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CONTEMPLATING JAPANESE AND KOREAN RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORETICAL CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on relations between Japan and the two Koreas, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Relations between Japan and the two Koreas can be simultaneously examined in three related contexts: the history of the national entities which is still subject to divergent interpretations, the post-Cold War East Asian security environment, and international relations (IR) theory, particularly the contrasts between neorealism, neoliberalism and neoclassical realism. In addition to traditional relations, the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–1945) still serves as a relevant area of sensitivity between all three nations. The post-Cold War East Asian security environment is a complex mixture of vestiges of the Cold War and new regional paradigms and shifts of power, particularly against the backdrop of competing big-power interests converging on the region. Both the relations between these three nations and as well as the regional concerns of other state-actors have often been focused in recent years by North Korea's developing nuclear weapons and missile technologies. Japanese-Korean relations present a contentious subject for IR scholars to debate the respective merits of various theoretical approaches. It is the opinion of the author that on balance, at least for the time being, neoclassical realism is a better lens through which to view these relations.

Keywords: Japan, Korea, international relations, regional security

THE JAPANESE-KOREAN RELATIONS are a subject of fascination to many scholars. The two nations share a lot in culture and history, some of it tragic and full of conflict. Both the Japanese and Koreans recognize that both nations are a part of the East Asian civilization and that Korea served as an important bridge for transmitting higher forms of the Chinese civilization in the distant past. Koreans, for their part, in addition to being aware of the cultural connections, are often more conscious of Japan's negative impact on Korean history, because of such events as the invasion by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1592–1598) or the Japanese Occupation of Korea (1910–1945). This last period, during which the Japanese colonial government attempted to eradicate the Korean identity, still brings painful memories to contemporary Koreans.¹

In the period following World War II, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) became a part of the United States' defense against communism in East Asia, an extension of the American Cold War strategic thinking. The Korean War was a symbol of the global ideological conflict, starting as a division between rival political interests, and evolving into a civil war which became a conflict involving the United States, China, the Soviet Union, and many other nations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) became part of the communist bloc, following a path of socialist development with both the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and China as its primary supporters. Throughout most of the last half of the twentieth century, history and the reality of the Cold War in the East Asian region both strongly defined relations between Japan and both the ROK and the DPRK. In the post-Cold War, history still seems to be an important factor in the Japanese-Korean relations. Remnants of the Cold War are at the core of the two competing nation-states on the Korean Peninsula.

In the post-Cold War era, however, there have been changes in the global balance of power: The decline in power of the United States; the emergence of the BRIC nations, Brazil, Russia, India and China; and the increasing importance or the influence of the G20. The influence of transnational corporations, as well as global communications have contributed to a growing sense of multipolarity left in the power vacuum of the post-Cold War. In the region of East Asia, the increasing wealth of both China and Russia has altered the scene: China, with its obvious ascending economic power and manifesting the desire to be recognized as a power, continues to expand its influence with both regional and global implications; and

¹ B. Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s, From Antagonism to Adjustment*, Hants, England, and Brookfield 1993, pp. 1–5.

Russia, fed by oil and gas revenues and resurgent and assertive nationalism, expanding its influence. The United States is still a significant force, and the ROK and Japan are part of America's Pacific alliance. The DPRK continues to struggle, between the retention of power by the regime and the need for adaptation to an increasingly interconnected global economy.

In the light of these changes, international relations (IR) students might ponder which approach is most relevant to the relations between Japan and two Koreas, as well as the region. Neo-realism and neo-liberalism is a central theoretical IR debate axis,² among academics, diplomats, political economists, military officials, as well as other IR observers and practitioners.³ In the last decade, however, neo-classical realism, an approach which emphasizes analysis of foreign policy calculations through complex and indirect intervening variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structures, has increasingly become regarded as a compelling alternative.⁴

HISTORY BETWEEN JAPAN AND KOREA IN GENERAL

The history between Japan and Korea is full of controversy. Such problems are still the subject of debate among scholars and the source of friction among the citizens of the three nations, Japan, the ROK and the DPRK. The conflict between Japan and Korea is not a modern phenomenon.⁵ The traditional history of the Japanese and Korean relations has numerous controversies, such as: the nature of the linguistic relationship between the Japanese and Korean languages; the possible role of the "horse riders" of the Puyŏ nation from the Korean Peninsula being

² For a clear encapsulation of the neo-realist versus neo-liberal debate, see Andrew Jones, *Comparatively Assess Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism. Whose Argument Do You Find More Convincing and Why?*, "E-International Relations" 21.12.2007, <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=147jLJames>, accessed 8.03.2011.

³ E. Haliżak, *Regionalny kompleks bezpieczeństwa Azji Północno-Wschodniej*, issue 3, Warszawa 2004, pp. 129–136.

⁴ For a well-written overview of the theory, see Gideon Rose, *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, "World Politics" 1998, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 144–172.

