Thus, it could be expected that the same would hold true following the nationalisation of the islands by the Noda administration in 2012. However, this did not hold true.

In the twelve months following the nationalisation of the islands Japan recorded 109 incursions of Chinese ship into the territorial waters around the islands. This is a dramatic increase not only on the average yearly total over the previous seventeen years of fourteen incursions, but was more than three times that of the previous highest of 33, which occurred in 1999. In fact, it was only the third time that the total had exceeded 20. Furthermore, when the figures are examined in closer detail they reveal that this cannot be attributed to a brief spell of incredibly high activity. In fact, at no stage during those twelve months did more than 5 Chinese vessels enter the territorial waters at the same time. The period of time between incursions was also fairly constant, with 21 of the 109 incursions taking place in the first four months following the nationalisation, meaning that the first eight months of 2013 saw even higher levels of activity.

There were other events that appeared to show China’s response to the nationalisation was markedly more robust than any of the previous disputes. This included the use of military aircraft with the first “breach” of the airspace over the islands being recorded on December 13th 2012 (Cole, 2013). Later in January the presence of Chinese military vessels in the area provided arguably the most serious incidence of mutual antagonism. As was noted earlier, Japan claimed that on the 30th of January a Chinese warship had locked its radar onto a Japanese destroyer approximately 110 nautical miles north of the islands. A radar lock is required in order to ensure accuracy when firing missiles at a target and, when detected, carries the very real risk of provoking the target ship into firing first in order to protect itself. That did not come to pass on this occasion but it prompted a complaint from Japan. China initially denied that the incident had taken place but it was later revealed that Chinese officials confirmed to their Japanese counterparts that a single officer carrying out an “emergency decision” based on China’s rules of engagement had been responsible and had acted without seeking further orders from superiors (South China Morning Post, 2013). Even if this version were true[[195]](#footnote-195) it would illustrate the dramatically increased risk of accidental conflict between the two sides in the region since the increased naval activity.

On February 28th, it was reported that two Japanese fishing boats were trailed for six hours by CMS ships, apparently leading to them abandoning the area (Hisatsune, 2013). This was the first time that such reports had come to light, indicating another shift in the balance of control over the waters.[[196]](#footnote-196) Similarly, on April 23rd eight Chinese ships were sighted in the territorial waters surrounding the islands. They had seemingly been sent to monitor a group of Japanese activists that had entered the area (Hofilena, 2013). Another break from the previous norms came in July 2013, when a ship registered in the Bahamas was reported to have conducted fishing surveys in the waters around the islands on three separate occasions. On each occasion it was challenged by the JCG, only to respond in Chinese that the action had been authorised by the Chinese government (Kyodo, 2013c). This represented the first successful internationalisation of China’s claims to the islands.

More than one year after the nationalisation of the islands by Japan, China was continuing to shift its behaviour in the region in a more assertive way. The most prominent example of this was the declaration in November 2013 of China’s first Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). ADIZs are areas of airspace which a country designates that falls outside of its own sovereign airspace. Upon entering such zones foreign aircraft have an obligation to inform the relevant authorities in the state claiming the ADIZ, submit a flight plan and maintain an open radio link throughout the period of time during which the aircraft remains in the zone. China’s declared zone was certainly not the first in the region; indeed, Japan has had such a zone surrounding its airspace since 1969, unilaterally expanding it as recently as 2010, and both Taiwan and South Korea have maintained ADIZs for decades. However, China’s new zone differs from these in one fundamental way: China demands that all aircraft comply with the requirements to open and maintain contact regardless of whether they intend to enter Chinese airspace, whereas all other ADIZs only require this if the aircraft intends to enter the relevant country’s airspace. China’s newly declared ADIZ overlaps with Japan’s, most notably above the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and has not been formally recognised by either Japan or the US.[[197]](#footnote-197) Nevertheless, commercial aircraft from both countries began to comply with China’s requirements within days of the announcement, though Japan later urged its own airlines to cease doing so (Aoki, 2013). Notably, within days of the announcement two US B-52s flew through the ADIZ without complying with China’s requirements (BBC, 2013). Though the flight had apparently been planned as a training exercise before the declaration of the zone, it seemed clear that the US was making a statement.[[198]](#footnote-198) Despite this challenge, the ADIZ has remained in force, unquestionably altering the security dynamics of the region.

**7.3.2 What has Changed?**

It is, perhaps, too early to declare the 2012/13 dispute over. Nevertheless, at this stage it appears that the previously understood norms in the bilateral relationship in this specific field have been altered, partly because of the nationalisation that Japan undertook, but mainly as a result of China’s opportunistic decision to become more active in the waters surrounding the islands. The consequence is that the three norms that were outlined earlier in this chapter have taken on a slightly different shape and this will likely play a significant role in how this particular dispute is addressed by both sides in the future. Each of the three norms remains in some form, but have been subtly altered: Japan’s ‘administration’ of the islands is no longer entirely unchallenged; China’s legitimate interests in the area have been reinforced; and the consequences of challenging the status quo have been brought into clearer focus for Japan.

The continued incursions into the territorial waters of the islands, in combination with increased activities in the surrounding areas, shows that China is no longer willing to promulgate the image that it tacitly accepts Japanese administration of the islands. Prior to 2012 incursions into the waters by CMS vessels were very much the exception, rather than the norm. Since the nationalisation it has become regularised behaviour. That this shift in behaviour is both a direct response to the nationalisation issue and a long-term strategic move was confirmed as early as October 2012 when *Renmin Ribao* identified the new pattern of CMS vessels patrolling the waters as “a routine action” (*“yi zhong changgui xingdong”*) to which “Japan must learn to adapt” (*“Riben bixu xuehui shiying”*) (Renmin Ribao, 2012). It might have been thought that this response would have been a temporary one and that over time the CMS (later the CCG) would return to occasional incursions into the waters. However, almost one year after the nationalisation occurred, not only had the regularity of the vessels’ presence in the area continued unabated, but there were signs that the attempts to normalise this were increasing: three CCG ships entered the waters around the islands on August 7th 2013 and stayed for 28 hours, the longest recorded stay by non-Japanese vessels since the sovereignty dispute began (Kyodo, 2013b). China’s moves in this area are twofold: it has sought to change the interaction with Japan at a bilateral level, so that Japan no longer enjoys unfettered access to the islands; and it has sought to present the image internationally that the previously understood situation of Japanese ‘administration’ was erroneous. Bilaterally, this has significantly increased the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding leading to armed conflict, as it has increased the contact that occurs between the two sides in a high pressure situation. This was evidenced by the incident involving Chinese frigates locking radar onto a Japanese destroyer in January 2013. This new reality feeds into the decision making process for both sides in the future and will have to be taken into consideration for any future policy change by Japan. Internationally, China has simultaneously pursued a public relations campaign that has attempted to convince public and state actors around the world not only that Japan’s claims to the islands are false, but that the impression of Japan as current occupiers of the islands is equally bogus. Part of this campaign has been to involve other nations implicitly providing support for China’s claims of sovereignty. An example of this was the previously outlined instance of a Bahamas-registered fishing vessel claiming the right to conduct surveys in the area based on the authorisation of China. This has also included attempts to tie the issue to Japan’s “aggressive history” in the minds of those in countries that suffered under Japanese occupation, with Peter O’Neill, the prime minister of Papua New Guinea offering rhetorical support (Gustafsson, 2013). Chinese diplomats around the world have continually engaged in rhetoric designed to reinforce the link between Japan’s aggressive history and colonisation of parts of Asia with its continued refusal to acquiesce to China’s claims over the islands. Examples of this have included China’s ambassadors to the UK and Canada, Liu Xiaoming and Zhang Junsai, writing newspaper articles emphasising the importance of the Cairo Declaration and Japan’s aggression in East Asia in determining the sovereignty of the islands (Liu, 2012; Zhang, 2012). These kinds of articles seek to support the line peddled by the central government, evidenced by China’s ambassador to the UN, Li Baodong, referring to Japan’s nationalisation of the islands as “an open denial of the outcomes of victory in the world anti-fascist war, and a grave challenge to the post-war international order” (cited in Drifte, 2013, p. 35).

This has not been an entirely one-way process. Japan has demonstrated through its own actions that this particular norm has been altered. Though Japan maintains its official position of there being “no territorial dispute” its actions have suggested otherwise. It has conducted its own international public relations campaign which has included focussing on Japan’s democratic identity in overseas interviews (Gustaffson, 2013) and the extensive updating of the MOFA website’s section on the islands, which provided detailed information making the Japanese case in six different languages.[[199]](#footnote-199) By contrast, the section regarding “Japan’s Northern Territories”, which deals with a territorial dispute between Japan and Russia, is only given in Japanese, Russian and English. In addition to this, there have been statements from some within the Japanese political elite that acknowledge the existence of a dispute, including former Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio as well as former Deputy Prime Minister Okada Katsuya.[[200]](#footnote-200) All of this does not necessarily mean that China now has the advantage in reaching a resolution of the dispute, but it does show that the way in which this dispute is viewed in the relationship has changed. Japan’s position can no longer be taken for granted and its “administration” of the islands is no longer a universally tacitly accepted state of affairs, either within the bilateral relationship or in the wider international framework.

Many of the processes that have contributed towards the diminishing of acceptance of Japan’s administration of the islands have also played a role in the strengthening of the perception that China has a legitimate interest in the area. Japan’s relative acquiescence in CMS vessels patrolling the waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands has allowed that pattern to become normalised, reinforcing the sense that Chinese interests in the area have tacit recognition from Japan.[[201]](#footnote-201) Similarly, the shift in public discourse from Japan has added to the depth of China’s position. This is true even though Japan’s increased willingness to discuss the dispute is entirely aimed at demonstrating the legitimacy of its own position; the very fact that there is now a debate, where previously Japan had been able to dismiss the discussion as irrelevant, is a shift towards China’s position and away from Japan’s.

Finally, the matter of the tacit agreement not to challenge the status quo is difficult to assess, given that the situation has been in something of a flux. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Japan underestimated the consequences of the decision to nationalise the islands, even if, as outlined earlier, prior knowledge of the extent of China’s reaction may not have been enough to alter the decision anyway. Thus, Japan’s decision making environment on the islands issue has a new dimension: the more acutely understood consequences of challenging the status quo. Though this cannot be said to categorically cement the position that currently exists – as already noted, prior knowledge of the extent of China’s reaction may not have prevented the last challenge to the status quo that Japan launched as it would have remained the least provocative option available to the Noda administration against the possibility of Ishihara’s proposal – it does offer a contributory force in ensuring that Japan does not seek to reopen this dispute in the near future. In turn, a continued acceptance, either tacit or explicit, of the altered norms in this field will reinforce their position in determining the future course of the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute.

