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Gregor Konzack, B.A.

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## 1 Introduction

The world of international relations is comprised of theories and scholars. States confront states in a game over power and security constantly threatened to be permanently extinguished as countless empires before. The interpretations of underlying forces and even subjects of international relations is highly debated. For some, states aim to maximize power. For others, capital seeking individuals make use of states' resources for individual gains. Yet others understand power as an act of speech. Scholars of international relations have to be highly careful in their understanding of main driving forces because a set of chosen theoretical foundations is likely to narrow possible outcomes. As such, one needs to be aware of theoretical underpinnings. This holds especially true for established theoretical schools in general and predictions of the realist school in particular. Implicit in realism is not only that underlying assumptions are predictive but that the research objects is necessarily recurring patterns of the international system. True, the term international relations clearly indicates a relationship between at least two objects. Thus, it seems only natural that realism would predict the outcomes of bargaining behaviour between the objects. However, what is necessary to fully understand the bargaining game is an answer to the question on how these different entities form their behaviour. Of course they will reflect the international bargaining stage but as it essentially remains a process of domestic formation what is truly needed is a theory of foreign policy; not of international outcomes. How can it be explained otherwise that states similarly placed in a system behave differently? Neoclassical Realism provides such a new branch of theories and scholars that embarked to find an answer on the pressing problem of how international outcomes and circumstances translate into domestic formation of foreign policy. Essentially, it might represent one of the most important contributions to the study of international relations theory at large as it tries to bridge the gap between the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* and the *Primat der Innenpolitik* by giving the former the defining role and the latter a shaping character. Being a young school of thought, however, further research needs to be directed to the impact of socio-political settings on foreign policy formation. This will not be of help to understand international outcomes but to explain foreign policy.

Being the most dynamic region of the world today, East Asia forms a perfect laboratory to apply insights gained from neoclassical realism. Not only that major changes in threat, power distribution and economic development are transforming this part of the world, it also hosts a variety of competing identities, ideologies and historical memories that seem to influence foreign policy behaviour. For example, from a geopolitical perspective, Japan and the Republic of Korea (thereafter 'South Korea', 'Korea', or 'ROK') seem to be natural allies in East Asia. Both countries share the same ally, the United States and have close economic ties as well as vested economic

interest in mutual cooperation. Moreover, the geographic proximity of both countries to a rising China and a threatening Democratic People's Republic of Korea (thereafter 'North Korea' or 'DPRK') makes closer military and political cooperation between the two needed to cope with common security threats. Typically propositions that would, according to neorealism, result in deeper cooperation and more cooperative foreign policy of the two countries. Yet, this cannot be observed. Despite incremental bilateral interest both countries over and all seem to embark on a confrontational path over history, guilt and memory on the issue of the shared colonial past.

Today, memories of the colonial past, which stretched from 1910 to 1945, seem to be vivid among the people of Korea. Japanese policies of colonial time, like the imposition of Shintoism, the prohibition to use the Korean language or surnames are remembered as Japanese attempts to exterminate the Korean culture. In a material way, the conscriptions of Koreans for Japanese wars, soldiers for the front, workers for the factories and women as prostitutes, still ran deep in current Korean historical memory. For the Koreans there has not been a sufficient excuse for the war time deeds of Japan until today. Accordingly, any incident directing attention back to history is currently regarded under these factors. The Dokdo/Takeshima conflict, a dispute over the Liancourt Rocks, is equally unresolved as the naming issue of the Sea of Japan/East Sea. Controversy in Korea spark repeatedly with actions and words of Japanese politicians, ministries and citizens being weighed constantly. Occasionally, this led to serious confrontation as Seoul's dispatchment of gunboats to the islet in 2006 shows. Surprisingly, such a high sensitivity has not been present after the liberalization of Korea in 1945, it gained increasingly influence on Korea's Japan policy only following the end of the Cold War and with the beginning of democratisation in Korea after 1987. It seems astonishing that quarrels over historical grievances are able to shape the foreign policy of a country deeply threatened by its regional environment. Neorealism would make different predictions. Moreover, it comes as a surprise that in the mid-1960s and early 1980s South Korea took a cooperative approach to the bilateral relations. What has caused the evolution in general, and more precisely, the ability of domestic factors to influence Korea's Japan policy? If, how and when have domestic constraints affected South Korea's external behaviour towards Japan after the Korean War? Under what circumstances can domestic constraints be said to play a role in foreign policy formation? In the case of South Korea, what are the decisive domestic constraints at work?

An answer to these questions will help to illuminate the neoclassical realist debate on the factors shaping foreign policy in general and facilitate our understanding of Korea foreign policy behaviour in particular. What is necessary first, however, is to establish a theoretical background of neoclassical realism in order to understand the dynamics at work. After a theoretical discussion in section 2, alternative explanations are presented in section 3. It will be clear that these models do

not take crucial variables into account as identified by neoclassical realism. Having established a causal gap in existing explanations and hypothesis the thesis will continue to elaborate on the hypothesis and methodology in section 4. Data of the Correlates of War Index will be used to illuminate the setting of the international environment. Accordingly, in section 5, at first, the results of the COW analysis are presented, followed by four case studies investigating the mid-1960s, early 1980s, early 1990s and 2000s in order to find commonalities and identify causal relationships between domestic constraints and foreign policy behaviour in section 6. From the comparison it will become clear that under certain circumstances, i.e. a permissive international environment as well as socio-political settings that allow for societal participation, domestic constraints can at times be decisive and shape the content of Korea's Japan policy. Since democratisation this holds especially true for historical sensitivity towards Japan.

## 2 Theoretical Part

This section will introduce the reader to the distinction between a theory of foreign policy and a theory of international structure. It is shown that a distinction is crucial to analyse individual state's responses to international circumstances, subsequently followed by an assessment of a causal coherent method to incorporate unit-level factors into the realist analysis of foreign policy. What is needed is a realist theory of the state accompanied by a theoretically informed selection of domestic factors. Moreover, it is necessary to specify under what conditions domestic factors in general can be said to play a meaningful role in the first place. Neoclassical Realism offers a useful theory to embark upon the investigation of Korea-Japan relations as it provides a framework for assessing the circumstances under which domestic actors can influence foreign policy decision-making. Inherent in it is a neorealist model of the state theorizing venues of influence for domestic actors and circumstances of impact. These aspects are discussed in turn and followed by a critical discussion on the underlying assumptions and their validity to make meaningful predictions on the external behaviour of states.

### 2.1 *The Need for a Theory of Foreign Policy*

For scholars of international relations there is an ocean of approaches and theories to choose from. One of the most influential of those streams and by far the most autochthonous is (neo)realism. Philosophically originating in the writing of Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes and Niccolò Machiavelli, realism posits a pessimistic image about humankind, refuses teleological notions of progress and regards moral as a function of power. In pre-civil times the individual was in a state of anarchy relying on his own strength, understood as his own capabilities, to survive.<sup>1</sup> Individual units in international relations – be it tribes, city-states, nations – are similarly placed in an environment of anarchy, absent any overarching governing force able to secure the survival of individual states.<sup>2</sup> To ensure the national interest – defined by Hans Morgenthau as “the national pursuit, within certain moral limitations, of the power objectives of the state”<sup>3</sup> – states can only rely on their national capabilities, always fearing stronger states will claim their lands or overtaking the state's institutions.<sup>4</sup> As such, what drives the national interest is security for survival. As states are always

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For statements on the human nature see Morgenthau, H.J. (1946). *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*. Chicago University Press; Waltz, K. (1959). *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University

<sup>2</sup> Lobell, S. et al. (2009) p. 14

<sup>3</sup> Morgenthau, H. (2006) p. 240

<sup>4</sup> Morgenthau defined national security as “integrity of the national territory and its institutions” Morgenthau, H.

concerned about other's states capabilities they are suspicious of their intentions and, in doubt, are willing to use force to maximize their security, defined as national capabilities.<sup>5</sup> Other states expecting such a behaviour will form alliances to keep the rising state in check and establish a balance-of-power.<sup>6</sup> States, however, can neither be entirely certain of other states' intentions nor can they put their capabilities to test besides in war. Thus, for some, the interpretation of threats to national security is essential; not the actual distribution of capabilities observed.<sup>7</sup>

Structural realism, as promulgated by Kenneth Waltz's balance-of-power theory, Stephen M. Walt's balance-of-threat theory or John Mearsheimer's offensive realism, sets forth to provide a comprehensive analysis of the international system, its structure and forces. Anarchy as fundamental principle resulting from the continuous drive for survival by states aiming to maximize their power or security leads to recurring systemic outcomes and polarity. Obviously the recurring patterns of the international structure are caused by systemic forces outside the control of individual states. In *the long run* they are, to borrow the metaphor of Fareed Zakaria, mere 'billiard balls' of outside forces. Fairly accurate predictions of these developments are given by structural realist approaches. Yet, because billiard balls are “made of a different material, affecting its speed, spin, and bounce on the international plane”<sup>8</sup>, their lane on the international plane might be different. The foreign policy of a country at a given time might be fundamentally departing from structural realist predictions precisely due to different specifications. The inability of structural realist approaches to incorporate unit-level variables, however useful for the description of the international system, becomes a hindrance for a neorealist analysis of the foreign policy of a particular country. For an investigation of the distribution of capabilities of states in the system no internal factors are important. For an investigation of a state's respond to this distribution of capabilities, however, they are of tantamount importance. Waltz himself described in a convincing article on why a theory of international politics is not to equate with a theory of foreign policy that “[n]either realists nor anyone else believe that unit-level factors can be excluded from foreign policy analysis”.<sup>9</sup> His argument rests on a distinction of causality. While theories of international politics regard foreign policy as independent and the international structure as the dependent variable, the causality in a realist theory of foreign policy is reversed. It is therefore critical to distinguish between a theory of

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(2006) p. 586

<sup>5</sup> Mearsheimer, J. (2003) formed the school of offensive realism which in contrast to defensive realism posits that states aim to maximize their power in order to secure their survival.

<sup>6</sup> Waltz is said to have founded neorealism as a theory of international politics. Investigating recurring patterns of the international system he found that states typically tend to (i) balance against each other and (ii) emulate successful practices, see Waltz, K. (1979)

<sup>7</sup> Walt argues that the balance-of-threat is better able to explain recurring patterns of the international system than the balance-of-power approach, see Walt, S. (1987)

<sup>8</sup> Zakaria, F. (1998) p. 9

<sup>9</sup> Waltz, K. (2007)



international politics and a theory of foreign policy.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 *Neoclassical Realism as Progress in International Relations Theory*

In an influential review article in *World Politics* Gideon Rose, in 1998, investigated recent realist scholarly research and found an increasing departure from black-box approaches to the study of international politics.<sup>11</sup> He found that neoclassical realism is a direct critique to approaches overemphasising domestic factors at the same time as a critique to neorealism's complete exclusion of domestic factors in the analysis of foreign policy. For him, the relative distribution of capabilities shapes the parameters for state action but the actual arrangement is confined to the foreign policy elite of a country constraint by their ability to extract resources from society for foreign policy goals. Thus, neoclassical realism incorporates external and internal variables into the investigation of foreign policy decision-making. As a rule, Gideon finds that with growing resources states tend to expand their ambitions in the international arena, while those with a shrinking material base are likely to roll back on international expansion. As the information provided by the international system, however, is indirect and complex the pressure of the international must be translated through intervening variables. Rose termed this function a “transmission belt”<sup>12</sup>, at which point domestic factors can influence foreign policy making. This is not to question that the scope of material capabilities shape the ambitions of the individual state. Yet, states exhibit different characterisations regarding the process of turning national capabilities into foreign policy. For example, while every government needs revenues for keeping up an army, the sources and amount of these revenues might differ from country to country. Due to benchmarking trajectories established by the international system, any analysis must, as a starting point, look at the international power distribution to understand which forces command states to act. Only after having established a framework on the relative distribution of power, domestic factors can play a role in foreign policy making. Accordingly, first the relative distribution of material capabilities as well as their perception is discussed. This should help to understand that domestic factors can only influence foreign policies in a permissive international environment. Afterwards, the factors that

<sup>10</sup> Note, there are other theories and approaches of a theory of foreign policy. Among them: an approach that different governmental agencies struggle with each for benefits, see Allison, G. & Zelikow, P. (1999). *Essence of Decision-Making. Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers; on the argument that trade pacifies states, see Rosecrance, R. (1986). *The Rise of the Trading State. Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World*. New York: Basic Books; on the sources of imperial behaviour of colonial empires, see: Schumpeter, J. (1955). *Imperialism and Social Classes*. Cleveland: A Meridian Book

<sup>11</sup> Rose, G. (1998) discussed commonalities of Brown, M. et al. (1995). *The Perils of Anarchy. Contemporary Realism and International Security*. Cambridge: MIT Press; Christensen, T. (1996). *Useful Adversaries. Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict 1947-1958*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Schweller, R. (1998). *Deadly Imbalances. Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy for World Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press; Wohlforth, W. (1993). *The Elusive Balance. Power and Perception during the Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Zakaria, F. (1998). *From Wealth to Power. The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

<sup>12</sup> Rose, G. (1998) p. 147

shape domestic constraints are explored.

### Relative Distribution of Material Capabilities

Existing literature expresses that internal debates can exert influence only in a permissive international environment. The realist assumption that states “as a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination”<sup>13</sup> makes a point in this case. What is sought by a state depends on the relative ability of a state to realize those goals. Already Machiavelli emphasised that the distribution of capabilities sets necessities for state action which narrow the range of alternatives for the statesmen to pursue.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Waltz argues that “in the absence of counterweights, a country's internal impulses prevail”.<sup>15</sup> This implies the notion explored by Steven Lobell et al. that “anarchy gives states considerable latitude in defining their security interests”.<sup>16</sup> Paul Kennedy's seminal book on *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* provides meaningful insight into the main causes of relative rise and decline of individual states. For him there is “a very clear connection in the long run between an individual Great Power's economic rise and fall and its growth and decline as an important military power”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, there is a link between national capabilities and scope of international ambition. Taking this debate further, several authors argue that domestic factors matter in a permissive international environment. Generally, they matter because the external environment “set[s] the parameter ... [while] unite-level factors ... determin[e] both the character and the venue” of foreign policy.<sup>18</sup> In that way, unit-level factors are of substance as they “constrain or facilitate the ability ... to respond to systemic imperatives”.<sup>19</sup> States face an international environmental setting but in the short-run the response is influenced by domestic politics. Zakaria, for example, aims to take account of the hesitation of the USA to become a great power. Investigating the period in the 30 years prior to 1908, he finds that even though the international environment was permissive for a bid to great power status, domestic structures prevented the president to do so. The domestic political turf war about competences prohibited more efficient foreign action and it was not before “the collapse of the congressional bid for supremacy gave the federal government a more centralized, less political, and rational structure”.<sup>20</sup> While Zakaria explores a case of under-expansion, Aaron Friedberg investigates a case of over-expansion. Between 1895 and 1905 Britain, was able to conduct decisive action worldwide and

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<sup>13</sup> Waltz, K. (1979) p. 118

<sup>14</sup> Machiavelli, N. (1970) pp. 62-63

<sup>15</sup> Waltz, K. (2000) p. 5

<sup>16</sup> Lobell, S. et al. (2009) p. 7

<sup>17</sup> Kennedy, P. (1988) p. xxii [emphasis omitted]

<sup>18</sup> Lobell, S. et al. (2009) p. 3

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 4

<sup>20</sup> Zakaria, F. (1998) p. 11

could be said to be in a permissive environment. She found that British officials in times of decline between 1895 and 1905 misinterpreted facts about their ability to project power abroad and therefore pursued policies of over-expansion.<sup>21</sup> What is important here is that the supremacy of the international over the domestic is defining the broad pattern of development but not the individual response of the state. Moreover, it is striking that there is no clear link between permissive environment and state action as it allows for both over- and under-expansion. In this vein, Colin Dueck argues that because leaders have to manage domestic politics at the same time with international constraints, sub-optimal policy outcomes are likely if a permissive international environment prevails.<sup>22</sup> This seems logical as domestic actors place their demands to the state. The state, however, can only be receptive to such demands if they do not threaten its very existence and, as a result, can only be fulfilled in a permissive environment. Summarizing, countries not being able to conduct great power politics cannot select from the menu to do so and if they can they might be narrowed by the requirements of domestic politics.

### Domestic State Power

The crucial difference between an analysis of international relations and foreign policy is the need of the latter to incorporate domestic factors. According to Jennifer Sterling-Folker, they can include “anything that has traditionally fallen within the realm of comparative or American politics, such as political parties, public opinion, media, bureaucratic politics, legislative and executive branch relations, political culture, interest groups, types of government and politics, and strong-weak state dichotomy”.<sup>23</sup> It becomes apparent that the incorporation of this vague definition of unit-level factors into a neorealist analysis of foreign policy is viable only, if there is a realist theory of the state explaining how and why they matter. Stretching back to Peter Evans et al., realist analysis on the state embarked from the point that, unlike in structural realism, the state is distinct from society.<sup>24</sup> Fundamentally characterised as groups in competition with other groups, Lobell et al. make use of a top-down approach of the state. Accordingly, decision-makers mitigate between international requirements and domestic constraints in defining the national interest. Therewith, decision-makers filter the external environment, assess threats and formulate possible responses based on their ability to mobilize and extract resources from society.<sup>25</sup> Rose described this function as “transmission belt” between the international and the domestic.<sup>26</sup> This is what the relatively new school of neoclassical realism tries to illuminate by developing a theoretical oriented approach to

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<sup>21</sup> Friedberg, A. (1988)

<sup>22</sup> Dueck, C. (2009)

<sup>23</sup> Sterling-Folker, J. (1997) p.2

<sup>24</sup> Evans, P. et al. (1985). pp. 5-9

<sup>25</sup> Lobell, S. et al. (2009) pp. 23-28

<sup>26</sup> Rose, G. (1998) p. 147

identify and trace relevant factors as proposed in Sterling-Folker's definition.

Three central points can be identified to play a role in this dichotomy between state and society. Zakaria and Thomas Christensen developed the notion of 'state power' and 'national political power' respectively. "Foreign policy is made not by the nations as a whole but by its government, consequently, what matters is state power, not national power", Zakaria reasons.<sup>27</sup> For him state power is defined as "the portion of national power the government can extract for its purposes and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends."<sup>28</sup> Consequently, it entails the dichotomy between government and society and implies that decision-makers do face at times difficulties to harmonize the interests of society and government. To assess the degree of state power Zakaria regards three characteristics as crucial: (i) state autonomy; (ii) state capacity; and (iii) coherence of central policy-making apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

### State Autonomy

State autonomy, according to Evans et al. can be defined as the ability to pursue "other goals than the sum of interests and demands of social groups".<sup>30</sup> Again, important to this definition is the possibility for colluding interests between leadership and society. Lobell makes the point that foreign policy elites are more effective in pursuing the national interest than society because they are (i) tasked to, (ii) specialized in doing so, and (iii) own a monopoly on intelligence.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the responsibility for decisions rests ultimately in the decision-maker. Therefore "any domestic pressures are reflected in their discussions and actions", as Zakaria observes.<sup>32</sup> How isolated the leadership can act is therefore of tantamount importance for the implementation of the national interest. Two scholars explored this notion of isolation further. On the one hand, Jeffrey Taliaferro developed the 'resource extraction model' of the state. For him, the characteristics of domestic political institutions shape the degree of mobilization and the ability of extraction as they set the stage for the 'bargaining game' between rulers and societal actors. Assuming that democracies are more open than dictatorships or monarchies – systems characterized by a one-man rule –, democracies, *ceteris paribus*, should have reduced state autonomy to extract resources, e.g. to levy taxes or recruit soldiers. Therefore, "domestic variables ... limit the efficiency of state's responses to ... systemic imperatives".<sup>33</sup> In light of the discussion above on permissive international environments, he finds that "mobilization hurdles [domestic constraints] are likely to be particularly

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<sup>27</sup> Zakaria, F. (1998) p. 9

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-41

<sup>30</sup> Evans, P. et al (1985) p. 9

<sup>31</sup> Lobell, S. (2009)

<sup>32</sup> Zakaria, F. (1998) p. 24

<sup>33</sup> Taliaferro, J. (2009) p. 197

high where states currently face low levels of external vulnerability”.<sup>34</sup> The second neoclassical realist model that sheds light on state autonomy is the 'domestic-actor model' developed by Norrin Ripsman. He names factors that inhibit or facilitate state autonomy from society. Comparing democracies and non-democracies he finds general characteristics for both systems. Accordingly, domestic groups that (i) can provide sufficient resources, (ii) have the ability to influence the domestic agenda, and (iii) are able to shape the interpretation of international circumstances are able to influence decision-makers. As a rule, however, the higher the demands of social groups the more difficult to implement them.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, we can identify state autonomy as depending on the nature of the political institutional set up, which in turn, allows for domestic-actors to exert influence on foreign policy if they are either wealthy or/and are considerable in size.

### State Capacity

Evans et al. defined state capacity as “the power to implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of powerful social groups or in the face of recalcitrant socioeconomic circumstances”.<sup>36</sup> Theoretically this is underpinned by a bargaining game between *necessities for* international action on the one hand and *acceptability of* these policies to the public on the other. Barbara Farnham develops an 'acceptability-necessity model' to explain domestic influence on foreign policy decision making. For her, leaders are only possible to conduct foreign policies acceptable to policy-shaping society. In doing so, decision-makers balance constantly between the two poles as “effective action is their primary goal, but they recognize that it is difficult to achieve without acceptability”.<sup>37</sup> Decision-makers, however, are not confined to this setting. They can actively shape the acceptability of foreign policy options by, among others, change people’s preferences through education, understood as teaching through the political leadership.<sup>38</sup> Farnham is focussing her analysis on democracies. The author puts the argument around in such a way as that to enhance acceptability leaders can reduce the impact of the policy-shaping community, e.g. by limiting the opposition. Next to acceptability, Schweller, Taliaferro and Sterling-Folker regard ideology as a central factor for states to act efficiently. Investigating the tensions across the Taiwan Strait Sterling-Folker finds that domestic identity struggles filtered through the electoral system influence Taiwan's security policy towards China.<sup>39</sup> Taliaferro in his resource extraction model establishes that state capacity to extract resource is influenced by the willingness of society to sacrifice private for public goals as the “rise of nationalism allowed states to extract more resources

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 218

<sup>35</sup> Ripsman, N. (2009) pp. 179-186

<sup>36</sup> Evans, P. et al. (1985) p. 9

<sup>37</sup> Farnham, B. (2004) p. 450

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 451-456

<sup>39</sup> Sterling-Folker, J. (2009) pp. 126-136

from society”.<sup>40</sup> Schweller explores the same rational in the age of mass politics. Overall, he argues that the fascist state under Hitler was the archetypical expansionist state of Mearsheimer's offensive realism. Fascist ideology increased domestic acceptability of aggressive foreign policy and enhanced resource extraction by subordinating individual needs to those of the '*Volk*'.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, state capacity is high if foreign policies can be enforced easily and society is willing or coerced to pay the costs.

### Elite Cohesion

A third characteristic of state power is the degree of elite cohesion. The 'cohesion model' developed by Schweller posits that with a high degree of elite cohesion domestic constraints are low as the ability of domestic actors to influence decision-makers is reduced.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, when faced with a low degree of elite cohesion decision-makers are unable to conduct efficient foreign policy because it opens up venues for influencing foreign policy. James Fearon described this influence as resulting in sub-optimal policies outcomes.<sup>43</sup> One has to make the point, however, that the concept of elite cohesion is not sufficiently elaborated upon. After all, what constitutes the 'elite'? Is it the president and his/her closest advisor alone, as Christensen argued?<sup>44</sup> Or do all parliamentarians qualify as elite, as Yoo Hyon-joo tried to explain?<sup>45</sup> This research is taking middle ground between those two positions as it regards the 'foreign policy elite' as members of the presidential cabinet.

From the theoretical discussion above we can extract three central characteristics on when domestic constraints are able to influence foreign policy decision-making. First, the international environment must be permissive as to allow states more options of foreign policy. Second, domestic actors can position their interests in foreign policy only if state autonomy and capacity are low. Third, in times of elite fragmentation decision-makers are constraint by domestic interests.

## **2.3 Critique on Neoclassical Realism**

The evolution of neoclassic realism, specifically its merger of international with domestic variables caused several criticisms in the scholarly literature. Most prominently, Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, raised their concerns that it bends realist core assumptions, namely (i) the rational and unitary nature of the actors, (ii) the fixed nature of state preferences and (iii) the primacy of material capabilities. If these core assumptions do not hold in neoclassical realist analysis, 'is anybody still a

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<sup>40</sup> Taliaferro, J. (2009) p. 205

<sup>41</sup> Schweller, R. (2009)

<sup>42</sup> Schweller, R. (2004)

<sup>43</sup> Fearon, J. (1998). Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations. *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 1

<sup>44</sup> Christensen, T. (1996)

<sup>45</sup> Yoo, H. (2012)

realist' – as they titled their article in *International Security*?<sup>46</sup> The critique raised many responses. Peter Feaver, and in a similar vein Gunter Hellmann, argue that they employ a too narrow interpretation of realism that “inadvertently excommunicated too many of the faithful” and is “essentially a labelling exercise”.<sup>47</sup> Similar, Schweller regard the assumptions of Legro and Moravcsik as too thin to explain the entirety of realist theory as a whole. Nevertheless, he warns not to jeopardise the core assumptions. A bending for the sake of predictive power is permissible only if the causal hierarchy of the superiority of systemic factors is upheld. On the usefulness of neoclassic realism, Christensen, for example, reasoned that it has “identified many of the domestic, bureaucratic, and perceptual issues that underlie Morgenthau's 'typical errors of evaluation'.”<sup>48</sup> A comparable point is raised by Taliaferro who posits that the established research programs in international relations entail “often ambiguous dividing lines”<sup>49</sup> and, thus, cannot be understood in a strict sense. The point made that neoclassical realism lacks theoretical clarity and is bending the structural logic of neorealism might have some merits. One has to acknowledge, however, that (i) neoclassical realism continues to acknowledge the primacy of the international over the domestic and therefore is still fundamentally distinctive to other theories of international relations, such as liberalism and (ii) that there is no commonly accepted research program in international relations.<sup>50</sup> Thus, sticking to the narrow assumptions cited by Legro and Moravcsik would highly limit the ability to assess degeneration and progress in international relations theory. As a baseline researchers should adhere to Lakatos' rule to stick to a theory as long as it provides “novel facts”.<sup>51</sup> Neoclassic realism is able to provide these 'novel facts' in a way to combine international with domestic variables to explain the foreign policy of a specific country at a clear defined juncture in time.<sup>52</sup> As a result “neoclassical realism is essentially the only game in town”, as postulated by Schweller.<sup>53</sup> Its ability to bridge the '*Primat der Aussenpolitik*' with insight of '*Innenpolitik*' makes it valuable, as it can offer guidance in an international forest of brakes and foxholes.

