**Online Appendix**

**A1. Background on the issue of relocating US bases in Okinawa, Japan**

The Japanese and US governments agreed to relocate the US air base in Futenma town to Henoko town in the late 1990s. However, the issue is at a deadlock after the government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) mishandled the issue, and because local political leaders in Okinawa are opposed to developing a new base in Henoko. This issue could potentially be crucial for PM Abe because of its significance for Japan–US relations.

The Okinawa issue was selected because it was one of the important issues at the time of the experiment, while at the same time its salience was not too high to test the media priming effect. Figure OA1 illustrates the issue coverage in *Asahi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*––the two biggest national newspapers in Japan––in the first half of 2015. As the figure shows, although the coverage of the Okinawa issue was more extensive than that of pension reform and protection against earthquakes, it received less press coverage salient than other prominent issues such as nuclear policy and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War 2. Therefore, the Okinawa issue was not a distinctively highly salient issue compared with others, although the supply of news for the issue was substantial.

Likewise, the participants in the experiment did not perceive the Okinawa issue as being particularly important compared with other issues. Perceived issue importance collected in posttreatment measures corroborates this argument. The average perceived issue importance on a scale of 1 to 5 was 2.69 for the Okinawa issue, which was lower than for other issues such as nuclear policy (3.00), pension reform (3.19), and protection against earthquakes (3.38). Furthermore, perceived issue importance measured in other experiments—conducted by one of the authors at the same university and in the same month as our replication (*N* = 146)—indicates that the averaged perceived issue importance on a scale of 1 to 5 was 3.74 for Okinawa issues. This was lower than for other issues such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (3.84) and the increase in consumption tax (4.23). All this evidence supports our claim that the salience of the Okinawa issue was not high enough to cause a ceiling effect.

It should also be noted that the Okinawa issue is comparable in some important ways to the energy issue discussed by Iyengar et al. (1984). Iyengar & Kinder (1987: 88) maintained that the participants “may be unsure as to what part, if any, the president’s policies have played in producing energy shortages, and what role the president can and should play in avoiding them in the future. Such conditions appear to open the way for greater priming effects.” The Okinawa issue has the same level of uncertainty about the PM’s responsibility. The issues around a US base in Okinawa are not only domestic but also international, involving multiple stakeholders including Japan and the US. Major agreements about Okinawa were made by a previous government in the late 1990s. Therefore, it is not necessarily clear what role PM Abe can or should play in addressing this issue. Because uncertainty surrounding the leader’s responsibility is expected to strengthen the media priming effect (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), there was a good chance of finding the media priming effect in the Okinawa issue in the same way as it was found in the energy issue examined by Iyengar et al. (1984).

At the same time, the Okinawa issue was comparable to the energy issue in the original study because its personal importance to the participants was potentially large. For instance, in relation to the Okinawa issue, the Governor of Osaka Prefecture, which is close to the university where the replication was conducted, made a proposal to relocate the US Marines’ Training Site for the V-22 Osprey from Okinawa to Osaka in 2013, resulting in strong opposition from local residents. Therefore, although the coverage in the media was not distinctively large at the time of the replication, the Okinawa issue may have been potentially important to the participants who live near Osaka.



Figure OA1. Number of articles in national newspapers in the first half year of 2015

Note: Search queries for each issue: Okinawa (Okinawa + US military + Base); TPP (TPP); Nuclear policy (Nuclear power plant + Restart); Pension reform (Pension + Reform); Protection against earthquakes (Massive earthquake); Increase of consumption tax (Consumption tax + Tax increase); 70th anniversary of the end of WW2 (The 70th anniversary of the end of war); Amendment of constitution (Amendment of constitution); Security-related legislation (Security + Legislation).

**A2. Measurement of pretreatment covariates**

*Sex*

1: Female; 0: Male

*Age*

A real number

*Political interest*

Political interest was measured using a single item scored on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much).

*Ideology*

Ideology was measured by using a single item scored on an eleven-point scale ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right).

**A3. Robustness check using predicted lagged dependent variable**

We first estimated two OLS regressions with posttreatment using *overall evaluation of PM Abe’s performance* as the dependent variable and either pre- or posttreatment measures of issue-specific evaluations excluding the Okinawa issue as the independent variables. To address posttreatment bias, we estimated the two models using only the data from the control group. Sex, age, political interest, and ideology were included in the specification to maximize the predictive power. Table OA1 shows the result.