⁵ Yangmo Ku, *South Korean Democratization and Japan – South Korea Relations*, paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, CA, 23–25 March 2006, pp. 4–5, http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/9/7/0/pages99707/p99707-1.php, accessed 9.03.2011.

a founding element of the Japanese imperial family,⁶ the debate over the Korean territory of *Mimana* in Japanese, *Imna* in Korean, which some Japanese claim that early Japan conquered, while Koreans reject this notion;⁷ and finally, the Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea (1592–1598), which caused much destruction to the Korean economy.⁸

It is the history between the two nations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, which especially gives the Japanese-Korean relations the feeling of antagonism. Koreans often point to the Japanese imperialism of the nineteenth century in which Japan employed its own variant of gunboat diplomacy to force Korea to sign a modern treaty with Japan in 1876,⁹ and later the Japanese murder of Queen Min (Empress Myōngsōng) in 1895. Korea's occupation by Japan (1910–1945) included the economic exploitation of Korea in a myriad of ways, such as Korea being a source of rice for the growing Japanese domestic demand, and as a source of labor as demonstrated by the forced mobilization of Koreans to work in a variety of wartime activities, which included factories and mines in Japan.¹⁰ Part of this mobilization included young Korean women, so-called “comfort women,” mobilized to serve in Japanese military brothels from 1942 to 1945.¹¹ Since the end of World War II, the Japanese Occupation has been used, both by Seoul and Pyōngyang, as a focal point for nationalism, while Japan has played down the period, attempting to stress the need for economic cooperation, especially with the ROK. Since the 1950s, the primary Japanese-Korean controversies have included the following: the territorial ownership of a few rocky islands between the Korean Peninsula and Japan (*Tok-do* in Korean, and *Take-shima* in Japanese); the occasional visits by Japanese politicians to Yasukuni Shrine where some 2.5 million Japanese war dead are honored, including war criminals, and indeed most controversially, 14 Class-A war criminals whose *kami*, or spirits, have been enshrined there since 1978; the revision of Japanese history textbooks deflecting

⁶ Jon E.H.C. Covell and A.C. Covell, *Korean Impact on Japanese Culture: Japan's Hidden History*, Seoul 1986, pp. 12–41.

⁷ J.P. Rurarz, *Historia Korei*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 88–91.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 250–260.

⁹ Woo-kuen Han, *History of Korea*, Honolulu 1971, pp. 372–375.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 429–431.

¹¹ Northeast Asia History Foundation, *Korean-Japan Relations, Contemporary Times*, http://english.historyfoundation.or.kr/?sub_num=36, accessed 8.03.2011, and *History Controversy*, http://english.historyfoundation.or.kr/?sub_num=116, accessed 8.03.2011.

the past of colonial imperialism in Korea¹²; the North Korean abduction of Japanese citizens; the North Korean military provocations; and the discrimination of some half a million *Zainichi*¹³ Koreans residing in Japan.

RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE ROK

The United States San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan came into effect on April 18, 1952. Japan thus automatically recognized retroactively the existence and independence of the ROK. Syngman Rhee visited Japan three times as a guest of the United States military, in October 1948, February 1950 and in January 1953. The negotiations between the ROK and Japan throughout the 1950s were sometimes acrimonious affairs. Americans provided the impetus for normalization of relations.¹⁴ The Syngman Rhee government (1948–1960) followed a largely anti-Japanese approach while being part of the anti-Communist American security fortress with Japan in East Asia. In 1962, both the ROK and Japan determined to settle the property claims of Korea through high-level negotiations. The Kim-Ohira Memorandum set the guidelines for the settlement: \$300 million for property claims, \$200 million in government-to-government credits to the ROK government, \$100 million in commercial credits, and grants and credits payable in Japanese products and services.¹⁵ The Park Chung Hee government (1961–1979), however, normalized relations with Japan in 1965, with the encouragement of the US, and the willingness of the Prime Minister Sato Eisaku. The relationship better integrated the ROK into the dynamics of global capitalism, as the ROK imported intermediary goods from Japan for export. This, coupled with financial support from the United States as part of South Korean support to the Americans in the Vietnam War, contributed to the rapid growth of the ROK economy. Japanese

¹² Ibidem, *History Controversy*, http://english.historyfoundation.or.kr/?sub_num=48, http://english.historyfoundation.or.kr/?sub_num=49, and http://english.historyfoundation.or.kr/?sub_num=50, accessed 10.03.2011.

¹³ The term *Zainichi* in Japanese means “residing or being in Japan; by itself, *Zainichi* can mean Koreans as they are the largest non-Japanese minority in Japan. Further distinctions can include *Zainichi chōsenjin* (Koreans living in Japan with a DPRK affiliation, or *Zainichi kankogujin* (Koreans living in Japan with a ROK affiliation).

¹⁴ Kwan Bong Kim, *Korea-Japan Treaty Crisis*, New York 1971, pp. 42–45.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 59.