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<sup>46</sup> Legro, J. & Moravcsik, A. (1999)

<sup>47</sup> Feaver, P. et al. (2000) p. 165-170

<sup>48</sup> The 'typical errors' include errors resulting from misconceptions of own power or misinterpretation of factors, see Morgenthau, H. (2006) p. 174

<sup>49</sup> Feaver, P. et al. (2000) p. 180

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion on the existence of a commonly accepted research program in international relations, see: Schweller, R. (2003)

<sup>51</sup> Lakatos, I. (1970) p. 119

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion on the potential of neoclassical realism to be substantial to the progress in international relations theory, see Schweller, R. (2003)

<sup>53</sup> Schweller, R. (2003) p. 344

### 3 Alternative Explanations

The relationship between Korea and Japan has been studied extensively and competing explaining models have emerged. This section explores, at first, the five most prominent explanatory models and is followed by the authors critique on them.<sup>54</sup>

#### Quasi-Alliance Model

The most cited approach is the 'quasi-alliance model' by Victor Cha. For Cha the cooperation between the two countries cannot be explained by psycho-historical approaches emphasising historical animosity alone. Neither is the balance-of-threat model able to fully account for changes in cooperation and conflict. He suggested to understand the bilateral relation between Korean and Japan as a function of patron-commitment by the common ally USA. Accordingly, existing threats are seen through the perception of patron-commitment in Japan and Korea. For him, differences in abandonment or entrapment fears cause friction or cooperation.<sup>55</sup> As such, he argued that in cases of asymmetrical feelings of abandonment/entrapment friction is likely to prevail. Conversely, if both countries experience symmetrical fears cooperation is likely.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, “promises of the great power patron can influence alignment behaviour more than external threats”.<sup>57</sup> A vital point to his model is that security engagement of the US allows the two countries to 'free-ride' on security and are therefore relieved from cooperation.<sup>58</sup> In the scholarly literature there are three critiques to his model. First, Woo Seung-ji points out that his model does not explain the period prior to the formal normalization of the two countries in 1965. In this period extensive pressure was exerted by the US which can be interpreted as engagement in Cha's model. However, the result was cooperation not friction.<sup>59</sup> Second, Hwang Ji-hwan raises the point that disengagement of the US from Korea and Japan is likely to result in competitive internal balancing and thus competition between the two.<sup>60</sup> Third, Park Cheol-hee criticises that in Cha's analysis the historical animosity between the two countries is treated as a constant factor while, for Park, it can “either be escalated or de-escalated by political leaders and civic groups”<sup>61</sup> and has, thus, to be understood as variable, not as a constant.

<sup>54</sup> There are more explanatory models available. However, the five presented form a comprehensive overview of underlying forces incorporating the historical component, the international environment and domestic politics, Further studies include: On the role of historical animosity Rozman, G. & Lee, S.W. (2006); or Cooney, K. & Scarbrough, A. (2008). On the institutional set-up Yi, K. (2002); or Yoo, H. (2012)

<sup>55</sup> Abandonment can be understood as “the fear that the ally may leave the alliance” while “entrapment occurs when an alliance commitment turns detrimental to one's interests.”, Cha, V. (2000) p. 265

<sup>56</sup> Cha, V. (2000) pp. 269-273

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 283

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pp. 284-285

<sup>59</sup> Woo, S. J. (2003). [Korean] Puzzle of Korea-Japan Cooperation in the Cold War. *Korean Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37 No. 3 p. 143; Note, the author is unable to read Korean. Therefore the information on Woo, S. J. (2003) is derived from Park, C. (2008)

<sup>60</sup> Hwang, J. (2003)

<sup>61</sup> Park, C. (2008) p. 16



### Colonial Legacy Model

Hwang developed the 'colonial-legacy model' to account for the volatile relationship despite common threats and patron. For him, Cha's approach provides valuable insight but he made the point that in times of US disengagement both countries did cooperate only to a limited extent. Thus, he clarified that they engaged in extensive military build-up and only marginal cooperation indicating both countries are balancing against each other. For Hwang, the underlying cause of this antagonism rests in historical animosity.<sup>62</sup> A crucial critique on his point can be derived from the theoretical framework discussed above. The necessity to cooperate as directed by the international environment is likely to outweigh domestic concerns, such as historical animosity, if threats are significant. Cha made a point in this regard. According to his investigation, the cooperation between 1969 and 1971 which resulted in the 1969 Korea clause and the Okinawa base agreement, is clearly attributed to US president Nixon's Guam doctrine which foresaw a disengagement of the US from the region.<sup>63</sup>

### Net Threat Theory

Yoon Tae-ryong developed a threat model to explain the relationship. Accordingly, Yoon combines the common threat perceived by Japan and Korea with the commitment of the US into one threat variable, called 'net threat'. He shows that increases in net threat result in increasing cooperation incentives, as structural realism would predict. However, he limits his predictions as incentives alone cannot adequately account for the actual cooperation or friction observed.<sup>64</sup> For him, the crucial intervening variable is historical animosity.<sup>65</sup> Park criticises Yoon's 'net threat theory' on two grounds. First, he argues that it fails to take into account diverging/converging threat perception and, second, works with concepts of conflict that are too broad to be useful for predictive purposes.<sup>66</sup>

### Engagement-Coalition Model

Woo developed an 'engagement-coalition model' incorporating the engagement of the US with domestic coalition politics of the two countries. Even though he acknowledges the role of the US as laid out in Cha's model, he stated that party politics of domestic Japanese politics can either facilitate or hamper cooperation. Different to Cha, however, he regards the engagement of the US as promoting cooperation. In times of US engagement what makes the difference is whether there are

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<sup>62</sup> Hwang, J. (2003)

<sup>63</sup> Cha, V. (2000) pp. 273-276

<sup>64</sup> Yoon, T. (2006)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. pp. 24-26

<sup>66</sup> Park, C. (2008) p. 18

'Alpha coalitions' or 'Beta coalitions' in power in Korea and Japan. 'Alpha coalitions' are anti-communist and promote closer alignment with the US. 'Beta coalitions', represented by centrist government, balance between cooperation with the US and neighbouring countries. He predicts that in times of US engagement cooperation will occur if the same coalitions are in power in the two countries. It is striking, however, that he attributes a pro-cooperation attitude to Korea and thus limiting the role of coalitions to Japan.<sup>67</sup> Park grounds his two criticism on this assumption. On the one hand, with rising progressive forces in Korean society the pro-cooperation stance cannot be assumed anymore. On the other hand, the changed political climate in South Korea favours historical animosity to influence the bilateral relation.<sup>68</sup>

### Convergent-Management Model

Park developed a 'convergent-management model'. Basing his argument on Cha he argues, firstly, that the “perception about the threatening third, not the allied third, party”<sup>69</sup> is crucial for determining cooperation. Thus, if faced with symmetric threats the two countries will enhance cooperation. Moreover, he takes into account the point of Hwang's model that historical memory matters. For him, historical animosity matters but is a variable in itself that can be engraved or tampered by elites or societal actors. Therefore, historical animosity can be de-escalating or escalating leading to either cooperation or friction. Next to these two independent variables he includes the US' alliance management as intervening variable that can either enhance cooperation if symmetrically or lead to friction if asymmetrically performed.<sup>70</sup>

### Critique

Concluding, four points of critique could be voiced to all of these models. First, a difference between threat by a third party and threat of abandonment or entrapment is inherent in the models. From theory it seems not deducible that the source of threat makes a difference for foreign policy decisions. One can regard threat in the form of a reduced ally commitment the same as threat of an increasing adversary. In the wording of Walt, what counts is that “one state or coalition appears especially dangerous”.<sup>71</sup> Thus, threat remains threat regardless of the source. Second, all models except the coalition-engagement model regard state and society as unit by incorporating historical animosity to the decision-makers level immediately. Thus, as discussed by the theoretical part above a separation between decision-maker level and society is necessary and has to be investigated through the concept of domestic state power. Third, all models involved do regard the relative

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<sup>67</sup> See, footnote 59

<sup>68</sup> Park, C. (2008) p. 17

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. pp. 19-21

<sup>71</sup> Walt, S. (1987) p. 263

distribution of power capabilities fixed throughout the time. Globally, the decline in US capabilities since the end of the Cold War as well as regionally, the rise of capabilities of South Korea vis-à-vis Japan are neglected.<sup>72</sup> Fourth, the China factor is understudied by the models. After all, opportunities to choose cooperation with third countries effect costs/benefits calculation of cooperation with Japan. Since the end of Cold War the relationship in the triangle China-Korea-Japan opened diverging opportunities for cooperation. For Korea China presents a potential partner on many issues while there remain significant friction between Japan and China.<sup>73</sup> Thus, a new model is of tantamount importance.

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<sup>72</sup> The author will elaborate on this in the empirical part in which the relative distribution of power is calculated according to the Correlates of War dataset, see Methodology

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Han, S. (2012)

## 4 Hypothesis

Building a model based on the theory to predict foreign policy behaviour of ROK towards Japan this investigation will shed insight not only into the bilateral relations of the two countries but provides a framework of how to assess the role of domestic constraints on the conduct of state's external behaviour in general. This will help to understand the relationship between societal actors and leadership in the conduct of foreign policy. From the theoretical parts the two categories 'international environment' and 'domestic state power' have emerged. To find evidence supporting the hypothesis one, 'international environment' is split up into the (i) international as a whole, referring to the actions of the major powers in the region and (ii) to its bilateral character investigating the power distribution in a dyadic relationship. Yoon already argues that the international level of threat is influential on the relationship between Korea and Japan. He has shown the merits of his hypothesis that an overall increase in the level of threat will result in an increase in cooperation. A preposition that an increase in the overall level of threat will result in a more cooperative Japan policy of Korea is inherit in this. What is not taken into account, however, is the bilateral distribution of power, different opportunity matrices as well as a coherent analysis of the domestic framework on its impact on Korean foreign policy formation towards Japan. In a similar vein domestic state power is a function of elite cohesion and state capacity alongside its autonomy to act. This will help to determine the merits of hypothesis two.

**H1: The higher the relative power of Korea towards Japan, the fewer cooperation will take place**

As with all dyadic relationships, the bilateral relations between Korea and Japan are characterised by the relative distribution in material capabilities and difference in alliance structure. With a rise in the relative power of Korea the potential gains from Japan diminish because Japan is not able to provide as many benefits as before. *Ceteris paribus*, the more permissive international environment decreases the importance of Japan for Korea. Effectively this reduces the dependence of Korea on Japan. As the gains from cooperation reduce in significance, the topics on the bilateral agenda increase. At the same time, Korea is more likely to pursue cooperation with other countries that outweighs the gains from Japan. This opens up venues of friction between Korea and Japan previously prohibited by the dependence of Korea on Japan.

## **H2: The higher the level of domestic constraints, the fewer cooperation between Korea and Japan will take place**

Increases in domestic constraints lead to narrow the choices of foreign policy of Korea as decision-makers are exposed to greater societal influence due to reduced domestic state power. Assuming that governments, rather than society, pursue the national interest, this will reduce the ability of Korea to conduct efficient foreign policy. Given societal interest opposes the cooperation with Japan, domestic constraints will have a negative impact on the cooperation between Korea and Japan. Conversely, an increase in domestic state power results in more insulation for the government, and therefore allows for more efficient foreign policy formation, which would approach the structural realist prediction of cooperation.

## 5 Methodological Part

Methodologically this analysis will follow an approach closely connected to the theoretical framework. As mandated by neoclassical realism any analysis should start with an investigation into the international framework, followed by the traces of how relative power distributions are translated in the domestic institutional framework and conducted by decision-makers.<sup>74</sup>

### 5.1 *Correlates of War Index*

To assess the relative distribution of power the thesis will employ a quantitative approach using the Correlates of War (COW) national capabilities dataset.<sup>75</sup> Founded in 1963 by the political scientist David Singer, the COW dataset tries to measure the absolute power of all states between 1816 and 2007.<sup>76</sup> It categorises power in three components: (i) military, representing current force level; (ii) industrial strength, to measure war potential; and (iii) demographic data, to mirror power of endurance and the capability of increasing the level of forces. Each category is divided into two subcomponents. For military strength it is the number of military personnel and expenditure; the industrial component is measured by the production of pig iron before 1900 and ingot steel after 1900 as well as by primary energy consumption; finally, the demographic aspect is described by the total and urban population.<sup>77</sup> The accuracy and ability to measure power as a function of three broad categories might be disputable. However, there are three reasons why the thesis makes use of it. First, by making the measurement transparent it reaches a coherence that allows for reliable comparison of countries across different times. Second, employing the data set allows to reproduce the argument in an easy fashion. Third, Schweller in his study on inter-war Europe tested the reliability of the COW dataset by adding eight other indices and found that they have no significant effect.<sup>78</sup> For the assessment of the relative distribution in East Asia the analysis makes use of the data of the countries currently member of the Six-party talks as they are assumed to be the most influential in the region. The time frame is from 1960 to 2003 as data on the DPRK's military expenditure is missing from 2004 onwards.

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<sup>74</sup> Rose, G. (1998) p. 165

<sup>75</sup> The COW project updates and improves the data set continuously. Currently, version 4.0 is available from: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>

<sup>76</sup> Note, there are competing projects to measure the trajectories of international conflict, such as the Conflict Information System (CONIS) or the Armed Conflict Database (ACD).

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed discussion on the rational, calculation as well as pitfalls of the COW project, see: *Correlates of War Project. National Material Capabilities Data Documentation Version 4.0 2010* available from <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>

<sup>78</sup> See, Appendix, Schweller, R. (1998)

## 5.2 *Measuring Domestic State Power*

How to assess state power as defined as a function of state autonomy, capacity and elite cohesion? As state autonomy is influenced by socio-political institutions the legal setting in which actors do perform is a necessary precondition to start an investigation. The constitutional powers of the president, its ability and constraints to declare martial law as well as the duration in office are factors that insulate the government from society. Thus, this thesis will investigate the evolution of presidential powers throughout the Korean Constitution alongside supporting acts and decrees related to presidential power. State capacity, understood as the ability of the state to act without interference from society is dependent on the influence of societal actors and the presence of ideology. While the influence of domestic actors, as prescribed by Ripsman's domestic-actor model, is a function of societal actors' wealth and size, ideology is more difficult to identify. Moreover, for the sake of causal clarity, societal demonstrations are understood to limit governmental insulation. Reverse, the ability to crack down on the opposition is seen as increasing government insulation. Operational, this will be conducted by investigating the conditions of social actors, its size, impact and agenda setting abilities. To assess the nature of the socio-political setting public opinion polls, legal documents and secondary literature is used. Lastly, elite cohesion is measured along political group identification of decision-makers. The social background of individuals, i.e. family, educational, or professional career, is used to identify these affiliations. As noted above, the 'elite' is confined to members of the presidential cabinet.

## 5.3 *Case Selection*

The number of observation is limited to the period after the Korean War, given the political structure before can be characterized by colonization and a state of civil war. The selection of cases is guided by two principles. First, they should represent major turning points of cooperation and friction in Korea's Japan policy. Second, the cases should be located in both, the Cold War era and thereafter to test the effects of the variables under different international settings. A suitable case seems to be the 1965 normalization treaty between South Korea and Japan. The second case is to be made under the dictatorship of Chun Doo-Hwan, who ruled from 1980 to 1988. Significant on his rule is the decisive crackdown on opposing voices in the society exemplified by the Kwangju massacre 1980 and the 1984 loan negotiations with Japan. A third case is chosen on grounds of profound changes in the international environment. Here the immediate aftermath of the Cold War is significant. Moreover, it is in this period that South Korea evolved into a full democracy and conducted *Nordpolitik* to approach Russia and China. Fourth, the foreign policy outlook in the 2000s is investigated as the international environment changed again due to a rising China.

## 6 Empirical Findings

### 6.1 *The Relative Distribution of Power 1960-2003*

To measure the relative distribution of power across the region the COW Dataset is used as specified in the methodological section. The author computed (i) the relative strength as a percentage share of the six components as well as (ii) the overall strength as a percentage share of total major power-capabilities. To compare these figures more effectively the author calculated (iii) the relative strength as power ratio with 5 as the top score.<sup>79</sup> While these findings are presented in table 1 comprehensively in a 5 years cycle, figure 1 show the development of the regional power distribution since 1960. Three trends are visible, which are discussed in this section followed by an analysis of their long term impact on Korea's Japan policy.

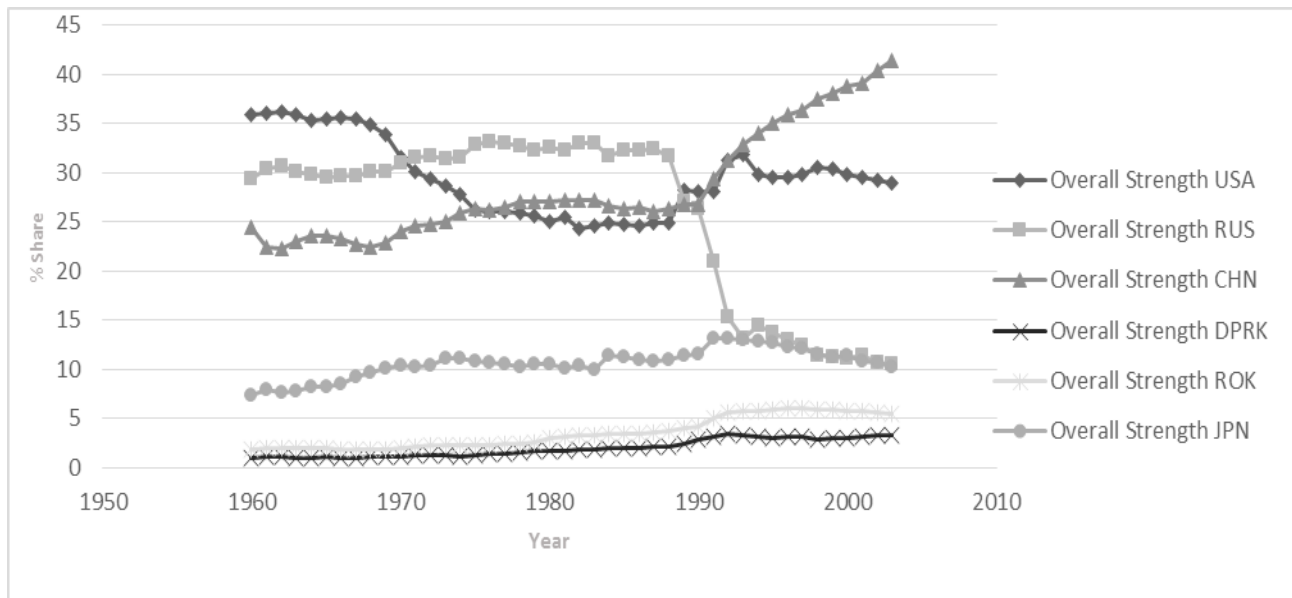


Figure 1: Evolution of COW Capabilities, 1960-2003, in %

<sup>79</sup> See for a similar approach Schweller, R. (1998) pp. 26-31



		Industrial Strength		Military Strength		Demographic		Overall Strength	Relative Strength*
		Iron and Steel	Petroleum Consumption	Military Personnel	Military Expenditure	Urban Population	Total Population		
USA	1960	45,75	58,05	22,06	50,52	23,95	15,29	35,94	5
	1965	44,99	57,55	29,33	45,89	19,72	15,03	35,42	5
	1970	42,96	56,91	28,95	50,82	19,17	14,91	31,52	5
	1975	39,55	57,64	30,14	51,84	18,74	14,77	26,27	4,00
	1980	39,23	57,19	30,30	49,45	18,25	14,62	25,02	3,83
	1985	38,10	55,67	29,43	47,33	18,68	14,47	24,73	3,83
	1990	34,18	52,18	26,61	42,90	18,92	14,36	28,13	5
	1995	31,85	50,58	24,93	41,02	18,44	14,25	29,49	4,21
	2000	32,65	50,02	21,73	40,33	17,92	14,13	29,81	3,85
CHN	1960	9,48	11,92	30,94	7,49	30,96	55,66	24,41	3,40
	1965	4,61	6,12	26,47	12,21	35,88	56,39	23,61	3,33
	1970	5,10	9,64	24,70	13,10	33,38	58,15	24,01	3,81
	1975	6,28	11,72	36,33	11,25	33,39	59,42	26,40	4,02
	1980	8,88	12,87	38,30	7,35	35,32	60,00	27,12	4,15
	1985	11,32	13,28	34,54	1,16	36,88	60,58	26,30	4,08
	1990	14,65	13,99	31,31	1,29	37,44	61,67	26,73	4,75
	1995	25,02	17,82	36,44	7,12	56,91	66,91	35,04	5
	2000	29,05	18,03	39,27	9,18	69,83	67,22	38,77	5
RUS	1960	33,17	25,72	34,44	41,15	24,08	18,14	29,45	4,10
	1965	34,34	29,53	30,66	40,73	24,45	17,86	29,59	4,12
	1970	33,23	29,81	37,26	42,55	25,73	17,00	30,93	4,90
	1975	37,07	32,49	34,64	50,50	26,11	16,30	32,85	5
	1980	35,39	34,14	32,12	51,87	26,48	15,95	32,66	5
	1985	37,60	31,26	32,86	50,05	26,12	15,70	32,26	5
	1990	34,01	27,20	30,41	27,45	24,47	15,02	26,43	4,70
	1995	13,54	14,09	17,42	17,73	11,47	8,10	13,72	1,96
	2000	13,50	12,44	14,03	11,37	7,89	7,73	11,16	1,44

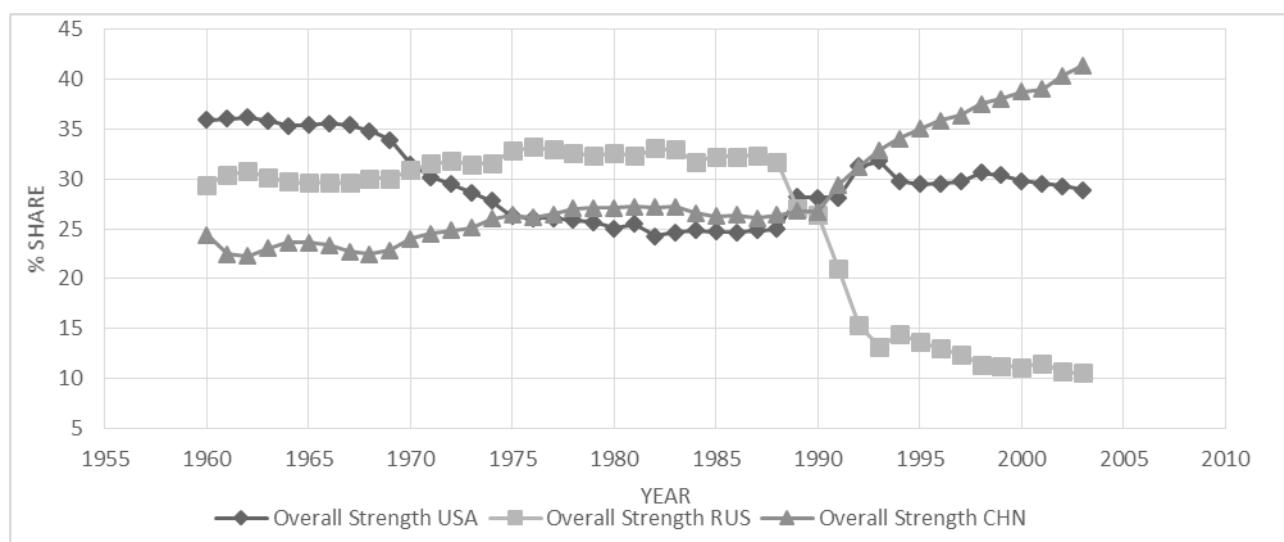
		Industrial Strength		Military Strength		Demographic		Overall Strength	Relative Strength*
		Iron and Steel	Petroleum Consumption	Military Personnel	Military Expenditure	Urban Population	Total Population		
JPN	1960	11,25	3,78	2,52	0,51	17,98	7,89	7,32	1,02
	1965	15,53	5,67	2,71	0,75	16,94	7,57	8,20	1,16
	1970	26,73	7,07	2,05	0,91	18,26	7,24	10,38	1,65
	1975	26,90	8,63	2,00	1,79	18,38	7,15	10,81	1,64
	1980	26,64	8,03	1,99	2,40	17,29	7,02	10,56	1,62
	1985	25,54	14,56	2,03	2,58	16,19	6,84	11,29	1,75
	1990	24,36	14,63	2,24	6,12	15,87	6,59	11,63	2,07
	1995	26,67	16,16	2,99	10,86	12,89	6,88	12,74	1,82
	2000	24,30	15,71	3,31	9,91	9,11	6,67	11,50	1,48
ROK	1960	0,03	0,16	6,22	0,11	2,73	2,12	1,89	0,26
	1965	0,07	0,57	6,66	0,10	2,68	2,22	2,05	0,29
	1970	0,14	0,69	5,59	0,15	3,28	2,26	2,02	0,32
	1975	0,53	0,83	5,32	0,23	4,77	2,26	2,32	0,35
	1980	3,45	1,07	4,94	0,85	5,14	2,29	2,96	0,45
	1985	4,52	2,21	5,06	0,83	5,89	2,31	3,47	0,54
	1990	5,40	2,88	5,81	2,26	6,60	2,29	4,21	0,75
	1995	9,65	5,18	9,33	3,07	5,85	2,47	5,92	0,85
	2000	9,84	6,88	9,55	2,79	3,25	2,46	5,79	0,75
DPRK	1960	0,33	0,37	3,83	0,22	0,31	0,89	0,99	0,14
	1965	0,46	0,56	4,18	0,31	0,33	0,93	1,13	0,16
	1970	0,63	0,61	3,80	0,39	0,43	1,00	1,14	0,18
	1975	1,37	0,74	3,97	0,35	0,59	1,04	1,34	0,20
	1980	1,39	0,79	5,77	0,37	0,73	1,06	1,68	0,26
	1985	1,58	0,79	6,61	0,76	0,90	1,07	1,95	0,30
	1990	1,77	0,97	10,73	1,11	1,57	1,09	2,87	0,51
	1995	0,16	0,94	13,68	1,13	1,35	1,21	3,08	0,44
	2000	0,07	0,27	14,74	0,46	0,99	1,26	2,97	0,38

**Table 1: Evolution of COW Capabilities, 1960-2000, in %**

**\*Relative strength has 5 as a top score**

### From a Tripolar to Bipolar System

First, there is a move from tripolarity to bipolarity observable. During the Cold War there have been three distinct powers in the region, the Soviet Union, the USA, and China. Intuitively, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia ceased to be among the major powers. Instead the US and China together account for more than 60% of the capabilities from 1990 onwards. What are the effects of the move from tripolarity to bipolarity? At first, there should be a conceptual note on polarity here. The concept of polarity as such seems to be under-defined and can be understood to mean both (i) the number of poles within a given system and (ii) the number of alignments within a system.<sup>80</sup> While the first concept deals with individual countries only, the second regards existing blocs as single pole. In Cold War terms, this distinction would mean to regard the US and Soviet Union as poles or, alternatively, the NATO as well as the Warsaw Pact.



**Figure 2: Distribution of Capabilities, Major Power 1960-2003**

If taken together, one could observe that save the early 1990s the RUS-CHN-DPRK bloc outweighed the US-JPN-ROK bloc in material capabilities. This, however, can only be meaningful incorporate as to assume a stable alliance between Russia and China, which in fact did exist occasionally only.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, as the Cold War was not confined to East Asia the figures as such would not give a meaningful indication for the distribution of power beyond the region. For example, it does not take the capabilities of NATO members into account; a factor likely to have influence Soviet behaviour. Therefore, the analysis here deals with poles understood as individual countries. Regarded independently of each other the former Soviet Union ceased to be among the

<sup>80</sup>

Ibid. pp. 39-40

<sup>81</sup> A striking example of Sino-Soviet confrontation is the 1969 border clash.

major powers after 1990 as can be seen in figure 2. Thus, the region moved from a tripolar to a bipolar system.