**7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has taken the 2012/13 Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute as a case study to demonstrate how the structurationist lens can be applied to a different aspect of Sino-Japanese relations to offer insights into decisions taken and the strategies employed. It shows that China not only recognises the normative structures in which the bilateral relationship is played out, but actively seeks to alter them to suit its own long term strategic aims whilst simultaneously satisfying the multi-layered structural expectations that serve to limit its foreign policy options. China’s actions in the 2012/13 dispute can be explained as a result of a combination of the structural forces of the bilateral relationship and the domestic pressure that was obvious for it to react. However, Japan’s nationalisation of the islands served not only to challenge the existing norms but also to present an opportunity for China to redevelop those norms. What could be perceived as an ‘overreaction’ to the issue was actually a strategic play to move the ideational goalposts. Japan’s initial action may have been correctly calculated as the least provocative action available to the Noda administration in the light of Ishihara’s campaign to purchase and develop the islands, but it was also an opportunity that China elected to exploit. Its reaction was produced through its own agency operating within the dual structural constraints of the bilateral relationship and its own domestic context. The result is that the norms governing the bilateral interaction in this field that had previously been tacitly understood and accepted by both parties have moved in a way that reflects China’s own long term strategic aims. Whether this has strengthened China’s position vis-à-vis the islands may not be clear for some time to come, but the structurationist lens reveals much about China’s dealings with Japan over this issue. It appears that China employs the strategic development of norms in its relationship with Japan in more than one field and this may be the foundation of a coherent approach to understanding China’s relationship with Japan.

**8. Conclusion**

This concluding chapter not only provides a recap of the main tenets of this thesis, but also places the work done into the context of contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. As such, it begins with a review of the research outlined in the thesis and explains how the approach of structuration adopted in this thesis helps our understanding of the results. It then goes on to give some context to this issue by outlining the events that followed Koizumi’s tenure, which ended in 2006. Specifically, it will address the slightly varying ways in which each of the following six prime ministers of Japan[[202]](#footnote-202) dealt with the issue of Yasukuni Shrine and the effects that this had on the Sino-Japanese relationship. The seventh prime minister since Koizumi, Abe Shinzō,[[203]](#footnote-203) is then considered in a little more detail. This extra consideration is given in light of Abe’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine on December 26th 2013, making him the first prime minister to visit the shrine during his tenure since Koizumi. The contextualisation is not limited to the issue of Yasukuni Shrine and also considers the wider range of issues in the relationship, particularly the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute, considering the conclusions drawn on the issue in chapter 7 and referring to some of the recent events in this field. Finally, the chapter offers some suggestions for ways in which this research might be further developed in consideration of China’s relationship with Japan and the wider study of its international relations.

**8.1 Review of the Research Results**

The research in this thesis was divided into two distinct sections that were performed separately but intended to inform and supplement each other. The first of these was an analysis of the different sections of Chinese media and the ways in which these sections reported on Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine. The intention of this work was to find any link between the tone of reporting in official and non-official media. It was divided in this way to provide data from across the spectrum of media in China, with official media represented by *Renmin Ribao*, the newspaper most closely associated with the CCP, and the non-official media represented by one of the most commercialised publications in the Chinese market, *Nanfang Dushibao*. In order to provide extra balance and seek further insight, *Huanqiu Shibao*, a newspaper with close ties to the CCP but one that is also commercial in nature, was also included in the analysis. This distinction was drawn based on an extensive review of the relative commercialisation and freedom to report of different newspapers that was conducted during the time of the main topic under consideration in this thesis. The content analysis sought to ascertain if there was any evolution in the tone of discourse relating to both Koizumi and Japan in the reporting of his visits to the shrine between 2001 and 2006. Furthermore, if such an evolution could be found it aimed to address the question of whether there would be a correlation between the three newspapers or if the different sections of the media were unrelated in terms of how they reported on the issue. Finally, it sought to identify the driver of any discursive shift in order to address the question of whether the production of national images of Japan and Koizumi in China were being led more by the political elite, as represented in this research by the official media over which it retains tight control, or by societal forces, as represented in this research by the more commercialised, non-official media which is more responsive to societal pressures and views through commercial necessity.

The results provided much of the insight that had originally been the aim of this section of the research. In particular, a very clear pattern of tone relating to both Koizumi and Japan emerged from the analysis that showed all three categories of the media following a similar pattern. This pattern was more pronounced in the official media but was clearly visible across all three categories. Specifically, the pattern that emerged was one of strong negative content after the first visit in August 2001, followed by a sharp decrease in 2002 and very low levels of negativity in 2003 and 2004. The final two visits in 2005 and, in particular in August 2006, demonstrated a return to much stronger levels of negativity across all three categories of the media. Closer analysis of the results of the daily reporting tone in the two weeks following each visit showed that on each occasion the response to the visit was strongly negative for a very short period of time. For most of the visits across the three newspapers this meant that reporting on the issue was limited to just two or three days.[[204]](#footnote-204) However, despite demonstrating a strong correlation across the differing sections of the media in their tone of reporting on the issue, the research did not identify from which end of the spectrum the narrative was being driven. This could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly it could be seen to imply that it simply was not driven from either end, and the two ends moved in similar directions independently of each other. Secondly, it may simply mean that the research failed to uncover the desired result. Without further research, it would not be possible to make a definitive declaration on this question. Nevertheless, the correlation between official and non-official media in terms of narrative clearly indicates a unity of sorts, whether that is determined by dictation from political elite or if it is more as a result of elite response to societal pressure. It is worth noting that the consistently limited period of intensive reporting on all six visits across all three newspapers suggests that neither end of the spectrum was responding to the other’s reporting, since this would involve a lag in the data that was not present. This suggests that the most likely explanation is that there is a certain level of consensus on the appropriate way of reporting on this issue.

The second part of the research in this thesis was a series of interviews conducted in China and Japan across a six month period in 2011 and 2012. The intention of the interview process was to garner insight and information from key participants and observers of the processes involved in the production of China’s reaction to Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Conducted on a semi-structured basis, participants were encouraged to speak freely and many of the interviews did not stick rigidly to the questions originally set. Similarly, the questions originally chosen for the process underwent something of an evolution themselves in response to the initial responses from interviewees. In this way, as much data as possible was extracted from the participants in order for a qualitative analysis of the results to be performed. As such, the results do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis.

Through the interviews were wide-ranging and some disparate views were expressed, a number of key themes could be extracted from the plethora of data that was collected during this process. These themes, outlined in chapter 6 of this thesis, can be arranged in chronological order in relation to the events of Koizumi’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine across the five years of his premiership. The six themes that were identified are briefly summarised here. The first of these themes was a consistent belief that the Chinese government was not surprised by Koizumi’s first visit. Sufficient analysis had been conducted within the policy advisory circle for a reasonable conclusion to have been drawn that Koizumi would fulfil his election pledge of visiting the shrine as prime minister. Secondly, several interviewees expressed a possible confusion between the political elites of Japan and China following Koizumi’s visit to China in October 2001. It was interpreted by some in China that Koizumi’s appearance at *Lugou Qiao[[205]](#footnote-205)* was intended to be an indication that he would not return to Yasukuni Shrine during the rest of his tenure. Thus, his second visit in April 2002 came as much more of a shock than the first visit had. Thirdly, despite the obvious tensions that existed at the highest political level, it was felt that both sides continued to recognise the importance of the relationship and to work towards making it a functional one despite the ongoing issues. It was pointed out that this was demonstrated by the apparently *ad hoc* system of bilateral meetings that developed with Koizumi meeting both Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao during various multilateral fora, allowing the two sides to engage in dialogue despite the lack of bilateral summits. Low level political contact also continued throughout this period, leading to a rejection of the notion by analysts from both China and Japan that the relationship had broken down. Fourthly, the role of societal pressure during this period of time was higher than had been expected, or had previously been experienced during times of tension in the Sino-Japanese relationship. Several interviewees felt that the government’s response to Koizumi may not have been as entrenched if the reaction from the societal level had not been so strong, though this observation was ordinarily in the context of the wider issues in Sino-Japanese relations at the time rather than on the singular problem of Yasukuni Shrine. Fifth, the point at which those in the policy-making community gave up hope of altering Koizumi’s behaviour was substantially later than one might have expected. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems clear that he would not stop his visits to the shrine for the entirety of his tenure, but interviewees suggested that it was believed possible to influence him on this issue until 2004 or, in some cases, even as late as 2005. This is significant not only because it reveals just how long the Chinese leadership held out hope of influencing Koizumi but also because it confirms that they believed it possible for China to influence a Japanese prime minister’s ostensibly domestic behaviour, just as predicted under the structuration model outlined in this thesis. Finally, interviewees considered that there was a conscious effort made in the final twelve months of Koizumi’s tenure to increase the pressure around the issue of Yasukuni Shrine. This pressure was ostensibly aimed at Koizumi himself and took the form of symbolic diplomatic acts such as Wu Yi’s late cancellation of here scheduled meeting with Koizumi and a generally more hard-line approach to the possibility of summitry. However, the intent of this strategy was not to influence Koizumi himself but to provide a clear choice for his successor: return to the practice of not visiting Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister; or become *persona non grata* in the relationship with China from the outset.

Overall, this thesis has deconstructed China’s reactions to Koizumi’s repeated visits to the shrine during his tenure. It has shown that these reactions were a product of its domestic circumstances placed within the context of previously constituted bilateral relationship norms with Japan at the inter-state level. With a more vocal and visible nationalist reaction from the societal level that increased significantly during the early years of the 2000s, the possible choices of the Chinese political elite were narrowed in terms of its dealings with Japan. The popular internet campaign to oppose Japan’s bid to seek a permanent seat on the UNSC demonstrates well that societal forces can have a direct impact on Chinese foreign policy. When Wen Jiabao announced China’s official opposition to the bid it was clear that it was a response to the pressure felt from within China. Thus, the prevailing mood of Chinese society played a role in guiding the choices of the political elite in determining foreign policy.[[206]](#footnote-206) In terms of the Yasukuni Shrine issue, this was placed into the context of the previously determined ideational structures that shaped behavioural expectations on the issue. In other words, China’s previous experience of populist Japanese prime ministers visiting the shrine led the policy-makers to believe that a suitable response was not only required in order to demonstrate China’s position on the shrine, but would be able to influence future behaviour regarding the shrine. Thus, there was an understanding that the first visit would take place and the rhetorical reaction to it was designed to do two things. Firstly, it was aimed at fulfilling China’s role in the established process by expressing moral outrage, which simultaneously would satisfy domestic requirements for the political elite to respond.[[207]](#footnote-207) Secondly, it was calculated to be the appropriate method of ensuring that Koizumi would not repeat his visit. That he was welcomed to Beijing just two months after this first visit is testament to the fact that China expected him to alter his future behaviour.

The responses to the six visits across the five year period had much in common, but also altered subtly across that time. In highlighting this apparent evolution, this thesis has shed light on the way that China operates within the previously described ideational structures. Notably, the rhetoric of the reactions to the third and fourth visits was relatively low key in terms of its depth, though the strength of the condemnation remained stable. At the same time, the political elite continued to find ways to manage the relationship with Japan, albeit in a somewhat *ad hoc* manner. This was evidenced by Hu Jintao’s willingness to meet with Koizumi in third countries, though the refusal to allow formal bilateral summits to take place emphasised that the issue could not be ignored. There was a clear desire to manage the relationship whilst not allowing China to appear to acquiesce on the issue of Japanese prime ministers visiting Yasukuni, something that could have resulted in the institutionalisation of these visits and would have represented a diplomatic defeat for China.