Prime Minister Nakasone Yasohiro visited the ROK in 1983; ROK President Chun Doo Hwan visited Japan in 1984.¹⁶

In the 1990s the relations between the two nations were characterized by growing economic interdependency, and reaching the agreement on the need to respond to the DPRK's development of the nuclear weapons program,¹⁷ resulting in Japan and the ROK being members of the Korean Peninsula Economic Development Organization (KEDO) from 1994 to 2006. The growth of regional institutionalism in the post-Cold War era seemed to be in agreement with the Japanese foreign policy tradition of multilateralism, though Japan was decidedly part of the American East Asian security strategy. Additionally, the ROK normalizing relations with China and the Soviet Union prompted Japan's keener interest in the Korean Peninsula, as the Japanese desired not to lose its status as an important regional player.¹⁸

Japan has slowly modified what was a rather non-assertive and minimalist foreign policy in the region from the 1950s until the 1990s. The Japanese have become more rhetorically assertive since the late 1990s, and have continued to foster closer relations with the ROK, especially in the light of the growing Chinese regional influence and both North Korean rhetoric and actions, compounding domestic fears in the ROK and Japan of an arms race in Northeast Asia.¹⁹

The ROK responded to the lessons of the unification of Germany and the end of the Cold War with the formulation of the *Sunshine Policy*, which meant more openness and exchange towards the DPRK as a means of opening North Korea to reform. The ultimate goal of the *Sunshine Policy*, which was the official engagement policy with the DPRK during the Kim Dae Jung administration (1998–2003) and the Roh Moo Hyun administration (2003–2008), was lessening the possibility of conflict on the Korean Peninsula. The logic of the *Sunshine Policy* was the inclusion of the DPRK in the Korean economic cooperation sphere, and that the integration

¹⁶ Hideki Yamaji, *Policy Recommendations for Japan: Unification of the Korean Peninsula*, working paper prepared for The Brookings Institution Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Washington, D.C., July 2004, pp. 2–3, at <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/cnaps/papers/yamaji2004.pdf>, accessed 12.03.2011.

¹⁷ B. Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s...*, pp. 43–49.

¹⁸ S.S. Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World*, monograph prepared for The Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, October 2006, pp. 35–36, at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/download.cfm?q=772>, accessed 8.03.2011.

¹⁹ Kamiya Mataka, *Japanese Foreign Policy toward Northeast Asia*, [in:] *Japanese Foreign Policy Today*, Inoguchi Takashi, Purnendra Jain (eds.), New York 2000, pp. 226, 243.

into the global economy would gradually bring socialization, and then result in an internal drift toward reform on the part of the decision makers in Pyongyang.²⁰

During the last decade bilateral relations between the two nations have improved despite periodic controversies. Former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Yasukuni Shrine on six occasions during his time in office, as part of what was generally seen as his political strategy for support of more conservative (nationalist) elements of Japanese society. This caused very negative reactions throughout East Asia. In 1996 FIFA (*Fédération Internationale de Football Association*) announced that the two countries would jointly host the 2002 FIFA World Cup. The next few years produced much political good will in preparations for the games, which were successfully conducted. However, the Liancourt Rocks controversy erupted again when Japan's Shimane prefecture declared "Takeshima Day", inciting mass demonstrations in the ROK. During his term of office of former ROK president Roh Moo Hyun periodically called for Japan to compensate the ROK for damages and suffering inflicted on the Korean people during the Japanese Occupation Period. ROK President Lee Myung Bak, upon taking office in 2008, called for the two nations to put history behind them. In addition to nuclear detonations over the last several years, provocative actions on the part of the DPRK against the ROK in 2010, specifically the sinking of the ROK vessel the *Chōnan* on 26 March, and the DPRK shelling of Yōngp'yōng Island on 23 November which resulted in the deaths of two military personnel and two civilians, have continued to foster a perception on the part of both the ROK and Japan that their shared security is growing in importance,²¹ particularly with respect to the DPRK.

RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE DPRK

In 1955, despite not having diplomatic relations Japan and the DPRK agreed to establish the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (in Japanese, the *Zai Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai*, or *Chōsen Sōren*, and in Korean, the *Chae Ilbon Chosōnin Chōngryōnhaphoe*, or *Chōngryōn*) for the numerous ethnic Koreans in

²⁰ Key-young Son, *South Korean Engagement Policies and North Korea, Identities, Norms and the Sunshine Policy*, Oxon, United Kingdom and New York 2006, pp. 60–69.

²¹ Sharyn Lee, *Japan and South Korea's Growing Bond*, "Pynx: Comment on Global Security and Politics" 18.0.2011, <http://www.pynxblog.com/pynx/2011/2/18/japan-and-south-koreas-growing-bond.html>, accessed 18.03. 2011.