In the scholarly literature there are supportive and opposing views about the stability of tripolar systems. Note, while stability is defined as “the preservation of all actors in the system” polarity can be understood as “the number of Great Powers in the system”.<sup>82</sup> Unipolar and bipolar systems are assumed to be the most stable systems because balancing is achieved through internal – say domestic build-up – rather than external means – say alliance formation –, which involve lower transaction costs and higher certainty.<sup>83</sup> In contrast opinions diverge on the stability of the tripolar world. Schweller identifies that different interpretations on the meaning of tripolarity cause this friction. While advocates of stability regard tripolar systems generally as any triadic relationship, those in the instability camp regard tripolarity as three actors of roughly equal size.<sup>84</sup> Proponents of instability include Robert Gilpin, who posits that “almost all agree that a tripolar system is the most unstable configuration”<sup>85</sup> or Morton Kaplan arguing that two actors are likely to form an alliance to eliminate the third.<sup>86</sup> Supporting Kaplan, Waltz finds that “[t]wo of the powers can easily gang up on the third”.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, Schweller attributes the instability of tripolar systems to the odd number of powers. For him, it is “obvious that all even-numbered systems are capable of balance, while all odd-numbered systems are not”.<sup>88</sup> As a result, in cases in which the main actors are endowed with roughly equal capabilities, one can observe that bipolar systems, even debatable, tend to be more stable than tripolar systems. This allows for the conclusion that the East Asian region, *ceteris paribus*, enhanced its stability over the course of the last half century as it moved from a dangerous tripolar to a more predictable bipolar system in which China and the USA remain the two dominant powers.

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<sup>82</sup> Schweller, R. (1998) p. 42

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 44

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 41

<sup>85</sup> Gilpin, R. (1981) p. 235

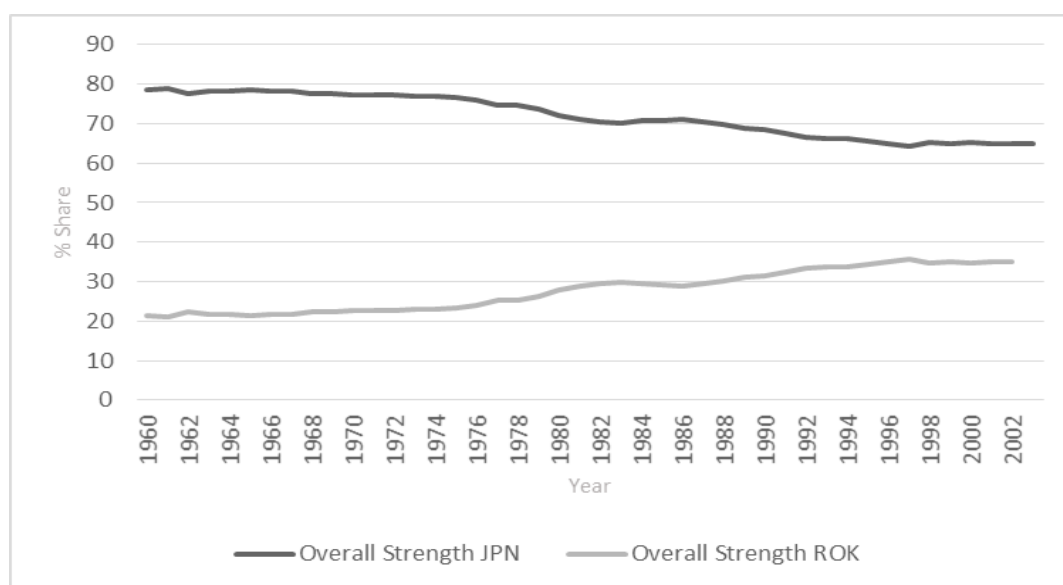
<sup>86</sup> Kaplan, M. (1957)

<sup>87</sup> Waltz, K (1979) p. 163

<sup>88</sup> Schweller, R. (1998) p. 42

### Increasing relative Power of Korea towards Japan

A second observation is a rise in the relative power of Korea vis-à-vis Japan. At the outset of 1960 the national capabilities of Korea approximated around 1.9% of capabilities in the region which contrasted with 7.3% for Japan. The dyadic power distribution evolved favourably for Korea as it improved to 5.5% of capabilities for Korea and 10.3% for Japan in 2003. Hence, the bilateral distribution ration of power for Korea improved from 26% to 53%. As can be seen in figure 3 the gap is narrowing.



**Figure 3: Distribution of COW Capabilities between ROK and JPN**

Indeed, Korea has experienced a rapid increase in nearly all political fields. The economy skyrocketed in the period of investigation and while GDP in 1970 was only around 8.1 Billion USD it stood at 1.128 Billion USD in 2012, an increase of 140 times in 40 years.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Korea ranks now one of the most industrialized countries in the world, symbolized by the accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996.<sup>90</sup> As such, the manufacturing base is remarkable, it ranks first in mobile phone production, second in semiconductors and shipbuilding and fifth in automotive production. The fourth rank in patent registration is showing the advance of its economy.<sup>91</sup> The fast industrialization, however, comes at a price, as the dependence of the economy on trade as well as the import of food and energy are significant.<sup>92</sup> With an economic rise Korea positioned itself in main international institutions. The

<sup>89</sup> See, Economic Statistic System of the Bank of Korea, retrieved November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, from: <http://ecos.bok.or.kr/>

<sup>90</sup> See, Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retrieved November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, from: <http://www.mofa.go.kr>

<sup>91</sup> KITA (2013)

<sup>92</sup> Korea's dependence on foreign trade stands at 94.5%, see KITA (2013); the food self-sufficiency stood at 27% in 2009, see Lee, S.-K. (2012). *South Korea External Strategy Qualms: Analysis of Overseas Agricultural Investment within the Global Food System*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Land Grabbing II, Ithaca, NY; of total energy consumption Korea imports 84% of its energy supply, see Calder, K. (2005). Korea's Energy

accession to OECD was followed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2006. The creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations 'plus 3' (ASEAN+3) platform resulted from an initiative of South Korea. Moreover, it engaged in regional security dialogue as member in the Six-Party Talks, the North East Asian Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), the North East Asia Security Dialogue (NEASED) and the North East Asian Cooperation Initiative (NACI). In addition, the country was supporting the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) tremendously until it was terminated in 2006.<sup>93</sup>

In direct comparison, Japan recognizes Korea as “influential in terms of security in the Asia-Pacific region”.<sup>94</sup> Table 2 shows a direct comparison on the strength according to military segment. The military build-up is especially astonishing in regard to the navy. Under the assumption that countering North Korea the military would centre on ground and air forces, the existence of a fleet of nearly half the tonnage of Japan is remarkable. Traditionally, Japan is regarded as maritime power while Korea in its history tended to put emphasis on ground forces.<sup>95</sup> Recent debate has sparked on the usefulness of a blue-water navy for the Korean national interest. In a direct conflict with the North the navy would represent a marginal factor only and could, in this light, be interpreted as a waste of resources. However, if seen through the lens of regional action a powerful navy might divert other threats and functions as a symbol of self-confidence.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of the new self-confidence was at the launching ceremony of the country’s first AEGIS destroyer at which president Roh Moo-Hyun warned of a potential military threat of Japan.<sup>97</sup>

	Ground Forces	Naval Vessels	Combat Aircraft
South Korea	547 000 Troops	190 Vessels 193 000 Tons	620 Aircraft
Japan	140 000 Troops	141 Vessels 452 000 Tons	410 Aircraft

**Table 2: Military Forces South Korea and Japan, adapted from The Military Balance 2013**

Thus, Korea today plays a crucial role as an economic stronghold, with an increasingly military sophistication and an active engagement in in regional security dialogues. So much as the famous

Insecurities. Comparative and Regional Perspectives. *Korea Economic Institute Special Studies Series*, No. 3

<sup>93</sup> For a good overview of the aspirations of South Korea, see Shim, D. (2009)

<sup>94</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense (2013) p. 4

<sup>95</sup> For a distinction between maritime powers and land based powers in East Asia, see: Bae, K. (2007) pp. 26-39

<sup>96</sup> For the aspirations of South Korea, see: Jung, S. (May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007). Korea Launches AEGIS Warship. *Korea Times*; the argument that it is a waste of resources: Mizokami, K. (October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013). *South Korea's New Navy is Impressive ... and Pointless*, retrieved November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from: <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/513b93e52b84> ; for a more differentiated discussion, see: Farley, R. (October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013). Why South Korea's Building an Impressive Navy. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from: <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/10/24/why-south-koreas-building-an-impressive-navy/>

<sup>97</sup> Kimura, K. (2011) p. 24

notion of Korea as 'Shrimp amongst Whales' was applicable half a decade ago so much we have to regard Korea now as an influential country in the region, especially towards Japan. As the COW figures suggest the material capabilities increased significantly and the rise in military expenditure was accompanied by an increase in sophistication of the military. Moon Chung-in and Lee Jin-young argue that in the 1970s Korea's procurement policy was mainly centred on conventional arms, such as armoured vehicles or short-range artillery. In the 1990s, however, it approached the characterisation of the revolution in military affairs (RAM) pioneered by the US, which refers to the application of “multiple innovations in technology, device, system, operational concept, and military doctrine and force structure [*sic*]”<sup>98</sup>, manifested in the investment in surveillance and networks, such as the acquisition of AWACS.<sup>99</sup> As a second tendency, South Korea is aiming to increase its own military technology and therewith reduces the importance of military technology transfers from abroad. Therefore, they argue, the South Korean military industry was better able to enhance self-sufficiency than other second-tier military countries. Moon attributes the incentives in the “waning US hegemonic power” in the region.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, be it in military technology, international outreach, or raw capability data, South Korea advanced rapidly, effectively creating a more favourable power balance between Korea and Japan.

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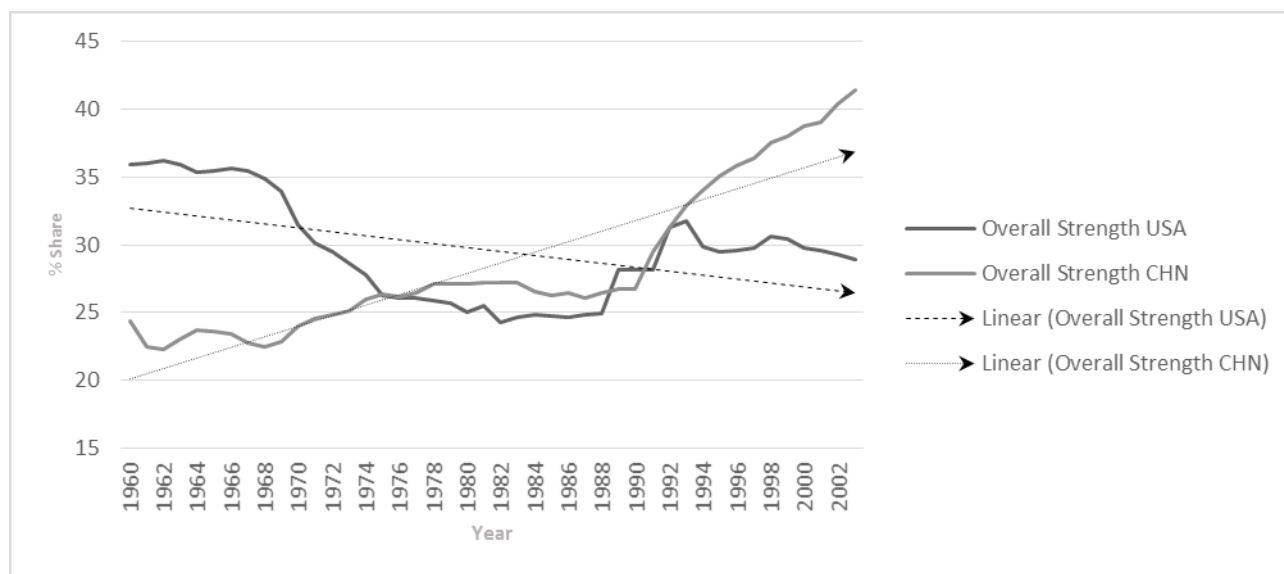
<sup>98</sup> Moon, C. & Lee, J. (2008) p. 118

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Moon, H. (2010) p. 101

## A Rising China

The third observation is a relative decline in the capabilities of the US in light of a rising China. China being the strongest state in the region since 1993 the US declined from a level on par to only 70% of Chinese capabilities. This trend seems to continue despite the 'Asian Pivot' envisioned by US president Obama as the economic rise of China continuous.<sup>101</sup> The diverging trend line between US and Chinese capabilities in figure 4 indicates this development.



**Figure 4: COW Trend Evolution US and CHN, 1960-2003**

How is this perceived by South Korea and Japan? In overall terms, China with 41% of capabilities in 2003 was equating the combined capabilities of the US, Japan and South Korea. The effects are, however, regarded differently in Japan and Korea. The Japanese Defense White Paper 2013 stresses the development of Chinese military capabilities combined with unclear intentions as “matter of concern for Japan”.<sup>102</sup> In contrast, the Korean pendant highlights the cooperation between Korea and China and is more cautious in its formulation of security threats describing them as resulting from “competition for regional ascendancy”.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, Korea rather identifies a security threat in the “perceptions of past histories, territorial disputes, and demarcation of territorial waters”<sup>104</sup>, a claim directly connected to the Korea-Japan contestations on the Dokdo/Takeshima confrontation as well as Japan's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. While for both countries China is the biggest trading partner with about 18% of total trade each<sup>105</sup>, security relations are different. In South Korea

<sup>101</sup> The Asian Pivot was first elaborated upon in Clinton, H. (2011)

<sup>102</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense (2013) p. 3

<sup>103</sup> Korean Ministry of Defense (2012). p. 14

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>105</sup> For South Korea it is 17.7%, see Commission of the European Communities (2013a); for Japan it is 18.1%, see Commission of the European Communities (2013b)



relations with China are seen through a lens of rational gains. Robert Sutter attributes five motives for enhanced cooperation with Beijing for Seoul, namely (i) facilitation of trade and investment, (ii) deal with contingencies of North Korean threat, (iii) guard against a potential assertive China, (iv) broaden foreign policy options, and (v) act as mediator in the region.<sup>106</sup> Zhiquan Zhu argues that the rise of China alongside a reduced level of overall threat “helped South Korea to pursue a more independent foreign policy”.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, Japanese tensions with China have risen not only due to the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute. The Japanese Defense White Paper regards the motives of China as “to weaken the effective control of other countries over the islands which China claims its territorial right over”.<sup>108</sup> Japan recently even threatened to open fire on unarmed Chinese drones intruding Japanese airspace.<sup>109</sup> Overall, as Paul Smith argues, the relationship between the two states is overshadowed by (i) the islet dispute; (ii) historical grievances; (iii) the status of Taiwan; (iv) the declining leadership role of Japan in the region; and (v) the Japan-US alliance. Moreover, it is in this period, for the first time in history that both Japan and China are strong at the same time. This, could result in increasing competition.<sup>110</sup>

Summarizing, even though a rising China possess similar challenges in regard to material capabilities the opportunities and responses by Japan and Korea are different. While for Japan the aspirations of a rising China pose a direct challenge to its security it opens up possibilities for South Korea to diversify its foreign policy.

### *Impact of the Changed Security Context on Japan-Korea Relations*

While the security framework remained relatively fixed during the times of the Cold War, there were tremendous changes in its aftermath. Where, according to Cha's model, patron commitment was the main driver of confrontation and friction the empirical findings above signify a different causality. A more independent South Korea confronted with an increasing menu of foreign policy choices experienced a rise in relative power alongside a reduction in overall threat. Notwithstanding specific instances in time as identified by Cha, such as Nixon's Guam doctrine or the asymmetrical fear of abandonment during the Sino-American détente, overall there are three developments in the long run – a move from tripolarity to bipolarity; a relative increase of Korea towards Japan; and a rising China. A long run investigation into the effects of these three issues allows for a better elimination of other factors involved. There are three lines of argumentation on how these

<sup>106</sup> Sutter, R. (1997)

<sup>107</sup> Zhu, Z. (2007) p. 74

<sup>108</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense (2013) p. 42

<sup>109</sup> Germis, C. (October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013). Streit um Senkaku-Inseln. Japan droht mit Abschuss chinesischer Drohnen. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from: <http://www.faz.net>

<sup>110</sup> Smith, P. (2010)

developments can diminish the cooperation benefits of Japan for Korea.

First, in line with the predictions of Hwang's 'colonial-legacy model' South Korea seems to internally balance against Japan with the establishment of a sophisticated defence industry and the aspiration of a blue-water navy. Of course, one could argue that the military build-up is mainly designed to enhance its security vis-à-vis a nuclear capable North Korea. However, from the COW dataset it becomes clear that the South Korean military is outweighing the North by a factor of two. In addition, the build-up of naval capabilities is unlikely to be directed towards the North but rather represents an increasing aspiration to become a power in the region. Therefore, Korea and Japan enter, over and all, in a more competitive environment which, of course, is mitigated by a common ally but equally by a more assertive Korea willing to defend what it perceives to be its national interest.

Second, an overall reduction in the threat level reduces the necessity of cooperation between the two countries. While North Korea was typically described as 'main enemy' by the Korean Ministry of National Defence, the Defence White Paper 2012 tuned down the wording describing only the North Korean military and regime as 'enemies of the South'.<sup>111</sup> A second source of reduced threat level is the increasing cooperation with China. With the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992 cooperation increased between the two countries, leading to closer cooperation regarding North Korea, the planning of a free trade agreement (FTA), and warm relations. This reduced threat level makes cooperation with Japan less needed as the benefits reduce in light of ongoing disputes on territory and war time history. This argumentation is in line with Yoon's 'net threat model' as a reduction in overall threat should lead to a more confrontational outlook of Korea's Japan policy.

Third, a fundamental change is observable in the bilateral relationship. While it could be described as hierarchical in the early period it evolved into a horizontal relationship. This has important effects on the bargaining power of the two. Seoul was very cautious when Japan renegotiated the US-Japan treaty as to include the Korea clause in 1969. Today, in times of reduced threat level and the capabilities to defend itself Japan is about to lose these bargaining chips in the bilateral relations. Overall, while in the 1960s Japan was able to provide five times the capabilities of Korea to a conflict it would only double them today. As a consequence, it should be observed that the cooperative outlook of Korea should reduce as the benefits Japan can provide diminish. This is equally expressed in a change in the economic relationship. As discussed, the China factor is a crucial determinant in this regard. Notwithstanding the historical alliance and close connection with

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<sup>111</sup> Officially North Korea is referred to as follows: "The North has posed serious threats to the South's security with its large-scale conventional military forces, development and enhancement of WMDs, including nuclear weapons and missiles, and constant armed provocations as shown by the attack on the ROK ship *Cheonan* and the artillery firing at *Yeonpyeong* Island. As long as such threats continue, the main agents of the provocative acts, which are the North Korean regime and its military, will remain enemies of the South", see Korean Ministry of Defense (2012) p. 24

the US, South Korea is aspiring a more active role regarding the economic integration of the region.<sup>112</sup> For example, while it was initially envisioned to form a trilateral free trade agreement between China, Korea and Japan (CJK FTA) talks stalled due to historical animosities as well as territorial disputes between China and Korea confronting Japan. Acknowledging the competitive character of economic integration, this paper interprets an alternatives to a CJK FTA in the bilateral China-South Korea FTA.<sup>113</sup> In the beginning of September 2013 both countries tentatively agreed on a tariff reduction of 90% and turned to 'sensitive issues'.<sup>114</sup> This stage is far ahead of CJK FTA negotiations despite being initiated at a later stage.<sup>115</sup> Choi Nakgyoon argues, that the motives of the Korean government rest next to economic gains in the achievement of a more independent foreign policy as well as enhancing the diplomatic and geopolitical relationship between Korea and China, mainly by creating deeper interdependence as well as "help the Chinese leadership and private sector to realize the importance of political as well as military security in the Korean Peninsula [sic]".<sup>116</sup> Still, the rapprochement of Korea and China should not suggest an abandonment of the US as strategic ally in the near future. Some even call for an engagement of the US on the Korean Peninsula even after unification.<sup>117</sup> However, as the China factor seems to be understudied in the existing models it should receive a more prominent role here.

These points are not to suggest that cooperation between Japan and Korea becomes superfluous. After all, both countries share similar security concerns and, accordingly, should cooperate more as neorealist logic would predict. The regional developments in the relative distribution of capabilities do indicate, however, that the benefits of cooperation are likely to diminish, effectively causing a deterioration of Korea's Japan policy. These developments work as a break mechanism in the long run and allow other factors to exert influence. After all, the international system sets the stage only while the states are responsible to perform the play. Therefore, cooperation was never a forgone conclusion and today is less 'commanded' by the international system than ever before. Different models have been suggested in the scholarly literature on the high volatility in bilateral relations between Korea and Japan. Yet, they do neither take the changed security environment into account nor the reduction in the pressure to cooperate. Despite clear cut long-term developments there have been times of rising cooperation or friction

<sup>112</sup> Since the end of the Cold War a more independent foreign policy evolved, see for example the *Nordpolitik* of Roh Tae-woo, the Sunshine policy of Kim Dae-jung was equally a move for more independence as it was conflicting with the US deterrence policy of the time, the mediator role envisioned by Roh Moo-hyun or the *Trustpolitik* of Park Geun-hye, see for a good overview Shim, D. (2009)

<sup>113</sup> Another alternative could be an ASEAN+2 FTA

<sup>114</sup> MK Business News (September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013). *Seoul, Beijing agree on interim 90% Trade liberalization*, retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from: <http://news.mk.co.kr/newsRead.php?year=2013&no=816756>

<sup>115</sup> In contrast, CJK FTA just completed the joint feasibility study, see [www.mofa.go.kr/ENG](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG)

<sup>116</sup> Choi, N. (2012) p.32

<sup>117</sup> See for example the comments of Wang, F. at the Korea Institute for Unification (KINU) Forum 2011, see Choi, J. (Ed.) (2011). *US-China Relations and Korean Unification*. KINU Report, accessible from: <http://www.kinu.or.kr>

that happened in a relatively short period of time. These short term fluctuations cannot be understood by investigating the long term capabilities alone. However, they set the stage on which the other factors, be it ally commitment, perceived threat, historical antagonism or domestic state power, need to be analysed from. In this vein, they are the benchmark for any investigation to start with. From the discussion above it follows that the threshold for effective cooperation between Japan and Korea has been risen over the last 50 years. How this turns out to affect decision-making at specific conjunctures in time is discussed in the following case studies.

## 6.2 *Cases*

While the above analysis was able to shed light onto the general tendency of a shifting balance of power favouring the Republic of Korea vis-à-vis Japan over the last 50 years, these general developments are difficult to apply to an individual decision at a certain moment in time. As neoclassical realism taught us, the crucial stage is how these international commands are translated into actual politics. The international environment is of tantamount importance here, as it sets the stage for any action to be performed. However, to enrich the scholarly discussion on ROK's Japan policy there will be four case studies in the following. They are divided into an examination of the specific international environment at that time, an investigation into the main developments of ROK's Japan policy as well as one section on the domestic structure to assess state power. This framework allows for a comparison across the different cases. Two cases are chosen from the Cold War period to keep the external threat as constant as possible. One is the early phase of bilateral contact resulting into the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations. The second case deals with the period under the rule of Chun Doo-hwan, who ruled with iron fist and cracked down on the Korean opposition decisively. Moreover, the Chun period saw a slow approximation of Korean strength against Japanese capabilities. As there exists nothing like a stable distribution of power the relative strength of ROK towards Japan is discussed and traced. The two last cases are selected from the post-Cold War period as they fall into the time of a rising China and significantly reduced threat level. On the one hand, the immediate post-Cold War period in the early 1990s is investigated, as it is the manifestation of the first democratically elected government in Korea. This will be contrasted with the developments in the 2000s. Specifically, the example of the failure to reach an agreement on the GSOMIA treaty is suitable for comparing the times of early democracy with a surprising absent threat level to today's situation of a rising China and consolidated democracy. The case studies are structured according to the theoretical framework and begin with a discussion of the international environment of the time followed by an analysis of the main pattern of the dyadic

relationship between Korea and Japan. The final section of each case study is designated to investigate domestic changes for their impact on the bilateral relationship. Afterwards the cases are compared identifying the impact of the international environment, the bilateral distribution of power, government insulation and elite coherence.

### *6.2.1 Military Junta and the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations*

The interested commentator might speculate how, despite the pre-eminent dichotomy between the free world and the communist world, there have been two separate system of collective defence in the so-called free world. While in Europe there is a NATO with relatively fixed command structure, clear commitments and legal security such a provision, despite similar threats and overarching US commitment, did not emerge in East Asia. Of course, one could cite the historical antagonism in the region, specifically surrounding Japanese war time past, as a reason. Cha, however, made a more convincing point. The fundamental difference between Europe and East Asia, he argues, rested in different motivations and objectives of the US vis-à-vis its regional allies. While a multilateral framework seemed most promising in Europe, the US preferred bilateral arrangements in East Asia to tamper revisionist mood, be it in Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek or in South Korea by Rhee Syng-man. This was thought to prevent individual allies to drag the US into a full blown war.<sup>118</sup> In Cha's words the US developed a hub-and-spokes system with “no apparent connections between the 'spokes'”.<sup>119</sup> South Korea and Japan being two of those 'spokes' one might wonder why the US engaged the two to cooperate and pressured Seoul and Tokyo heavily to formalize their diplomatic ties until 1965. What has changed the US regional strategy in East Asia?

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<sup>118</sup> Cha, V. (2009) pp. 161-167

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 161

### International Environment

The Korean War neither saw a decisive loser nor a clear winner but only a permanently divided country. The world in 1960 seemed static with two power blocs opposing each other. Combined the capabilities of the US, Japan and ROK with a relative strength of 6.28 nearly matched those of the Soviet Union, North Korea and China with 7.64. Table 3 illustrates this balance.