Actions in 2005, including then-Vice Premier Wu Yi cancelling a meeting with Koizumi at late notice and abruptly cutting short a visit to Japan and refusal for even third country meetings to take place between Koizumi and China’s highest leadership, should also be viewed in terms of the domestic situation of China at that time placed into the context of the structural element of behavioural expectation in the Sino-Japanese relationship. With widespread anti-Japanese protests becoming violent across China, it would have been politically difficult for the government to be seen to be conciliatory towards a Japanese administration that had made none of the concessions that had been demanded of it. However, the actions of the Chinese government at this time and its reaction to the fifth and sixth visits was rooted in establishing the rules for greater Sino-Japanese interaction under Koizumi’s successor. This strategy is best explained under the structuration model outlined in this thesis. China was exercising its agency to reshape the normative structures of the relationship over this issue at a time when it was possible to seek to alter them. This was a crucial period of time as repeated visits to the shrine by any successor to Koizumi might have institutionalised the visits, leaving China with a choice of acquiescing or rupturing the relationship in a more serious way. By making it clear to the incoming Abe Shinzō that this was the stark choice he faced, China was able to re-establish the norm that serving Japanese prime ministers do not visit Yasukuni Shrine. Crucially, it also re-established the implicit – and occasionally explicit – determining factor behind this decision was consideration for the relationship with China. Thus, China has been shown not only to act with agency within the structures of the relationship, but to actively strategise to reshape those structures in its own interests, and with some degree of success.

**8.2 Sino-Japanese Relations and Yasukuni Shrine 2006-2012**

This section outlines the actions of Koizumi’s successors as prime minister of Japan between September 2006 and December 2012. During this period Japan had six different prime ministers and underwent a rare change of government when the Democratic Party of Japan won a general election in 2009. Though the party went on to lose power again in December 2012, this three-year period represents the longest time that the LDP has been out of government in Japan since its formation in 1955.[[208]](#footnote-208) The DPJ proved no more capable than the LDP of maintaining stability in the position of prime minister with three different people holding the post during its short time in office. Across all six prime ministers during this time, not one visited Yasukuni Shrine whilst in office, though each had quite different approaches to relations with China.

**8.2.1 Sino-Japanese Relations under the Post-Koizumi LDP, 2006-2009**

When Abe succeeded Koizumi as prime minister of Japan it could not have been interpreted as a dramatic shift in Japanese politics. Abe had been appointed chief cabinet secretary by Koizumi in 2005 and was considered by many to be “more hawkish” in terms of foreign policy – in particular with regard to China - than the man he replaced (Green, 2008, p. 175; Yoshihara, 2008, p. 62). Even more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, he had been a consistent supporter of Koizumi’s right to visit Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister and had appeared to suggest that he would continue the practice of visiting the shrine should he succeed Koizumi (Taipei Times, 2006, p. 5). Abe’s maternal grandfather was Kishi Nobusuke,[[209]](#footnote-209) who was prime minister from 1957 until 1960, but who was also one of the wartime Japanese leaders that had been identified as a possible candidate for the second round of ‘class A’ war crimes trials, a process that was ultimately abandoned.[[210]](#footnote-210) Given Abe’s stance on these issues and his personal links with the generation of Japanese leaders that had such a close involvement with the roots of this problem, it might have been expected that his election as leader of the LDP – and, therefore, as prime minister – might damage Japan’s relationship with China even further than the five-year tenure of Koizumi had. However, through a combination of pragmatism on both sides, this did not turn out to be the case.

Abe paid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine just over one month before becoming prime minister and then did not visit during his time in office. Furthermore, Abe visited China within days of becoming prime minister as a clear gesture that he intended to prioritise the mending of this particular relationship. This visit was particularly notable as it was his first foreign trip as prime minister, something that is considered to be a large symbolic gesture of the direction foreign policy is likely to take.[[211]](#footnote-211) It has since been reported that Abe’s advisers had worked secretly to arrange the trip to China and had offered an assurance that he would not visit the shrine for at least one year after taking office (Park & Vogel, 2007, p. 30). This pledge was not confirmed in public and Abe maintained a position of “strategic ambiguity” over the question by refusing to confirm plans to either visit or avoid the shrine during his tenure (Armstrong, 2007). Since Abe’s period in office lasted exactly one year it cannot be determined if this pattern would have continued. He did send offerings without appearing in person (Fackler, 2007), but this met with almost no reaction from China whatsoever. In fact, when asked about this in a press conference the spokesperson Jiang Yu elected not to criticise the action stating that: “The two sides have reached consensus on overcoming the political obstacles to the bilateral ties and promoting the healthy development of the friendly relations and cooperation. The consensus should be strictly abided by” (Jiang, 2007). What can be assessed is that despite the previously outlined reasons for potential concern over his election as prime minister in terms of the propensity for the issue to continue to damage Sino-Japanese relations, Abe’s first period in office was marked by quite the opposite.

Abe suffered from low poll ratings during much of his first term and his government also had to contend with a series of scandals involving cabinet ministers. Ultimately the combination of these things led to his resignation, though the official reasons cited at the time included his poor health. Fukuda Yasuo was elected to replace him. Fukuda also had family links to the past controversies over Yasukuni Shrine, as his father was Fukuda Takeo who had visited the shrine as prime minister in 1977 and 1978.[[212]](#footnote-212) Nevertheless, Fukuda Yasuo could be considered to be much more conciliatory towards China, something which was partly rooted in the positive relationship his father had with Deng Xiaoping.[[213]](#footnote-213)

As prime minister this translated into some highly symbolic gestures that allowed Fukuda to develop a good working relationship with the Chinese leadership. Most notably he offered a public commitment that he would not visit Yasukuni Shrine during his time as prime minister. This led to reciprocal state visits during his tenure with Wen Jiabao declaring that the relationship had entered “Spring season” (Kahn, 2007). The improvement in relations was exemplified in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck in China’s Sichuan province in May 2008, when Japan became the first country to send assistance in the relief effort. That this was not only offered by Japan but accepted by China underlined the thaw in the relationship (Arase, 2009, p. 110). Despite continuing the improvement in relations with China, Fukuda was hamstrung domestically when the DPJ took control of the upper house. He resigned abruptly in September 2008.

Asō, who had been foreign minister under both Koizumi and Abe, was elected to succeed Fukuda. He was widely considered to hold similar views on questions of history and relations with China as Abe had, and was a frequent visitor to Yasukuni Shrine even during his times as a government minister. Indeed, Abe has gone on record to say that he does not consider those convicted by the IMTFE as being criminals under Japanese law (Katz, 2014). Given this pattern of behaviour and apparent scepticism over the recent thaw in relations between Japan and China, Asō might have been expected to be the prime minister to raise the Yasukuni Shrine issue once more. However Asō followed Abe’s lead by sending offerings during important festivals rather than paying personal visits to the shrine. Just as Abe had done, Asō declined to publicly commit to either visiting or staying away during his premiership, but the frequency of his visits both before becoming prime minister and since leaving office suggests that he took a conscious decision to avoid raising this particular issue with China. Nevertheless, the Asō administration did risk a diplomatic dispute with China by granting a visa to Rebiya Kadeer, a prominent exiled Uyghur who had been blamed by the Chinese authorities for inciting widespread rioting in Xinjiang.[[214]](#footnote-214)

**8.2.2 Sino-Japanese Relations under the DPJ, 2009-2012**

The general election of September 2009 was a momentous occasion in Japanese politics as the LDP lost its place as the largest party in the Diet for the first time since its inception more than half a century earlier. Replacing them as the governing party was the DPJ, which had been created largely out of disaffected LDP members, most prominent among them Ozawa Ichirō, who had been instrumental in the previous removal of the LDP from power in 1993.[[215]](#footnote-215) However, despite Ozawa’s leading role in the rise of the DPJ and him holding the position of leader of the party from 2006 until 2009, he was forced to resign from this position shortly before the election in response to allegations that he had been involved in a funding scandal. As a result, when the DPJ won the election by a landslide in September 2009, it was Hatoyama Yukio who became prime minister.

Hatoyama explicitly aimed to change Japan’s foreign policy direction away from one that focussed on the US-Japan alliance as its cornerstone to one that sought to play a leading role in Asia. As a result, he prioritised Japan’s relationship with China and made a number of symbolic gestures during his time in office to signify this. This included accepting a visit from Xi Jinping, who was regarded as the most likely successor to Hu Jintao,[[216]](#footnote-216) and controversially arranging for Xi to have an audience with the emperor (Przystup, 2010a, p. 5). With regard to Yasukuni Shrine, Hatoyama chose to be explicit in his commitment not to visit but went further than even Fukuda did on this by implementing a rule that no cabinet minister may visit the shrine whilst in office, something that was pledged during the election campaign of 2009 (Easley, Kotani, & Mori, 2010, p. 54). This represented an extension of the apparent rule in the relationship regarding shrine visits as those made by cabinet ministers had not previously been treated by China as similarly provocative to prime ministerial visits.[[217]](#footnote-217) That Hatoyama chose to offer this concession in order to provide China with reassurance that his commitment to deepening Sino-Japanese engagement was genuine demonstrates how the Yasukuni Shrine question had been turned into something of a litmus test of Japanese leaders in their relationship with China. Hatoyama not only wanted to ensure that ties were not damaged by the shrine issue but wanted to go further in the institutionalisation of not visiting Yasukuni Shrine. He did this under no discernible pressure from China.

Hatoyama’s time in office was short. A failure to fulfil his election pledge that he would oversee the closure of the Futenma air base on Okinawa and relocate it outside of the prefecture led to a dramatic plunge in his popularity. He was replaced by Kan Naoto, who continued the policy on Yasukuni Shrine, offering an opportunity that, by repeating the pattern laid out under Hatoyama, the non-visiting of cabinet ministers to Yasukuni Shrine might also become institutionalised in the same way that the prime ministerial visits appeared to have. However, Sino-Japanese relations suffered during Kan’s tenure as a result of the collision between a Chinese fishing vessel and a JCG patrol boat in the vicinity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.[[218]](#footnote-218) Though the incident was clearly not planned and subsequent actions suggest that China’s decision makers would have preferred that it had never happened,[[219]](#footnote-219) the reaction from China was viewed as particularly assertive by some both in terms of diplomatic protests and societal reactions that included scenes reminiscent of those witnessed during 2005 (Tanaka, 2012). Despite this threat to the improved ties between China and Japan, the issue of Yasukuni Shrine was not on the agenda at this time.

In keeping with a fairly regular pattern of Japanese politics, Kan’s tenure was also cut short due to an inability to maintain popularity with the electorate and unity within his own party. Kan’s situation was exacerbated by the perception in Japan that he did not appropriately handle the aftermath of the massive earthquake and tsunami in northeast Japan and consequent nuclear disaster at Fukushima in March 2011. His replacement was Noda Yoshihiko.