Japan who identified with North Korea.²² The organization became a *de facto* DPRK embassy in Japan. The *Chōsen Sōren* during the years 1959–1982 facilitated the majority of trade between the two countries, as well as the repatriation of an estimated 93,000 ethnic Koreans.²³ Following the ROK and Japan normalization treaty of 1965, the DPRK, consistent with its policy of opposition to recognition of two Koreas by one state, did little to attempt establishing diplomatic ties with Japan.²⁴ Relations temporarily worsened when in 1970 Pyōngyang granted asylum to members of the Japanese Red Army who hijacked a Japanese airliner.²⁵

It seems to be generally agreed that there have been five attempts by Japan at the engagement with the DPRK. The first took place during 1971–1974, a period of détente, especially between the United States and the Soviet Union; the second in the early 1980s, with high-level initiatives made by the representatives of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro.²⁶ The third attempt at the diplomatic engagement with the DPRK came after Tokyo was surprised by Seoul's *Nordpolitik* (the policy towards the North), and the movement of the ROK towards closer ties with both China and the Soviet Union. To maintain regional leadership Japan organized numerous overtures towards the DPRK in the 1990s, the last of which consisted of a delegation led by Liberal Democratic Party Kanemuru Shin.²⁷ This third series of Japanese diplomatic moves to engage the DPRK included its participation in the formation of KEDO in 1994. The fourth such engagement attempt was the preliminary normalization dialogue between Tokyo and Pyōngyang in 1999²⁸, which had been prompted by the DPRK's firing a *Taepodong* missile over the Japanese

²² The Korean Residents Union of Japan (in Japanese, the *Zai Nihon Daikanminkoku Mindan*, and in Korean, the *Chae Ilbon Taehan Min'guk Mindan*) is for Koreans in Japan who identify with the ROK. Founded in 1946, the organization is commonly known simply as the *Mindan* in both Japanese and Korean.

²³ F. Nevel, *Japan – DPRK Relations: An Overview*, [in:] *NK News: DPRK Information Center*, 21 November 2010, <http://nknews.org/2010/11/japan-dprk-relations-overview-2>, accessed 16.03.2011.

²⁴ S.S. Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations...*, pp. 34–35.

²⁵ F. Nevel, *Japan – DPRK Relations...*

²⁶ V.D. Cha, *Japan's Engagement Dilemmas with North Korea*, "Asian Survey" 2001, vol. XLI, no. 4, p. 551.

²⁷ C.K. Quinones, *Japan's Engagement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1990–2000*, "International Journal of Korean Unification Studies" 2000, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 147; Hong Nack Kim and J.L. Hammersmith, *Japanese-North Korean Relations in the Post-Kim Il-sung Era*, "Korea and World Affairs" 2000, vol. XXIV, no. 4, p. 590.

²⁸ V.D. Cha, *Japan's Engagement...*, p. 551.

territory in August 1998.²⁹ The fifth and final overture by Japan began in April 2000. Subsequently, Japan and the DPRK held three talks until October 2000. Japan calculated progress in conjunction with what seemed to be diplomatic momentum following the historic 15 June meeting between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong Il. No progress was made because of the abduction and missile issues.³⁰ At the historic meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jinichiro and DPRK Leader Kim Jong Il in 2002, discussions ranged from economic development to the status of 13 Japanese citizens who had been kidnapped and brought to North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s.³¹

This unilateral approach on the part of Japan, however, was largely deemphasized in 2003 after Pyöngyang withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January, and fired a missile later that year. The Six-Party Talks, which commenced in 2003, were in response to regional concerns about the DPRK's public statements regarding its nuclear program, and the development of nuclear weapons. The Japanese throughout much of the Six-Party Talks suggested that institutional pressure, specifically global pressure through such organizations as the United Nations, would be more effective than a mere regional attempt at an arrangement with the nations of the Six-Party Talks.³²

In June 2008, after almost one year, Tokyo and Pyöngyang resumed bilateral talks after Pyöngyang promised a 'reinvestigation' of the fate of Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK in the 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, Pyöngyang for the first time voiced its willingness to hand over to Japan the four remaining members of the nine hijackers of the Japan Airlines jet in 1970. In response, Tokyo agreed to partially lift sanctions against the DPRK, allowing certain North Korean ships to make port calls in Japan. Tokyo was also ready to lift restrictions on individual travel and charter flights between the two countries. After the DPRK's announcement it would pull out of the Six-Party Talks and its firing of a long-range missile, both events in April 2009, Japan then announced to extend economic sanctions by one year, including the ban on imports imposed in 2006. Tokyo enacted changes targeted at the DPRK: tightening of oversight of monetary transfers from Japan, and strengthening the ban on selling luxury goods. The DPRK's firing of a short-

²⁹ S.S. Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations...*, p. 45.

³⁰ Toshimitsu Shigemura, *New Prospects for North Korea-Japan Relations*, unpublished research paper prepared for The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, The Graduate School of North Korean Studies, Kyongnam University, Seoul 2001.

³¹ V.D. Cha, *Japan's Engagement...*, p. 551.