JPN 1.02	ROK 0.26	USA 5	↔	CHN 3.40	DPRK 0.14	RUS 4.10
6.28				7.64		

**Table 3: Distribution of COW capabilities, 1960**

However, two dynamics emerged that altered the fundamentals of the Cold War at the time. Since the Korean War, China increasingly acted independently from the Soviet Union in regional affairs. The split between the Soviet Union and China, partly a result of Khrushchev's doctrine of peaceful coexistence in 1956 widened in the 1960s with a series of incidents. During the 1959 Tibetan Uprising the Soviet Union gave moral support to the Tibetans while India granted the Dalai Lama asylum. Subsequently, Indian forces attempted to set up stations north of the McMahon Line<sup>120</sup>, which led to the Sino-Indian war in 1962. During the conflict the Soviet Union defended the Indian side diplomatically; a major blow to Sino-Soviet relations. China, now on a more independent path out of necessity, successfully tested nuclear weapons in October 1964 and May 1965 and as a result gained a status of a capable power to be calculated with in regional affairs.<sup>121</sup> The deteriorating relations caused tensions on the common border of China and the Soviet Union which ultimately lead to the border clash in 1969 between the two communist nations. As highlighted by Thomas Robinson, the 1969 clash is representative for the relationship as it “paralleled the downward course of Sino-Soviet relations as a whole”.<sup>122</sup>

Faced with a nuclear equipped and independently acting China the US had to alter its East Asia policy from a static bloc-en-bloc policy to a more flexible framework. According to Kil Yi, three points need to be highlighted in this regard. First, the altered power structure of the region made the security situation less predictable, thus closer cooperation between Korea and Japan was sought to balance against rising security challenges. Second, the challenges the US faced in Vietnam increased drastically. It was not before Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 and the dispatch of marines in 1965 that the Cold War turned into one of significant costs in both equipment and personnel. Looking for allied support not many countries in the region were able to provide substantial reinforcements in Vietnam. Of allies available, South Korea appeared the most

<sup>120</sup> The McMahon Line is the contested border between India and China

<sup>121</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 371-372

<sup>122</sup> Robinson, T. (1972) p. 1175

motivated to join in and engage in the war alongside US forces. South Korea already provided support to the French in Vietnam and understood Vietnam as a parallel case to the Korean peninsula. If South Vietnam was to fall, so the calculation, South Korea might be next. However, in its current economic and geopolitical situation the US understood that “South Korea was too isolated and fragile to intervene in a distant war”.<sup>123</sup> A possible solution would be logistical aid and diplomatic support by Japan. Third, the US was constantly providing large amounts of aid to South Korea in order to develop the country economically and invest in its army for defence reasons. In two decades after the independence from Japan South Korea received more than 6.6 Billion USD in military assistance and economic aid. In 1965 Korea alone received about 11% of all economic and military aid provided by Washington. The effects, however, were few with only marginal economic development. Out of a fear to divert American funds to South Korea endlessly Japan, as a reviving economic power in the region, was thought to provide a significant share and therewith support to American efforts in developing and defending South Korea. Yi named the changing security dynamics due to an independent and rising China; the escalation in Vietnam and the relieve from aid to Korea the US' 'far eastern problem' which could at best be resolved by a rapprochement of Japan and Korea.<sup>124</sup>

Given the deteriorating international environment with a China rising and a costly war in Vietnam combined with an increasing reluctance to keep paying for South Korea a rapprochement between Japan and Korea appeared to be the natural development for the US. It seems the international environment called for closer cooperation. The US recognizing the change in dynamics actively lobbied for the conclusion of a treaty. Indeed, Cha scrutinized the encouraging policy of the US in Tokyo and Seoul to find common ground and argues that the US throughout the negotiation process leading to the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations was facilitating rapprochement.<sup>125</sup> His analysis gives crucial insight and offers an explanation on why it took 14 years to conclude the treaty. However, Cha acknowledges that anti-treaty sentiments were present on both sides and inhibited earlier ratification. Effectively, domestic constraints were able to prevent the conclusion of the treaty amid its necessity commanded by the international environment. How have these domestic resistances been overcome in Korea? To answer this question one first needs to look at the specific character of the 1965 treaty, which can partly be explained by the relative strength of Korea towards Japan.

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<sup>123</sup> Yi, K. (2002) p. 647

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. pp. 636-644

<sup>125</sup> Cha, V. (1996)

### Relative Strength towards Japan

Between the early 1960s and 1970s the relationship between South Korea and Japan could hardly be any more unequal. A senior member of the US National Security Council put it in a nutshell when he described Korea in 1964 as a country “overpopulated, underskilled, poorly led, poverty ridden, corrupt, and embittered”.<sup>126</sup> In this early period the relationship between the two countries was a hierarchical one between senior and junior. In COW capabilities this is expressed in that the ROK in 1961 was only equipped with about 27% of capabilities of Japan a value that only slightly improved until 1970 when it reached 29%. In contrast, Japan was experiencing a remarkable economic boom. With GDP growth rates of 12.8% in 1963 and 13.7% in 1964 Japan was advancing rapidly, effectively overtaking West Germany as second largest economy in the free world in 1967.<sup>127</sup>

Making matters worse for South Korea the North was performing remarkably well in the early 1960s. Being economically stronger from the end of the Korean War, North Korea made significant progress internationally. It was especially successful in the year 1965 in which Kim Il-sung made advances to Indonesia, United Arab Republic (UAR), Algeria, Mali Guinea and Cambodia.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the DPRK was able to rely on security treaties with both Soviet Union and China since 1961.<sup>129</sup> Overall, the DPRK was better embedded in its alliance structure than was South Korea given the absence of a formal relationship with Japan.

As such, South Korea from a position of inferiority negotiated in a situation of economically need and a high dependence on outside support with an advancing Japan on the issues of maritime borders and 'reparations' for war time causalities and damages. The dispute on the maritime border resulted from the unilateral declaration of South Korea in January 1952 to establish a 60 mile exclusive maritime – and therewith fishing – zone off the Korean coast. Not only that the so-called 'Rhee line' or 'Peace line' was clearly in violation of international law, South Korea captured Japanese fishing vessels intruding Korean waters and sentenced around one thousand Japanese fishermen to prison terms as well. A solution had to be found. At the same time Korea demanded substantial 'reparations' for the colonization period. While South Korea was demanding 2 Billion USD Japan was only willing to pay 50 Million USD.<sup>130</sup> A solution for these diverging demands was crucial to establish formal relations. In an international environment commanding cooperation the

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<sup>126</sup> Quoted in: Yi, K. (2002) p. 642

<sup>127</sup> Lee, C. (1985) p. 52- 69

<sup>128</sup> Note, during Japanese colonization the main industrial base was in the North while the South was primarily agricultural in outlook. Despite the massive destruction the Korean War caused the DPRK was able to rebuild its infrastructure and economy relatively quickly. For a contemporary and lively discussion on the differences between the ROK and DPRK, see: Kim, E. (1966)

<sup>129</sup> Bae, K. (2007) p. 368

<sup>130</sup> Lee, C. (1985)p. 37-55



1965 Treaty on Basic Relations solved these issues. Without elaborating on the detailed negotiation process, the 'Rhee line' was replaced by a twelve-mile exclusive zone and a joint fishing zone. In return, Japan provided needed foreign capital in form of grants and loans as understood as compensation for the colonization period. Note that in the negotiations, Park Chung-hee and his chief negotiator Kim Jong-pil were focused on the compensation payments and only to a lesser degree on a formal apology for war-time wrongdoings.<sup>131</sup> The more it comes as a surprise that the 'compensation' payments within the treaty between Japan and the Philippines have been higher than in the Korean-Japan one. Notwithstanding engagement by private entities the Philippines officially received 'reparations' amounting to 550 Million USD while South Korea received 500 Million USD 'grants' and 'loans' only (300 Million USD in 'assistance grants' and 200 Million USD in long-term loans) earmarked "conducive to the economic development of the Republic of Korea".<sup>132</sup> Note, the Philippines not only received more in absolute payments but indirectly received an apology by labelling the payments officially 'reparations'. This clearly indicates the weak bargaining position and the dire need for foreign capital of South Korea at that time. Indeed, after establishing diplomatic ties the trade between the countries flourished effectively leading to what will be later known as 'Miracle on the Han river'.

Therefore, the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations was forged in an environment of rising threats in the region and in content resembled very much the hierarchical relationship between Japan as senior and Korea as junior. However, one needs to shed light upon domestic components in order to understand how domestic anti-treaty sentiments were overcome. The ROK government was able to change its Japan policy from the confrontational stance of the 1950s and the Rhee line policy to a more cooperative posture leading to the conclusion of the necessary 1965 treaty.

### Domestic State Power

With regard to the 1965 treaty the decisive question seems not to be *if* there had to be such a treaty but more *how* this treaty could be reached. Likewise, the position of South Korea vis-à-vis Japan made up for a weak bargaining position for Seoul given its dire need for outside support both financially to pump its economy and politically to engage in the War in Vietnam. One could argue, that following the split of the communist world and the nuclear tests of China the region was enormously threatening for the two countries. This seems plausible, but does not preclude a precise date for the conclusion of the treaty. In this regard, US ambassador to Korea Edwin Reischauer

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 49-55

<sup>132</sup> There is some confusion regarding the precise amount of payments. The figures indicated refer to the treaty text as such. In contrast, Yi, K. (2002) incorporates 300 Million USD commercial loans in the Japan-Korea agreement and 250 Million USD in long-term loans for the Philippines. Still, even under this conditions the Philippines would be better off.

correctly identified the main obstacle in the “the very great hurdles of party conflict and public opposition in Korea”.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, an investigation into the domestic power politics of Korea seems worthwhile. In the following it will be argued that the capacity and autonomy of the government from society helps to understand this puzzle. How was the South Korean government able to overcome these two significant hurdles Reischauer highlighted?

Crucial is the military coup of Park Chung-hee on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1961. Park seized power by moving a small division of soldiers into Seoul. Notably, he did this without prior authorization of the US military command and therewith showed the ability of the Korean army to act independently despite formal 'command authority' of the United Nations Command.<sup>134</sup> Before, mainly democratically elected presidents of Korea, were bound by what is best illustrated with a National Assembly resolution on Korea-Japan relations of February 1961. Accordingly any bilateral cooperation should (i) result from a gradual expansion of diplomatic ties, (ii) not question the 60-miles Rhee line, (iii) not be conducted before Japan apologizes and pays reparations for damages inflicted during the colonial period, and (iv) not harm domestic industries.<sup>135</sup> The Park government, until 1971 elected formally by general suffrage, understood that its legitimacy was resting on quick economic development. Surprisingly, it was able to drop the demands on the Rhee line and the question of apology in favour of economic assistance. How was this possible when prior presidents had to seek an apology as centrepiece for any diplomatic ties? Showing the contrast in resolve: When former president Rhee Syng-man was asked for Japanese assistance in the Korean War he responded decisively that “in such an event he [Rhee] would conclude a truce with the North Korean Communists to repel the Japanese”.<sup>136</sup> The ambiguity was reciprocal as the Japanese ruling elite, aware of the need for formal cooperation between Japan and Korea due to geopolitical and economic reasons, thought the military junta as the best partner available. Calling the coup 'fortunately', Japanese premier Kishi Nobusuke campaigning for cooperation among the Japanese emphasised:

“South Korea is under a military regime where a small number of leaders under Park Chung Hee can decide things. Even if Japan exerted itself and gave a great sum of money, South Korea will never be satisfied on the compensation issue. So, if [we] persuade Chairman Park at a certain level, [that will be all]. They have no National Assembly. Even if the newspaper opposed it, Chairman Park can seal them off.”<sup>137</sup>

What has changed between the Rhee administration and the military junta of Park that made rapprochement easier?

First, there was a difference in elite cohesion. Rhee's government was pre-occupied to battle

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Cha, V. (1996) p. 133

<sup>134</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 50-51

<sup>135</sup> Lee, C. (1985) p. 47

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Lee, C. (1985) p. 47

communist forces both on the outside and inside. It had to fight against pro-communist guerrillas mainly from impoverished peasantry as well as against infiltrating North Korean armed and well trained fighters who crossed into South Korea along the Taebaek mountain range in the east.<sup>138</sup> Similar, from 1956 to 1960 president Rhee, and vice president from 1956 to 1960 Chang Myon had different approaches towards Korea's Japan policy. While the former opted for outright confrontation the latter conducted tacit attempts to enter negotiations. For example, Chang released a Japanese collaborator to set up negotiations with Tokyo.<sup>139</sup> In contrast, Park once inaugurated ousted and replaced 36.000 state employees, around 10% of the bureaucracy, to infuse into the state apparatus "disciplined, young, and eager workers".<sup>140</sup> Likewise he retired the existing ruling elite of first generation political leaders.<sup>141</sup> Elite cohesion was also increased by Park's membership in the *Hanahwoe* which increasingly took grip on political and military key positions. The *Hanahwoe* was a military network within the Korean army of former classmates of the first graduation class. John Oh describes the association as a "mutual promotion group with underlying political ambitions".<sup>142</sup> Perhaps it might be understood best as clique of like-minded military officials that gained power as a group through concerted action. Under Park members of the *Hanahwoe* were to take over key positions of society and economy leading. They headed, for instance, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) and the Economic Planning Board (EPB).<sup>143</sup> Therewith, Park could rest his rule on a considerably more coherent decision-making elite than Rhee. From the bottom of bureaucracy to the top, Park was able to install like-minded individuals and therewith enhance elite cohesion and decision-making capacity of the government. Thus, Park was able to rest on a decisive military leadership matching his personal background of a military general. Table 4 illustrates this point, as all key positions in the 1969 government have been filled with military individuals effectively enhancing Park's power position.

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<sup>138</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 31-37

<sup>139</sup> Sun, J. (2012) p. 91-95

<sup>140</sup> Oh, J. (1999) p. 54

<sup>141</sup> Yi, K. (2002) p. 649

<sup>142</sup> Oh, J. (1999) p. 77

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 54

Department	Name	Rank
The President of the Republic	Park Chung-hee	General, Army
Presidential Secretariat Senior Secretaries (Political Affairs)	Kim Sang-bok	Lt. General, Army
Civil Affairs	Yu Song-won	Brig. General, Army
Public Information	Kang Sang-uk	Brig. General, Army
Protocol	Cho Sang-ho	Colonel, Army
General Affairs	Kim Won-hui	Brig. General, Army
Central Intelligence Agency Director	Kim Kye-won	Lt. General, Army
The Prime Minister	Chung Il-gwon	General, Army
The Minister of Defence	Chung Nae-hyok	Lt. General, Army
The Minister of Home Affairs	Park Kyong-won	Lt. General, Army
The Minister of Construction	Yi Han-rim	Lt. General, Army
The Minister of Transportation	Park Son-yop	General, Army
The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry	Cho Si-hyong	Maj. General, Army
The Chairman, Committee of Agriculture and Forestry, the National Assembly	Yi Chong-gun	Brig. General, Army
The Chairman, Committee on Commerce and Industry, the National Assembly	Kil Chong-sik	Colonel, Army
The Chairman, Committee of Foreign Affairs, the National Assembly	Cha Chi-chol	Army
The Chairman, Committee on Home Affairs, the National Assembly	Yi Sang-mu	Colonel, Army
The Chairman, Judiciary Committee, the National Assembly	No Chee-pil	Brig. General, Army
The Chairman, Committee on National Defense, the National Assembly	Min Pyong-hwon	Lt. General, Army
The Chairman, Committee on Steering and Planning, the National Assembly	Yi Pyong-whi	Colonel, Army

**Table 4: Key Political Positions, 1969, adopted from Kim, S. (1971) pp. 162-163**

A second important feature of the Park government is the increasing insulation from society which lead to an increase in the capacity to conduct independent foreign policy. To gain decisive control over society and economy Park restructured the governmental apparatus along two branches. First, the KCIA as instrument for coercion and control was established on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1961. Only afterwards on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1961 the EPB was created, effectively, centralizing and concerting the economic and financial sector.<sup>144</sup> While the EPB was envisioned to steer economic development positively, the KCIA, headed by Park's former comrades of the *Hanahwoe*, should muzzle the opposition. The main opposition at that time was clearly the intelligentsia and students. Having ousted former president Rhee in the 1960 student uprising the force of intellectuals could, at times, be decisive. Struggling against the military coup of Park, universities became the hub of the opposition. Two leading figures emerged that would shape the Korean opposition movement and beyond. On the one

<sup>144</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 51-53

hand, Kim Young-sam leading the moderate opposition and, on the other hand, Kim Dae-jung heading the radical faction.<sup>145</sup> The two were meant to shape the course of Korean politics for the next 30 years as main opposition figures.

Despite the attempts to limit the opposition it continued to represent a major force against the conclusion of the 1965 treaty. As the remarks of Reischauer show, the US clearly understood that the most significant problem for the conclusion of the treaty rested with domestic opposition in Korea. Therefore, the US government actively tried to mediate between the government and opposition and struggled to convince leading figures of the dire need for diplomatic cooperation with Japan. To calm the Korean public US embassy employees meet with opposition leaders, e.g. Yun Po-sun of the Civil Rule Party, in Korea. There they threatened that any undermining of Park's position or opposition to a normalization of relations with Japan would be followed by a reduction of US aid. Therewith, US support for Park “gave the ROK president the confidence to brave fierce domestic opposition to the treaty.”<sup>146</sup> In the initial negotiation process, Park made use of the secret and informal channel established by his predecessor Chang Myon. As the democratic government under Chang, the Park leadership was sensitive to public opinion and tried to conduct the negotiations secretly through talks of KCIA director Kim Jong-pil. Kim Jong-pil managed to agree tentatively with Japanese counterparts on the amount of money provided by Japan to Korea. Once these secret negotiations surfaced, however, Park was urged to remove Kim from his duties first temporarily and finally completely in June 1964. This move was intended to calm the public that was rallying against the tentative agreement which was perceived as ungracefully low payments and surrendering of national pride.<sup>147</sup> Strikingly, the US government eager to secure a deal exerted pressure on Park to remove Kim from the negotiations. As such, the US embassy expressed their discontent and recommended that “it would cause a great deal of trouble for ROK-Japan negotiations and political stability in Korea if KCP [Kim Chong-Pil = Kim Jong-pil] returned before the ROK-Japan negotiations were ended”.<sup>148</sup> Despite sacrificing leading government figures and strong control over society through the KCIA, opposition mounted in the immediate prelude to the signing of the treaty. Initially planned to be ratified on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1965 it had to be postponed in light of massive protests all over the country in general and in Seoul in particular. Two obstacles to the final conclusion of the treaty were imminent. First protests across the country sparked. In the beginning, they were directed against what was perceived as undue interference by the US.<sup>149</sup> In March 1964 students were rallying in front of the US embassy in central Seoul demanding

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 59

<sup>146</sup> Cha, V. (1996) p. 138

<sup>147</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 49-55

<sup>148</sup> Cited in Cha, V. (1996) p. 136

<sup>149</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 49-55

“Yankee, Keep Silent!”.<sup>150</sup> This, however, was an expression of dismay with the envisioned treaty and from March 1965 onwards massive demonstrations across the country “beyond the control of Park's police” threatened the ratification of the treaty.<sup>151</sup> Two strategies have been pursued by Park to crack down on the opposition. In August 1965, he (i) send troops to top universities to silence intellectual leaders and (ii) declared martial law over Seoul. Memories of the successful 1960 uprising against Rhee Syng-man seemed to materialize again. Yet, this time crucial support for Park came from the US side. Before declaring martial law Park requested permission from General Hamilton Howze, commander of US forces in Korea, to make use of the army in order to enforce martial law. Howze granted permission to send two divisions into Seoul in order to restore order.<sup>152</sup> These measures effectively silenced the opposition and allowed him to enforce the ratification of the treaty despite massive upheaval across the country. Eventually it needed a government that was able to enforce foreign policy decisions by force to 'translate' the international pressure into foreign policy.

Given the adverse international environment as well as the pressure of the US the rapprochement between South Korea and Japan seemed to be mandatory. However, as can be seen from the discussion on elite cohesion and government insulation, the treaty could only be ratified once the government was able to conduct Japan policy independently from society. It needs to be highlighted, that the military was necessary to crack down on the opposition to enforce the treaty. Park understood that his legitimacy rested upon economic growth and needed outside capital to fulfil the desire of the people. In this regard, he was not only able but also willing to sacrifice on national objects of pride, such as demanding an apology or insisting on the Rhee line, for economic assistance. In the aftermath, the unrepentant tone of the 1965 treaty caused many Koreans to believe that “Japan is coming again”<sup>153</sup> but the Park government was able to understand the need for cooperation resulting from international and domestic needs. Table 5 summarizes the findings for the early 1960s.

	Int. Environment	Power Balance ROK-JPN	Elite Cohesion	Domestic Insulation	ROK's Japan policy
Mid-1960s	++	++	++	++	Cooperative
Legend: -- strong pressure to act confrontational - pressure to act confrontational o ambivalent + pressure to act cooperatively ++ strong pressure to act cooperatively					

**Table 5: Foreign Policy Setting in the mid-1960s**

<sup>150</sup> Yi, K. (2002) p. 651

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 651

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p. 651

<sup>153</sup> Chung, J. (2011) p. 33

### 6.2.2 *The 'Most Dangerous Year' and Volatile Relations in the early 1980s*

Under Park's rule the economy flourished and the country experienced what will become known as 'Miracle on the Han River'. However, opposition to his regime mounted, eventually leading to his demise. His successor Chun Doo-hwan ruled by brutal force and steered the country through the difficult years in the early 1980s as the confrontation between the East and the West intensified and the Korean economy was yet again in dire need for foreign capital.

#### International Environment

After the détente period of the 1970s the Cold War started anew into what could be labelled the 'new Cold War' in the period leading up to Gorbachev's inauguration. For Washington there were detrimental developments in the late 70s when Soviet influence was on the advance in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Angola and Cambodia. In 1979 the Khomeini revolution deprived the US of one of its key allies in Central Asia. Moreover, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets in 1979 resulted in an alteration of the power dynamics in the region and the world. Crucial, these instances have been connected to a rise in Soviet influence abroad triggering US president Reagan to label the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" in 1983. At the same time, the US was experiencing a recession being rooted, as interpreted by Reagan, in oversized government involvement and expansionary fiscal policy. As he took office in 1981 Reagonomics became the new keyword of American economic policy leading to a revival of the economy, especially in the high tech field. As response to the rising threat of the Soviet Union the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) was proposed in 1983 to shield the US from direct Soviet nuclear threat and alter the balance of deterrents in the Cold War game.<sup>154</sup> The findings of the COW database confirm this power relation. As can be seen figure 2 above, the power capabilities deteriorated relatively between 1970 and 1982 with the Soviet Union tacking the lead and China overtaking the US the late 1970s. How did this change in the power balance affect regional developments?

To respond to rising Soviet power the US unlike in the détente era of the early 1970s chose a confrontational path. The words of US Admiral James Watkins are representative for this change in policy: "Our feeling that an aggressive defence, if you will, characterised by forward movement, early deployment of forces, aggressiveness on part of our ships, is the great deterrent that we can have."<sup>155</sup> Practically, the policy was meant to shake the pacific area. With perhaps the greatest armada in history the US conducted its large scale manoeuvre FleetEx in 1983, intruding into Soviet

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<sup>154</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 377-379

<sup>155</sup> Quoted in Hersh, S. (1986) p. 18

territory by air and sea and providing a conclusive picture of maritime might.<sup>156</sup> In its immediate aftermath Korean Air Lines Flight 007 (KAL 007) was shoot down by the Russian air force after intruding into Soviet territory leading to a low in Cold War relations. Koreans in this regard already experienced a shot down of a commercial air plane Korean Air Lines Flight 902 (KAL 902) in 1978 by Soviet forces. However, unlike 1978 the Cold War dynamics were at a low with some commentators describing the year 1983 as the 'Most dangerous year of the Cold War'.<sup>157</sup>

At the same time the significant rise of Soviet influence affected Chinese foreign policy. As of the late 1970s China overtook the US as second most capable state in the region. Overall, this had profound impact on the triadic relationship. First, the dyadic relationship between the US and China have turned from stagnant to frosty. While the general relations have improved in light of a common Soviet threat two striking points remained unresolved. First, the issue of Taiwan. The US weapon sales repeatedly caused friction between Washington and Beijing. Unimpressed, the US continued to deliver high end technology to Taiwan. In the memorandum on the state visit to China in 1984 Reagan expressed the aid to Taiwan with the following rational:

“[W]e should reconfirm our moral and legal commitment to maintain unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan, including the continued sale of defensive arms. We believe the resolution of the Taiwan issue is a matter for the Chinese people to settle themselves, and our only concern is that it be done peacefully. A continued peaceful approach by Beijing to Taiwan is fundamental to our position on Taiwan arms sales and to the whole framework of our relations.”<sup>158</sup>

Arguably, the engagement of the US in Taiwan was mirrored in the support of the nuclear weapons program in Pakistan by China which followed the test of India's nuclear deterrent 'Smiling Buddha' in 1974. US intelligence in 1983 came to the conclusion that China not only provided organisational support but that “cooperation has taken place in the area of fissile material production and possibly also nuclear device design”.<sup>159</sup> In light of the non-proliferation policy of the US this represented a second hurdle in the Sino-US relations.

While China was conducting a foreign policy contrary to US key objectives relations with the Soviet Union have been on a constant low too. The border dispute between the two countries has not been resolved and negotiations stalled. At the same time, the geopolitical rivalry between the two, now most capable states, continued. Despite Brezhnev's attempts to ease tensions with China, most prominently by acknowledging Chinese claims to Taiwan and recall territorial claims to Chinese land, bilateral relations could not take a positive spin. Deng Xiaoping identified 'three

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<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Hersh, S. (1986) p. 18

<sup>157</sup> Walsh, D. (May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013). 1983: The Most Dangerous Year. *History Network*, retrieved December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from: <http://hnn.us/article/151950>

<sup>158</sup> The White House (April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1984)

<sup>159</sup> Department of State (1983) p. 6



obstacles' in the relationship with Moscow. First, in the proxy war between Vietnam and Cambodia the Soviet Union supported Vietnam while China backed up the Cambodian side. Second, the "massive deployment of troops along [the] Sino-Soviet border"<sup>160</sup>, which posed a direct and significant threat to Chinese security. Third, the invasion of Afghanistan prompted the Chinese leadership to support the Mujahidin in their fight against the Soviet Union.<sup>161</sup> As such, China in distancing itself from both the Soviet Union and the US sought a more independent foreign policy from 1982 onwards.<sup>162</sup>

Summarizing, there are two distinct developments resulting from a change in power balance in East Asia. First, an increase in threat level through heightened tensions in the triadic relationship is visible. The likelihood of military clashes is testified by the proxy wars in Afghanistan and between Vietnam and Cambodia. The Korean peninsula being a third hotspot in the region, in such a dangerous situation, could have become another place of violence. Second, China's rise in material capabilities was followed by an outreach of aspiration to exert international influence and position itself on equal footing with the two other major power. How did Korea respond to these international developments and in what ways could Japan be of help?

### *Relative Strength towards Japan*

The relative position of Korea vis-à-vis Japan has changed since the ratification of the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations. While in the early 1960s Korea was clearly a junior to Japan the relationship in the early 1980s can best be described in terms of an older and younger brother. After the successful economic development initiated by Park Chung-hee Korea reached a level of modest prosperity, however, still being overshadowed by the Japanese economic success. Table 6 puts the figures for Japan and Korea into perspective and indicates the trade balance between the two countries as well as the share of Japan in the overall trade of South Korea. Next to the significant difference in GDP per capita the negative trade balance of South Korea is an obvious factor in the relationship as it represents a considerable drain on the developing Korean economy. At the same time, however, Japan, was the main trading partner of Korea with about 20% of all trade conducted. Sang-young Rhyu and Seoungjoo Lee by investigating the changing economic relationship between the two find that while Korea was following the Japanese economic model in the beginning it changed to more

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<sup>160</sup> Foreign Ministry of China, retrieved January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, from: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ziliao/3602/3604/t18018.htm>

<sup>161</sup> For a good overview of the impact of rising power of the Soviet Union in general and the invasion of Afghanistan in particular, see Hilali, A. (2001) pp. 326-329

<sup>162</sup> On the 12th Chinese Communist Party Congress it was declared to follow a more independent foreign policy on equal level to the US and the Soviet Union. Equally, the three obstacles have been raised here. For an overview of China's position and policy in the early 1980s, see Ziegler, C. (1993) pp. 58-85

independent path in the early 1980s due to government leadership of the economy, such as R&D promotion.<sup>163</sup>

	Korean GDP/Capita	Japanese GDP/Capita	Trade Balance in Billion USD	Japanese Share of Overall Trade
1980	1,647	9,308	-2,8	22%
1981	1,846	10,212	-2,9	21%
1982	1,938	9,429	-2,0	19%
1983	2,118	10,214	-2,9	19%
1984	2,307	10,787	-3,0	20%

**Table 6: Trade and GDP Data, compiled from the World Bank for GDP per capita in current US dollar and KITA for trade indicators, 2013**

Still, Korea lacked behind Japan especially in COW capabilities. When comparing the ratio of Japan to Korea, however, it becomes obvious that a change in the dyadic relationship is slowly taking place. While in 1965 Japan was endowed with about 3.7 times the capabilities of Korea this advance reduced to 2.4 times the capabilities in 1981. Moreover, the Korean military gained increasing tactical experience due to the annual ROK-US military exercise 'Team Spirit' first performed in 1976. Therefore, in capabilities and economic terms the bilateral relationship improved for South Korea. Still, due to the international environment the need for security cooperation increased.

