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Threat, Prejudice, and Stereotyping in the Context of Japanese, North Korean, and South Korean Intergroup Relations

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ABSTRACT

Integrated threat theory, realistic conflict theory, and group justification (based on social identity theory) were evaluated in the international context of Japanese prejudice toward North Korea and South Korea. Military threat emerged as an important addition to the four threats outlined by integrated threat theory. Three perceived North Korean threats (realistic [domestic] threat; intergroup anxiety; military threat) predicted prejudice toward North Korea. North Korean prejudice predicted negative stereotypes, supporting group-justification theory. Perceived North Korean realistic [domestic] threat predicted prejudice toward South Korea. Prejudice toward South Korea predicted negative stereotypes of North Korea, suggesting a mechanism by which prejudice generalizes.

INTRODUCTION

We compared integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966), and group-justification theory (an aspect of social identity theory, Tajfel, 1981), in the context of Japanese prejudice toward North Koreans, Japanese prejudice toward South Koreans, and Japanese perceived North Korean threats. We also examined whether perceived North Korean threats generalized to prejudice against South Koreans.

While it is widely acknowledged that prejudice and stereotyping are related, various theories propose differing accounts of that relationship. In the original model of integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), negative stereotypes constituted a form of threat contributing to

prejudice in the same way as realistic threat, symbolic threat, and intergroup anxiety. However, more recently Stephan et al. (2002) have suggested that negative stereotypes occur *prior* to realistic threats, symbolic threats, and intergroup anxiety, with the effect of negative stereotypes on prejudice mediated by these three threat variables. In this way, stereotypes lead to feelings of threat rather than constitute a type of threat themselves (Stephan et al., 2002).

Realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1964; 1966) is consistent with integrated threat theory in hypothesizing a central role for threat in forming intergroup attitudes. However, in contrast to integrated threat theory, realistic group conflict theory argues that threat results in stereotyping (not vice versa), and over time, this stereotyping becomes consolidated into more general forms of prejudice (Sherif & Sherif, 1966).

These two approaches conflict with the group-justification approach (Tajfel, 1981), which is derived from theorizing on the social functions of stereotyping championed by Tajfel (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981; Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997) and postulates that stereotyping is a justification of prejudice, and therefore threats lead directly to prejudice, with stereotypes occurring subsequently. According to the group-justification approach, stereotypes neither cause feelings of threat (integrated threat theory) nor prejudice (realistic group conflict theory), but rather justify or rationalize the prejudice that has resulted from the threats. In support of this proposition, Rutland and Brown (2001) found that negative outgroup stereotypes were activated following discriminatory behavior and a motivation to justify behavior. This supports the notion that prejudice can be a pre-cursor of stereotyping, rather than vice versa.

We examined these three theories in the context of Japanese prejudice toward North Korea and South Korea. The heightened military context surrounding these three countries offers an opportunity to explore the role of perceived *military* threat. We propose that in such an international context, military threat will emerge as an additional factor to the threats described in integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). According to a public survey, 46 percent of Japanese respondents perceived the North Korean government to be a 'great danger' to Asian stability and world peace (Pew Research Center, 2006), with fears of a North Korean nuclear weapons program (McCormack, 2004), which lends support to the notion of military threat. Nearly all studies on the four threat construct proposed by Stephan and Stephan (2000) have focused on *domestic* intergroup relations rather than *international* intergroup relations. For example, research has considered prejudice toward people with cancer or AIDS (Berrenberg, Finlay, Stephan, & Stephan, 2002), racial attitudes of Black and White students (Stephan et al., 2002), and anti-immigrant prejudice (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). Studies that have dealt with intergroup relations in international contexts have tended to focus on less hostile, more domestically-oriented conflicts (Mexico and the US: Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000). Given the limited examination of international contexts, it is possible, despite the strong evidence in favor of the four threat construct (Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan et al., 2002), that realistic threat may concern not only domestic threat, but also military threat.

In addition to examining Japanese prejudice toward North Korea, the present study also examines prejudice toward South Korea, in the context of North Korean threats. While a historical relationship of aggression between Japan and the unified Korea exists, Japanese relations and perceptions of South Korea have become more favorable in recent times reflected

in the co-hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup and the South Korean cultural influx into Japan (kanryu / Korean wave: McCormack, 2004). Therefore, it is interesting to assess perceptions of South Korea within the context of North Korean threats. The basic finding from superordinate goals and common enemy studies (e.g., Sherif & Sherif, 1966) is that awareness of a common enemy reduces prejudice between two conflicting groups, suggesting that Japan may not be prejudiced toward South Korea.