³² J. Bayer, W.J. Dziak, *Korea & Chiny, Strategia i Polityka*, vol. I, Warszawa 2006, pp. 254–289.

range missile over the Japanese territory and detonation of a nuclear device in May 2009 left relations at a relatively low state.³³ Provocations against the ROK have further chilled any overtures between the two nations in the next two years. What does seem abundantly clear is that the Japanese focus on the Korean Peninsula will be diverted for the foreseeable future due to the 11 March 2011 earthquake, the massive destruction caused by tsunami, and the ongoing concern over nuclear fallout. The estimates are that Japan will spend approximately 308 billion dollars on costs related to the March 2011 disaster.³⁴

THE EAST ASIAN REGIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT

The East Asia region will continue to be a place where the security interests of many actors converge. The post-Cold War era is characterized by a growing emphasis on regionalism, which is the case of East Asia. East Asia, as an increasing economically integrated and interdependent region,³⁵ has been referred to sometimes as a natural economic territory.³⁶ Despite the drive toward global economic integration, among the principal political obstacles in East Asia, national histories, competing historical narratives and nationalisms are prominent.³⁷ Japanese relationships with the ROK and the DPRK are merely one part of this general regional characteristic.

American interests in the region are not simply economic; trade with Asia accounts for about 60 percent of the United States' non-oil trade deficit goods.³⁸ The United States has ideological interests, supporting Japan and the ROK, two successful democracies in the region. Moscow's interests are more likely purely economic, at least in the mid-term. Russia's national energy strategy, adopted on 22 May 2003, involves a long-term strategic shift of its oil and gas exports from Europe to Northeast Asia. By the year 2020, 25–30 percent of Russian oil exports,

³³ A. Burkofsky, *Japan-North Korea Relations – (Sad) State of Play and (Sad) Prospects*, paper published for the Institut für Strategie – Politik – Sicherheits – und Wirtschaftsberatung (ISPSW), Berlin 2009, pp. 1–14.

³⁴ CNN International, television news broadcast on 23.03.2011.

³⁵ E. Haliżak, *Stosunki międzynarodowe w regionie Azji i Pacyfiku*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 20–27.

³⁶ R.A. Scalapino, *Northeast Asia Today – An Overview*, "Azja-Pacyfik" 2004, no. 4, p. 163.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 174.

³⁸ P. Morici, *U.S.-China Trade: Implications of U.S.-Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Trends*, *Global Politician*, 13 March 2007, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/22536-china-economics>, accessed 19.03. 2011.

and 20 percent of its gas exports will go to Northeast Asia. This strategy coincides with Russian plans for diversifying its oil and gas markets, and expanding transportation and economic links to the region.³⁹ China seeks stability on the Korean Peninsula, and may see itself as a central arbitrator between the DPRK and the security triangle of the United States, the ROK and Japan. Beijing would like to see inter-Korean reconciliation, though reunification could present potential security problems for the Chinese, assuming that reunification would largely be on Seoul's terms. A unified Korea, with a vibrant democracy and a close relationship with the United States, could be perceived as being undesirable, or even destabilizing.⁴⁰ One desirable strategic goal, one that would be in China's interest, would be for the DPRK to reform economically along the China model,⁴¹ as was the case starting in the 1970s during the Deng Xiaoping regime. This could create an ideologically compatible and dependable economic partner, and conceivably force Seoul to take a more neutral position between Beijing and Washington, thus enhancing China's regional power and influence.⁴²

Regionally, the DPRK remains the primary centerpiece of strategic security concerns. Pyöngyang conducted its second nuclear weapons test on 25 May 2009. This was in defiance of the United Nations. Russia and China expressed serious concern, while the United States maintained that it would not accept a nuclear DPRK. The new conservative ROK government of Lee Myung Bak continues to signal a much harsher stance than the two previous administrations. In the past, Beijing and Moscow used their vetoes as permanent United Nations Security Council members to soften or block Western-backed sanctions against Pyöngyang, but approved new punitive measures in 2009 after expressing unusually strong concern over the DPRK's nuclear test and missile launches.⁴³

³⁹ E. Wishnick, *Russia in Inter-Korean Relations*, [in:] *Inter-Korean Relations, Problems and Prospects*, S.S. Kim (ed.), New York 2004, p. 127.

⁴⁰ Xiaoxiong Yi, *China's "Soft" Nationalist Strategy: Making North Korea a Neutralized and Stable Buffer State*, "Korean National Defense University Review" 2001, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 141–175.

⁴¹ A. Scobell, *China and Inter-Korean Relations*, [in:] *Inter-Korean Relations, Problems and Prospects*, S.S. Kim (ed.), New York 2004, pp. 84–88.

⁴² J. Bayer, W.J. Dziak, *Korea & Chiny...*, pp. 70–116.

⁴³ Global Security Newswire by The National Journal Group, *China, Russia Urges North Korea to Return to Nuclear Negotiations*, 18 June 2009, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20090618_5449.php (retrieved on 19.03.2011); A.D. Romberg, *The US-ROK-PRC Triangle: Managing the Future*, [in:] *Coping with Korea's Security Challenges*, Washington, D.C.: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, 20004, pp. 147–167, <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/USPRCROKTriangle.pdf>, accessed 20.03. 2011.