Though his administration was preoccupied with Japan’s recovery from the disasters of March 2011, Noda indicated his willingness to continue the institutionalisation of prime ministers staying away from Yasukuni Shrine, making a public declaration to that effect early in his tenure (Noda, 2011). However, on appointing his cabinet he revealed a subtle difference to his administration’s rules on visits by cabinet members. No serving cabinet member would be permitted to make an official visit to the shrine but Noda did not explicitly rule out unofficial visits (Noda, 2011). This distinction was underlined when two cabinet members – Land Minister Hata Yū’ichirō and National Public Safety Commission Chairman Matsubara Jin – visited Yasukuni Shrine on August 15th 2012. Though these ministers were relatively low profile, this represented the first time that serving cabinet members had visited the shrine since the DPJ assumed power almost three years earlier. In October of the same year, Hata returned to the shrine while still a cabinet member as did Shimoji Mikio, another member of the cabinet who simultaneously held the relatively junior posts of minister for postal service privatisation and minister of state for disaster management. Though this continued to represent relatively low profile government ministers breaking the taboo of Yasukuni visits, it indicated that the requirement of cabinet ministers to exercise the same level of restraint on this issue as the prime minister was not sufficiently accepted.

Noda’s administration was also notable for the outbreak of the most serious round of tensions surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. As outlined in detail in chapter 7 of this thesis, his government opted to nationalise three of the islands rather than allow a campaign led by Ishihara Shintarō to succeed in what would have been an even more inflammatory plan to build a harbour on the largest of the islands. Given that this occurred during the summer months of 2012, with the plan to nationalise the islands confirmed in July and the process completed in September, it is perhaps understandable that some members of the government felt little need to heed the warnings of harming Japan’s relationship with China.

**8.2.3 The Return of the LDP and Prime Minister Abe’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine**

The DPJ found itself unable to govern effectively as its popularity suffered from a series of political miscalculations. Aside from the previously mentioned issues over the Okinawa base issue and the handling of the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute with China, the attempt to introduce a domestic consumption tax harmed the image of the party. By November 2012 Noda had dissolved the parliament. One month later, a general election resulted in the return of the LDP to power, led by Abe Shinzō who returned for his second period in office as prime minister.

During the five years in between his two tenures as prime minister, Abe had publicly stated his regret that he had not visited Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister (Mochizuki & Porter, 2013, p. 36). With his familial links to the period of history that is at the root of the controversy over the shrine, [[220]](#footnote-220) Abe’s personal convictions over the importance of retaining a link between the political establishment and the shrine are reportedly strong (Mochizuki & Porter, 2013, p. 37). Furthermore, during his first year back in office there were repeated public suggestions by sources close to Abe that he would seek to re-establish the practice of prime ministerial visits to the shrine. Most notable among these was a comment made by one of his close aides, Hagiuda Kōichi, in October 2013 which mooted the possibility that Abe intended to visit the shrine within one year of taking office (Japan Times, 2013b). During a visit to Tokyo by the US secretaries of state and defence, John Kerry and Chuck Hagel, they laid flowers at Chidorigafuchi, a cemetery that honours fallen Japanese soldiers[[221]](#footnote-221) without the controversy inherent at Yasukuni. This could certainly have been interpreted as a message that Abe should stay away from Yasukuni. However, if this was a warning then Abe elected not to heed it and paid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine on December 26th 2013, precisely one year since taking office. It has been noted that the chosen date is significant; it is the first time that a serving prime minister has visited outside of the months of January, April, July, August or October. Tessa Morris-Suzuki identified that this made the visit “all about Shinzō Abe, his ideology and ambitions” (Morris-Suzuki, 2013).

China’s response was remarkably similar to the occasions on which Koizumi had visited during his own tenure. Though it is too soon at the time of writing to properly analyse the impact of this visit, it appears to have been treated in the same way by foreign ministry spokespeople and official media, with condemnation from both but limited to criticism of Abe himself. Indeed, *Huanqiu Shibao* ran two editorials on the issue. The first called for measures to be taken to ban Japanese politicians who visit the shrine from entering China for a period of five years, while the second argued against targeting economic ties through boycotts of Japanese made products. These two calls may seem slightly contradictory in that they appear aimed at both punishing any visitor to the shrine by ensuring they can play no significant part in the Sino-Japanese relationship whilst also ensuring that the economic relationship remains unaffected, but represents a continuation of the rhetoric that was analysed in chapter 5 of this thesis. It not only follows the pattern that visiting Yasukuni Shrine would make a prime minister *persona non grata* in terms of the political element of Sino-Japanese relations, but also one of the key themes identified in chapter 6 of this thesis: that of maintaining some equilibrium in the vital relationship despite the political difficulties.

The theoretical approach applied throughout this thesis would suggest that the bilaterally understood norm of prime ministers not visiting Yasukuni Shrine would be a difficult one to breach for Abe. Furthermore, had his personal convictions been so strong on the issue one might have expected that he would have ignored the external pressure in his first term and paid a visit regardless. Explaining this alteration in behaviour – both in terms of the individual and in terms of the office of prime minister of Japan – is, therefore, challenging. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Abe’s visit was made in the context of an already-poor relationship with China, brought about as a result of the ongoing Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. When Abe came to power for his first term he was also faced with the prospect of a strained Sino-Japanese relationship, but with the crucial difference that he was in a position to offer a concession imbued with sufficient symbolic capital to mitigate the situation. In other words, during his first term Abe had only to stay away from Yasukuni Shrine in order to achieve his aim of improved relations with China. This was not true of the situation that he found upon regaining the position of prime minister at the end of 2012. Indeed, Abe did stay away from the shrine for precisely the same length of time that he had during his first term, a term that lasted only one year. However, this had not led to any discernible improvement in ties with Beijing and it could be argued that, by the time he took the decision to visit Yasukuni, he had nothing to lose in terms of the Sino-Japanese relationship. Whether or not this was a correct calculation is open to interpretation. The response from China included a public declaration from Qin Gang, a foreign ministry spokesperson, that following Abe’s visit to the shrine “the Chinese people do not welcome such a leader, nor will Chinese leaders meet with him” (Qin, 2013). This was followed by another equally clear declaration from Vice-Foreign Minister Cheng Guoping in response to speculation that Abe might have a chance to meet with Xi during the Sochi Winter Olympics that “China is not considering any engagement with the Japanese leader” (China Daily, 2014). This would appear to suggest that the price for Abe’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine was to forgo any possibility of a bilateral meeting with Xi Jinping, just as the structuration model outlined after Koizumi’s tenure suggested. However, while it certainly seems likely that Abe’s actions have left him with fewer options in any future attempt to ease bilateral tensions, and the easing of these tensions appears a very distant prospect at the time of writing, it remains too soon to assess this satisfactorily from an academic perspective.

The backdrop of Abe’s Yasukuni Shrine visit was the continuation of the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute that had begun under the Noda administration. This dispute was detailed in chapter 7 of this thesis, which suggested that China’s response to what could have been perceived as Japan’s provocation on this issue in the nationalisation of the islands, was a calculated attempt to alter the normative structures that govern the relationship on this issue. This interpretation is in contrast to the characterisation, popular in journalistic reporting of the events, of China’s reaction as “driven by emotion” (The Economist, 2013) in what might have appeared to have been a series of angry actions with little coherent strategy. However, more scholarly assessments seem to agree that China’s actions in this round of the islands dispute have been a deliberate attempt to “change the status quo” as part of its “more assertive” foreign policy (Takahara, 2013, p. 77-79; Dittmer, 2014, p. 7; Heberer, 2014, p. 123).[[222]](#footnote-222) The public protests and violent attacks on Japanese interests in China could be seen to be government-orchestrated, while others might consider them a nuisance that the CCP would prefer did not happen. However, there is a third possibility; the societal reaction itself does not have to be choreographed for it to be of use to governmental objectives. In other words, the protests could well stem from grass roots nationalist sentiment that responded to a genuine sense of grievance over Japan’s behaviour, but the physical protests and violence must have been at least tolerated to some extent by an authoritarian regime that retains the power to quash public dissent wherever it sees fit. Thus, the societal response has a role not only in indirectly influencing the government’s position,[[223]](#footnote-223) but also in providing the domestic background for its international response. While it may initially appear that the reactions are knee-jerk and done in order to pacify domestic pressure, it is actually part of a strategy to shift the structure of the issue toward China’s own interest. With regard to the islands dispute, Japan was relatively slow to react but then became involved in a “public diplomacy battle” (Gustafsson, 2013) with China to convince others in the wider international system that Japan’s position remained unchallengeable. This has gone beyond diplomacy and both sides have increased activity in the seas around the islands. The problem with this tactic is that by engaging with China, Japan has left its own position that ‘there is no dispute’ looking increasingly untenable.

**8.3 Future Development of the Research**

Although the research done for this thesis has been extensive it represents only a tiny portion of the Sino-Japanese relationship, both in terms of the period of time studied and the issues considered. This section will outline some suggested directions that future research could take by building on this thesis.

This thesis has considered the Chinese response, broadly interpreted to take into account societal and political elite reactions, to perceived provocations from Japan. While the structuration approach has been shown to be appropriate in terms of interpreting this, the thesis has not explored this from a Japanese perspective. As such, it would be valuable to our broader understanding of the Sino-Japanese relationship as a whole if work could be done to explore this. It would be beneficial to providing a more complete understanding of the concept of structuration within the relationship if this could be done, revealing how the domestic forces within Japan also played their role in the formation of Koizumi’s own decision making around the Yasukuni Shrine issue. Similarly, given that this thesis suggested a misunderstanding between Koizumi and the Chinese political elite occurred early on in his tenure over the symbolic meaning of his visit and speech at *Lugou Qiao*, it would be helpful to undertake some research into the perception of this in Japan. Furthermore, the suggestion that Japanese foreign policy decisions in relation to China are now made with at least some consideration of the response from Chinese society needs to be explored further.[[224]](#footnote-224) If the structuration model that takes domestic production of foreign policy identity in conjunction with state-to-state level interaction holds true, then it is equally conceivable that a further linkage needs to be added between the domestic consumption or reaction in China and the elite level foreign policy production in Japan. Thus, foreign policy would be determined by a combination of domestic societal interests, political elite decision-making, international system-level state-to-state interaction, and societal domestic considerations within the country with which the foreign policy deals. This should certainly be explored further.

Aside from the need to expand into Japan’s own foreign-policy production, there is further work that can be done from the perspective of China’s own reaction. While the Yasukuni Shrine issue is an important one that has not been resolved, something that had been underlined by Abe’s visit in December 2103, it is undeniable that there are more serious sources of tension in the relationship. One of the areas where the concept of structuration might be applied include China’s response to Japan’s involvement with Taiwan. This could include the instances where prominent Taiwanese politicians have been granted visas to visit Japan, such as Lee Teng-hui in 2007. This would seem particularly appropriate for the framework because of the obvious importance of mutually constituted and understood norms within the relationship and the symbolic nature of any actions taken on the issue. The issue of the islands dispute has been explored in this thesis, but a more detailed examination of this dispute would help us to understand if the apparent strategising in which China has engaged during the most recent incarnation of this dispute is a new phenomenon, or if it is part of a much longer trend. It would be beneficial to identify how long the previously outlined relationship norms have been in place, to what extent they have been respected by both sides and whether or not either side has previously engaged in a conscious attempt to alter them as it appears that China has on this occasion.