In contrast, Bar-Tal and Labin (2001) found that following terrorist attacks in Israel carried out by Palestinian extremists, attitudes not only worsened toward Palestinians (conflictive relations with Israel) but also worsened toward Jordanians (peaceful relations with Israel) and Arabs as a whole. One possible explanation put forward was that feelings of threat and anxiety elicited by terrorist attacks lead to simplified stereotypic perceptions (Bodenhausen, 1993) in which respondents evaluate situations and attribute characteristics to groups (Smith, 1993). In this way, Jordan ceases to be seen as an independent country with peaceful relations with Israel, in favor of the more superordinate categorization of Arab. Likewise, reminders of North Korean threats could result in South Korea being viewed in terms of an historical, superordinate, Korea.

Present Research

We consider Japanese perceptions of threat from North Korea in terms of prejudice toward North Korea and South Korea. It is considered plausible that in an international context, realistic threat may concern not only domestic threat, but also military threat. We consider three competing prejudice models; if integrated threat theory best explains the data, negative stereotypes will predict threats, which in turn will predict prejudice (Negative stereotypes > Threats > Prejudice); if the realistic group conflict model is to be supported, threats will predict negative stereotypes, and these will then predict prejudice (Threats > Negative Stereotypes > Prejudice); or, if the group-justification approach offers the best explanation of prejudice, threats will predict prejudice, which in turn will predict negative stereotyping (Threats > Prejudice > Negative Stereotypes). We used structural equation modeling to explore the empirical plausibility of each of these theoretically derived path models and to examine the fit of each model to the data.

METHOD

Participants and Design

One-hundred and seventy-eight Japanese undergraduate students from Waseda University, Tokyo, were recruited and assigned to one of two conditions (prejudice toward North Korea vs. prejudice toward South Korea) during an introductory sociology lecture.

Measures

The translation procedure consisted of forward translation (into Japanese), back-translation, discussion, and pilot testing ($N = 5$). All participants, regardless of condition, completed measures of realistic threat, symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes toward North Koreans. In the North Korea condition ($N = 91$), participants completed prejudice items

toward North Koreans. In the South Korea condition ($N = 87$), participants completed prejudice items against South Korea.

Prejudice

Adapted from Stephan et al. (2002), negative affect associated with North Korea / South Korea was measured by participants indicating the degree to which they felt 12 different evaluative / emotional reactions (e.g., hostility; admiration; dislike) on a 10-point scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*).

Realistic Threats

Adapted from Stephan et al. (2002), 12 items measured political, economic, and criminal threats from North Korea (e.g., *North Korea affiliated businesses should not be allowed to operate in Japan*) and three additional items measured military threat (*A North Korean nuclear weapons program would be the biggest single threat to Japanese security; A weapons build up in North Korea threatens Japanese sovereignty; Japan must strengthen its sea defenses to protect against a North Korean invasion*). Participants responded on a 10-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Symbolic Threats

Twelve items (Stephan et al., 2002) assessed the threat felt by the Japanese participants in response to perceived differences in the values and beliefs of North Korea and Japan (e.g., *North Korea and Japan have similar family values*). Participants responded on a 10-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Intergroup Anxiety

Participants indicated whether or not they had ever met a North Korean. If participants had, they were instructed to complete the scale based on how they felt during interaction with North Koreans. If participants had not, then they were instructed to complete the scale based on how they would feel if they were to interact with North Koreans. The scale (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) consisted of 12 items (e.g., nervous; friendly; uncertain), with responses on a 10-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*.

Negative Stereotypes

A trait list was produced by the first author in discussion with Japanese colleagues, with Japanese participants ($N = 18$) rank ordering the items for negativity. The highest scoring 12 traits were selected (*insincere; brainwashed; unhygienic; aggressive; barbaric; paranoid; hates Japan; obstinate; self-centered; simple; impatient; jealous*). Participants stated the percentage of North Koreans who possessed each trait (Stephan & Stephan, 1993) on a 10-point scale progressing in increments of ten percent.

RESULTS

Scale Construction

In order to assess the reliability of the four-threat plus prejudice construct, factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed through SAS Factor on the 48 threat and 12 prejudice items. Due to the minimum eigenvalue criterion tending to overestimate the number of factors when the number of items exceeds 40 (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), the scree plot (Cattell, 1966) was analyzed, producing six interpretable factors. Five factors reflected previous intergroup threat theory research (*prejudice*, $\alpha = 0.94$; *realistic [domestic] threat*, $\alpha = 0.82$; *symbolic threat*, $\alpha = 0.77$; *intergroup anxiety*, $\alpha = 0.93$; *negative stereotypes*, $\alpha = 0.92$), while a sixth additional factor also emerged (*military threat*, $\alpha = 0.68$).