The year 1983 was in both countries perceived as major threat. For example, the FleetEx manoeuvre was framed by the Japanese newspaper '*Asahi Shimbun*' in June 1984 as “a spring tide of Soviet-American arms race is washing the western Pacific and bathes Japan in significant way”.<sup>164</sup> Similar recognizing the threat in the region then ROK leader Chun Doo-hwan emphasised in a statement on departure for Japan in September 1984 the need for cooperation:

“The world today is clouded by instability and unpredictability due to political and military confrontations between the East and the West [...]. Under such circumstances, the Northeast Asian region, of which the Korean peninsula is part, is undergoing crucial changes: the political stance of the major countries and the power relations between them are being realigned. [...] In view of the lessons of the past and in response to this historical call, I will convey to the Japanese people, on this visit, your [the peoples] wish for Korea and Japan to become true neighbors.”<sup>165</sup>

In light of international requirements the two countries forged closer political ties but experienced friction over economic, democratic and historic issues. On the cooperative side rests the successful completion of a loan agreement of over 4 Billion USD in 1984 as well as the visit of Yasuhiro Nakasone in January 1983, which was the first official state visit of a Japanese premier since the

<sup>163</sup> Rhyu, S. & Lee, S. (2006) pp.195-214

<sup>164</sup> Bittord, W. & Sampson, A. (1984). Sinken auf eins-null-tausend. *Der Spiegel*, Vol. 40/1984

<sup>165</sup> Korean Overseas Information Service (1984) p. 11

end of the colonization period. These events happened despite a mutual climate of distrust in light of a history controversy, the questioning of Chun's legitimacy by Japan due to the incarceration of opposition leader Kim Dae-jung; and differences in North Korean threat assessment.<sup>166</sup> Further, the state visit of Chun to Japan in 1984 could be interpreted as positive signal as well.<sup>167</sup>

With the establishment of the autocratic regime of Chun Doo-hwan in 1979 and the subsequent massacre in the Korean city of Kwangju in 1980 significant distrust between the Japanese and Korean government arose. The Korean government trialled Kim Dae-jung as brain behind the uprising as well as for alleged charges during his exile in Tokyo prior to his kidnapping in 1973.<sup>168</sup> Subsequently, he was sentenced to death for political upheaval and violation of the National Security Law.<sup>169</sup> This ran contrary to the Japanese-Korean agreement which settled the kidnapping affair on grounds that Kim will be held not liable for charges before 1973. Moreover, the name of Kim Dae-jung was known to the wide Japanese public. Thus, it created serious difficulties for 1984 loan agreement as the Japanese were questioning the need to pop-up an autocratic regime in the name of national security.<sup>170</sup> While this was an issue that led to a more sceptical position in Japan a second point of disagreement emerged regarding the historical interpretation of the shared past that had profound effects on Korea's Japan policy. Both the Showa apology for the colonial misconduct of Japan in 1984, which was rejected by South Korea and the controversy surrounding the content of Japanese history textbooks sparked fierce feelings of grievances among the Korean public.<sup>171</sup> Interestingly, in contrast to Chinese response and the uproar in Korean public opinion, the government fearing interference in the ongoing loan negotiations calmed down the diplomatic tone.<sup>172</sup>

A further point of disagreement during the negotiations of the loan agreement, namely a difference in the assessment of the North Korean threat, became apparent. Given the Korean economy was in dire need for foreign capital due to the unfavourable current account balance<sup>173</sup> the government sought a massive 6 Billion USD loan from Japan. Chun based his rationale on three grounds: (i) South Korea was facing a significant threat from North Korea; (ii) by enhancing

<sup>166</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 109-139

<sup>167</sup> Korean Overseas Information Service (1984)

<sup>168</sup> The kidnapping of Kim Dae-jung was conducted by KCIA in August 1973. Following Kim's later testimony, agents threatened to drown him on the passage from Japan to Korea. Having learned of the events immediately, the Japanese police informed the relevant US organisation which exerted pressure on Park to let Kim alive. Several days later, Kim was found drugged on the streets of Seoul, see Lee, C. (1985) pp. 81-85

<sup>169</sup> The National Security Law enables the government to curb on individual freedoms and human rights in the name of national security. For a critical discussion, see: Amnesty International (2012). *The National Security Law. Curtailing Freedom of Expression and Association in the Name of National Security in the Republic of Korea*. London: Amnesty International Publication. pp. 13-18

<sup>170</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 110-113

<sup>171</sup> Cha, V. (2000) p. 282

<sup>172</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 141-149

<sup>173</sup> Among others, the negative trade balance with Japan, see table 7, resulted in a negative current account balance

military capabilities of South Korea Japan protects itself because (iii) if South Korea fell to communism Japan will be threatened seriously. This contrasted sharply with the views of the Japanese government which held that (i) the ROK was not the buffer zone between communism and Japan; (ii) that there is no immediate threat from North Korea to invade the South; and that therefore (iii) loans cannot be granted on grounds of security reasons. Clearly, the diverging views on the role of South Korean security was a point of contestation. Eventually, however, a compromise could be found in 1984 with Japan agreeing on a 4 Billion USD loan and Korea relinquish on the security link.<sup>174</sup>

Overall, scholarly literature has difficulties in identifying this period as either frictionous or cooperative foreign policy stance of Korea towards Japan.<sup>175</sup> However, we can acknowledge that (i) the international pressure required an increase in corporation; (ii) given the controversies about history and Kim Dae-jung cooperation might not have happened *in spirit*; but (iii) due to the massive 4 Billion USD support of Japan for Korea happened *in fact*. An investigation into the domestic Korean situation might help to illuminate why cooperation happened *in fact* despite antagonism *in spirit*.

### Domestic State Power

Around the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s South Korea domestic politics was in turmoil. Public riots mushroomed across the country against the Park regime and government officials were discussing on whether to use the military to suppress them. At the crucial round of discussion between Park and his closest advisor on October 26<sup>th</sup> 1979 Kim Jae-kyu, then director of KCIA, suddenly shot Park at a hosted dinner. The country drifted into a short phase of political uncertainty until on December 12<sup>th</sup> general Chun Doo-hwan seized power in a coup involving 7.500 troops and, among others, occupied the capitol building in Seoul. As was the case in Park's coup 1961, the United States has neither authorized nor did know about the attempt. Again, a Korean General was able to circumvent the legal chain of command and use the Korean military independent from US control.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Initially the Japanese was willing to provide 1 Billion USD, see Lee, C. (1985). pp. 115-135

<sup>175</sup> Cha, V. (2000) argues the period represents one of “acute bilateral friction” (p. 282). Hwang, J. (2003) raises the point that the historical memory of Korea was inflamed by Japan and led to a deterioration in relationship. Supporting the position of cooperation, Lee, C. (1985) highlights the historic state visit of Japanese premier Nakasone Yasuhiro to Seoul as well as the successful completion of the loan agreement despite detrimental circumstances as cooperative phase with underlying frictions, e.g. history textbook controversy. According to him, “Nakasone's visit and his speech can be considered an important step toward genuine improvement” (p.135). Similar, Manosevitz, J. (2003) regards the Nakasone visit as one of the main occasions of the security dialogue between the two countries

<sup>176</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 75-80

As did Park the Chun leadership immediately replaced the elite. Even though both Park and Chun belonged to the *Hanahwoe* as did most elites, Chun was eager to secure his power and eliminate potential opponents. Using the assassination of Park as a pretext army chief of staff Chung Sung-hwa was arrested alongside KCIA director Kim Jae-kyu.<sup>177</sup> In the bureaucracy Chun immediately replaced thousands of officials and therewith gained direct control over the military, the KCIA and the national apparatus. Crucial for Korea-Japan relations, Chun replaced hitherto prominent figures. Only a few months after the coup he arrested former foreign minister Kim Jong-pil, former KCIA director Lee Hu-rak and one of the closest lieutenants of former leader Park, Park Chong-gyu.<sup>178</sup> Whatever changes Chun intended to make to the conduct of Japan policy he made sure no diverging opinions can be voiced among the ruling elite and within the state apparatus.

Nevertheless the public outcry was tremendous following the short period between Park's assassination and Chun's usurpation of power. In the so-called 'Seoul Spring', demonstrations across the country demanded a path towards democracy and basic human rights. At the centre of this movement have been the inhabitants of Kwangju city, a name that became synonymous for democratic resistance in Korea today. To crack down on the opposition Chun arrested key oppositional figures, such as Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, closed down universities and colleagues and suspended the National Assembly. At the same time, the US protested against the unilateral command over the troops, demanded a retreat from Seoul and felt unease about the dictatorial tendencies of Chun. Fearing a second Iranian revolution in Korea the Carter administration, however, ultimately had to acknowledge the leadership of Chun Doo-hwan and "quietly opted for relative stability and continuity".<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile, however, protests focused in the city of Kwangju where armed students declared the city "liberated from the military dictatorship".<sup>180</sup> The attempt proved to be futile once loyal troops of Chun surrounded the city and retook it by force in the morning hours of May 27<sup>th</sup> 1980.<sup>181</sup>

With opposition leaders out of place and no mass scale social demonstrations ongoing, Chun relied on several measures to quyte any upcoming future opposition. First he made use of a domestic strategy which consisted of a suspension of the National Assembly by the Legislative Council for National Security (LCNS). In the five and a half months of its existence the LCNS not only abolished all political parties and banned nearly 600 politicians but also passed around 200 bills that restricted civil rights. The freedom of press was curtailed by the 'Press Law' which merged different journalistic outlets into one under direct governmental control. The 'Basic Labor Law' significantly

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. pp. 75-80

<sup>178</sup> Lee, C. (1985) p. 110

<sup>179</sup> Oh, J. (1999) p. 84

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 82

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 82

cut on worker's rights to strike and in the wake of Chun's attempt to 'clean' Korean civil society 16,599 individuals were forced to 're-education camps'.<sup>182</sup> In a nutshell Chun established a violent authoritarian regime.

The second method to insulate the government from criticism was by manipulating public opinion and diverging hatred on the regime towards the US. Chun publicly stated the false fact that the US authorized and knew about his coup in advance as well as the massacre in Kwangju. US rejections were unable to reach the public due to the censored and steered press. Moreover, the synchronized media did report on Chun's visit to the US in such a way as that the US was supporting him. The information that the state visit to the US came as a quid-pro-quo for averting capital punishment for Kim Dae-jung as well as lifting martial law was not made public. Consequently, public outcry directed itself increasingly against the US instead of the Chun dictatorship and thus worked as an outlet for domestic pressure.<sup>183</sup>

In how far did this affect the conduct of Japanese policy, especially with regard to the ongoing loan negotiations? The Japanese government was aware of the danger the history textbook controversy caused in neighbouring Asian states, including Korea and China. Amid loan negotiations this was a potential danger to conclude the agreement which was thought to provide considerable economic impetus. However, with a public outcry about the Japanese neglect of its war time past the Korean government under Chun was forced to include the point in the negotiations. As Lee states, not "even a dictatorial government could contain the strong emotions aroused among the Korean people".<sup>184</sup> Meanwhile, the Japanese feared that anti-Japanese sentiments could turn against the Chun leadership once again causing political turmoil in the country suspending internationally needed cooperation further. Nevertheless, the strong domestic position of Chun enabled him to resist the public outcry to a certain degree. In comparison to the reactions from China, the response from Seoul was more diplomatic in language and showed more inertia. China lodged a first official protest in July 26<sup>th</sup> 1982 and a second on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Moreover, it recalled the Chinese ambassador to Japan on August 19<sup>th</sup>. Fearing negative spill-overs on the loan negotiations the Korean government tried to de-link the history controversy from ongoing negotiations, demanding no apology or revision during the negotiations. Nevertheless, despite harsh authoritarian control the Chun government had to respond and lodged an official protest on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Notwithstanding public sentiment, it was eager to settle the conflict as soon as possible and published editorials optimistic about a resolution. Another difference between the Korean and Chinese reaction was the response to the revision of Japanese premier Suzuki who stated that no

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<sup>182</sup> For a discussion on the suppression of civil society under Chun, see: Kim, S. (2000) pp. 77-104

<sup>183</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 83-89

<sup>184</sup> Lee, C. (1985) p. 147

clear interpretation can be given at the time and that it needs to “await the judgement of future historians”.<sup>185</sup> While the Chinese side did not issue a response before the Japanese ambassador in Beijing further explained the remarks of Suzuki, the spokesman of the Korean government eagerly gave an affirmative response despite ongoing outrage by the Korean public.<sup>186</sup> Thus the response of South Korea was more tamed than could have been expected if society demanded. The ROK government clearly acted differently from public opinion and was able to enforce its policy option of a more cooperative stance onto society.

The strong position of the Chun government fostered by authoritarian rule, even though not able and willing to suppress public outrage altogether, was able to manoeuvre through it and keep public sentiment to a great degree out of ongoing negotiations between Japan and Korea. Given the need for financial impetus from Japan and a detrimental international environment the regime in South Korea was not willing to jeopardize the negotiations for a public outcry with uncertain outcome. In this vein, the isolation of the government, the absence of dissenters in the ruling elite and the capacity to crack down on the opposition enabled the Chun government to conclude the loan negotiations despite tremendous obstacles in 1984. Table 7 categorizes the early 1980s alongside the established criteria.

	Int. Environment	Power Balance ROK-JPN	Elite Cohesion	Domestic Insulation	ROK's Japan Policy
Early 1980s	++	+	++	+	Cooperation in Fact; Confrontation in Spirit
Legend: -- strong pressure to act confrontational - pressure to act confrontational o ambivalent + pressure to act cooperatively ++ strong pressure to act cooperatively					

**Table 7: Foreign Policy Setting in the early 1980s**

<sup>185</sup> Cited in Lee, C. (1985) p. 148

<sup>186</sup> Lee, C. (1985) pp. 141-149

### 6.2.3 *The End of the Cold War and Democratisation*

The end of the Cold War was to advocate a new structure in the international security landscape. The Berlin Wall came down but unlike in Germany the heavily fortified demilitarized zone along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea remained intact. Meanwhile, the relationship between Korea and Japan had to adjust to these changes.

#### International Environment

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the precursor of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* the international outlook, as in most other parts of the world, was about to change in the region. As discussed in section 6.1 the regional power system was to evolve from a tripolar into a bipolar one, promising greater stability and security. Overall, as Sheldon Simons rightly points out, “the Cold War has ended with what appears to be a major Western triumph”.<sup>187</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union, the inward orientation of China towards its economic development, the rapprochement of Vietnam with ASEAN states as well as the South Korean outreach to former communist states seem to promise the advent of a new era. An overall reduction in threat in the region is easily noticeable, even though it is not comparable to the European region given the persistence of North Korean threat. Perhaps the most striking effects were the initiatives of the US to reduce the number of ground forces in Japan and Korea, to pressure allies to take up a bigger burden in the upkeep of remaining troops, and to demand to support the UN mission in Kuwait more actively as well as the 1991 initiative to withdraw ground-based nuclear weapons from Korea.<sup>188</sup> Overall, while during the Cold War the US was willing to take up a significant share of both political and financial costs this changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sung-hack Kang describes this change very neatly:

“[W]hile during the Cold War era a camp versus camp confrontation of East against West and the solidarity of each camp dictated the structure of the international system, thenceforth international relations would be dictated by nationalist principles where each state's own interests received top priority.”<sup>189</sup>

While one could question if the Cold War dynamics have not been commanded by 'nationalist principles' it is safe to assume a reduction in the overall threat level and thus diminishing need for security measures. This, however, has three limitations to it.

First, different to the unification of Europe, particular Germany, there occurred neither signs of North Korean collapse nor measurable steps towards unification of the Korean peninsula. Still, the end of the Soviet Union, one of the North's major partner, had profound effects. Shortly after the

<sup>187</sup> Simon, S. (1993) p. 12

<sup>188</sup> Bridges, B. (1993) pp. 75-79

<sup>189</sup> Kang, S. (2011) p. 125



disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia was eager to suspend the North Korea-Soviet Union Mutual Defence Treaty of 1961 and demanded the outstanding 3.5 Billion USD debt to be paid in cash payments.<sup>190</sup> To make matters worse for the North, Moscow sought out to establish friendly ties with Seoul. In particular, Russia offered closer cooperation on security issues as well as proposed arms sales to Seoul.<sup>191</sup> Even though South Korea remained suspicious of Russian advances and hesitated not to jeopardize the relations with the US in favour of Russia, it shows clearly the abandonment of North Korea by its former ally. Bae describes the situation very figurative by stating that “North Korea, which was once a kind of ferocious beast, degenerated into a porcupine”.<sup>192</sup> The hedgehog tactic of Pyongyang could be interpreted to have resulted into the development of nuclear weapons. Having initiated its nuclear program in the 1980s already the international environment after 1990 put substantial pressure on the country as it continued to face a significant threat and, at the same, time abandonment by its traditional allies.<sup>193</sup> Amid tremendous pressure, the North was confronted with the question on whom to count for its security if former allies in the blink of an eye seemingly change sides. Resembling the increasingly independent foreign policy style asserted by Kang, the 1994 Geneva Framework in which the US and North Korea agreed on a package deal to suspend the nuclear program in exchange technology, specifically the provision of two light water reactors.<sup>194</sup> Strikingly, both Japan and Korea have not been part during the negotiation of the agreement.

Second, China made initial steps to advance further as a great power in the region. As figure 2 above shows, China overtook the US as most capable state in COW capability terms. The US ranked second only short of China. Given the already starting deterioration of Russian capabilities, which correctly was expected to continue, a system of bipolarity evolved in the region. To prepare for these developments China was able to end the long-lasting split with the Soviet Union by (i) high level diplomacy and (ii) a resolution of security concerns. The historic 1989 Gorbachev-Deng Xiaoping summit took place in Beijing and was the first time in 30 years for leaders of the two countries to meet directly. Subsequently, a Chinese general secretary Jiang Zemin travelled to Moscow in 1991 to resolve most of the outstanding border disagreement.<sup>195</sup> Agreeing on common challenges in the economic sphere and minimizing ideological and geopolitical differences the two countries restarted their bilateral relationship. Remarkably, to enhance its security environment China was able to conclude an agreement with Russia not to target each other with tactical nuclear

<sup>190</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 380-389

<sup>191</sup> Joo, S. & Kwak, T. (2001) p. 196-197

<sup>192</sup> Bae, K. (2007) p. 388

<sup>193</sup> Simon, S. (1993) p. 12

<sup>194</sup> For a lively and detailed discussion of the provision of the two light water reactors, see: Kartman, C. et al. (2012). *A History of KEDO 1994-2006*. Policy Brief. Stanford Centre for International Security and Cooperation

<sup>195</sup> Marantz, P. (1993) p. 12

weapons in 1994. It not only allowed to free resources from deterrence vis-à-vis Russia but paved the way for the acquisition of more sophisticated weaponry from Russia.<sup>196</sup> Again, China emerged more than ever as the decisive counterpart to the US in the region, now rallying with Russia to offset the 'victory' of the US in the Cold War.

Third, even though a retreat of the US from the region was anticipated it was not a whole-hearted retreat. Already in the 1991 US National Security Strategy, it was readily identified that China “poses a complex challenge”.<sup>197</sup> Before already, the report 'Selective Deterrence' unveiled in 1988 predicted that China by 2010 would become the second or third most economically powerful state in the world and that its military would keep pace.<sup>198</sup> Decisively, three new hotspots were to emerge for the US in East Asia at large: (I) On the Korean peninsula China was hesitant to support the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); (ii) the South Chinese Sea experienced territorial claims by China, specifically the 1995 seizure of a disputed island of the Philippines; and (iii) the aggressive policy towards Taiwan resulting in the 1996 Taiwan crisis and the blockade of the island that was only lifted once the US responded with military might.<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, the global triumph of the US after the Cold War had more profound effects than regional quarrels. Signs of a regional increase in security can be found in the suspension of the Team Spirit exercises between US and ROK forces until 1996, the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons in 1991<sup>200</sup>, the reduction of ground forces in Japan and Korea<sup>201</sup> and an overall reconciliation with the communist world expressed in US president Bush's desire to integrate “the Soviet Union into the community of nations.”<sup>202</sup> Thus, the US might have identified future challenges but for the time being a peace dividend was sought after. One commentator vividly expressed that “the era of *Pax Americana* has ended in Asia”.<sup>203</sup>

Overall, the end of the Cold War had tremendous impact on the region. Still, the continued existence of threat by a weakened and desperate North Korea, the starting expansionist foreign policy of China and attempted retreat of the US from the region made the security landscape not as shiny as in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, hardly anyone would doubt that in the immediate post-Cold War time the threat to the security of South Korea was lower than during the Cold War. This reduced the need for cooperation between South Korea and Japan.

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<sup>196</sup> Manosevitz, J. (2003) pp. 822-824

<sup>197</sup> The White House (1991)

<sup>198</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 380-389

<sup>199</sup> Segal, G. (1997)

<sup>200</sup> Simon, S. (1993)

<sup>201</sup> Roehrig, T. (2007)

<sup>202</sup> Bae, K. (2007) p. 388

<sup>203</sup> Simon, S. (1993) p. 25 [emphasis added]

### Relative Strength towards Japan

As much as the effects of the end Cold War have been visible all around the world as inconclusive is its impact on the bilateral relationship between Korea and Japan. Being a junior in the relationship for more than 30 years Korean society slowly reached a level of welfare that was comparable to Japan, yet not completely the same. Expressed in GDP at purchasing power parity per capita an average citizen of Korea had about 8.000 USD at his disposal contrasting with about 19.000 US dollars for an average Japanese citizen.<sup>204</sup> In 1990 the improvement of the South Korean position is reflected as that Korea closed the gap to being endowed with 46% of the capabilities of Japan. This contrasts with the figure of 39% in 1981 showing a gradual increase in relative Korean power. Notwithstanding the significant negative trade balance of 7.9 Billion USD this represents a major improvement of Korea since the beginning of cooperation in the mid-1960s. Paul Bracken makes the point quite clear and highlights the obvious change in bilateral relations that occurred when he compares Korea in the 1960s with the 1990s:

“Between 1960 and today [1996] South Korea has gone from being poor to being middle class, from being rural to being urban, from having primary industries to having secondary and increasingly tertiary industries, and from having an inferiority complex with respect to Japan to having an attitude that could develop into chauvinism”<sup>205</sup>

Speaking of chauvinism as understood as a feeling of superiority of the own group it might be a bit far-fetched to speak of a superiority of Korea over Japan. However, profound changes in the dyadic benefit structure are not to be neglected. How did the increase in Korean capabilities affect Korea's Japan policy in the early post-Cold War era? Two observations are possible in this regard.

First, Japan emerged as a decisive player in regional security. The COW data indicates not only that the gap between Korea and Japan is closing but equally that Japan emerged as a power on a par with Russia. To be sure, the National Security Strategy of the US in 1991 advocated, for instance, that Germany and Japan will emerge as “economic and political leaders”.<sup>206</sup> Likewise, the reduction of US engagement in East Asia called for traditional US allies, of whom Japan was the closest, more commitment to ensure regional stability especially as “we [the US] and they [Japan and German] adjust to a new era”.<sup>207</sup> One of the means to achieve this function seemed naturally a build up in arms and the transformation of the Japanese Defence Forces into a military that is capable of forward defence. Indeed, between 1991 and 2003 Japan actively enhanced its military

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<sup>204</sup> Data derived from: <http://data.worldbank.org>

<sup>205</sup> Bracken, P. (1996) p. 3

<sup>206</sup> The White House (1991); it fits in this regard that in 1992 a book called 'We are the World Power. Why Future is shaped by Japan' appeared; see Ishihara, S. (1992). [German] *Wir sind die Weltmacht. Warum Japan die Zukunft gehört*. Köln: Bastei Lübbe

<sup>207</sup> The White House (1991)

capabilities and shaped the ground for limited offensive strategies.<sup>208</sup> Strikingly, this came after Japan, for the first time in its post-war history, deployed troops overseas in support of the US in the Gulf War. Even though it was just a minesweeper mission this raised suspicion in Seoul. Central to the fears of Korea was that this represents, as then ROK Foreign Minister Choi Ho-joong expressed, “the starting point of remilitarisation of Japan”<sup>209</sup>. Clearly, a fear that with a retreating US Japan would be freed of its constraints and flexes its muscles again was present. Still, neither the Japanese constitutional provision on the 'renunciation of war' (Art. 9) has changed nor did the Japanese advance unusually strong in its military capabilities.<sup>210</sup> In fact, the COW data shows a narrowing of Korea and Japan. The Japanese dispatch to Kuwait and participation in other UN missions, however, raised suspicion in South Korea.

Second, with the end of the Cold War the countries in the region were freed to reach out to former communist countries. For Japan and Korea, however, the opportunities have been different from scratch. As can be seen in table 8, there were more opportunities and benefits for Korea than for Japan. Let us compare the relationship of the two with Russia at first. Japan has been hesitant to approach Russia in security dialogue. In fact, Simons argues that being highly centred on the US-Japan security alliance as the so-called “anchor of peace and stability”<sup>211</sup> Tokyo has been reluctant to engage more with regional partners. A second factors inhibiting rapprochement with Russia was the latter's unaltered stance on the disputed southern Kurile Islands.<sup>212</sup> For Yeltsin as was for Gorbachev it was necessary to claim the disputed territory to be Russian, thus inhibiting a restart in cooperation with Japan. Moreover, the recurring desire for 'great power status' in Russia in 1996 further inhibited progress in bilateral relations.<sup>213</sup> Contrary to the continuously strained Japan-Russia relations over disputed territory rapprochement between Moscow and Seoul appeared to happen swiftly. As illustrated above, Russia reached out to Korea for weapon sales and increasing cooperation. After having established formal diplomatic ties in 1990 Moscow sought to cooperate in military security as well. Among others, Moscow suggested basic security treaties, military exchanges, weapon sales and technology programs. Clearly, Russia was extremely eager to cooperate. Yet, South Korea remained cautious but aware on possible cooperation, as a statement in 1992 by then ROK ambassador Hong Soon-young exemplifies: “Russia is more forward [about military relationship] than we are, meaning it wants more than partnership relations”.<sup>214</sup> In the years

<sup>208</sup> For a good overview of the developments of Japan's military between 1991 and 2003, see Arima, T. (2003)

<sup>209</sup> Quoted in: Bridges, B. (1993) p. 57

<sup>210</sup> Bridges, B. (1993) pp. 53-58

<sup>211</sup> Statement of Japanese Foreign Minister Hisashi Owada, cited in Simon, S. (1993) p. 17

<sup>212</sup> Simon, S. (1993) p. 16

<sup>213</sup> For a detailed overview of the Japan-Russia relations from Gorbachev to Yeltsin; specifically for Yeltsin's Japanese policy, see Kimura, H. (2000) pp. 173-190

<sup>214</sup> Quoted in, Joo, S. & Kwak, T. (2001) p. 198

to come, Seoul slowly agreed to increase cooperation in military exchanges, the import of Russian military equipment as a mean to repay outstanding debts, as well as technology transfer.<sup>215</sup> Thus, while for Japan a rapprochement with Russia seemed extremely difficult and unlikely, it appeared to be effortless for South Korea.