Finally, if we are to accept that structuration offers an insight into how China’s response to Japan can be interpreted, it would be helpful to discover if this can be transposed onto China’s other relationships and its other actions in the international system. In other words, the competitive pursuit of control over the determination of relationship norms may be something unique to the way that China deals with Japan, or it might be a trait of China more generally in terms of international relations. If it is the former, that would raise many more questions about why it is that China’s relationship with Japan is so unique or how it has been unable to impose normative control in other relationships. If it were the latter, it would provide a revealing insight into the important issue of China’s place in the contemporary international system and how it is seeking to shape that system in its own interests. Related to that, exploring China’s behaviour in the more formalised rule-formation settings of international organisations through the employment of the structuration concept might reveal patterns of behaviour that have echoes of those seen in the Sino-Japanese relationship. It seems reasonable to assume that if China is consciously seeking to control the creation of bilaterally understood norms in its international relationships, then it would also do so inside organisations in which such ideas are the very foundation of their existence. This would certainly not be a uniquely Chinese act – almost every strand of IR theory explains states’ behaviour in these organisations in terms of seeking to exploit them for self-interest – but it might offer insights into China’s methods that have, as yet, not been uncovered.

**8.4 Conclusion**

This thesis has explored an area of the Sino-Japanese relationship that has been a source of significant tension and has done so through the application of the idea of structuration grounded in constructivist IR theory. Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine during his tenure as prime minister of Japan appeared to have seriously damaged the relationship at the highest political level between the two countries. The visits could easily be seen as highly provocative to China because of the unresolved bilateral issues relating to history and the reaction, therefore, somehow natural and not in need of explanation. However the application of the theory of structuration has revealed that the reaction is more complex and worthy of examination. By showing how the reaction has been produced and, more importantly, how the subtle alterations in these reactions were driven over the course of the six visits, this thesis has demonstrated that the reaction of China to Japan over the Yasukuni Shrine issue was both a product of its domestic circumstances and of the previously constituted normative structures in its bilateral relationship with Japan. Furthermore, it has shown how China actively seeks to exploit opportunities during periods of time when these structural determinants are challenged in order to shift them to better suit its own interests.

Whether this concept can be a useful theory to employ in a broader sense of China’s international relations, or even within the wider study of IR itself, remains for further research to reveal. However, what this work has shown is that it is an appropriate explanatory tool in understanding China’s reaction in certain situations within the bilateral relationship with Japan. It is a useful constructivist perspective to take in order to appreciate a level of strategising in which China engages that is not frequently appreciated. China’s reaction, when viewed in this way, is a great deal more coherent than is otherwise deemed to be the case. Although China can be seen to be reacting in an emotional and irrational manner, there is an order to these reactions that can be viewed as a coherent strategy to alter the structural nature of the Sino-Japanese relationship in its favour. It is the application of structuration to the analysis of this issue that reveals this.

**Appendix A – Information on Interviews**

**Questions Used During Interviews**

**A.** What discussions and meetings took place at the political level that are not widely reported? In other words, what happened behind the scenes that we do not know about?

**B.** Regarding the responses from the Chinese government, what were the main driving forces behind these reactions? What was the leadership trying to achieve?

**C.** Was there a notable difference between the Jiang and Hu administrations in the way that the relationship with Japan in general was handled? What about the specific issue of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine?

**D.** The coverage in the official media of the events of 2001-2006 does not appear to match the trajectory of the political response. Is this a fair assessment and, if so, why do you think that was?

**E.** Did the political reaction and the reaction at the grassroots level influence each other? If so, in what ways and how?

**F.** Yasukuni is a potent symbol to China. What do you think it really represents? Is it a genuine sign of Japan’s militaristic past and the threat of a return to those days? Or is it more symbolic in terms of demonstrating repentance and/or respect to China?

**G.** Do you consider Sino-Japanese relations to be cyclical, or to follow some sort of pattern?

**H.** Was the Koizumi period exceptional in terms of the bilateral relationship? It is often said that relations were at the lowest point since normalisation – do you think this is true?

**I.** How much influence can public opinion, however expressed, have on the formation of Chinese foreign policy? Is this more or less pronounced with regard to the Sino-Japanese relationship?

**J.** Looking back now, do you think that the events of 2001-2006 changed the Sino-Japanese relationship? If so, how? To what extent were the visits to Yasukuni Shrine a factor in this?

**K.** Do you envisage this problem recurring in the relationship in the future? In other words, do you think that a future Japanese PM might visit the Shrine? If so, will the reaction be the same as it was during the Koizumi time? (Why not?)

**L.** What consideration, if any, is made of the impact of Chinese media on China’s foreign relations generally, and the relationship with Japan specifically?

**M.** Do you think that the media reports reflected or affected popular opinion at the time? Do you consider this to be normal, or was this more/less pronounced during this period of time?

**N.** Why is Yasukuni such an important symbol for China? What does a prime minister visiting it represent to observers (policy-makers and advisers) in China?

**O.** Did China expect Koizumi to visit Yasukuni after he became prime minister, or was it thought that his election pledge was just about getting votes and would not be carried out?

**P.** Before the first visit, how much influence did China think it had over preventing him from going? Did the fact that he visited on August 13th instead of August 15th represent any kind of success for China?

**Q.** Following the first visit in 2001, Koizumi came to China and met with Jiang, made a speech at Lugou Bridge. Did Jiang believe that Koizumi would not return to Yasukuni after this meeting? How much of a surprise was it that he went back in April 2002?

**R.** At what stage did the relationship with Koizumi become irreparable? Was any of the six visits the “straw that broke the camel’s back”? Were the visits to Yasukuni Shrine the most important factor in the poor relationship between the Chinese and Japanese leaderships?

**S.** When Jiang handed over power to Hu in 2002/2003, he said that he was handing over a difficult situation with Japan to Comrade Hu. Was there a clear strategy for dealing with this situation?

**T.** The reaction in the media, especially the official media such as Renmin Ribao, was very strong to the first two visits but treated the visits in 2003 and 2004 as very low key before making a much bigger deal out of the visit in 2005 and especially in 2006. Why do you think that was?

**U.** There was a strong reaction from the grassroots level against several issues relating to Japan at this time, such as the Yasukuni visits, the textbook issues of 2001 and 2005, the bid by Japan to gain permanent membership of the UNSC. Did this response surprise the Chinese government? Was it a worry to them? If so, in what way was it worry – was the concern over the damage to an important relationship or was it more about the threat to their own authority domestically?

**V.** In private conversations between China and Japan, did China express concern over the domestic situation? In other words, when the Chinese tried to get Koizumi to alter his behaviour was the domestic situation in China used as leverage?

**W.** Did the public declarations of the Chinese government accurately reflect the private conversations that took place at the time? Publicly China was consistently condemnatory over Koizumi’s visits, was any level of understanding expressed in private?

**X.** From the outside, it appeared that the relationship between China and Japan at the highest level had completely broken down during this time, do you think this is true? Was this breakdown isolated to the highest level (eg between Jiang/Hu and Koizumi) or did it affect Sino-Japanese relations at other levels?

**Y.** The economic relationship continued to grow during this period, often described as *zhengleng jingre*. Was there a conscious effort to ensure that this happened? Was this effort equally from both sides? Is it possible that the economic relationship would have been even better without the political difficulties, or was there no connection?

**Z.** After every high level bilateral meeting the media in China reports that both sides reaffirm their adherence to the 4 political documents (四个政治文件). The media in Japan does not report this. Why is this an important aspect of the bilateral meetings in China?

**AA.** Do you think there was a significant difference between the Jiang and Hu administrations in the way that the relationship with Japan in general was handled? There is a perception in Japan that Jiang was particularly anti-Japanese in a way that Hu has not been, would you agree with this? Do you envisage China’s Japan policy changing under Xi Jinping?

**BB.** Is there frequent contact between the top levels of the two governments? Does the public face of the relationship reflect the reality of the private interactions between political leaders?

**CC.** What are China/Japan’s most important policy-aims in its relationship with Japan/China?

**DD.** How well do you think Japanese/Chinese policy-makers understand Japan/China’s motives and how much consideration is given to Japan/China’s domestic situation? For example, when a controversial incident occurs between China and Japan, such as the boat captain’s arrest, did China/Japan’s actions come as a surprise?

**Interviewees’ Affiliations**

**Japan**

Tokyo University  
MOFA  
J F Oberlin University  
Temple University  
AFP

**China**

Fudan University  
East China Normal University  
Jiaotong University  
Tongji University  
Tsinghua University  
Peking University  
Renmin University  
University of International Relations  
CASS  
SIIS  
CIIS  
SASS  
Party School of the Central Committee of the CCP  
British Embassy  
US Embassy

**Question Frequency Matrix**

The following matrix indicates which questions were asked during each interview (see above or the questions indicated by each letter). The interviews in this matrix are numbered in chronological order but the interviewees are deliberately not identified. Interviews 1, 15-22, and 30-39 were conducted in Beijing; interviews 2-9 were conducted in Tokyo; and interviews 10-14 and 23-29 were conducted in Shanghai.