Next, using the estimated models in Table OA1 and the observed pretreatment measures, we predicted pretreatment *overall evaluation of PM Abe’s performance* (i.e., the lagged dependent variable) for all participants and then estimated the treatment effects including the (predicted) lagged dependent variable and its interaction with the treatment. As shown in Table OA2, regardless of the type of predicted lagged dependent variable and the inclusion of covariates, the focal interaction term between the Okinawa issue performance and treatment remained insignificant. The coefficient of the interaction term ranged from 0.13 to 0.16, which is statistically indistinguishable from those estimated without lagged dependent variables. Although these tests are admittedly weak in the sense that the lagged dependent variable was predicted rather than directly measured, a consistently insignificant media priming effect supports the robustness of our null findings.

**Table OA1. Regression models predicting overall evaluation of PM Abe’s performance (OLS)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|  | Unstandardized coefficient (B) |
| Sex | -0.08 | -0.27 |
|  | (0.24) | (0.24) |
| Age | 0.06 | 0.04 |
|  | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| Political interest | -0.01 | -0.05 |
|  | (0.16) | (0.15) |
| Ideology (conservative) | 0.17+ | 0.18+ |
|  | (0.10) | (0.10) |
| Issue-specific evaluations (pretreatment) |  |  |
|  Trans-Pacific Partnership | 0.41\* |  |
|  | (0.17) |  |
|  Nuclear policy | 0.02 |  |
|  | (0.14) |  |
|  Pension reform | -0.01 |  |
|  | (0.14) |  |
|  Protection against earthquakes | 0.18 |  |
|  | (0.18) |  |
| Issue-specific evaluations (posttreatment) |  |  |
|  Trans-Pacific Partnership |  | 0.39\* |
|  |  | (0.16) |
|  Nuclear policy |  | -0.03 |
|  |  | (0.15) |
|  Pension reform |  | 0.17 |
|  |  | (0.15) |
|  Protection against earthquakes |  | 0.06 |
|  |  | (0.17) |
| Constant | -0.76 | 0.18 |
|  | (1.93) | (1.95) |
| Observations | 52 | 52 |
| R-squared | 0.34 | 0.31 |
| Standard errors in parentheses |  |  |
| \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1 |  |  |

**Table OA2. Regression models predicting overall evaluations of PM Abe with the predicted lagged dependent variable (OLS)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | Unstandardized coefficient (B) |
| Okinawa issue performance | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.09 | 0.10 |
|  | (0.10) | (0.10) | (0.10) | (0.10) |
| Treatment | 0.63 | 0.76 | 0.37 | 0.42 |
|  | (0.63) | (0.66) | (0.64) | (0.67) |
| Okinawa issue performance X Treatment | 0.16 | 0.13 | 0.16 | 0.13 |
|  | (0.15) | (0.15) | (0.15) | (0.16) |
| Lagged dependent variables | 0.94\*\* | 1.07\*\* |  |  |
| (Predicted from Model 1 in Table 1) | (0.20) | (0.23) |  |  |
| Lagged dependent variables X Treatment | -0.46+ | -0.48+ |  |  |
|  | (0.25) | (0.26) |  |  |
| Lagged dependent variables |  |  | 0.82\*\* | 0.96\*\* |
| (Predicted from Model 2 in Table 1) |  |  | (0.19) | (0.23) |
| Lagged dependent variables X Treatment |  |  | -0.36 | -0.35 |
|  |  |  | (0.25) | (0.26) |
| Sex |  | -0.05 |  | 0.10 |
|  |  | (0.14) |  | (0.16) |
| Age |  | -0.03 |  | -0.02 |
|  |  | (0.05) |  | (0.05) |
| Political interest |  | -0.05 |  | -0.00 |
|  |  | (0.09) |  | (0.10) |
| Ideology (conservative) |  | -0.05 |  | -0.04 |
|  |  | (0.06) |  | (0.06) |
| Constant | -0.02 | 0.72 | 0.22 | 0.22 |
|   | (0.49) | (1.13) | (0.48) | (1.17) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.38 | 0.39 | 0.36 | 0.37 |
| Standard errors in parentheses |  |  |  |  |
| \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1 |  |  |  |  |

**Table OA3. Replication of original regression models predicting the evaluations of PM Abe (OLS)**



**Table OA4. Regression models with covariates predicting summary evaluations of PM Abe (OLS)**