Prejudice

Prejudice was higher toward North Korea ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.38$) than South Korea, ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(176) = 8.94$, $p < .001$. North Korean negative stereotypes ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.91$), realistic [domestic] threat ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.34$), symbolic threat ($M = 7.11$, $SD = 1.19$), military threat ($M = 6.92$, $SD = 1.91$), and intergroup anxiety ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.34$) did not differ as a function of condition, all $ps = ns$.

Prejudice and North Korean Threats

Correlations for North Korea / South Korea prejudice and the threat measures are presented in Appendix A. Prejudice toward North Korea significantly correlated with all threats. Prejudice toward South Korea significantly correlated with realistic [domestic] threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes, but not symbolic threat or military threat.

Prejudice Models

Structural equation analyses assessed the fit of integrated threat, realistic group conflict and group-justification models in explaining the relationship between North Korea / South Korea prejudice and North Korean threats. SAS Calis was used, with estimates derived using the maximum likelihood procedure. Following analysis, and further LaGrange Multiplier tests, revised group-justification models provided the best fit for the data. See Appendix B.

Group-Justification Revised Model (North Korea)

Military threat ($\beta = -.21$), intergroup anxiety ($\beta = .29$), and realistic [domestic] threat ($\beta = .23$) significantly predicted prejudice toward North Korea. Symbolic threat did not significantly predict prejudice toward North Korea ($\beta = -.14$). In turn, prejudice toward North Korea predicted negative stereotypes ($\beta = .41$), as too did intergroup anxiety ($\beta = .33$). No other paths were significant. The model accounted for 43% of the variance in stereotyping, and 45% of the variance in prejudice towards North Koreans.

Group-Justification Revised Model (South Korea)

Realistic [domestic] threat ($\beta = .33$) significantly predicted prejudice toward South Korea, although no other threats predicted prejudice toward South Korea, all $ps = ns$. In turn, prejudice toward South Korea predicted negative stereotypes ($\beta = .26$), as too did symbolic threat ($\beta = -.42$). No other paths were significant. The model accounted for 25% of the variance in stereotyping and 15% of the variance in prejudice against South Korea.

DISCUSSION

Japanese prejudice toward North Korea and South Korea was examined. In terms of the relationship between threat, prejudice, and stereotyping, the group-justification approach offered the best model fit of the data. Threats (military threat; intergroup anxiety; realistic [domestic] threat) predicted North Korean prejudice, which in turn predict negative stereotyping. In addition, perceived North Korean threats (realistic [domestic] threat) predicted prejudice against South Korea, which in turn predicted negative North Korean stereotypes. This suggests that stereotypes are a result of prejudice, and are not a precursor of prejudice (realistic group conflict theory), or a precursor to threats which ultimately lead to prejudice (integrated threat theory).

Taking the North Korea model, military threat, intergroup anxiety, and realistic [domestic] threat predicted prejudice toward North Korea. Prejudice toward North Korea predicted negative stereotyping which was also predicted directly by intergroup anxiety. That symbolic threat did not predict prejudice is not surprising considering previous integrated threat theory on groups of unequal power (Stephan et al., 2002).

With the South Korea model, only realistic [domestic] threat of North Korea predicted prejudice. This prejudice toward South Korea predicted negative stereotyping of North Korea, which was also directly predicted by symbolic threat. This suggests that realistic [domestic] threat perceived from an outgroup (North Korea) can result in prejudice toward a second outgroup (South Korea) and this prejudice can predict negative stereotypes toward the original outgroup (North Korea). Of note, military threat was not a predictor of South Korean prejudice, so, while realistic [domestic] threat can overspill into prejudice against an alternative outgroup, the same cannot be said for military threat. It is, therefore, important to distinguish between types of realistic threat, as different types (i.e., domestic, military) may have different effects on prejudice. North Korean military threat may not affect South Korean prejudice due to an apparent discrepancy between the military positions of these two countries.

According to group-justification theory, people are motivated to find a justification for discriminatory behavior through stereotyping. Our findings suggest that people may also justify their prejudice through stereotyping a distinct, but related, outgroup. This has implications for intergroup relations research seeking to understand why prejudice generalizes. For example, it seems conceivable that under the umbrella of a 'war against terror' negative stereotypes of some Arab and Asian countries (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan) might result in generalized prejudice against other countries that seem stereotypically similar.