In 2009 Chinese President Hu Jintao and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev tried to encourage the DPRK back to the Six-Party Talks. Hu's meetings with Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin followed two days of international summits in Russia underscored common goals, but also pointed to conflicting economic interests and competition over the influence in the energy-rich Central Asian states they neighbor. Eager to counter the influence of the West, especially the United States, China and Russia forged what Hu called a "strategic partnership" after decades of tension during the Soviet era; however, China's trade with the United States far exceeds its trade with Russia.⁴⁴ In the next two years since the 2009 detonation, Russia and China have continuously called for the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks. In November 2010, the DPRK revealed it was operating a nuclear enrichment facility, thus heightening tensions both regionally and internationally. This time, Moscow's response to the revelation was highly critical of Pyöngyang, whereas China blocked the United Nations Security Council taking up discussions on the matter as Beijing believed that the issue at the Security Council level would inflame politics of the region.⁴⁵ China, Russia, Japan and the United States are all competing with one another for the influence in the region, within security and economic frameworks as important elements to that end. A skillful handling of inter-Korean relations, particularly by the United States and China will be important for the stability of East Asia. The ROK has taken up the DPRK's appeals for economic assistance; this has caused Seoul to increase leverage in the relationship, particularly while the dialogue between the DPRK and the United States is no longer conducted.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Global Security Newswire by The National Journal Group, *China, Russia Urges North Korea...*

⁴⁵ Yonhap News Agency, *Foreign Minister Rejects North Korea's Suggestion to Unconditionally Return to Nuclear Talks*, 17 March 2011, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/03/17/74/0301000000AEN20110317009800315F.HTML>, accessed 21.03.2011.

⁴⁶ Scott Snyder, *Shaky Restart for Inter-Korean Talks*, [in:] *Council on Foreign Relations* (Publications), 9 February 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/shaky-restart-inter-korean-talks/p24043>, accessed 18.03. 2011.

IR THEORETICAL CONTEXTS, JAPANESE-KOREAN RELATIONS AND EAST ASIA

Historically, within the field of IR theory there have been four so-called “great debates.” The first debate was between liberalism and classical realism during the 1940s and 1950s; the second was a continuation of the liberalism-realism debate and the emergence of the social or behavioral IR theories from the 1950s until the late 1970s; the third which began in the 1980s and continues includes the juxtaposition of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, as well as feminism and postmodernism; the fourth great debate in IR has been described as an oppositional discourse between positivism and post-positivism, or critical IR theory.⁴⁷

Despite the proliferation of IR theory over time, in the last two decades two approaches have prevailed: neo-realism and neo-liberalism. The two have shared much of the discussions, both practical and academic. The debate between them is intra-paradigmatic; both theories are positivist and focus mainly on the state system as the primary unit of analysis. Additionally, both theories recognize that anarchy is the defining characteristic of the international environment. Neo-realism, also called structural realism, seeks to understand the dynamics of state power in the context of the international system.⁴⁸ Neo-liberalism is a response to neo-realism; neo-liberalists figure anarchy to be a central feature of the international order, but argue that its importance and effects have been exaggerated. The neo-liberal logic focuses on the neo-realist underestimation of the varieties of cooperative behavior, even within a decentralized and anarchic system. Neo-realists contend that states cooperate only if it is in their interest to do so.⁴⁹

Neo-realism was born out of what was widely thought to be classical realism’s inadequacy in explaining the collapse of what had been perceived in the West as the “monolithic Communist structure,” and the withdrawal of much of the Soviet Union’s military from many of the zones of conflict with the United States.⁵⁰ Neo-liberalists suggest that globalization and increased global interconnectivity has the potential to enhance international relations. The Six-Party Talks involving the

⁴⁷ R. Zenderowski, *Stosunki międzynarodowe*, Wrocław 2005, p. 51.

⁴⁸ See: J. Kukułka, *Teoria Stosunków Międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 2000.

⁴⁹ J.E. Dougherty, R.L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, New York 2000, pp. 68–69; Andrew Jones, *Comparatively Assess Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism. Whose Argument Do You Find More Convincing and Why?*, E-International Relations, 21 December 2007, <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=147jLJames>, accessed 8.03.2011.

⁵⁰ J.E. Dougherty, R.L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories...*, p. 93.

United States, Russia, China, the ROK, the DPRK and Japan, over the DPRK's nuclear program seemed until recently to be capable of supporting both the contemporary theoretical visions of neo-realism and neo-liberalism: that is, structural leverage among state actors versus institutional structures as the focus of state actors' agendas.

Current Japanese-Korean relations reflect the complexities available for theoretical application of very different IR theories. Concerns over the DPRK nuclear capabilities are clearly central in understanding the region's security dynamics. Beyond that issue, there is the troubling domestic political discourse in Japan over revising the Constitution of Japan in order to formally restore the army. This debate in Tokyo has been fueled by P'yöngyang's development of nuclear weapons and missile technology. At the same time, the current ROK administration has changed its rhetoric towards the DPRK, for the same reasons. The relationships between Japan and the ROK appear to exemplify neo-liberal views of state-centric economic integration and cooperation; Japan's relationships with the DPRK on the other hand, are eloquent of neo-realism's assumption of conflict and security concerns within the structures of international power politics.