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1. The Yūshūkan, a museum within the grounds of the shrine is viewed by many as presenting a distorted history of Japan’s actions during the Second World War in East Asia and is also frequently cited as a source of controversy for the site. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Despite the deterioration in relations with these countries, Koizumi also went further than any other Japanese leader in attempting to open relations with North Korea. These attempts included two visits to Pyongyang, making him the only Japanese prime minister to visit the country. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A full examination of the significance of Yasukuni Shrine is provided in chapter 4 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In addition to the sources cited in Lai’s book about this, one of the interviewees in my own research indicated that such meetings had taken place. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This opposition was by no means universal. Polls in Japan showed that support for Koizumi’s first visit was around 28%. Notably, this level of support had increased to around 50% by the time of Koizumi’s sixth and final visit as prime minister in 2006 (Rose, 2007, p. 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This debate stems from the 1980s when a series of prime ministers made visits that could have been interpreted as ‘official’, culminating in a declaration by Prime Minister Nakasone that his visit on August 15th 1985 was precisely that. This was ruled unconstitutional in several district courts with that decision being upheld by Japan’s Supreme Court in 1997. A fuller discussion of this is provided in chapter 4 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The five refugees were eventually allowed to go to South Korea. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Koizumi was not obliged to abide by the ruling from Fukuoka District Court. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Standard Shinto practice would involve bowing twice, clapping twice and finally bowing for a third time. Koizumi, however, merely bowed once during each of his visits. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. He was responding to a question from a member of New Kometio. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The campaign brought together four countries that each sought a seat on the expanded council. In addition to Japan, they were India, Germany, and Brazil. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Sometimes referred to as ‘the Tokyo Trials’. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. As explained in the chapter itself, this distinction is not made in any attempt to diminish the actions of the three people incorrectly identified, but merely for historiographical accuracy. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. An explanation of the processes of China’ foreign policy-making is provided in chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. There is no perfect translation of this phrase into English, and some scholars object to it being “mistranslated” in this way (Wang, 2011, p. 73), without offering a better translation. Certainly the idea of China “biding its time” sounds somewhat more sinister in English than the phrase actually implies in Chinese. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Deng never actually used the precise phrase in any public speech. He told the Chinese leadership to “observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly” (“*lengjing guancha, wenzhu zhenjiao, chenzhuo yingfu*”), though “the spirit of [*taoguang yanghui*] was clear” (Chen & Wang, 2011, p. 197). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The “diplomacy of anger” employed by China during this time has been explored by Todd Hall (2011). Nevertheless, his work actually highlights the exceptional nature of the Taiwan issue in Chinese foreign policy, rather than generalising about China’s overall strategy in this way (Hall, 2011, p. 552-553). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This is not to suggest that China does not want a rebalancing of influence in that system towards itself, but it is committed to working to within the system rather than challenging the essence of it. As such, the rebalance will depend on the “accommodation” of China by the US (Swaine, 2010, p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The CCP actually gives its name in English as ‘the Communist Party of China (CPC)’ but I use CCP in this thesis as that is the most commonly used abbreviation in English language academic works. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The recent use of this term has its roots in the work of Zhao Tingyang, who has advocated a Chinese philosophical approach to IR (Zhao, 2011, p. 30-34). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Lu used the term “paramount leader” because of the experience of Deng Xiaoping’s position as “paramount leader” despite not holding the official title of General Secretary of the Communist Party. Since Deng’s death, it would be difficult to argue that either Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao was superseded by anyone else. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For example ‘Mao Zedong Thought’, ‘Deng Xiaoping Theory’, and the ‘Three Represents’, all of which are now enshrined in the constitution of the PRC. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. She calls them the “Three Representations”, a perfectly acceptable translation of the Chinese (*sange daibiao*) but the most commonly used translation is “Three Represents”. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shen also argues that it could have an equally stabilising effect on China’s external relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Liu makes the point that the internet allows for popular nationalists to challenge the monopoly of the state over nationalist discourse (Liu, 2006, p. 149). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Kim felt that China’s nationalist foreign policy should not be interpreted as meaning it had become a military threat as the motivation was domestic rather than demonstrative of any kind of irredentist or expansionist aims. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Dreyer does not mention Africa, but a similar point could be applied to that continent. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This was considered particularly controversial because it was made on the 40th anniversary of Japan’s surrender, and because it was declared to be an official visit. It is worth noting that it was Nakasone’s tenth visit of his premiership, his third that year and the third consecutive time he had visited on August 15th. A fuller exploration of this is included in chapter 4 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. It has been noted that a more appropriate translation of Yasukuni would be ‘setting the country at peace’ (Pye, 2003, p. 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The number is usually cited as 14 though, as explained in more detail in chapter 4 of this thesis, only 11 of these individuals were actually convicted of class A war crimes by the IMTFE. Nevertheless, it is the enshrinement of these 14 individuals that remains the most controversial aspect of the shrine. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This included, in the wake of the September 11th 2001 attacks in New York, an attempt to redefine those who resisted Japan in China as “terrorists”, though the video that used this label is no longer shown (Kingston, 2010, p. 497). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Li, a Chinese national but a Japanese resident, insists that the film is a “gift” to Japan, so that it may one day come to terms with its own history (quoted in Moller, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The shrine has not been visited by the Emperor since 1975, before the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. This included 8 visits on August 15th, all of which took place after diplomatic normalisation with China. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. It is worth pointing out that the so-called ‘revision’ that caused this controversy was actually a misunderstanding caused by an error in the Japanese media (Rose, 1998, p. 85-94). Nevertheless, the response of the Chinese remains a valid aspect of the relationship to explore. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The most prominent of these is the *Izokukai* (Japan Association for Bereaved Families). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Abe was prime minister from 26th September 2006 until 26th September 2007. He returned to office on 26th December 2012 and visited Yasukuni Shrine on December 26th 2013, becoming the first serving prime minister to do so since Koizumi. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. As with the review of Western academic literature, a discussion of Chinese views on IR theory is included in Chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The China Academic Journals Database (CAJ) carries 9,922 journals, including more than 200 dedicated to ‘China and International Relations’. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. It has been argued that Western academics working on China often succumb to something similar (Holz, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. These figures were correct on September 13th 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Abb identified several other institutions including some university institutes and think tanks closely linked to the military. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. It should be noted that there is also an Institute of Taiwan Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Jin Xide was a prominent academic working in the Institute of Japanese Studies of CASS until he was arrested in 2009 on suspicion of leaking “state secrets” to South Korea and Japan. He was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment in 2011 (Chosun Ilbo, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. He was referring to the Joint Statement issued upon normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 and the Treat of Peace and Friendship that was signed in 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. A good example of this is Jiang Lifeng’s article, which seeks to explore “Sino-Japanese Relations over the next decade” (Jiang, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. For example Wang (2003, p. 9) makes a similar case. In a separate article Pang argues that China should player a significant role in the international system, but does not offer any concrete suggestions as to what form this should take (Pang, 2006, p. 19-21). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Koizumi’s period in office was not unprecedented, though only two post-war prime ministers – Satō and Yoshida – had longer tenures. Nakasone was similarly successful in terms of time in office and is fourth on the post-war list of long serving prime ministers. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. I use the word “ostensibly” in this sentence because of the ambiguities in the various understandings of how this issue is dealt with in China. While it seems self-evident that the Chinese, at various levels, consider prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine as an insult to China, this should not be unquestioningly assumed. If the theory that the ‘history issue’ is manipulated within Chinese society for both internal and external advantage holds any water then it is possible that the visits themselves are not actually perceived as slights on the Chinese at all, but merely presented in that way to serve the aforementioned manipulation. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Although this visit falls outside of the period of time being studied in this work, it is addressed in chapter 8 of the thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Originally referred to as ‘idealism’ in recognition of the value placed on ideas, though the tag came to be somewhat pejorative and used to indicate that one was operating outside the realms of reality – in stark contrast to realism. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The term “black box” is not normally used by realists but it is one that has long been used to critique its position (Singer, 1961, p. 81). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The classic example of this is the decision by the UK to become involved in the Suez Crisis of 1956, driven by Sir Anthony Eden’s belief that Nasser was likely to follow a similar path to Hitler (Vogler, 1989, p. 137). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. There are many Chinese academics working outside of the PRC and writing in English, but this section focuses on the work that has been produced by those academics that remain within institutions in the PRC. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. For example he has advocated improving Chinese soft power in order to balance its relationship with the US (Shi, 2009a, p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 of this chapter provide some examples of both of these authors’ work in other areas of IR theory. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Mearsheimer argued that all great powers seek hegemony through ‘offensive realism’, taking advantage of opportunities to increase their relative power vis-à-vis other rivals, both potential and contemporary, in order to do so (Mearsheimer, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Su cites the European Union as the most obvious example of this (Su, 2003, p. 76). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. In an earlier article, Fang had advocated a Wendtian approach to understanding norms in international relations (Fang, 2002, p. 66). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. For example Callahan (2011), Barabantseva (2011), and Carlson (2011) have all sought to demonstrate the continued relevance of the traditional Chinese notion of *Tianxia* (all under heaven) as opposed to *shijie* (the world). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Green dismissed the Yasukuni controversy on the basis that “most post-war Prime Ministers went before” Koizumi (Green, 2006, p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Koo was writing before the most recent eruption of this particular dispute in 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Reilly’s work does not use the term ‘constructivism’ and shies away from being pigeon-holed in any particular branch of IR theory but the study contributes much to a constructivist view of Chinese foreign policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. A similar set of assumptions underpinned an analysis of China’s policy towards the Korean Peninsula (Lee, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. It is worth noting the length of time between these two works; numerous developments in Chinese society, including the advent of technology and rapid economic growth that has driven freedom of travel for individual citizens, have changed conditions in China dramatically since Zhao’s earlier study. More recently, Denny Roy – through writing from a mainly realist perspective – outlined the domestic support for many of China’s foreign policies that is sometimes overlooked in external analyses (Roy, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The use of the term “apparently perceived act of provocation” here may appear tautological, but it is intentionally worded this way to allow for objectivity in the analysis. The acts themselves are not judged to be provocative here, and the perception of them as such in, or by, China is also not taken as given. Hence they are apparently perceived as provocative. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. A good example of such an actor would be the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai* (Society for History Textbook Reform). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Johnson explains: “A *fumie* was a tablet with a crucifix on it that the Tokugawa military government at the time of the census forced people to stamp their foot on to prove that they were not Christians; by extension, the term refers to any loyalty test not freely taken” (Johnson, 1986, p. 408). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Though I use the term “nationalist” here, I do so without prejudice. In Chinese, the word “nationalist” (*minzuzhuyizhe*) can have quite negative connotations and it is likely that most of the people involved in this group would prefer the term “patriot” (*aiguozhuyizhe*). However, the nuances of these words in English mean that “nationalist” is more appropriate, provided that this caveat is kept in mind. This is neatly explained by Elina Sinkkonen, (2013, p. 1046-1048). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. The term itself was originally coined by Giddens (1979) and remains inextricably linked to his name, but several other theorists have been described as “structurationists” by Nigel Thrift (1983) including Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Roy Bhaskar (1979) and Derek Layder (1981). None of these could be described as IR theorists *per se*. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. A Marxian interpretation of the international system that is most closely associated with Immanuel Wallerstein (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. A similar hypothesis could be posited about the shrine’s role in the domestic identity of Japan, but that is not the subject under primary consideration in this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The software was not originally designed to be used with the Chinese language and a plug-in has been developed to allow it to recognise appropriate breaks in Chinese. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. This included an interview with a Japanese diplomat who was more comfortable speaking Chinese than English. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Only one declined permission. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. This word was used by six different interviewees to describe China’s reaction to the Yasukuni Shrine issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Zuo Zhuan is considered to be the most significant record of the *Chunqiu* (Spring-Autumn) period of Chinese history (771BCE to 476BCE). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The poll focused on Japanese people aged 20-29 and was conducted shortly after Abe Shinzō visited the shrine in December 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō cited Kevin Doak in an interview to defend the right of Japanese leaders to visit Yasukuni Shrine (Abe, 2013, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. There were a total of 55 charges, though not all of the defendants were charged with all 55 counts. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. There were 1054 of these convicted war criminals. They were not immediately enshrined upon their deaths but Yasukuni began the process “quietly” in 1959, after receiving representations from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (Hasegawa & Togo, 2008, p. 122). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. It was originally intended that others would face ‘class A’ charges at a later tribunal, but these plans never came to fruition. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Satō remains Japan’s longest-serving post war prime minister at a total of 2,797 days. Koizumi is the third (1,979 days). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Japan did not formally surrender until September 2nd, but August 15th was the date that the emperor’s message was broadcast to the nation informing them of the decision and imploring the Japanese people to lay down arms. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. If one accepts the date of August 15th 1945 to be the end of the war then the first prime minister to visit the shrine after this date was Higashikuni Naruhiko, who went just three days later. Another incumbent, Shidehara Kijurō also visited twice before the end of 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. His first visit as prime minister was an exception to this. It was made on July 8th, the day after he became prime minister. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. The exception was Ōhira, an abstention that “was surely calculated” since his period in office coincided with the revelation of the enshrinement of the 14 war criminals (Seraphim, 2006, p. 244). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The article stated “*you ren hai ba zhege wenti yu junguozhuyi wenti guanxi qilai”* (“there are also people who connect this issue with that of militarism”) (*Renmin Ribao*, 1980, p.4). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. The phrase “annual circus” was actually used by head priest of Yasukuni and, as Nelson noted in his article, evokes the shrine’s past as a “place of spectacle” that once hosted travelling circuses (Nelson, 2003, p. 459). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. The Yūshūkan was established shortly after the shrine, in 1882, to serve as a museum of artifacts. However, after Japan’s defeat in 1945 and the subsequent separation of Yasukuni from the Japanese state, a lack of funds meant that the museum was not maintained. It was rented by an insurance company from 1947 until 1980. The building was then extensively renovated and it reopened in 1985, just one month before Nakasone’s final visit to the shrine as prime minister. Though the timing of China’s increased objections to prime ministerial visits to the shrine coincided with the museum’s reopening, it was not mentioned publicly by Chinese official at the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. This request was made through intermediaries but was specifically framed in terms of it undermining Hu’s position as General Secretary of the CCP. Nakasone confirmed this in his memoirs (cited in Zakowski, 2011, p. 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. I have made no assessment as to whether any of the prime ministers who visited the shrine did so out of a genuine sense of duty and desire to honour those enshrined at Yasukuni or as an act of political expediency. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that after leaving office Nakasone resumed frequent trips to Yasukuni and, later, also becoming a vocal advocate of prime ministers refraining from doing so whilst in office. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Also known as the Shenyang Incident or the Mukden Incident in English, it is usually referred to in Chinese as *Jiuyiba Shibian*, or the ‘9.18 Incident’, referring to the date on which it occurred. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. The commitment was only partially fulfilled because he had pledged to go on August 15th. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. This was the first time since World War II that a serving prime minister had paid a visit to the shrine during December. Most previous visits had been made to mark the festivals of New Year (January), Spring Rites (April), and Autumn Rites (October) or during August to mark the anniversary of Japan’s surrender. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. To be China’s paramount leader ordinarily requires holding three posts simultaneously: General Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP; the Chairmanship of the Central Military Commission (CMC); and the Presidency of the PRC. When Jiang Zemin left his position as Chairman of the CCP and President of the PRC, he retained control of the CMC for a year before Hu Jintao succeeded him. This led to some tension over who was actually leading China at the time (Mulvenon, 2003, p. 4-6). When Hu left office in 2013, he passed all three posts over to Xi Jinping. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Notwithstanding the detail in the previous note, for the sake of simplicity the leader shall simply be referred to as ‘the president’. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Currently there are seven members of this standing committee, including Xi Jinping, but that number has altered over time and was nine during the ten years that Hu Jintao was president. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. It is worth noting that Sino-Japanese relations did not begin in 1972. Aside from the fairly obvious contact that goes back around two millennia, even during the period from 1945 to 1972 when the two states had no official mutual recognition, interaction continued to varying degrees at political, economic, and societal levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Small amounts of targeted aid have continued, mainly for environment-related projects. However the value of this is surpassed by the repayment of loans previously provided under the loan aid element of Japanese aid (frequently known as ‘yen loans’). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. This issue is examined in significantly greater detail in chapter 7 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Although it can be argued that Jiang’s behavior was unreasonable (Fewsmith, 1999, p.111), it is worth noting that Obuchi had signed a written apology to the then president of South Koreat, Kim Dae Jung, less than two months earlier (Uriu, 1999, p. 123). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. This number includes Miyazawa who, as noted earlier, actually did visit the shrine during his time in office but did so in secret. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. The Yasukuni Shrine issue was not the only source of tension between Japan and China in 1996; the lighthouse controversy on the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands combined with China’s nuclear weapons testing to create a difficult atmosphere for the two sides. This was also against the backdrop of the most serious deterioration in China-Taiwan relations since 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Excluding the previously noted secret Miyazawa visit. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Both *Huanqiu Shibao* and *Renmin Ribao* are often referred to by their respective English names. However, since both newspapers now have English language editions, to avoid any confusion their Chinese names are used throughout. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. In James Reilly’s study of Chinese newspapers, in which the subjects were classed simply as either “party” or “commercial” newspapers, it was placed in the “commercial” section, despite being owned by the party (Reilly, 2012, p. 230). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. *Nanfang Zhoumo* is often referred to in English as ‘Southern Weekend’, which is the direct translation of its name, but the newspaper refers to itself as ‘Southern Weekly’ whenever it uses English. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. The use of opinion polls in China studies is growing as access to such data begins to become available. A recent example is Lee (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. It would not be possible to even control for the censorship that does take place as it takes different forms at different times, depending on the direction of the political wind of the day. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Sina Weibo would appear to offer an indicator in this regard in the number of followers a particular user might have, or by measuring the number of times that a statement is ‘retweeted’. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Sina Weibo reported in November 2012 that is has 400 million registered users, which may make it a useful tool for future analyses of public opinion in China if carefully conducted. However, since it was only launched in 2009 it is not of any use to this study. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Though this project is not explicitly, or exclusively, an exploration of expressions of nationalist sentiment in China, it is inescapably a part of the question under consideration. Any response to perceived historically-rooted slights or actions of apparent disrespect by Japan is, by definition, wrapped up in the question of nationalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Though the use of opinion polls was ruled out earlier in this chapter for the purposes of this research, it is known that the government uses both overt polling and covert monitoring to maintain an up-to-date view of popular sentiment (Tang, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. The four weeks commenced on the day following each visit since this would be the first day that any reporting of the actual visit could take place. So, for example, Koizumi’s first visit as prime minister was made on August 13th 2001, so the search incorporated all articles published from August 14th until September 10th inclusive. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. It should be noted that this software has been successfully used in other projects analysing the tone of Chinese media (for example Stockmann, 2010a). I contacted academics that have used the programme and also the developers themselves to attempt to resolve this issue but was unable to find the root of the error. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. For example, one of the positive entries is 心满意足地注视 (*xinmanyizu de zhushi*) which translates as “look on with contentment” or “observe with satisfaction”. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. It should be noted that a plug-in for Yoshikoder has been created that, in theory, would eliminate this problem in computer software analysis, but since I was unable to make the programme function properly I cannot confirm this. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. All terms beginning with 不 (*bu*), 没 (*mei*), 无 (*wu*)and 非 (*fei*) are classed as negated. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. A combination of the two would have resulted in double counting and was, therefore, not used. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. The examples here and below are provided first in Chinese, then in pinyin and finally translated into English. Words identified as negative are highlighted in red, those as positive are highlighted in green, while Koizumi is presented in blue with Japan highlighted in purple and yellow. The precise word order of the English translations necessarily differ slightly from the original Chinese. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Krippendorf considered a figure of 0.84 to be “remarkably good” (2004, p. 330). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Actually, the second visit in 2002 attracted a greater level of negativity (-19) than did the final visit in 2006 (-12). This was the only outlier on an otherwise uniform pattern between all three newspapers. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. *Nanfang Dushibao* recorded positive averages of 2.00 in both of these years. *Huanqiu Shibao* also recorded a positive average in 2004 of 1.33. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Indeed, as noted earlier in this thesis, this was his first ever visit to the shrine. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. As previously noted, this should not be misread as an absence of reporting on the issue, as the newspaper did run a story immediately after Koizumi’s first visit. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The tone relating to Japan does not suffer from this anomaly, as illustrated below. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. The article did state that the visit was a contravention of Japan’s Constitution (Huanqiu Shibao, 2002a, p. 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Officially this was the “Bill Concerning Measures to Ensure National Independence and Security in a Situation of Armed Attack”. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The bill did not pass due to criticism of its vaguely defined terms and failure to address acts of terrorism (Fischer & McDonald, 2002, p. 559-560). However, a later version was passed in June 2003, under the auspices of which Japan was able to send limited logistical support to the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. As noted earlier, this should not be confused with an absence of any mention of Japan. It simply shows that no reference to Japan was negatively collocated. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Honzawa was formerly a political journalist and was part of the Japanese entourage of reporters that accompanied Prime Minister Ōhira to China in 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Ma later became president of Taiwan. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. As noted earlier, Jin was a prominent Japan analyst at CASS in Beijing but was arrested in 2009 on suspicion of spying and leaking state secrets. He was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment in 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. *Qiangguo Luntan* literally translates as “Strong Country Forum” and is a place where internet users often express patriotic or nationalist sentiment. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Using Xinhua commentary would absolve the newspaper of any responsibility for incorrect tone and this is known to be a technique used by commercialised newspapers at times of uncertainty as a form of self-censorship (Stockman,, 2010b, p. 117). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. The one exception to this was, as noted in the results, the response to the fifth visit in *Nanfang Dushibao* when the tone was sharply more negative than at any other occasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Again, it is worth noting that the figure for 2005 from *Nanfang Dushibao* is an outlier in this regard but remains the only exception. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. There is a difference between a facet that is ‘expected’ and one that is ‘accepted’, with the latter implying a degree of agreement or allowance from the other party. It would be difficult to argue that even during a time when the reaction was relatively low key that anyone on the Chinese side truly ‘accepted’ Koizumi’s visits to the shrine. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. It could be said that this phenomenon is not unique to the relationship with Japan; the responsibility for the excesses of the cultural revolution – a near decade long campaign of organised chaos that caused widespread death and destruction in China – is ordinarily placed on the ‘gang of four’. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. It is not clear if this could be achieved objectively, since any assessment would be conducted within the ‘psychological environment’ of the assessor (Vogler, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. That is not to say that the information is necessarily false (though, of course, it may be), but that simply disclosing certain events might be aimed at further concealing other aspects of the area under study. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. The pilot study was conducted before the fieldwork trip but the main study was completed afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. This was through an affiliation at East China Normal University (*Huazhong Shifan Daxue*). [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. This included some of the interviews with Japanese participants who were more comfortable in Chinese than they were in English. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. One senior academic made it clear that he was willing to be more open with information and opinions if he could express them in English. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Permission to record interviews was always sought prior to the arranged interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Japanese participants were asked similar questions to assess their understanding of Chinese motives in these instances. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. A sample of questions asked in the first and last interviews is provided in Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. As noted earlier, it was reported in 1996 that Miyazawa Kiichi secretly visited when he was prime minister in 1992 (Su, 2007, p. 16). Prior to this it had been widely thought that he had visited, but no confirmation of the date was released. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. As noted in the previous chapter, ‘acceptance’ does not automatically imply ‘approval’. It merely indicates that one party understands an action will occur and will not react to it outside of the parameters of understanding in the relationship in question. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. On August 15th 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s surrender, then-Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi made a speech describing Japan’s “aggression” as “irrefutable facts of history” and expressing his “deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology” (Murayama, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Murayama had been the first prime minister to do so in May 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Nakasone specifically cited Chinese concerns as the reason for his decision but Hashimoto might not accept this interpretation. However, this does not negate the importance of the Chinese assessment of it as so. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. If it had been calculated that his visits would continue in this way then allowing the public display of welcoming Koizumi to Beijing would represent an equally serious political misjudgement. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Few in China would acknowledge that the country sought regional hegemony and that would be a matter of academic debate even outside China, but all of the interviewees noted the importance of China playing a significant role in regional leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. This included from an interviewee in Beijing who was a university student at the time and recalled buses being provided to and from her place of study. The interviewee herself did not take part, showing that coercion was not used to ensure that the students participated in these protests. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. The petition was actually started by a US-based group, the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia. It should also be noted that this figure was almost certainly skewed by people signing multiple times and there is no way of verifying how many individuals actually did sign it. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Along with Germany and Brazil, India was also bidding for a permanent seat and the four nations lobbied jointly. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. As with earlier incarnations of this issue, the textbook in question was adopted by a tiny number of schools in Japan. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. New Komeito is one of the smaller conservative political parties in Japan with Buddhist roots, and was the LDP’s coalition partner at the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. The Chinese were never expected to accept this explanation as it was intended to appease those within Japan who objected to Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine on constitutional grounds. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. This was usually accompanied by expressions of confusion around Koizumi’s own need to do this. Having completed four visits as prime minister, even those that expressed an understanding of the domestic context in which Koizumi was acting could not understand why he felt the need to continue the practice when such a vital bilateral relationship was at stake. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Abe was prime minister from September 2006 until September 2007. He returned to the position in December 2012 and visited the shrine exactly one year later. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. He was speaking before Abe’s return as prime minister. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. As with almost any aspect of Sino-Japanese relations it can be argued that there is an element of this involved; Chinese interpretations of the dispute tend to trace Japan’s claims on the islands back to the treaty of Shimonoseki that marked the end of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, under the terms of which Taiwan was ceded to Japan. Similarly, the Potsdam and Cairo Declarations are invoked as evidence that Japan has an obligation under international law to return the islands to China as one of the territories that it gained during its imperial expansion. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. In Taiwan, the main island is referred to as Tiaoyu-Tai, which is written as Diaoyu Tai in pinyin (钓鱼台). [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. For example Linus Hagstrom (2005) referred to the islands as the “Pinnacle Islands”, though in a later work he changed this to “Diaoyu/Senkaku” (Hagstrom, 2012, p.267). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. It can be argued that the very fact that academic works now commonly refer to the islands by both the Chinese and Japanese names is a victory for the Chinese side of the international public relations competition. In fact, if one invokes the structurationist interpretation of our understanding of this dispute in a much wider context, it would be reasonable to say that by repeating the practice here, this work is contributing to the recreation of the structures that have slowly moved the international perspective of the dispute. That the islands are almost never referred to solely by the Japanese name is a small, but significant development in the reinterpretation of Japanese claims to the islands. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. These include: ‘Basic View on the Senkaku Islands’; ‘Q&A on the Senkaku Islands’; and ‘About Senkaku Islands’ among others (MOFA, 2013b; 2013c; 2013d). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. The report concluded that a “high probability exists that the continental shelf between Taiwan and Japan may be one of the most prolific oil reservoirs in the world” (Emery et al., 1969, p. 41). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. The terms of Japan’s surrender included acceptance of the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, which required Japan to surrender its concessions, including Taiwan. Japan also signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 which formally required it to give up sovereignty over Taiwan and its surrounding islands. None of these agreements mentioned the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands by name. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. This was confirmed by Zhou’s interpreter in an interview given in 2012 though the Japanese record of what Tanaka said “has been deleted by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs” (Suganuma, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Despite Japan’s objections to this term it is the word most commonly used to describe any disagreement between two states over territory and mostly aptly describes this situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. The word “shelve” is not used by Japan when referring to the dispute but was used by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 when answering journalists: “It does not matter if this question is shelved for some time” (cited in Beijing Review, 1978, p. 16). It was used again by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman in rejecting a claim by Prime Minister Uno that the dispute was settled because Japan enjoyed *de facto* control of the islands (Suganuma, 2000, p. 139). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. The JMSA became the JCG in 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Emperor Akihito’s father died in 1989 but the official enthronement of his successor did not occur until November 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. As a result of Article 9 of Japan’s constitution, it could not participate in any of the military activities to liberate Kuwait from Iraq’s invasion. Nevertheless, it provided significant levels of financial support to the war effort with funding totalling $13 billion, with only Saudi Arabia providing more (Cooney, 2007, p. 39). Japan’s inability to contribute directly to the military effort led to criticism from within the allied forces despite Japan’s acceptance of such a large portion of the financial burden. It also acted as a catalyst for the ‘normal country’ debate within Japan about the possibility of revising (or reinterpreting) the constitution (Ozawa, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Somewhat confusingly, the lease was confirmed in October 2002, but was applied retroactively so that the islands were considered to have been leased since April of that year. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. As noted earlier, the JCG was the new name for the JMSA since 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. This is a relatively common tactic in Sino-Japanese disputes as there is a popular perception that the Chinese market is crucial to Japanese economic development. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Despite the denials that these arrests were linked, the perception in Japan and elsewhere was overwhelmingly that the incidents were linked. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. It is widely thought that significant oil and gas deposits exist in the area that could be claimed by any EEZ that would come with sovereignty over the islands, though it is unclear precisely to what extent this is true. A Chinese survey suggested that there might be in excess of 200 billion barrels of oil, representing almost sixty years’ supply at China’s current usage, though a US Geological survey estimated that there would only be one tenth this amount (Lavelle & Smith, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. The campaign and subsequent nationalisation only referred to the largest three islands, known as Uotsurishima, Kitakojima, and Minamikojima. It is worth noting that the island known as Kuba in Japanese remains privately owned. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Tanaka noted that such a high level of support may indicate a “simplistic understanding” of the issue, given that some of the responses cited concerns that the owner might sell the islands to China, despite the private owner seeking a sale to the government specifically to prevent the islands from ever falling into foreign hands (Tanaka, 2012, p.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Noda Yoshihiko was the third prime minister from the DPJ, succeeding Kan Naoto in September 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. On July 26th 2013 vessels from the newly created CCG entered the waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands for the first time (Kyodo, 2013a). [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Japan submitted a claim to the commission in 2008 in an attempt to move its disputes with both China and South Korea forward. China countered that claim in 2009 and the commission finally ruled in 2012 that it could not support Japan’s claims until disputes with China and South Korea had been resolved (UNCLOS CLCS, 2012, p. 5). The same report recommended that Minamitorishima, over which there is no territorial dispute but around which Japan wishes to claim an EEZ, does not fulfil the criteria for such a claim (UNCLOS CLCS, 2012, p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Chinese officials initially denied Japan’s claims about this incident (CNN, 2013) but, after Japan suggested that it would release radar information confirming its claims, Chinese officials confirmed that the claim was true, though insisted that the captain of the frigate had made an “emergency decision” without direct authorisation (Japan Times, 2013a). [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Under international law ‘high seas’ are open waters beyond the territorial jurisdiction of a state. As such, neither the Chinese nor the Japanese ships were in breach of the law by being in the area, but the close proximity to the islands increases the potential for miscalculation. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. The most obvious example of this is the article from *Renmin Ribao* that referred to the islands as being part of Okinawa and used the name *Jiange Zhudao,* which is the Chinese for Senkaku Islands (*Renmin Ribao*, 1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. There are occasions when Chinese ships have stayed in excess of 24 hours; these incursions are only counted as singular in these figures. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. These figures do not include incursions by fishing vessels registered in the PRC and refer only to vessels from organisations within the state apparatus of the PRC. These were predominantly from the CMS between 1998 and 2013 though the Bureau of Fisheries is also known to have sent vessels into the area on occasion (Bussert, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. This is not to suggest that it is not true. There is no information in the public domain other than that which is cited here which could indicate whether or not the explanation is valid. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying suggested that Japan had “distorted the facts” and “smeared China” in response to a question on the issue, though did not actually deny it had taken place (Hua, 2013). Chinese-registered fishing ships have often been trailed and ordered to remove themselves from the area by the JCG, but this was the first reported occasion that Japanese ships suffered the same fate from the CMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. It should be noted that China has never formally recognised Japan’s ADIZ either. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. The two aircraft were not armed. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. On April 4th 2014 the MOFA website was updated again, providing the same information in a slightly different format, with the number of languages increased to eleven. In addition to the previous six, the new languages are Russian, Portuguese, Italian, Korean, and German. The Chinese version is now also available in a choice of either simplified or traditional Chinese, whereas only simplified was previously available. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. It should be acknowledged that Hatoyama’s statements carry very little weight in terms of framing the domestic debate in Japan. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. I use “relative acquiescence” because it would be inaccurate to portray Japan as entirely tolerant of this development. Indeed, it could be argued that Japan’s only method of challenging Chinese presence in the area would be to engage in a military manoeuvre that would bring much greater costs than benefits. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. In chronological order these were Abe Shinzō, Fukuda Yasuo, Asō Tarō, Hatoyama Yukio, Kan Naoto, and Noda Yoshihiko. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Abe returned to the position of prime minister on December 26th 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. This is not to suggest that all mention of the visit disappeared after three days. In several instances news articles on different subject matter relating to Japan referred back to the recent Yasukuni Shrine visit by Koizumi, though this is a fairly standard practice in media reporting generally and not something specific to China. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. As explained earlier in this thesis, *Lugou Qiao* is sometimes referred to by its English name of Marco Polo Bridge and was the scene of a key event at the outbreak of war between Japan and China in 1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. This is not to suggest that societal pressure is the sole, or even most significant, determining factor in Chinese foreign policy decisions. Certainly China’s opposition to Japan’s UNSC bid was not completely out of step with its wider strategy at the time, but the timing of the announcement demonstrates that societal pressure was a factor in this position. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. As has been noted earlier in this thesis, this should not be taken to mean that the reaction was somehow ‘fake’. Although there are a number of contributory factors to the official reaction, the sense that Koizumi’s actions were ‘wrong’ and genuinely hurtful to China was universal among the Chinese interviewees. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. In fact the LDP had only been out of office on one previous occasion when it was defeated by a wide-ranging coalition of parties in 1993. On that occasion the coalition dissolved in a little over a year, leading to the LDP’s return to power, though still in a series of coalitions. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Kishi’s biological younger brother was Satō Eisaku, who also became prime minister in 1964, though Kishi was adopted at an early age and the two did not grow up together. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. This is explained in more detail in chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. He also visited South Korea with whom Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine had also damaged bilateral relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. In fact, Fukuda Takeo visited the shrine within 24 hours of the enshrinement of the 14 war criminals, though it is unlikely that he knew this had happened (Higurashi, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Fukuda was the Japanese signatory to the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978 that is one of the most important documents in Sino-Japanese relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Xinjiang is ostensibly an autonomous region of China, but many of the indigenous Uyghurs complain of political and religious repression. There is an international movement that seeks independence for what it calls ‘East Turkestan’, an idea that is anathema to the Chinese government. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Though the LDP were out of government at this time they remained the largest party in the Diet. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Xi duly succeeded Hu in 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. This is not to say that no reaction was recorded when cabinet ministers visited the shrine, but this was ordinarily limited to brief remarks from spokespeople of the foreign ministry. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. This incident is described in more detail in section 7.1.3 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Though the captain of the boat, Zhan Qixiong, was publicly fêted as something of a hero on his return to China, he was subsequently placed under house arrest (Okudera, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. As noted earlier, Abe’s grandfather was Kishi Nobusuke, a post-war prime minister who had also held significant posts during the invasion and occupation of China. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. The cemetery contains the remains of more than 300,000 unidentified Japanese servicemen, military support personnel and civilians who died outside of Japan during World War II. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Though these academic works agree that China’s response is more strategy-oriented than emotionally-driven, they do not frame this analysis in the same ideational structure-centred way as is done in this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. As outlined in sections 2.1.1 and 5.1.1, whereby the government reacts to publicly expressed concerns over certain areas of foreign policy, particularly those connected with patriotism or nationalism, in order to preserve its own legitimacy as the ruling party. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. This suggestion was made by a Japanese diplomat and was outlined in chapter 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)