We are aware that intergroup relationships are not one-sided. Thus, it would be interesting to explore how North Koreans and South Koreans view one another and Japan in the context of

threats, stereotypes, and prejudice. An interesting question is how the correlational crossover effects outlined above may combine or compete with causal crossover effects. In the context of this study, it is possible to imagine a situation in which Japanese people perceive North Korea as a common enemy and thus perceive South Koreans as part of the ingroup (in the manner of the common ingroup identity model). If this had been the case, then threat from North Korea would presumably have led the Japanese participants to decrease their South Korean prejudice. In fact, the opposite is indicated by the correlations in the present data. This is presumably because of links South Korea shares with North Korea and also because of the international relations with Japan. This is consistent with research considering the limited conditions under which a superordinate identity may be formed (e.g., Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990). Considering these issues, future research could consider crossover effects involving groups which vary both in their political and cultural overlap with North Korea (e.g., South Korea vs. US), and in the extent to which they feel threatened by North Korea (e.g., China vs. US) to illuminate conditions and thresholds in which correlational and causal (superordinate, common enemy) interconnected effects occur.

Overall, our findings address some important gaps in the understanding about how stereotyping and prejudice relate to each other in an international context. As well as giving an insight into the Japan-North Korea-South Korea relationship, the findings provide support for group justification theory. There appears to be overspill between stereotypes and prejudice towards different, but related, outgroups, which is fuelled by intergroup threats.

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APPENDIX A

Correlation matrix for North Korea / South Korea prejudice and North Korean threat.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Prejudice	-	.56**	.48**	.57**	.58**	.45**
2. Realistic [domestic] threat	.27*	-	.46**	.53**	.46**	.36**
3. Symbolic threat	.04	.31**	-	.47**	.45**	.50**
4. Intergroup anxiety	.28*	.39**	.25*	-	.56**	.40**
5. Negative stereotypes	.29*	.26*	.28*	.24*	-	.34**
6. Military threat	.09	.46**	.29**	.24*	.23*	-

NOTE: Correlations for the North Korea condition are above the diagonal. Correlations for the South Korea condition are below the diagonal.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

APPENDIX B

For the integrated threat model, negative stereotypes were modeled to predict the four other kinds of threat (realistic [domestic] threat; symbolic threat; intergroup anxiety; military threat), which in turn predicted prejudice. In the realistic threat model, the four threats were assumed to predict negative stereotyping, which in turn predicted prejudice. In the group-justification model, the four threats were assumed predict prejudice, with prejudice predicting stereotyping.

Comparing models

For both the North Korea (RMSEA = 0.27; CFI = 0.75; AIC = 31.25) and South Korea (RMSEA = 0.29; CFI = 0.37; AIC = 32.29) conditions, analysis of the fit indices suggested that the integrated threat approach does not accurately model the data. Integrated threat models were not considered further.

In contrast, for North Korea, realistic group conflict (RMSEA = 0.24; CFI = 0.88; AIC = 13.33) and group-justification (RMSEA = 0.17; CFI = 0.94; AIC = 4.69) models provided potentially reasonable fits for the data. For South Korea, realistic group conflict (RMSEA = 0.16; CFI = 0.89; AIC = 3.09) and group-justification (RMSEA = 0.20; CFI = 0.83; AIC = 6.51) models also

provided potentially reasonable fits for the data. Post-hoc model modifications were performed in an attempt to develop improved fit models based on the original models. Modifications were made on the basis of the LaGrange multiplier test and theoretical relevance.

Realistic group conflict models: In the South Korea condition no significant improvements could be made. In the North Korea condition, the largest LaGrange multiplier suggested a direct path from military threat to prejudice against North Korea. The path was found to be significant ($beta = -.26, p < .05$). The next largest LaGrange multiplier (when the path above had been added) suggested a direct path from domestic realistic threat to prejudice. This path was also found to be significant ($beta = .25, p < .05$) and was added to the model (RMSEA = 0.10; CFI = 0.99; AIC = -0.37). The revised realistic group conflict model for North Korea thus consisted of the original model plus the two extra paths outlined above.

Group-justification models: In the North Korea condition, the largest LaGrange multiplier suggested a direct path from intergroup anxiety to stereotypes. This path was added to form the revised group-justification North Korea model (RMSEA = 0.04; CFI = 1.00; AIC = -2.59). In the South Korea condition, the largest LaGrange multiplier suggested a direct path from symbolic threat to stereotypes. This path was added to form the revised group justification model South Korea condition (RMSEA = 0.00; CFI = 1.00; AIC = -5.44) and was found to be significant ($beta = -.42, p < .05$).

The revised group-justification models provided the best fit for the data. In the North Korea condition, all three fit estimates were superior to those for the revised realistic group conflict model. In the South Korea condition, all three fit indices surpassed those for the original realistic group conflict model.

AUTHOR NOTE

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