	Russia	China
South Korea	Slow cooperation	Potentially strong cooperation
Japan	No cooperation	Suspicion

**Table 8: Matrix of Alternatives for South Korea and Japan after 1990**

Regarding China, the picture resembles very much the one of Russia. Even though formal diplomatic ties between Japan and China have been established as early as 1972 four problems identified by Zhao remain to strain their bilateral relationship.<sup>216</sup> First, uncertainty about future intentions of their respective foreign policy direction makes a threat assessment difficult. Second, the historical legacy, i.e. the allegations that Japan has not done enough *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, directly spilled over into other policy fields. For example, the state visits marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary by Emperor Akihito to China as well as the prior one of China Communist Party Secretary General Jiang to Japan have been overshadowed by the disputes over the Pinnacle Islands, called *Diaoyu* Islands in China, *Diaoyutai* Islands in Taiwan and *Senkaku* Islands in Japan.<sup>217</sup> Third, Human Rights issues seemed persistent in Japan and further aggravated the uncertainty about the future orientation of a rising China. However, human rights is unlikely to be Japan's first concern. For example, Japan was the first member of the G7 to lift international sanctions against China after the Tiananmen Massacre. To explain the rational of Japan's China policy, Zhao argues that Japan's China policy is mirroring the one of the US as that the country closely follows the US' position on contentious issues. As a consequence, he argues, that “for the most of the 1990s, their [Sino-Japanese] relationship has been deteriorating”.<sup>218</sup> In contrast, even though South Korea and China only established diplomatic ties in 1992 their rapprochement after the Cold War was smoother and longer lasting. In direct comparison, “South Korea has been less aggressive than Japan”<sup>219</sup> in pinpointing to bilateral disagreements. This makes sense if one looks into three developments that underlie their relationship. First, South Korea, when establishing diplomatic ties with China in 1992 was willing to suspend ties with Taiwan thus eliminating a contentious issue. Even though small tensions flare occasionally, such as about direct flight connections between Taipei and Seoul, an involvement of Seoul into a potential clash between the

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in, Joo, S. & Kwak, T. (2001) pp. 196-212

<sup>216</sup> Zhao, Q. (2002)

<sup>217</sup> For a detailed discussion of the effects of the power balance between Japan and China on the dispute over the Pinnacle Islands, see Hagström, L. (2005)

<sup>218</sup> Zhao, Q. (2002) p. 43

<sup>219</sup> Manosevitz, J. (2003) p. 806

US and China over Taiwan has been denied.<sup>220</sup> Second, the economic need for cooperation became increasingly urgent. Given the burdensome negative trade balance with Japan, South Korea was in dire need for new markets to set off its products. The establishment of economic ties with China in 1992 gave such an impetus and from 1993 onwards South Korea saw increasing positive trade balances ever since. Table 9 illustrates the development from 1992 to 2009. Third, China presented an alternative to the US in dealing with North Korea. After the Cold War China changed its policy of supporting the North to one of balancing between the two states on the peninsula and therewith can be understood as “wild card in Korea's uncertain future”.<sup>221</sup> The initiation of the Four-Party Talks in 1997 to resolve the nuclear question on the Korean peninsula stands testimony for this function. A smooth outreach to China, thus, can only be beneficial for Seoul. Fourth, Beijing-Washington negotiations do not centre on the Korean question. In contrast to Japan, which closely follows the US in its China policy Korea is freed to conduct a more independent foreign policy in regard to China as it has not yet made a conclusive choice between the US and China and rather seeks to maximize the security relation with the US and the economic relation with China. As a result, Chung Jae-ho is arguing that to find a long-lasting position for Korea between the US and China, it has to seek “middle-ground” between the two.<sup>222</sup>

	1992	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009
China	-1.1	1.2	3.5	4.9	23.3	32.5
Japan	-7.9	-8.5	-13.1	-10.1	-24.4	-27.7

**Table 9: Korean Trade Balance with China and Japan, in Billion USD, KITA**

Overall, in light of these developments the security environment in East Asia, in the words of Simons, has “never seemed more benign”<sup>223</sup> and favourable in terms of policy options for South Korea. The benefits of cooperation with Japan decreased in economic and military terms while, at the same time, benefits of cooperation with China and Russia increased. This reduced the overall need for cooperation with Japan. Nevertheless, Korea showed signs of cooperation with the Japanese. In light of US plans to retreat from the region, leaders of the two countries expressed their abandonment fears in concert action to the US administration as the quasi-alliance model of Cha would suggest. Moreover, both countries identified their bilateral relations as “priority for the post-cold-war era”.<sup>224</sup> It is striking that this seems to be in response to the nuclear program of North Korea, the exclusion of Japan and Korea from the negotiations of the 1994 Agreed Framework between the US and the North as well as the Sino-Russian agreement not to pinpoint each other

<sup>220</sup> Interview with former Pentagon official in January 2001, see Chung, J. (2001) p. 795

<sup>221</sup> Joo, S. & Kwak, T. (2001) p. 230

<sup>222</sup> Chung, J. (2001)

<sup>223</sup> Simon, S. (1993) p. 22

<sup>224</sup> Cha, V. (1999) p. 210

with nuclear weapons. Interestingly, Jason Manosevitz describes the relationship before 1994 as 'weak' and 'frosty', while later on a path to 'reach adolescence'.<sup>225</sup> Working level meetings starting from 1994 and defence summits installed since 1996 have laid the foundation for the security cooperation of the two in the post-Cold War era.<sup>226</sup>

A second argument in favour of the cooperative spirit at the time can be made by looking at the growth in communication and consultation between the two. Table 10 compares the absolute number of visits of the period of 1968 to 1988 with the period of 1989 to 1995. However, those meetings and summits typically took place outside the realm of high publicity. Indicative, while the meetings 'outside regular policy channels' grew by 26% official 'consultations' increased by only 13%. This finding recalls Hwang, who argues that “[b]ilateral contacts in the 1970s were conducted with little publicity for domestic political reasons”.<sup>227</sup>

	1968-1988	1989-1995
High-level meetings outside regular bilateral policy channels (special envoys, goodwill visits, advisory meetings, flight layovers, third-country venues)	86	108
Foreign-ministerial consultations (outside summits, annual joint ministerial conferences, and regular foreign-ministerial meetings)	31	35

**Table 10: Number of Bilateral Meetings and Consultations between ROK and JPN, adopted from Cha, V. (1999) p. 225**

Based on the increase in bilateral contacts, Cha regarded the period up to 1995 as trend that “may increasingly mature” and form deeper long-lasting cooperation.<sup>228</sup> As mentioned, Manosevitz regards the period before 1994 as frosty. For him, it was not before the emergence of a communication system to prevent air collusion in 1995 and a joint navy exercise in 1999 that first steps of cooperation were undertaken. He bases his analysis on a distinction between political-military and military-military cooperation. Accordingly, military-military cooperation endure political tensions and thus form as backbone that help bilateral relations to evolve over time slowly but consistently.<sup>229</sup> Acknowledging the insight of his analysis, the author puzzles over the path dependence argument. Manosevitz acknowledges that political-military ties might be disrupted due to whatever reasons, mainly caused by historical antagonism. For him, “military interaction, thus far, seems to recover quickly when tensions flare”.<sup>230</sup> However, the author contests that cooperation is likely to spill-over into the more visible area of political-military cooperation because of a history sensitive public. After all, military-military cooperation remained out of a field of society and was

<sup>225</sup> Manosevitz, J. (2003)

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. pp. 809-812

<sup>227</sup> Hwang, J. (2003) p. 101

<sup>228</sup> Cha, V. (1999) p. 223

<sup>229</sup> Manosevitz, J. (2003)

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. p. 819

so far, confined to the sphere of experts alone. Measures on secret communication systems as well as naval communications independent of the US form, for Manosevitz, “a pillar in the foundation of Japan and South Korean military interaction”.<sup>231</sup> But because, as he acknowledges, “both sides are looking cautiously at options and consequences”<sup>232</sup> it is highly likely that cooperation will remain on a low scale given the diverging opportunity structures of cooperation with third countries. A look into the domestic developments of Korea shows why the relationship is likely to stay sober and alternatives other than Japan seem more promising.

### Domestic State Power

As significant as the end of the Cold War for the international sphere, as significant have been the developments leading up to the 1990s in Korea. The ending of the Cold War enabled the US to step away from continued support for dictatorial regimes like the one of Chun Doo-hwan.<sup>233</sup> As such, the US warned Chun to make use of force to crack down on the opposition once faced with rallying masses. As a result, unprecedented mass protests across the country not only composed of blue-collar workers and students but also of the middle class forced the regime to reform. Specifically, it is thanks to brave lieutenants of the Korean army who refused to execute Chun's shooting orders that a bloody massacre could be averted and the seeds for a renewed trial of democracy started as demanded by the protestors.<sup>234</sup>

Roh Tae-woo stood as hand-picked successor of Chun to be the first presidential candidate to run against the two Kims – Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung – in the first elections in 1987. Strikingly, and probably due to massive financial assistance by Chun, Roh secured the presidency with a victory of 36.6%. Yet, his Democratic Justice failed to reach a majority in the *Gukhoe* – the name of the Korean national assembly. Tables 11 and 12 show the results of the 1987 presidential and 1988 National Assembly elections.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid. p. 813

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. p. 819

<sup>233</sup> Bae, K. (2007) p. 385

<sup>234</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 89-95



Candidate, <i>Party</i>	Result
Roh Tae-woo, <i>Democratic Justice Party</i>	36.6%
Kim Young-sam, <i>Reunification Democratic Party</i>	28.0%
Kim Dae-jung, <i>Party for Peace and Democracy</i>	27.0%
Kim Jong-pil, <i>New Democratic Republican Party</i>	8.1%
Shin J.Y. ( <i>independent</i> )	0.2%

**Table 11: Presidential Election Results December 16th 1987, adopted from Oh, J. (1999) p. 110**

Party, <i>Candidate</i>	Seats	%
Democratic Justice Party, <i>Roh Tae-woo</i>	125	41.8
Party for Peace and Democracy, <i>Kim Dae-jung</i>	70	23.4
Republican Democratic Party, <i>Kim Young-sam</i>	59	19.7
New Democratic Republican Party, <i>Kim Jong-pil</i>	35	11.7
Independents and others	10	3.3

**Table 12: National Assembly Elections April 26th 1988, adopted from Oh, J. (1999) p. 110**

Never before had a Korean government been forced to reign without a majority in the legislative national assembly. A diversification of thought inherent in democracies compared to dictatorship can be thought of as to decrease the cohesion of the elite. The results of the elections in 1987 and 1988 show that unlike the two prior dictatorships the government now had to take arguments of the opposition into account. A further striking feature that resembles a decrease in elite cohesion is the re-emergence of Kim Jong-pil. As discussed above, under the Park government he served as one of the chief negotiators with Japan but was later sacked by Chun. His re-appearance on the political scene alongside the multifaceted election results indicate an enrichment in the variety of thoughts among the political elite. The process of elite division finds its expression in cabinet composition. As a comparison between the cabinets of Roh Tae-woo and his successor Kim Young-sam in 1992 shows the Roh administration was still relatively coherent while the subsequent Kim cabinet showed a high degree of diversity. In the Roh cabinet, the ministries of defence, home affairs and justice were headed by hard-liners and seven ministers of the old Chun cabinet continued to stay in power. Moreover, the head of the Agency for National Security Planning, successor of the powerful KCIA, remained unchanged under Roh.<sup>235</sup> Roh headed the start of the Sixth Republic but, his presidency was, euphemistically called “the 5.5 republic”, referring to the composition of the cabinet. In contrast, the subsequent Kim cabinet consisted of 'progressive outsiders' and 'reform-oriented men and women'. University professors, political activists and, for the first time, three women held ministry offices.<sup>236</sup>

A third factor that reduced the elite cohesion was the dismantling of the once so powerful

<sup>235</sup> Los Angeles Times (February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1988)

<sup>236</sup> Oh, J. (1999) pp. 130-133

*Hanahwoe* under President Kim Young-sam. First, the names of *Hanahwoe* members have been made available and identified. Second, through dismissals, early retirements and reassignments of those members a “‘revolutionary cleansing’ of the Korean military” took place.<sup>237</sup> Overall, Kim reshuffled about 73.3% of lieutenant general and 68.3% of major generals to destroy old personal bonds and eliminate the *Hanahwoe*.<sup>238</sup> Thus, the diverse election results; a continuous decline in the cohesion of the presidential cabinet as well as the elimination of the *Hanahwoe* characterise the early start of the Korean democratic age and stand testimony for the reduced elite cohesion from that time onward.

Moreover, the insulation of the government, in the past resembled by the ability to crack down brutally on the opposition in Kwangju, has deteriorated significantly in both legal and political terms. Legally, the constitution has been amended in 1987 and since then placed an emphasis on circumcising the hitherto exorbitant powers of the president. Crucial to the amendments have been the introduction of an impeachment procedure (Art. 65), the direct election of the president by the people (Art. 67), stringent limitations for emergency actions and the declaration of martial law (Art. 76-77) and the absence of the power to dissolve the national assembly. Most significantly, the term of the president is five years and non-renewable (Art. 70). Moreover, a constitutional review procedure was installed (Art. 107) and the military was declared to be political neutral (Art. 5), a development in practice already observed when the army refused to execute the order to crack down on the opposition. Practically, the government was increasingly controlled by society. Blue-collar strikes demanding wage increases became more widespread – and were successful. The emergence of new political parties representing different 'interests' of society, such as the United People's Party spearheaded by Hyundai Group founder Chung Ju-yung, advocated a new political climate. Discussions about political developments became politicised in the public and there was, different to the past, no (unpunished) violence against political activists. In fact, when one student died in demonstrations in 1991 Roh was quick to dismiss his interior minister showing the receptiveness of the government to public demands.<sup>239</sup> Clearly, the insulation of the government hitherto so omnipresent has eroded significantly. After the inauguration of Kim in 1992 not only about 5.600 political prisoners have been released and 500.000 records been wiped clean but the Kim administration also initiated further political reforms, including anti-corruption measures, legislative reforms, and triggering an opening of the Korean market to globalization.<sup>240</sup> Thus, the Korean government changed from enforcing decisions by force to accounting and responding to the needs of society.

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid. p. 134

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. pp. 133-135

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. pp. 115-125

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. pp. 136-154

Of course, the peaceful transfer to power from Roh to Kim cannot be underestimated. To highlight the neutrality of the military, in the run-up to the 1992 elections the defence minister, the chairman of the joint chiefs and the army chief of staff concertedly declared a “neutral” stance at lectures delivered at the National Defence Graduate School. This is especially striking as all three main contestants at the election have been civilians lacking military background. The fact that presidential powers have been transferred peacefully to Kim Young-sam in 1992 was the first sign that the new system might actually work.<sup>241</sup> In this political climate there appeared to be room for civil society groups. While during the previous authoritarian regimes civil society groups have been suppressed they could flourish from 1987 onwards, freed by the democratic development they shaped themselves indirectly. Table 13 indicates the rise of civil society groups in South Korea. It is obvious that the majority mushroomed after democratisation for obvious reason. However, not only their number but also their organisation reached a new level. On the one hand their membership changed from mainly blue-collar workers to white-collar workers leading to a transformation of demands from complete regime change to system reformation. On the other hand, civil society groups started to organize themselves around umbrella organisation. The general Korea Council of Citizen's Movement with initially 38 member organisations was installed in 1994. This was a result of the previous formation of sector specific umbrella organisation starting in 1987, including for example the National Council of University Student Representatives or the Korea Coalition for National Democracy Movement.<sup>242</sup> Their impact on the course of government was significant. The Kim administration conducted a more transparent political style, initiated reforms and Kim Young-sam even disclosed his personal financial assets. Some observers note in this regard that “the people's movement groups underwent a crucial identity crisis”.<sup>243</sup> The author, however, interprets those facts rather in that they 'reached their goal' once Kim started with the far fetching reforms.

Number of Citizens' Movement Groups	
1944-1959	6
1960-1969	4
1970-1979	4
1980-1987	8
1988-1990	25
1991-1993	22

**Table 13: Citizens' Movement Groups, 1945-1993, adopted from Kim, S. (2000)**

In the climate of political responsiveness to public demands and flourishing civil society many groups with a relation to Japan, or more specific to its war time presence on the Korean peninsula,

<sup>241</sup> Note, Kim Young-sam won against Kim Dae-jung with 41.4% to 33.4%. In an unprecedented move Kim Dae-jung publicly acknowledge his defeat, see Oh, J. (1999) pp. 120-125

<sup>242</sup> Kim, S. (2000) pp. 106-108

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. p. 110

came to the fore. Under the previous dictatorial regimes several groups related to the interpretation of history have been banned or labelled as 'communists'. The democratisation process freed these forces and some observers even associated the trend with the end of a “forced amnesia under successive military dictatorships”.<sup>244</sup> True, it was not before the early 1990s that civil groups related to historical developments formed or placed their demands to the government of both Korea and Japan in an organised and forceful way. Table 14 provides an overview of four selected civil associations/groups and their respective demands.

Association/Group	Topic	Demands toward Japan
Korean Association of A-bomb Victims	Care for survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki	1987: compensation of 2.3 Billion USD
National Association of Bereaved Families of Korean War Victims	Care of War Victims and their Families	Recognition of the 'full' scope of forced wartime conscription 1990: financial compensation
Seven Korean B and C class War Criminals	Seven individuals claiming compensation for being forced to execute criminal deeds in war time prisons	1991: Compensation of 1 Million USD
Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Service by Japan	Representation of known and unknown women forced and coerced to provide sexual services to members of the Japanese Army during WWII	1991: Three former 'comfort women' <sup>245</sup> claiming compensation of 156.000 USD each

**Table 14: Claims and Topics of Four Selected Civil Groups/Associations, after Bridges, B. (1993) pp. 130-136**

The Korean public was highly receptive to demands of several of those groups, especially those related to perceived unjust and not sufficiently excused actions by the Japanese during the colonial period. Comparing joint public opinion polls of *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Asahi Shimbun* of the years 1984, 1988 and 1990 it becomes clear that a feeling of historical grievance was on the rise. As table 15 shows, asked for either liking or disliking Japan, its popularity decreased drastically among the Korean public. Specifically, when asked what constitutes the most important factor in bilateral relations the 1988 and 1990 polls both indicated the '36-year colonial rule' as priority, which it was not prior to democratisation.<sup>246</sup>

	1984	1988	1990
Koreans indicating to 'like' Japan	22%	14%	5%
Koreans indicating to 'dislike' Japan	39%	51%	66%

**Table 15: Perception of Japan by the Korean public, 1984-1990, after Bridges, B. (1993) pp. 21-27**

Crucially, these societal tendencies have been picked up by the government into the political realm best exemplified by the 'comfort women' demands, the destruction of the capitol building in Seoul

<sup>244</sup> Kim, D. (2010)

<sup>245</sup> Note, the author is distancing himself from any euphemism and is aware of the suffering of those women. A more precise term would be 'enforced sex slaves'. However, the term 'comfort women' has become widely understood and is thus, for the sack of comprehensibility and clarity, used.

<sup>246</sup> Bridges, B. (1993) pp. 23-27

and the erection of a pier on the dispute islet Dokdo/Takeshima. On the occasion of the visit to Seoul by Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa in 1992 the comfort women topic was raised as a diplomatic issue.<sup>247</sup> Stopping short of a full inclusion of demands, the South Korean government refrained from requesting compensations for comfort women. However, the government pledge to pursue it as a human rights issue and established domestic facilities to take care of survivors and established an inter-ministerial task force to collect evidence and put together a legal claim.<sup>248</sup> Crucially, even though it was just raised as a minor diplomatic issue, the topic, in prior negotiations, such as the 1965 treaty or the loan negotiations, has not been raised with such a rigor. Even in 1992 the government, at first, was not eager to include it but in light of demonstrations “changed tack”.<sup>249</sup> Similar, the destruction of the capitol building Seoul acting as a constant and massive memory of the colonization period was destroyed in 1995. While there was considerable discussion on whether to keep it as physical reminder or to destroy it altogether, it was eventually demolished at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's independence. A vital description was given by Ronan Thomas in 1997 of the crucial moment: “to the accompaniment of patriotic music, folk dancing and a large floating national flag, South Korean engineers using explosives removed the cupola from the neo-classical Seoul Capitol”.<sup>250</sup> Several further material reminders that highlight the colonial period, such as the War Memorial of Korea, emerged in the early 1990s. Third, and most immediate was the erection of a pier on the disputed islet Dokdo/Takeshima and a subsequent navy exercise in the waters surrounding the islands which lead to a significant deterioration of the relationship in 1996. Internationally, the *Wall Street Journal* criticized South Korea in the following way: “Given the seriousness of Korea's strategic situation, however, a government in normal mode would have taken every step possible to avoid any serious damage to relations with an important neighbor”.<sup>251</sup>

Overall, the late 1980s and early 1990s can be interpreted as time of increasing discontent between the two. Three reasons can be found for this. First, the end of the Cold War caused a significant drop in the level of threat and therewith reduced the urge to cooperate. Second, the availability of future and potential allies changed for both countries. Korea has had the opportunity to choose from a wider menu of foreign policy choices than Japan. Combined with a reduced significance of Japan for South Korea this lead to a reduction in potential benefits of cooperation for Korea. Third, the rise of societal influence on the South Korean government was clearly directed towards confrontation with Japan. The fact, that after the democratisation these groups gained a voice in foreign policy decisions can clearly be equated with a reduced domestic impetus for

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 134

<sup>248</sup> The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (2013)

<sup>249</sup> Bridges, B. (1993) p. 134

<sup>250</sup> Thomas, R. (1997)

<sup>251</sup> Quoted in Yoon, T. (2007) p. 13

cooperation. Therefore, before a change in the variable of international threat, namely in the 1994 Agreed Framework which had isolation tendencies for South Korea and the Sino-Russian agreement, no meaningful cooperation took hold. Only after 1994 common exercises, agreements on data exchange and cooperation in multilateral organisation took hold. Still, even then they were conducted with low publicity only thus reducing its exposure to societal pressure. The confrontational navy exercise in 1996 indicates the ambivalent Japan policy of Korea. Table 16 summarizes those developments.

	Int. Environment	Power ROK-JPN	Balance	Elite Cohesion	Domestic Insulation	ROK's Japan policy
Late 1980s/ early 1990s	-	o		-	-	Ambivalent
Legend: -- strong pressure to act confrontational - pressure to act confrontational o ambivalent + pressure to act cooperatively ++ strong pressure to act cooperatively						

**Table 16: Foreign Policy Setting in the late 1980s and early 1990s**

#### 6.2.4 Korea's Japan Policy in Times of a Rising China

The final case study is intended to enhance clarity on the impact of civil society on governmental action towards Japan by comparing the evolution of rudimentary military-military cooperation in naval and communication sphere to the breakdown of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2012. GSOMIA was intended to share information about North Korea and its nuclear program between Japan and Korea. Strikingly, the Lee administration prepared the agreement in secret detaching it from political discussions. Only shortly before the treaty was to be decided upon by the hitherto uninformed national assembly public uproar caused the suspension of GSOMIA only one hour before the scheduled signing of the treaty in Tokyo.<sup>252</sup> Given the fact, that Korea already has in place about two dozen GSOMIAs with other countries, including Russia, it comes as a surprise that the treaty had caused a widespread political protest. The East-West Centre asking ‘What Went Wrong with the ROK-Japan Military Pact?’ suggests four reasons. First, formal problems in the ratification procedure. Second, historical grievances towards Japan. Third, hesitation to solidify the alliance with the US and Japan in light of a rising China and, fourth, the dynamics of the anticipated election that amplified the reaction after the revelation politically for domestic purposes.<sup>253</sup> Obviously, many reasons can be cited for the breakdown. However, how can they be put into perspective and, ultimately, be ranked in their importance? Again, an investigation

<sup>252</sup> Yonhap News Agency (June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

<sup>253</sup> Sheen, S. & Kim, J. (2012)

into the level of international threat, the specific ROK-Japan power balance and Korean domestic politics seems fruitful.

### International Environment

In the East Asian security environment and perhaps the entire world, the rise of China will cause changes to the international system as such. Given the immense strength of China economically – and the likely continuation of this development – it is likely to overtake the USA in terms of absolute GDP, re-shape the regional economic balance and gain a bigger voice in the international sphere.<sup>254</sup> The scholarly literature, however, is not clear whether the rise of China presents an opportunity to gain a potential partner for the US or if it is indicating the advent of a new global competitor.

Advocates of the 'potential partner' tendency include Joseph Nye and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Both are regarding the rise of China as a new challenge to the US as limited. Nye acknowledges the rising economic power of China but contends that due to internal problems it cannot match the US in terms of output. Specifically, he argues that because the Chinese economy is based on authoritarian rule it is facing obstacles related to excessive corruption, domestic instability, and internal migration. These obstacles prevent it from channeling economic resources into military development. As a result China is not able to close the revolution in military affairs gap to the US.<sup>255</sup> In a similar vein, Brzezinski regards the rise of China as a potential threat as 'premature' as the US continues to constitute the “the first, only and last truly global superpower”<sup>256</sup> citing its superiority in the economic, military, technological and cultural sphere. However, for the future a certain regional power potential in a “Chinese sphere of either politically more assertive influence or somewhat more delicate deference”<sup>257</sup> is asserted by him.

In contrast, proponents of the 'global competitor' branch argue that the rise of China poses a threat to the US as China has the potential and intent to ravel the foundations of the current US-led international system. “China's emergence as a major power will dwarf any comparable phenomena during the last half of the second millennium ... and the world will have to respond to the increasingly assertive role of the biggest player in human history”,<sup>258</sup> Samuel Huntington wrote in 1996 already. Echoing the aggressive intent in Huntington words Condoleezza Rize specified these thoughts in 2000 when arguing that “China is still a potential threat to stability in the Asia-Pacific

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<sup>254</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 390-402

<sup>255</sup> Nye, J. (2002) pp. 19-21

<sup>256</sup> Brzezinski, Z. (1997) p. 3

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. p. 193

<sup>258</sup> Huntington, S. (1996) p. 231

region. ... What we do know is that China is a great power with unresolved vital interests, particular concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea ... That alone makes it a strategic competitor , not the 'strategic partner'".<sup>259</sup>

Obviously, there is uncertainty about the future direction of East Asia. Will the rise of China result in a "harmonious world ... adhering to peaceful development", as Hu Jintao in 2006 announced?<sup>260</sup> Or will it follow the logic that the stronger will inevitably triumph? For example, former Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi in 2010 justified assertive claims of China in the region by the simple words that "China is a big country and other countries are small and that is just a fact".<sup>261</sup> In any case, that China is gaining increasingly strength can be seen in the COW data. Accordingly, in 2003 the US was endowed with only about 70% of the capabilities of China. While the two countries in the early 1990s featured at about the same level in material capabilities China consistently grew faster than the US ever since. In light of the continuing economic and military development of China since 2003 this trend can be expected to have continued enlarging the gap of the US vis-à-vis China until today.