Ironically, the DPRK has been a source of regional, indeed even global cooperation, especially since the signing of the Agreed Framework of 1994. At that time the United States, Japan, the ROK and the European Union attempted to provide energy alternatives to the DPRK by providing two light water reactors to Pyöngyang in exchange for the DPRK giving up its heavy water nuclear program. KEDO ultimately failed in 2006, but continued to live on, more or less in spirit, within the Six-Party Talks which started in 2003.⁵¹

Within the context of the two previously discussed contending IR theories, on the surface neo-realism would evidently seem to render somewhat better insights into the nature of the DPRK's provocative politics, and the structural balance of neighboring actors. Neo-realism, however, has come under intense criticism for its limitations over the last decade. For example, neo-realism holds that external pressures will outweigh domestic ones as state leaders rationally choose foreign policy that will minimize security risk in an anarchical international system. In other words, the neo-realist approach presumes that elites, the empowered individuals shaping their nations' foreign policy, will be free of any domestic constraints

⁵¹ J.T. Laney, J.T. Shaplen, *How to Deal with North Korea*, <http://66.102.1.104/scholar?q=cache:CyK8upn9198J:scholar.google.com/&hl=en>, accessed 15.03.2011. This opinion piece appeared, in "Foreign Affairs" March/April 2003, vol. 82, issue 2, pp. 16–31.

that might sway their strategy for global interactions. National policy, international institutions, and ideological or cultural affinities among nations have little relevance. Evidently, the domestic policy has played a substantial role in moderating foreign policies of Japan, the ROK, and even the DPRK, with Kim Jong Il's transfer of power to his youngest son. Kim Jong Un is unfolding amidst struggles between economic reformists and regime power guardians.⁵²

Liberal institutional or neo-liberal criticism of neo-realism places a limit on the neo-realist premise of fully rational and self-interested leaders seeking risk minimization. Its constraint, however, comes from binding political and ideological ties forged within and cemented by such international institutions as the United Nations.⁵³ Neo-liberal approaches posit that state attributes and societal conflicts will affect foreign policy choices, and will often render statesmen incapable of responding to the exigencies of the international environment.⁵⁴ Liberal theorists purport that neo-realism's emphasis on structural power is anachronistic, given the high degree of regulating and legitimating quality of international norms, internalized by most nations, which in turn, according to liberal theorists, moderates state actors' behaviours.⁵⁵ The continued exercise of destabilizing policy on the part of the DPRK amid its own issue of power succession appears to question both neo-realism's emphasis on the structural variables of international relations, not to mention neo-liberalism's elevating the power of normative behaviors and institutions.

It is neoclassical realism that may provide another interesting alternative. Neoclassical realism has reshaped classical realist and neorealist theories to include both domestic and international policies. Neoclassical realism advances the concept that explanations of state's actions in the international system can be found in three

⁵² M. Fisher, *Understanding North Korea's Succession Drama*, "The Atlantic Wire" 29.09.2010, <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/global/2010/09/understanding-north-korea-s-succession-drama/22857/>, accessed 18.03.2011.

⁵³ D. Lieb, *The Limits of Neorealism*, "Harvard International Review," Vol. 6, Issue 1, Spring 2004, <http://hir.harvard.edu/interventionism/the-limits-of-neorealism?page=0,2>, accessed 20.03.2011.

⁵⁴ T. Juneau, *Neoclassical Realist Strategic Analysis: A Statement*, paper prepared for the European Consortium on Political Research, Graduate Student Conference, in Dublin Ireland, 30 August-1 September 2010, pp. 1-27, <http://www.ecprnet.eu/databases/conferences/papers/308.pdf>, accessed 6.03.2011.

⁵⁵ Ch. Bluth, *Norms and International Relations: The Anachronistic Approach of Neo-Realist Approaches*, "POLIS Working Paper" 2004, no. 12, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, pp. 254-26, at <http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/working-papers/wp12bluth.pdf>, accessed 8.03.2011.

variables: system variables, such as the distribution of power capabilities among states; cognitive variables, such as perceptions and misperceptions of systemic pressures; as well as the intentions and potential threats of other states; and domestic variables, such as state institutions, elites, social pressures and societal actors.⁵⁶ Neoclassical realism embraces the neorealist concept of the balance of power, but additionally examines the impact of power capabilities on foreign policy as indirect and complex, because ultimately systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure.⁵⁷ Neoclassical realism suffers from immature internal logic and a tendency to be given sweeping generalizations.⁵⁸

In recent years, a debate has emerged as to whether neoclassical realism as a foreign policy theory or as a "theory of mistakes"⁵⁹ is the states' mistrust and inability to perceive one another accurately, or state leaders' inability to mobilize state power, which can result in underexpansion or underbalancing behaviour leading to imbalances within the international system. Appropriate balancing occurs when a state correctly perceives another state's intentions and balances accordingly. Inappropriate balancing or overbalancing occurs when a state incorrectly perceives another state as threatening, and uses more resources than it needs in order to balance. Non-balancing occurs when a state avoids balancing through buck passing, bandwagoning, or other escapes.⁶⁰ It is these concepts of balancing derived from neo-realism with the added complex dimensions of state perceptions that may better capture the DPRK's power machinations and therefore, the current regional calculations of all nations whose interest converge in East Asia.