Recognizing these developments Hillary Clinton in 2011 called for a pivot towards Asia. Outlining the US strategy ahead she identified and advocated the need to reallocate foreign policy resources to the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>262</sup> Pressuring for cooperation between allied partners in Asia the US is advocating closer military coordination or what some regard as 'mini-NATO'.<sup>263</sup> The most successful example is the trilateral relationship USA-Japan-Australia. To enhance multilateral cooperation, at first, a Trilateral Security Dialog in 2001 has been established and subsequently upgraded to high-level diplomatic contacts in 2006. Today, the three are conducting regular joint military exercises and expressed their common views in a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation and a Defense Memorandum in 2007 and 2008 respectively.<sup>264</sup> A deeper cooperation between Japan and Korea in this regard might, as Christensen reminds us, bring the US in a position to "better be able to manage and cap future regional crises".<sup>265</sup> Close cooperation of South Korea with Japan, however, with the possibility to be dragged into a dispute of the US with China comes at a prize. US plans for common theater missile defense, deepening ties with regional allies, attempts to reach out to India as well as the invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq cause a feeling of encirclement in China. As a result, China is reacting by seeking closer cooperation with Russia and Central Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with Iran in bilateral dialogues and to

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<sup>259</sup> Rize, C. (2000) p.56

<sup>260</sup> Quoted in Bae, K. (2007) p. 408

<sup>261</sup> The Economist (April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

<sup>262</sup> Clinton, H. (2011)

<sup>263</sup> Park, M. (June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012)

<sup>264</sup> Park, J. (2012)

<sup>265</sup> Christensen, T. (1999) p. 80



ASEAN via the establishment of a common security forum.<sup>266</sup> To be sure, for Korea the US-alliance “remains the backbone of South Korea’s foreign policy”, as Zhu proclaims.<sup>267</sup> However, a formalization of Korean-Japanese security cooperation could be potentially dangerous for Korea in the long run with many hotspots of conflict between the US and China remains. Recognizing the potential danger from those potential conflicts for the integrity and security of Korea, Chung argued that the “bottom line for Seoul is not to antagonize China; in this regard, South Korea being sucked into a US-China conflict over Taiwan or elsewhere must be avoided”.<sup>268</sup> While South Korea continues to place considerable value on its US alliance, it regards the potential benefits of cooperation with China as valuable item as well. This is a factor likely to prevent deeper cooperation with Japan in a way that would resemble the trilateral US-Japan-Australia partnership.

South Korea is posited between the two great powers and every action is consequently scrutinized accordingly. This might explain why Seoul is shying away from cementing a trilateral relationship with the US and Japan. The envisioned GSOMIA treaty could potentially be regarded as such a 'shying away'. However, given the minor scope of the treaty as such, the fact the ROK already has in place such an agreement with Russia and a dozen other countries as well as the attempts to conclude a separate GSOMIA with China, it seems unlikely that the breakdown can be associated with a rising China alone. Accordingly, to identify the underlying cause for the suspension of GSOMIA requires to investigate the relative strength of Korea and Japan as well as the insulation of the Korean government.

### Relative Strength towards Japan

The COW data presents a decisive picture on the evolution of the bilateral relationship. In 2003 South Korea has reached about half of the capabilities of Japan, which contrast sharply with figures of previous decades. Figure 3 above clearly indicates the narrowing gap over the past 50 years. Since the early 1970s Korea has consistently decreased the gap in capabilities reaching more than 50% of Japanese capabilities by 2003. This reduced the potential benefits of Japan for South Korea for two reasons.

First, as South Korea is now capable on its own, the need for cooperation should decrease. This growth in capabilities and assertiveness is perhaps best expressed in the president Roh Moo-hyun address at the Air Force and Military Academy in 2005 in which he stated that “[w]e [ROK] have sufficient power to defend ourselves. We have nurtured mighty national forces that absolutely

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<sup>266</sup> Bae, K. (2007) pp. 406-410

<sup>267</sup> Zhu, Z. (2007) p. 77

<sup>268</sup> Chung, J. (2001) p. 794

no one can challenge”.<sup>269</sup> In this context, Cha regards the high political volatility of Japan as well as the high ratio of debt to GDP as aggravating factors for the conduct of cooperative foreign policy.<sup>270</sup> Therefore, one can observe a decline in the usefulness of Japan for South Korea as the military, economic and political benefits potentially to be gained diminish.

Second, South Korea gained alternative policy options. As was the case in the early 1990s Seoul has a wider menu of choices for potential and future allies than Japan. Thus it enjoys the luxury to balance its foreign policy decisions towards Japan in accordance with the benefits possible from countries. Most striking, China can offer significant larger gains than Japan is able to provide. Economically, Korea is increasingly tied to China in regard of, for example, continuation of prosperous trade accounting for about 20% of all South Korea trade in 2012 or the protection of significant investment of ROK in China amounting to 44 Billion USD.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, as outlined above the rising military might of China requires Korea to hedge for its security. In a similar vein, China plays a crucial factor in regard to North Korea. For some it is considered the only country with meaningful influence on Pyongyang and has shown in the past diplomatic initiative to resolve the nuclear problem with its participation, at first, in the four-party talks 1997 and later the six-party talks.<sup>272</sup> In contrast, the benefits Japan can provide to South Korea declined with a closing gap in COW capabilities and therewith potential military assistance as well as a reduction in economic advantage of Japan over Korea. Today, the ROK-Japan relationship might be best understood as on a level of two seniors to each other. This difference in benefit calculation can be clearly seen in a comparison of the recent evolution of ROK-Japan and ROK-China relations in regard to military cooperation. The current Korean Defence White paper highlights that “the ROK-Chinese relationship has seen rapid progress” and since 2008 lead to “active defense cooperation”.<sup>273</sup> In contrast, even though the Korean Ministry of Defence strives to create a “future-oriented and mature partnership” with Japan and acknowledges ongoing military cooperation such as working level-meetings and military exchange programs it clearly highlights “the different historical perspective held by Japan, and its unjust claim over Dokdo”.<sup>274</sup> Strikingly, it acknowledges the lack of “an institutional foundation in developing ROK-Japan military relations”.<sup>275</sup> Important, cooperation occurring with Japan is mostly on the level of military-military and rarely involves political-military connections. As was the case in the early 1990s this indicates a detachment of

<sup>269</sup> Quoted in Shim, D. (2009) p. 10

<sup>270</sup> Katz, K. & Cha, V. (2012)

<sup>271</sup> Trade Statistics from Korean International Trade Association (KITA), see [www.kita.org](http://www.kita.org); Only the US received with 45 Billion USD slightly more investment from South Korea, see [www.koreaexim.gov/en/](http://www.koreaexim.gov/en/)

<sup>272</sup> Note, at the four-party talks Japan had been excluded from the negotiation table. For a good discussion of the evolutionary pattern and usefulness of nuclear negotiations in North East Asia, see Cossa, R. (2012). Six-Party Talks. Will/Should They Resume?. *American Foreign Policy Interest*, Vol. 34 No.1

<sup>273</sup> Korean Ministry of Defense (2012) p. 91

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. p. 90 [emphasis omitted]

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. p. 91

cooperation from public opinion. A fact decisively brought to the fore once the military-military negotiations on GSOMIA reached the public sphere and caused an outcry among the public that lead to its suspension. An investigation into the influence of the public onto foreign policy is therefore necessary in order to understand the domestic constraints on Korea's Japan policy.

### Domestic State Power

The breakdown of GSOMIA took place in a framework of deteriorating public attitude towards Japan. Repeating historical instances, increasingly powerful civil groups and a negative public perception were commanding government actions.

Next to ongoing working-level cooperation two events clearly indicate that military-military talks cannot be the benchmark for cooperation as they are conducted with low publicity. First, even though 2005 was declared a Korea-Japan friendship year the tensions between the two over Dokdo/Takeshima seemed to escalate. In 2005 the Japanese Shimane prefecture celebrated 'Takeshima Day' in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its annexation intended to “inform Japanese public opinion and encourage active efforts at the national level [to claim the island and prevent the issue from fading away]”.<sup>276</sup> It was the presidency of Roh Moo-hyun who in the beginning of his tenure claimed that he “would not make the past history issue as a subject of diplomatic contention”.<sup>277</sup> At a visit to Japan he even called the islet by its Japanese name Takeshima.<sup>278</sup> Following the celebration of the Takeshima day, however, the uproar in South Korea was difficult to top in terms of emotions as a son and mother cut off their finger and a man set himself on fire in order to express their protest, therewith touching the soul of an entire nation.<sup>279</sup> In this climate Roh was pressured to include the topic on the bilateral agenda and to ask for an apology. Likewise, he had to revert to hard wording and threatened that “there could be a hard diplomatic war”.<sup>280</sup> In fact, the Korean Air Force intercepted a Japanese light plane heading for Dokdo/Takeshima by force. Indicative of the link between society and government on the issue is the fact that Roh himself kept contact with the Korean public via email explaining the possibility of a diplomatic war.<sup>281</sup> To make matters worse visits of Japanese politicians to the Yasuki Shrine<sup>282</sup> and the inclusion of a Dokdo/Takeshima picture on a Japanese history textbook kept historical anger on

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<sup>276</sup> Statement of Nobuyoshi Sumita, Governor Shimane Province, on the occasion of the 'Takeshima day' retrieved December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, from: [http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/soumu/takesima\\_eng/take8.html](http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/soumu/takesima_eng/take8.html). Note, in Korea the annexation by Japan in 1905 is understood as pretext for the eventual colonization in 1910

<sup>277</sup> Park, C. (2008) p. 26

<sup>278</sup> Zhu, Z. (2007) p. 78

<sup>279</sup> Onushi, N. (March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

<sup>280</sup> Quoted in Shim, D. (2009) p. 11

<sup>281</sup> Park, C. (2008) pp. 26-28

<sup>282</sup> At the Yasuki Shrine Japanese class A criminals are buried. While the Koreans insist that any visit resorts to a glorification of Japanese wartime past, Japanese claim to simply honour the dead of WWII

the agenda until Japanese authorities announced to conduct a maritime survey close to the islets in 2006. This move caused Seoul not only to threaten “stern measures” but in effect to send 18 gunboats to prevent Japanese vessels access.<sup>283</sup> As this was the first time that military equipment, was dispatched in an aggressive fashion, it represented clearly a new *zeitgeist* in Korea's Japan policy.

A second case shows the reduced insulation of the government not only through social processes but institutionalized in the very fabric of the Korean political landscape. As indicated above, the Korean government in the early 1990s refrained from demanding compensation payments for comfort women. Being able to make use of a changed constitution, however, the Korean Council of Comfort Women was able to file a constitutional complaint for the government's omission to act in 2006. Indeed, in 2011 the constitutional court ruled the inaction of the Korean government to be 'unconstitutional' and hold it 'liable for causing disruption in settling the payments of claims by Japan'. Strikingly, the government's argument that this would cause an 'uneasiness in diplomatic relations' was dismissed as not qualifying as 'national interest'.<sup>284</sup> Afterwards, the government took on the issue, brought it to the UN as war crimes and requested bilateral meetings with the Japanese. However, this has not triggered a change in Japanese position.<sup>285</sup> It is illustrative that current president Park Geun-hye in a recent interview indicated that a summit with her Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe would be “pointless” without an apology for war time wrongdoings of Japan and named the 'comfort women' explicitly.<sup>286</sup> This clearly shows the reduced isolation of the government which now is even legally liable for not pursuing claims of individuals. At the same time, the argumentation of the government indicates the reluctance to promote the topic on grounds of national interest.

A third point supporting the claim that public opinion increasingly gained influence over government action is the breakdown of GSOMIA negotiations. The Asan Institute for Policy Studies conducts annual public opinion polls about the Korean attitude towards Japan since 2010. Their surveys indicate a relationship between the favourability of Japan as well as presidential approval rates with the public's opposition to GSOMIA, which was determined in a separate opinion poll in July 2012 in the wake of the GSOMIA revelation.<sup>287</sup> As can be seen figure 5 the approval rates of Japan among the Korean public declined constantly since 2010. Unfortunately, the Asan Institute conducts the public opinion polls in a different format than the joint public opinion polls of *Dong-A*

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<sup>283</sup> Shim, D. (2009) pp. 10-12

<sup>284</sup> Korean Constitutional Court Ruling 366 2006Hun-Ma788

<sup>285</sup> The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (2013)

<sup>286</sup> BBC (November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

<sup>287</sup> The study found that while there exists a relationship between country favourability a second factor, the approval rates of president Lee, was more important, see Kim, J. et al. (2012) p. 2

*Ilbo* and *Asahi Shimbun* of the years 1984, 1988 and 1990.<sup>288</sup> Still, it is striking that Japan features the lowest approval rates of all neighbouring countries including North Korea. This is especially surprising if one considers that it was in 2010 that the North sunk the South Korean warship *Cheonan* and shelled the island of *Yeonpyeong*. Moreover, the approval rates deteriorated by about 30% in two years only. A second crucial point is the understanding of the relationship with Japan among the Korean public. As indicated in figure 6 it is clearly regarded as competitive relationship similar to the one of the US and China. This not only resembles the altered power structure between the two but also an understanding of zero-sum relationship which contrasts with the positive-sum relationship with the US.

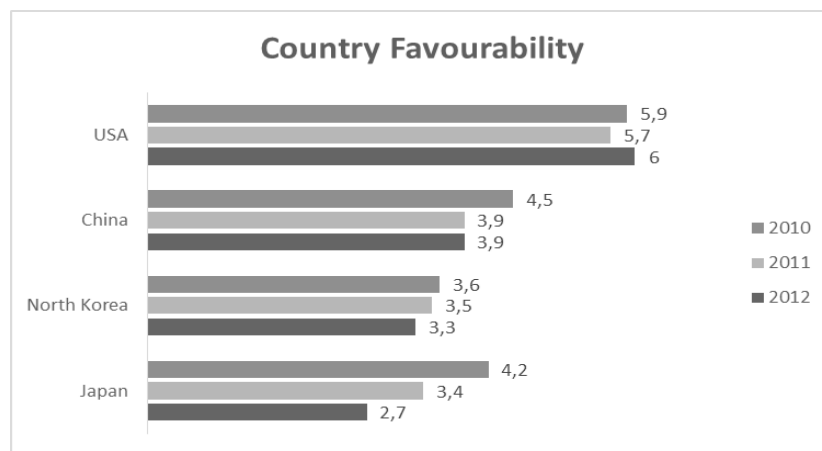


Figure 5: Country Favourability 2010-2013, adopted from Asan Institute (2012)

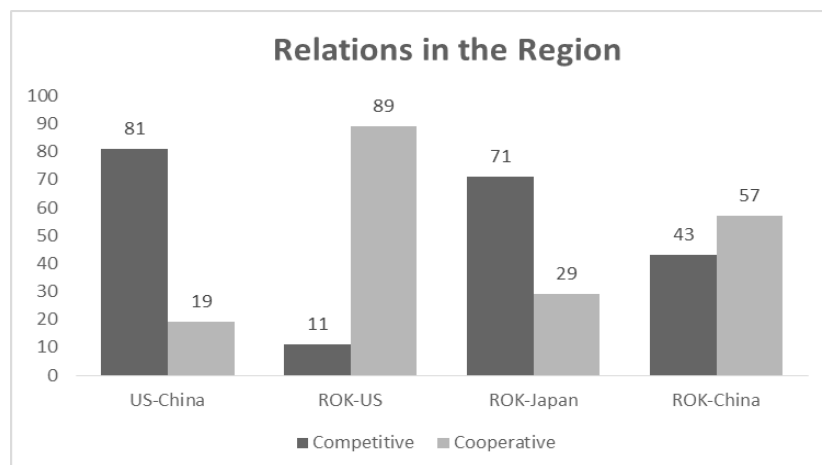


Figure 6: Relations in the Region, adopted from Asan Institute (2012)

This public tendency made cooperation oriented behaviour of the government extremely difficult to sustain once the public was informed that a military cooperation agreement was under way and decided by the cabinet secretly. After the revelation, asked if one supports the conclusion of

<sup>288</sup> See table 15

GSOMIA a majority of 61.2% opposed the conclusion. Pressure on Lee Myung-bak mounted with civil groups labelling the president a 'traitor' of Korean history and the government 'pro-Japanese'<sup>289</sup>. The opposition demanded personal consequences for “selling out the nation”.<sup>290</sup> In a dramatic move public opposition forced the Lee administration to refrain from signing the treaty only one hour before its ratification. Even though the agreement would have constituted the first military agreement and would start to 'institutionalise' security cooperation, an item sought for deliberately by the Korean Defence White Paper 2012, it failed to materialize. A further important feature is the fact that asked for the necessity of GSOMIA the public was split in half, as can be seen in figure 7. The difference between *support for* and belief in the *necessity in* clearly shows that the public, and in this case the government as a proxy, was guided by emotional feelings rather than necessity of the national interest.

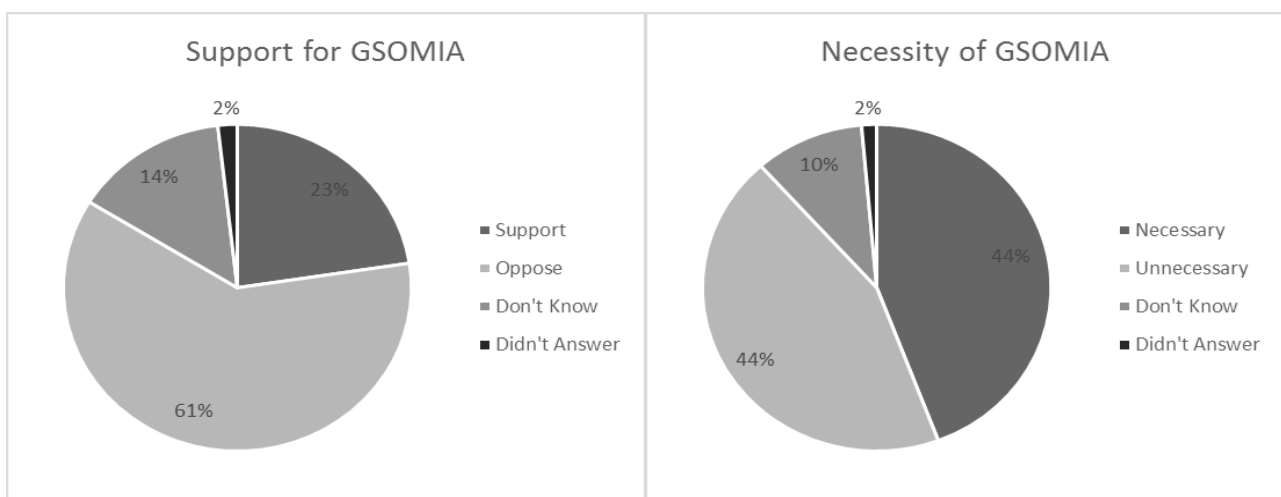


Figure 7: Public Opinion on GSOMIA, adopted from Kim, J. et al. (2012) p. 2

It is striking, that, as Park finds, since the democratisation of the country every single president up to Lee Myung-bak sought to improve relations with Japan in the beginning of their tenure but ultimately needed to resort back to drastic language in light of public outrage over historical issues.<sup>291</sup> The three cases shown clearly indicate the impact of society on foreign policy decision making, be it to dispatch gunboats to Dokdo/Takeshima, make claims for comfort women or to suspend GSOMIA. Obviously, when contrasting these dynamics with the time prior to democratisation a new muster is visible.

The abolishment of the dictatorial regime has created an environment in which society can freely express its desires and even has legal tools at its disposal to force the government to act. Table 17 summarizes these findings in the established categories. As shown in the discussion of

<sup>289</sup> Choe, S. (July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

<sup>290</sup> Sheen, S. & Kim, J. (2012)

<sup>291</sup> Park, C. (2008).

explanatory models in the current scholarly literature a variety of reasons, be it political engineered historical tension or US commitment to the region, have been identified. This paper criticised before that they have taken only partially the international level of threat, only marginal the relative distribution of capabilities between Korea and Japan and not at all the difference in Korea's domestic structure of societal participation into account. The following section will merge the four case studies above and investigate further if a conclusive pattern is visible alongside those three factors.

	Int. Environment	Power Balance ROK-JPN	Elite Cohesion	Domestic Insulation	Relationship
2000s	o	-	-	--	Confrontational
Legend: -- strong pressure to act confrontational - pressure to act confrontational o ambivalent + pressure to act cooperatively ++ strong pressure to act cooperatively					

**Table 17: Foreign Policy Setting in the 2000s**

## 7 Analytical Part

The high volatility of the bilateral relationship between Korea and Japan continues to be a contentious topic within the academic literature. Advocates stressing the hierarchy of the international environment confront arguments that put special emphasis on domestic circumstances such as coalition building and historical memory. In their analysis they typically try to illuminate how it can be understood that two countries that share similar threats and ally do not increase to cooperate. As their research interest deals with the bilateral relationship it is clearly a topic of international relations. They fair relatively well in their respective framework and cases to analyse the ups and downs in cooperation and conflict. Yet, they do not adequately explain the outlook of Korea's foreign policy towards Japan. After all, the object of analysis differs. While here it is sought to explain why Korea took a more cooperative or confrontational stance in its foreign policy towards Japan, it does not provide a final answer on why cooperation or conflict actually took place between the two countries. In the end, it takes two to tango. Therefore, transferring existing models to explain South Korea's foreign policy presents an obscure picture.

Table 18 is summarizing the findings of this analysis on the outlook of Korea's Japan policy alongside the predictions of existing models.<sup>292</sup> From the case studies above, it occurs that the trajectory of Korea's Japan policy is increasingly confrontational. Notwithstanding internal debates the mid-1960s as well as the early 1980s can be characterised as periods of an intensive cooperative outlook. The Treaty on Basic Relations in 1965 could only materialize once a cooperative Korean foreign policy towards Japan emerged. Similar, the 1984 loan negotiations were to a better part carried by cooperative behaviour of Korea which, in both cases, was willing to put international imperatives over domestic concerns. The ambiguous stance of Korea following the end of the Cold War, characterised by an emerging historical grievance, led to a more confrontational approach. It did not change before 1994 when Korea was threatened to be abandoned by the US independently forging a deal with North Korea. As such, international pressure resulted in a more cooperative stance in foreign policy and the beginning of joint naval exercisers as well as first security contacts. However, Korea's Japan policy seems to revert again in the 2000s. The Korean government intensified its claims on Dokdo/Takeshima by sending out military force in 2006, it brought the issue of comfort women to the UN and cancelled the signing of the first military treaty. These developments can hardly be explained by existing models.

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<sup>292</sup> For a discussion of existing explanations, see section 3



	Quasi-alliance model	Convergent-Management model	Net-threat model	Engagement-Coalition model	Colonial-legacy model	COW capability outlook	Outlook observed
Mid 1960s	-	+	+	+	-	++	++
Early 1980s	-	+	+	+	-	++	+
Late 1980s and early 1990s	+	-	o	+	-	-	o
2000s	-	-	o	+	-	o	-
Legend: -- strong confrontational Japan policy - confrontational Japan policy o ambivalent Japan policy + cooperation Japan policy ++ strong cooperation Japan policy							

**Table 18: ROK's Japan Policy as predicted by Existing Models, and COW capabilities**

Applying the model of Cha, it is difficult to apply symmetrical or asymmetrical abandonment fears to one country only. Still, one could argue that once Korea faces a fear it will try to cooperate. The higher the abandonment fear relative to Japan the more cooperative its foreign policy stance. Thus, the quasi-alliance model adds only limited value to the analysis. In both, the mid-1960 engagement of the US in Vietnam and its forward defence policy in the early 1980s, it could be said that there was a high patron commitment. Thus, Cha's model would predict an uncooperative outlook of Korea in both cases. Regarding US commitment as overarching factor, the disengagement after 1990 would advocate a more cooperative stance. The reduction of ground forces and the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from Korea should serve as a reminder of fading US commitment at that time. Accordingly, the current US' Asian pivot should result in deterring Korea from cooperating with Japan as it would allow the country to free-ride on its security. Those predictions match the observed behaviour occasionally only.

The Convergent-Management model developed by Park makes a reverse point. The crucial factor is the threat by a third party. Moreover, Korea's Japan policy is influenced by whether elites escalate or de-escalate historical grievances. This has some merits. In the mid-1960s and early 1980s threat from the outside was considerable while both the Park and Chun leadership tried to de-escalate historical animosity. This seems in line with the observation that Korea took a cooperative stance. However, it fails to explain the sometimes cooperative behaviour after 1990. All presidents have tried to de-escalate tensions in the beginning of their tenure.<sup>293</sup> A priori this should result in a better adaptation of the international environment into Korea's foreign policy outlook and eliminate domestic factors to a certain degree. True, a policy of confrontation with Japan would be predicted

<sup>293</sup> See, section 6.2.4

until 1994. However, how would it explain the behaviour of Korea after 2000? Presidents continued to de-escalate historical grievances but the rise of China, due to its inherent uncertainties, increased the threat by a third party. Accordingly, the model would predict a more cooperative foreign policy. Reality, however shows a more confrontational Japan policy by Korea.

The net-threat model puts a special emphasis on a combined threat component. As such it mainly neglects domestic factors. Thus, its predictions for Korea's Japan policy seem to parallel the predictions derived from looking at the COW capabilities for the mid-1960s and early 1980s.<sup>294</sup> Both country faced a detrimental environment leading to a cooperative Japan policy by Korea. After 1990, however, the net-threat model would predict a confrontational foreign policy stance of Korea only to turn cooperative after the 1994 Agreed Framework. In light of uncertainties of a rising China, it would predict an ambiguous stance of Korea toward Japan. It seems, however, that Korea's foreign policy to Japan became increasingly confrontational towards Japan when comparing the 2000s to the early 1990s.

Both the Engagement-Coalition model and the Colonial-Legacy model make simplified predictions about the foreign policy outlook of Korea towards Japan. While the former attributes a pro-cooperation stance to Korea, the colonial legacy model predicts internal balancing rather than cooperation even in times of US disengagement. All models have some merits but fail to predict actual behaviour with great accuracy. It seems the biggest obstacle is to find an explanation that holds in both, the Cold War era and afterwards. How can the inability of the models to explain the foreign policy behaviour of Korea be explained? True, they study the bilateral relationship, not foreign policy of Korea and make use of different cases to illustrate their points. However, they mostly disregard the evolution of capabilities and the role China plays in the formation of Korea's Japan policy. Moreover, the majority regards the state as black box with no distinction between society and government. Neoclassical realist analysis offers tools to apply these under-researched impact factors to the analysis of Korea's Japan policy.