⁵⁶ G. Rose, *Neoclassical Realism...*, pp. 144–145.

⁵⁷ J.W. Taliaferro, S.E. Lobell, N.N. Ripsman, *Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, [in:] *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, S.E. Lobell, N.N. Ripsman, J.W. Taliaferro, eds., Cambridge 2009, pp. 4–5; J.E. Dougherty, R.L. Pfaltzgraff, *op.cit.*, pp. 88–89.

⁵⁸ T. Juneau, *Neoclassical Realist Strategic Analysis...*, pp. 2–3.

⁵⁹ R. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, Princeton, NJ 2006, p. 10.

⁶⁰ B. Kunz, *Power, Vision and Order in World Politics: A Neoclassical Realist View*, paper prepared for the NISA Conference, Odense, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, 23–25 May 2007, pp. 1–28.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationships between Japan and Korea are complicated by conflicting historical narratives and the post-Cold War era pressures towards both integration and fragmentation. The distant history of Japanese invasion and occupation of Korea continues to be a source of uneasiness. The Cold War is still very much alive on the Korean Peninsula, though this grows more ambiguous in what some term the post-Kim Jong Il era. Commenting on North Korean nuclear ambitions and their possible impact, both regional and global, Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, said the following in a 2009 interview:

“It’s dangerous in a symbolic sense, that if we are really committed to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, as the president has stated repeatedly and eloquently, and if we can’t manage it in a region in which the country that’s proliferating has such limited resources and is surrounded by countries that are hostile to its intentions and then the ability to do it and other regions will diminish all the more. And there will be an immediate impact on Japan and South Korea, and a longer-term impact in the Middle East. And so it is a very important issue for the world.”⁶¹

The relationships between Japan and two Koreas will continue to be a confluence of multiple security and economic agendas from individual actors in the region, as well as the sum total of global forces of integration. There are elements of the relationships in the region that suggest that some form of IR realism theory works best in terms of analysis of East Asian inter-state policies. The DPRK’s actions over time, however, have seemingly blunted the structural arguments of neo-realism, in particular. The DPRK, with its proximity to vital interests of powerful nations in a strategic locale, its calculated and often skillful policy of high-stakes brinkmanship and coercive leverage, and asymmetrical military capabilities, have brought power disproportionate to its aggregate structural power against the ROK/United States/Japan alliance.⁶² This phenomenon can be explained by the structural vari-

⁶¹ Fox News, interview of Henry Kissinger transcript entitled, *Post Kim Jong Il North Korea May be Dangerous in a Symbolic Sense*, 15 July 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,532682,00.html>, accessed 13.03. 2011.

⁶² S.S. Kim, *Northeast Asia in the Local-Regional-Global Nexus: Multiple Challenges and Contending Explanations*, [in]: *The International Relations of Northeast Asia*, S.S. Kim (ed.), Lanham 2004, pp. 21–27.

ables of the region, and the cognitive variables, that is, the perceived realities of foreign policy makers. The ROK/United States/Japan alliance well-exemplifies patron commitment as a variable in understanding alliance cohesion, not a function of external threat, but rather as a product of the perceptions of patron commitment. These two points, the DPRK's prowess in perception manipulation, and the cognitive variables through which the ROK/United States/Japan alliance is maintained, seem to suggest more than adequately the suitability of the neoclassical realist lens.⁶³ More generally, despite IR liberalism's demand for a world politics paradigm, not to speak of multilateral frameworks such as the Six-Party Talks, IR realism, in its various permutations, appears to better serve as a basis for foreign policy science, and not merely a theoretical activity, at least with respect to Japanese-Korean relations. Neoclassical realism's resurrection of the perceptual realities of human interest and self-interest articulate well the underpinnings of security relationships in East Asia in this moment in history.⁶⁴

Japanese and Korean relations are at the center of East Asian relations, and there seems little possibility that the East Asian world order like that which disappeared at the end of nineteenth century will rise again. It is clear that Japanese and Korean relations will continue to be influenced by domestic considerations, and of course, regional, intraregional and global connections.⁶⁵ Despite rhetorical utterances of neo-liberalism, current events in East Asia, not to mention the Middle East and Southwest Asia, convince many that a form of realism such as neoclassical realism is somehow a better lens to see the unfolding relations between Japan and two Koreas, at least for now.

⁶³ V.D. Cha, *Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea*, "International Studies Quarterly" 2000, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 261–264.

⁶⁴ R.O. Keohane, *Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond*, [in:] *International Relations Theory. Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond*, P.R. Viotti, M.V. Kauppi (eds.), Needham Heights 1999, pp. 153–183.

⁶⁵ For more on the traditional East Asian political relations, see Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order, Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860–1882*, Berkeley 1980.