As stated above, the analysis of individual countries' foreign policy at a given time needs ultimately to incorporate domestic variable. Prominent is Zakaria's concept of state power defined as “the relative ability of the state to extract and mobilize resources from society”.<sup>295</sup> As state power is a function of the institutional set-up of the state and prevailing ideology it offers a proper tool to enrich the scholarly debate on the roots of the volatile relationship between Korea and Japan.<sup>296</sup> Next to the insulation of the government, elite cohesion is a crucial factor, according to Schweller. A

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<sup>294</sup> See, section 6.1

<sup>295</sup> Taliaferro, J. (2006) p. 467

<sup>296</sup> As discussed above, state power has the two components state autonomy – the ability to pursue “other goals than the sum of interests and demands of social group” – and state capacity – the power to “implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of power social groups”, see Evans, P. et al. (1985) p. 9

neoclassical realist analysis of state action thus is a combination of multilateral, bilateral and domestic factors. Traditionally, structural realists proclaim that the international environment is the all-defining element in foreign policy formation. If the survival of the state is in danger, foreign policy options are limited. As state try to maximize their benefits they will seek cooperation with other states that can offer them the most. As long as the benefits of cooperation outweigh states will continue to increase cooperation up to the point where marginal costs exceed marginal benefits.<sup>297</sup> Neoclassic realism adds to this the component of domestic politics. Accordingly, the government has to balance between the requirements of the international and the demands of the domestic. Thus the insulation of the government becomes crucial in the investigation of specific foreign policy choices. The following elaborates at first on the trajectories of the international environment and afterwards on the factors influencing the insulation of the government across the four case studies.

The international environment acts as all-defining centrepiece in realist foreign policy analysis. It sets the stage for state action and prescribes the underlying trajectory of policy choices. It becomes clear from the COW data employed that the three trends in the regional power balance evolved favourable for South Korea.

First, the move from a tripolar into a bipolar system with China and the US being the two main remaining powers is likely to have resulted in a more stable regional system. Indeed, the two great wars in East Asia in the roughly 50 years following the Second World War, namely the Vietnam and Korean war, have occurred in a system of tripolarity. Contrasting, in the now 20 years of bipolarity there was no major clash between the powers involved. As the three actors of the Cold War period were of roughly equal size<sup>298</sup>, the bipolar system is thought to be more stable as balancing can be achieved through internal rather than external means.<sup>299</sup> *Ceteris paribus*, the benefits of cooperation with other states decreased given a more benign security environment.

Second, the increase in relative power of Korea vis-à-vis Japan has resulted not only in enhanced security of Korea but also reduced the possible benefits of cooperation with Japan. Nothing represents this evolution more than the assessment of Korea's power. It evolved from “overpopulated, underskilled, poorly led, poverty ridden, corrupt, and embittered”<sup>300</sup> in the 1960s to “influential in terms of security in the Asia-Pacific region”<sup>301</sup> in 2013. Alternatively, Korea has “sufficient power to defend” itself, according to former president Roh Moo-hyun.<sup>302</sup> Figure 3 above has clearly highlighted this development. While in 1960 Japan was able to provide five times the capabilities it is only to provide two times the capabilities today. As a result, the increase in

<sup>297</sup> Or choose to set up a basket of cooperation with different countries

<sup>298</sup> As discussed in section 6.1 above this represents the condition advocates of instability of tripolarity assume

<sup>299</sup> See Gilpin, R. (1981); and Kaplan, M. (1957)

<sup>300</sup> Quoted in: Yi, K. (2002) p. 642

<sup>301</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense (2013) p. 4

<sup>302</sup> Quoted in Shim, D. (2009) p. 10

capabilities of Korea diminished the returns of cooperation with Japan and therewith the need for cooperation in the period of investigation.

Third, a rising China widens the menu of foreign policies for Korea. While during the Cold War period the country was forced to side with the US automatically for its own security, the changed dynamic allowed for a security policy “wherein both disputes and cooperation coexist in relations with all foreign states, which led to the normalization of all foreign relations”.<sup>303</sup> The establishment of formal diplomatic ties of South Korea with Russia in 1991 and China in 1992 during Roh Tae Woo's *Nordpolitik* characterised the new possible benefits through enhanced security cooperation. As a result, the possible benefits of cooperation with other countries increased considerably which led to a diminishing returns for cooperation Japan. Accordingly, a decrease in cooperative stance should be the consequence as benefits of cooperation with other countries increase.<sup>304</sup>

These three developments can be broken down into question “whether the costs of Seoul’s departure from the U.S.-aligned structure outweigh the benefits of opting for something else”, as Chung concludes.<sup>305</sup> Clearly, costs have decreased over time. The continued presence of the US and its role in providing security to Korea<sup>306</sup>, however, represent substantial benefits that prevent Korea from cooperating more with China. In effect, however, they do not increase the benefits of cooperation with Japan.

A sole reduction on international circumstances is not enough, however, to adequately explain the foreign policy behaviour of Korea. As Waltz put it, structural realism “cannot run the course and will lose if it tries”.<sup>307</sup> This might explain why a focus on the international environment alone would predict a modest cooperative outlook of Korea towards Japan today given the uncertainties of a rising China and decreasing benefits of US security commitments. As tensions are currently strained intensively it does not square the circle. A look into the domestic setting is able to provide guidance in this regard. After all, the structure of the international system “let’ rather than ‘make’ things happen”.<sup>308</sup>

Table 19 summarizes the findings of the four case studies. As established above, the international environment became more favourable over time as did the bilateral power balance. This provided the framework and trajectory of South Korea's foreign policy behaviour towards Japan. Nevertheless, the timing of the 1965 treaty, sometimes cumbersome negotiations of the 1984

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<sup>303</sup> Kang, S. (2011) p. 132

<sup>304</sup> See section 6.1

<sup>305</sup> Chung, J.H. (2001) p. 794

<sup>306</sup> The Korean National Defence White Paper 2012, for example, expresses that the security of South Korea rests on two pillars: (i) ROK's self-defence capabilities and (ii) the ROK-US alliance

<sup>307</sup> Waltz, K. (2007)

<sup>308</sup> Schweller, R. (1998) p. 6

loan negotiations, the drastic suspension of cooperation until the feeling of abandonment in 1994 and the outright confrontational military gesture in the 2000s cannot be explained solely on grounds of international imperatives. After all, both countries share common security interests which, at the very minimum, should prevent them from outright confrontation. The neoclassical realist model applied offers two possible explanations. First, changes in elite cohesion affect the foreign policy outlook of Korea towards Japan. Second, Korea's Japan policy was influenced by variations in the degree of government isolation. Let us investigate those two possibilities in turn.

	mid1960s	Early 1980s	Late 1980s and early 1990s	2000s
Int. Environment	++	++	-	o
Power Balance ROK-JPN	++	+	o	-
Elite Cohesion	++	++	-	-
Government Insulation	++	+	-	--
ROK's Japan policy	Strong cooperation	Cooperation	Ambivalence	Confrontation
Legend: -- strong pressure to act confrontational - pressure to act confrontational o ambivalent + pressure to act cooperatively ++ strong pressure to act cooperatively				

**Table 19: Matrix of the Four Case Studies**

As can be seen, elite cohesion has clearly reduced in the course of the four case studies. It was extremely coherent before the late 1980s with Park and Chun resting their rule on the *Hanahwoe* and military. Thus, in those two instances the effects of the variable 'elite cohesion' should remain the same. This changed from the late 1980s onwards when the country started to democratise. While the Roh government still had rudimentary coherence resembling the old military dictatorship it vaporised once democratisation took hold. Practically, the composition of the Kim government in 1992 was as diverse as never before. Naturally, presidents composite their cabinet according to their preferences. Still, it has never before been easier for the opposition to torpedo the cabinet and changes to presidential cabinets following pressure by the opposition or society continue well into the Lee Myung-bak period.<sup>309</sup> Not only that an impeachment procedure is in place but also that the appointment of the Prime Minister has to have the consent of the national assembly.<sup>310</sup> Still, it is difficult to assess a clear impact of elite cohesion on South Korea's foreign policy behaviour towards Japan. Given that elite cohesion parallels government isolation to a high degree it is

<sup>309</sup> Choe, S. (August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

<sup>310</sup> See, section 6.2.4

difficult to separate the two. As such, elite cohesion is a concept difficult to apply to the analysis of foreign policy. After all, who constitutes the 'elite'? Applying the elite-cohesion model of Schweller, scholars have made use of different definitions of 'elite' so far. When Christensen was applying the concept he regards it as the inner core of foreign policy makers, i.e. the US president and his closest advisor. This is compared with Yoo, who interprets the foreign policy elite as encompassing all parliamentarians. This ambivalence in the concept of foreign policy elite is likely to blur conclusive results. Similar to Christensen, this thesis made use of the president's cabinet as crucial elite. Further investigation into the specifics of elite-cohesion might be beneficial to illuminate the concept and enhance its applicability.

In contrast to elite cohesion, the devolution of government insulation presents a coherent picture. The military junta in the 1960s was enjoying considerable independence of society leading to the conduct of a more cooperative Japan policy. It was not before the US gave their consent for the Park regime to make use of two divisions to crack down on protesters and force the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations through the national assembly. Thanks to the insulation, the government was able to conduct foreign policy independent from society leading to a more cooperative outlook towards Japan. After all, such a treaty did not materialize in the ten years prior to the military junta. Despite the violent crackdown of the demonstrations in Kwangju the Chun dictatorship could not rest its government on such a high insulation and therefore had to include the history textbook affair into the loan negotiations. Thus, the lowered insulation directly translated into a less cooperative foreign policy outlook. After democratisation the government became increasingly less insulated from society. After 1987 civil society not only increased drastically and downgraded their demands from revolution to reform but organised itself in umbrella organisations. Ripsman's influence model would thus predict a higher influence on governmental policies.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, the revised constitution circumscribed presidential powers substantially. As a result, the government had to take up the demands of civil society in bilateral negotiations with Japan and therefore exhibited a more confrontational stance. Still, once the international environment commanded cooperation after 1994, the government was able to conclude security ties with Japan, even though with low publicity only. Endowed with a mature democracy the Korean government today is highly receptive of societies demand. The ruling of the constitutional court to take a more confrontational stance towards Japan on the comfort women issue shows the availability of venues to influence foreign policy in Korea. Similar, the 2006 naval exercise surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima was a response to the public outcry over the Takeshima day. Again, the government was highly influenced by society in its behaviour towards Japan. The same could be said for the breakdown of GSOMIA in 2012

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<sup>311</sup> Ripsman, N. (2009) pp. 179-186

which seems not explainable by approaches using international threat only.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, the rise in uncertainty caused by an increasingly powerful China does not prescribe aggressive behaviour as observed in the naval exercise 2006.

Several points can be derived from these observations. First, the concept of elite cohesion seems underdeveloped to apply to the analysis of foreign policy. Second, the neoclassic realist models used predicts greater cooperation if the international environment commands it. The command of the international environment can either derive from (i) a rise in overall threat level in the region or (ii) a great power gap between Korea and Japan. According to the COW data as well as specific circumstances in the case studies this seems to be confirmed by reality. Third, the timing, style and even over-aggression in South Korea's outlook to Japan must take government isolation from society into account. Accordingly, a government is better able to translate the international command into foreign policy behaviour if its rate of insulation is high. As the more confrontational stance of Korea after democratisation indicates, the higher domestic constraints for the government the more confrontational the foreign policy behaviour towards Japan. Moreover, the case studies have shown a clear and direct link between societal influence and more aggressive foreign policy behaviour.

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<sup>312</sup> For an overview of government insulation since 1960, see sections 6.2.1 - 6.2.4

## 8 Conclusion

To explain the bilateral relationship between South Korea and Japan is one of the urgent challenges in international relations. Located in a highly dynamic region both share a common ally, both are democracies, and both face similar threats. Still, the behaviour of the two countries towards each other exhibits an extremely high volatility. At times, cooperation seems blossoming; at times, moribund. Signs of cooperation are the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations, the successful loan negotiations in 1984 and military-military cooperation in maritime and aviation affairs of the 1990s. Even so, these instances were not self-propelling. Apparently, it took more than a decade for the two countries to establish diplomatic ties. Similar, the history textbook scandal of the early 1980s nearly caused the loan negotiations to be suspended and conflict over history seemed to foreclose deeper alignment in the early 1990s and today. It is substantial in what ways Korea's behaviour towards Japan changed in these instances. While in the late 1950s stringent conditions were set up to establish diplomatic ties, they were softened to reach an agreement. Similar, Korea showed surprising restraint following the history textbook scandal of the early 1980s. This contrasts sharply with the reaction towards Dokdo/Takeshima, Yasukuni Shrine, history textbooks, or comfort women today. Over the last five decades, not only the bilateral relationship but also Seoul's stance toward Japan showed high volatility. Popular explanations typically cite historical antagonism as main cause. However, every explanation focusing on historical grievances alone is likely to miss the point.

The aim of states is, first and foremost, their mere survival. Korea being located at a highly threatening conjuncture of world politics is facing the threat of annihilation more than most other states on the globe. Artillery is pinpointing its capital from north of the demilitarized zone and neighbouring countries have shown, in the past, repeatedly their willingness to invade the country. Any foreign policy conduct of Korea must safeguard the survival of the state, its territory and institutions. Today as in the past, relying on foreign policy foreclosing cooperation with Japan in the name of historical grievances seems suicidal in light of a nuclear armed North Korea and uncertain intentions of a rising China. Jeopardizing the future to rectify the past is no option. Therefore, an explanation resting on historical factors alone is likely to be in vain. In this regard, Cha was right to point out that “[a]s deep as historical animosity and emotionalism may run, they are not in the long term all-determining in state behaviour”.<sup>313</sup> Yet, the fact that forces related to history are at work is not to be denied. This thesis proposes to incorporate a realist conception of the state into the neorealist international relations theory. In the international states face states; in the domestic the

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<sup>313</sup> Cha, V. (1999) p. 232



government might face society. As such, feelings of historical animosity are to be assigned within society; not within the government conducting foreign policy for the survival of the state. True, historical grievances is an important factor in government-society relationship that may limit the governments menu of choices in foreign policy behaviour, effectively rendering Seoul's Japan policy more aggressive. However, one needs to understand that these processes are occurring in the domestic sphere. To comprehend that foreign policy formation stretches beyond the mere international field and, in the short-run, incorporates domestic factors is of tantamount importance.

Neoclassical realism provides such a bridging between international necessities and domestic constraints. It provides the tool of understanding foreign policy formation as a function of a country's relative position in the international system and the level of domestic constraints. Acknowledging the prominence of neorealism the international environment is thought to set the stage and define the broad trajectory of state action. Introducing a realist conception of the state, however, with its distinction between government and society as distinctive actors sharpens its analytical sword. In times of imminent threat to the survival of the state domestic constraints are likely to diminish. However, the more secure a state's relative position in the international system the more impact for societal interest in foreign-policy making. The attempts to form a theory of foreign policy on the basis of neoclassic realism provides support in solving the Gordian knot of Korea's Japan policy.

According to the COW dataset, the international environment became more favourable for Korea within the last five decades. At least three observations are possible. A move from tripolarity to bipolarity is thought to have increased regional stability. True, there was no repetition of proxy wars since the collapse of the Soviet Union such as in Korea, Vietnam, or Afghanistan. For the Korean peninsula being one of the regional hotspots, this should increase the security of its survival and therefore widen the menu of foreign policy choices. Moreover, unlike to Japan the end of the Cold War brought decisively more options to establish friendly ties with former enemies for Korea. In comparison, Korea's relations with China and Russia advanced faster and more promising than those of Japan. Again, this should be interpreted as enhancing the security of South Korea. Lastly, the bilateral power balance of Korea towards Japan evolved in Korea's favour. While Japan was equipped with roughly five times the capabilities of Korea in 1960, it was endowed with only double capacities in 2003. Therewith, benefits of cooperation with Japan decreased and necessity for cooperation diminished for Korea. Overall, the distribution of capabilities, as shown in the COW dataset, establishes the broad trajectory of Korea's Japan policy. While cooperation in the past was needed to ensure survival, this need reduced as Japan moved from a strong senior partner to one on equal footing. Notwithstanding specific circumstances in time, it should come as no surprise

that the general trajectory of Korea's Japan policy is evolving towards a more confrontational path. As a result, with rising relative power of Korea a more conflictual foreign policy towards Japan is likely.

Still, to rely on national capabilities alone would fail to explain actual foreign policy decisions in the short run. The four case studies above have shown that domestic factors beyond national capabilities played a role in the formation of Korea's Japan policy. There might be historical animosity in Korean society but what seems more important is the ability of social actors to place these specific demands to the government. To be precise, it seems to be important to what extent society is able to impose its will on the government. To include the insulation of the government as variable in the formation of foreign policy seems to be the missing link. In the four case studies it became clear that cooperative foreign policy of Korea needed a high insulation of government. The regime of Park Chung-hee was able to enforce the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations by dint of the army suppressing the opposition in the weeks and days before ratification. Similarly, Chun Doo-hwan was conducting the loan negotiations in the early 1980s from a position of authoritarian control over society. Still, the formal inclusion – even though as a remark only – of the history textbook affair in the negotiations running up to the 1984 finalization shows that amid brutal suppression the insulation of the government is not unlimited. Nevertheless, for a big part it was able to keep the topic out of the negotiations. In the democratisation process after 1987 there is a clear reduction in government insulation with the blossoming of civil society groups, a neutral stance of the military as well as constitutional constraints on the government. As a result, Korea's Japan policy was more confrontational in nature and started to intensively exhibit signs of historical animosity related to Japan's colonisation period. Specifically the Dokdo/Takeshima and the comfort women question only started to take off after democratisation. Interest groups now found their way into government and legal procedures were installed that limited the ability of the presidency. The primacy of the international over the domestic, however, is easily identified. Once Washington agreed on the 1994 Agreement Framework with North Korea without including Seoul, the foreign policy behaviour of South Korea towards Japan became more cooperative. With the international environment today being more permissive than ever and a full-fledged democracy in place, society gained an increasing say over Korea's Japan policy leading to a more confrontational foreign policy outlook. Legal tools are available to force the government to act as can be seen in the constitutional ruling on the omission to act in regard to the comfort women issue. Every presidency started out trying to be more cooperative with Japan but ultimately failed to do so in light of public sentiments. Most prominently, Roh Moo-hyun in the beginning might have called the contested islet by its Japanese name intending to pour oil on troubled water but ultimately had to send gunboats to

reassert Korea's tenure. Even though the Korean public is aware of the necessity to cooperate more intensively with Japan it is reluctant to do so. The public opinion polls on the need and desire for the GSOMIA treaty make a point in this case. Apparently, the international environment today allows for Korea to pursue aims different from national security in its foreign policy towards Japan. Over the last five decades the insulation of the government reduced drastically from being based on authoritarian rule to an open democracy. This opened up venues for the society to place their demands of historical grievances in the foreign policy of Korea towards Japan. The four case studies seem, thus, to support that the lower the level of government insulation the more confrontational the outlook of Korea's Japan policy will be.

This analysis enriches the scholarly debate on the sources of friction and cooperation between Japan and Korea. After all, it presents an explanation for Korea's Japan policy that includes the change in the relative distribution in capabilities, differences in opportunity structures following the end of the Cold War and offers an explanatory venue for understanding how societal demands can find their way into foreign policy. The combination of factors, moreover, allows for a consistent explanatory model that holds in both, during and post-Cold War order. This was not provided by existing models so far. Moreover, it sets clear benchmarks on how to evaluate future developments in Korea's Japan policy. Increases in Korea's relative power towards Japan are likely to result in more confrontational foreign policy behaviour as is an overall improvement in regional stability. Likewise, a decrease in domestic insulation and more influence of society to determine Korea's Japan policy might have the same effect.

The investigation made use of neoclassical realism and found it to be highly useful in understanding and predicting the foreign policy behaviour of Korea towards Japan. However, the concept of elite cohesion elaborated by some might seem, at first, highly sophisticated and useful for the analysis of country's' foreign policy. Yet, given its conceptual flaws, specifically its under-definition, it is difficult to apply to a specific case. After all, who constitutes the 'elite'? In contrast, the concept of government insulation proves valuable in the analysis. It is striking, however, that in the case of Korea government insulation seems to be inversely related to the security environment. High government insulation persisted when security was scarce and low government insulation occurs when the international environment seems benign. Neoclassic Realism posits that in the long-run the all defining variable is the international balance-of-power. It deals with the transmission of the distribution of capabilities into actual foreign policy decisions. These mechanisms of translation are different in authoritarian and democratic regimes. While in the regime foreign-policy making is dictated by a small elite, the latter faces a highly legalized system in which societal participation is institutionalized in the very fabric of socio-political affairs. It

appears the link between the international distribution of power and the evolution of forms of government within countries is understudied. Neoclassical realism shows that black-box approaches are a relic of the past and enriches the debate on possible sources of adaptation, innovation and emulation of state practices. Specifically, the effects of democracy on foreign policy behaviour should be scrutinized further.

Indeed, the bilateral relationship between Korea and Japan provides one of the most puzzling examples in international relations. This analysis has added to its understanding by providing a comprehensive explanation for Korea's Japan policy. Foremost, the international distribution of capabilities and, in the short-run, domestic insulation of the government form the two variables explaining either cooperative or conflictual foreign policy stance. With increasing improvement of Korea's relative capabilities benefits of cooperation with Japan are reduced. At the same time, reduction in government insulation allows society to influence foreign policy behaviour. In that vein, it is possible to understand historical grievances as a factor of the relationship between the government and society; not as a variable in Korea-Japan relations directly.

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## **Abstrakt**

Die Beziehungen zwischen der Republik Korea und Japan gehören mit einer sehr hohen Volatilität zu den theoretischen Rätseln der Nachkriegszeit. Obwohl die beiden Länder nicht nur die selbe Schutzmacht USA haben und mit einer nuklearen Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea sowie einer aufstrebender Volksrepublik China ähnliche Sicherheitsrisiken aufweisen, sucht man eine starke sicherheitspolitische Kooperation bisher weitgehend vergebens. Auch die eng verknüpften wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Banden scheinen nicht in der Lage, die teilweise eskalierende Konfrontation der beiden Länder über die geteilte Geschichte und deren Aufarbeitung zu verhindern.

Auf den ersten Blick scheint es, dass das historische Gedächtnis der Republik Korea ist in der Lage die außenpolitische Richtung deutlich zu beeinflussen. Konflikte wie die Liancourt-Felsen, die 'Trostrfrauen' oder Besuche des Yasukuni-Schreins bei führenden japanischen Politikern wiegen scheinbar schwerer als Aufrüstung oder wirtschaftliche Interdependenzen bei der Wahl der möglichen Außenpolitiken. Diese Thematik taucht tief ein in die wissenschaftliche Debatte um die Aussagekraft von Theorien der Internationalen Politik. Eine relativ neue Strömung, die sich weniger mit der internationalen Struktur als solches, sondern mit dem Verhalten von Staaten vis-à-vis diesen Strukturen beschäftigt ist der Neoklassische Realismus. Trotz theoretischer Nähe zum Neorealismus sucht diese Strömung nach den Faktoren auf die Außenpolitik und beleuchtet dabei sowohl internationale als auch innerstaatliche Faktoren. Dabei wird vor allem betrachtet in welchem Maß Staaten in der Lage sind Informationen des internationalen Systems effizient zu verwerten. Zwar können diese innerstaatliche Faktoren jene 'Übersetzung' beeinflussen, die bestimmende Variable bleibt jedoch, wie im Neorealismus auch, die Verteilung der Macht im internationalem System. Zu jenen innerstaatlichen Faktoren zählen etwa die Kohärenz der politischen Elite, das Verhältnis zwischen Gesellschaft und Elite oder der politischen Kultur. Mit dieser Verschränkung bemüht sich der neoklassische Realismus nicht nur theoretisch um eine Lösung des 'Level-of-Analysis' Problems, sondern offeriert auch einen Rahmen um die Japanpolitik der Republik Korea zu analysieren und deren Grenzen und Entwicklungen zu bestimmen.

Als erstes wurde hierzu die Verteilung der internationalen Macht in der Region Ostasien untersucht. Gewählt wurden die Mitgliedsstaaten der Sechsparteiengespräche. Methodisch wurde dabei auf den Correlates of War Index zurückgegriffen. Anhand dessen sind drei Aussagen über die Entwicklung des internationalen Systems in Ostasien möglich; (i) ein Übergang von einer Tri- in eine Bipolarität, (ii) eine stark aufstrebende Volksrepublik China, sowie (iii) eine relative Verringerung der Machtposition Japans vis-à-vis der Republik Korea. Damit verliert Japan relativ an Bedeutung für die Republik Korea, was wiederum innerstaatlichen Einfluss auf die koreanische



Außenpolitik gegenüber Japan ermöglicht. Dies lässt sich deutlich anhand von vier vergleichenden Case Studies feststellen in denen der Einfluss der Variablen 'Kohärenz der Elite' und 'Unabhängigkeitsgrad der Elite von der Gesellschaft' untersucht wurden. Auffällig ist, dass, während der Zeit der autoritären Herrschaft von Park Chung-hee und Chun Doo-hwan, gesellschaftliche Strömungen die eine aggressive Japanpolitik forderten unterdrückt wurden und ihren Weg nicht in die Außenpolitik fanden. Vielmehr fallen die Etablierung diplomatischer Beziehungen und der Abschluss eines umfangreichen Wirtschaftsabkommens in diese Zeit. Erst nach dem Demokratisierungsprozess können jene Kräfte in zunehmenden Maß Einfluss auf die koreanischen Japanpolitik nehmen. So ist es beispielsweise erst nach 1987, das sich viele zivilgesellschaftliche Akteure formen und scheinbar nun erst eine Öffentlichkeit bildet, die auch in historischen Sachverhalten auf die Regierung einwirkt. Bezeichnenderweise war etwa die Interessenvertretung der 'Trostfrauen', die selbst erst 1990 etabliert wurde, in der Lage beim koreanischen Verfassungsgericht erfolgreich auf Unterlassung der koreanischen Regierung zu klagen. Demnach musste die Regierung stärker auf Japan für eine Lösung der Problematik einwirken.

Die Arbeit befasst sich mit den theoretischen Auseinandersetzungen um die Einbeziehung von innerstaatlichen Faktoren in die realistische Analyse. Sie ermöglicht dadurch existierende Erklärungsmodelle für die bilateralen Beziehungen zwischen Japan und der Republik Korea zu hinterfragen und überzeugendere Erklärungsmuster zu präsentieren. Klar ist, Japan wird aufgrund der internationalen Entwicklungen immer unwichtiger für die Republik Korea. Gleichzeitig steigen jedoch auch innerkoreanische Ressentiments gegenüber Japan an, die seit der Demokratisierung einen steigenden Einfluss auf die Außenpolitik verzeichnen können.

*Stichwörter: Außenpolitik, Internationale Politik, Südkorea, Japan, historisches Gedächtnis, staatliche Strukturen, Governance*

## **Curriculum Vitae**

### Persönliche Daten:

Name: Gregor Konzack  
Geburtsdatum: 05. März 1986  
Geburtsort: Gräfelfing  
Staatsbürgerschaft: Deutsch  
E-Mail: gregor.konzack@hotmail.com

### Bildungsweg:

2011-2014                      Masterstudium Politikwissenschaft  
                                    Universität Wien, Österreich  
                                    Schwerpunkte: Internationale Beziehungen und Osteuropastudien

2008-2011                      Bachelorstudium European Studies  
                                    Maastricht University, Niederlande  
                                    Schwerpunkte: EU Recht und Integration

WS 2010                        Auslandsstudium  
                                    Ajou University, Südkorea

2008                              Abitur  
                                    Landschulheim Schloss Ising, Deutschland