

State Behavior and Regional Identity: The Case of China and East Asia

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The research on East Asian multilateralism argues favorably or unfavorably over the effectiveness and durability of regional cooperation towards strengthening state-to-state relations. Those who locate cooperation (e.g. economic or security) and shared norms among Asian neighbors typically apply a liberal institutionalist or a social constructivist approach. Those who doubt the depth and authenticity of corporate spirit and goodwill towards regionalization speak in terms of traditional power politics and strategic balancing. This paper critically examines Asian regionalism using the language of social constructivism and not political realism. Ideas, identities, perceptions, and behavior are prioritized and material forces are of less concern except to the degree they influence identity. Particularly, China's behavior will have the greatest impact, rather than current regional norms, on the viability of East Asian regionalization.

Keywords: International Relations, Security, Regionalism, East Asia, China's Rise

UNDERTAKING "REGION" AND "STATE"

This article begins with a defense of the premise that the region of East Asia with the state as primary agent is a feasible research subject followed by a discussion of the theoretical approaches to the regionalization of East Asia. Identity and interest are central to the Constructivist approach, so in that vein the subject of East Asia's social identity includes a discussion of Confucianism, nationalism, and race upon the regional identity. As for interest, it is political interests including hegemonic, economic, and security interests that are covered. In conclusion, China's current and future behavior rather than current norms shapes East Asian identity.

Area studies by and large emphasize field research and time-honed devotion to a nation or region; whereas a disciplinary approach such as international relations (IR) usually seeks to apply theoretical approaches, which are not limited to particular regions. This paper straddles the two fields by acknowledging that current international relations theories inadequately capture the complexity and nuances of East Asian regionalism by subscribing to the view that East Asia is a sui generis research subject and therefore cannot be equated with any other region. In spite of the shortcomings of IR theories at understanding the dynamics of East Asia, these approaches are helpful in explaining some aspects of state relations in the region.

What is meant by East Asia? A clarification on those countries constituting East Asia, it is composed of the states of Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, namely China, Japan, the two Koreas, and Taiwan. This categorization is “closed” as opposed to the “open” definition that includes other actors with great influence in this region, especially the US and to a much lesser, although not insignificant degree, the Russian Republic. Within this article, East Asia comprises Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia (ASEAN-10), focusing primarily on the Northeast Asian states of China, South Korea and Japan (EA3) dynamics and the United States seen primary as an outside actor (EA3+1).

This analysis of East Asian regionalism downplays the US variable for four reasons. The first is that this is an attempt to understand the region as a platonic model, with the US variable removed from the analysis. The US is a key player in Asian security architecture, but this article is not an explanation of said architecture but seeks to understand how Asian states within the region see themselves and their neighbors. The second is that the US, despite its many Asian immigrants and multiculturalism, is emphatically not an Asian country—not geographically or otherwise. The third is that because of China’s size, proximity, and historical and cultural interaction with its neighbors, China’s behavior in the region has more impact for better or worse. Finally, relative to the long-term historical picture of Sino-regional relations, the US is a new comer to the region and some would argue that its influence may be declining—especially if China successfully manages its domestic growth and reform, foreign relations, historical grievances, and territorial interests with its neighbors in the 21st century.

What value is there in a statist approach to the region? Marxism, Feminism, Postmodernism, critical theory, and Constructivism normally include an agenda that transcends the state and attempts to displace state-centrism. These approaches sweep away the state as primary actor, and remove it as “an object of enquiry,

once and for all” (Hobson, 2003, p. 1). However, non-state approaches including state as actor are largely omitted from the IR conversation of East Asia both inside and outside the region. The state as actor debate revolves around the degree of state autonomy vis-à-vis the power of non-state actors and general social processes including globalization. Traditional IR theorists, particularly Neorealists, maintain that the state is highly autonomous, and is the main actor in world politics even when working through institutions. Liberals and pluralists, on the other hand, argue that state autonomy is in decline particularly through economic processes consistent with Marxist and postmodernist assertions of the rank of globalization over that of state. The role of state debate is one of “international socio-economic structure-centeredness” versus “international political structure-centeredness” (Hobson, 2003, p. 2,4).

A non-state approach includes globalism, which epitomizes the global political-economic order defined by the Western preferences. Paradoxically, this Western victory at the end of the 20th century coincided with the diminished power of Europe introduced at the opening of the last century. The trend in Western scholarship (particularly European) is to downplay the role of the state as actor and to emphasize multilateral global and regional economic and security organizations. The great European powers are a shadow of their former glory, and the European state is less relevant. Is the hypothesis that the state is less relevant true globally, or is this a reflection of Europeans applying their historical experience to the non-European world? This era of weakening European states saw nation-states willingly transfer significant sovereign rights to supranational institutions. The diminishing power of the European state was interpreted in Radtke’s terms as a general “erosion of the state” (Radtke, 2010, p. 70). Granted that a “nation” is an “imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1983, p. 6), the modern sovereign state is nevertheless the prime unit for

facilitating, mediating, or impeding interaction between collective and individual societal units contained within its borders.

Because this is an examination of East Asia with the state as actor, what theoretical approaches lead to better understanding of the sources of conflict that weaken and complementary strengths and cooperation that strengthen the region as a political and social unit? Looking outside into the region, Realists see a geopolitical area that is increasingly shaped by conflict or nascent conflict centering upon the tensions posed by a rising and self-asserting China and what it means for the status quo. This approach overlooks the role of identity and economic interaction in forming regional norms. A Liberal view celebrates the extent of cooperation between the East Asian states, especially as institutionalized in regional groupings such as ASEAN Plus Three (APT), and their deepening economic interdependence to eventually frame a workable system of cooperative security. However, the Liberal approach has failed to explain why economic interdependence between East Asian states has not smoothed over the distrust between or among them, nor offers evidence for the hypothesis that thick economic interdependence prevents war rather than some other factor. After all, economic interdependence did not prevent the Europeans from entering WWI, and today it is economic interdependence that is at least as much a source of conflict as it is a source of cooperation. A Constructivist paradigm emphasizes identity, interests, behavior, interactions, and ensuing norms among states and their societies as providing the momentum via regional institutions that leads towards regional cooperation.

Using the above terminology of Constructivism, it is equally logical that the focus points of identity, interest, and behavior may lead to conflict just as they may foster cooperation. Aaron Friedberg also recognized this: "Repeated interaction can erode old identities and transform existing social structures, but it can also reinforce them" (2005, p. 38). Therefore, the theoretical approach of this

argument begins with the assumption that human association is determined primarily by both shared and non-shared ideas and secondarily by material forces. Ideas form national and cultural identities and are shaped by historical as well as material factors such as economic wealth and geography. Identity plays a role in forming interest that impacts behavior. Behavior and interaction in turn create new history so that this is an ongoing process and this is the case for all interacting units including East Asian states.

EAST ASIA'S SOCIAL IDENTITY

National identities are constituted through international relations and through the histories people construct about their national past. As social creatures, state identities like personal identities are inter-subjective, established through encounters with others. Thus, national autobiographies are stories about a state's relationships with other states. It is through these state relationships that the subject explains how it became what it is today and where it hopes to be tomorrow (Gries, 2005, p. 4).

Fortunately, perceptions are dynamic and not fixed. Self-interested identities rather than collective identities can alternate depending upon which one is nurtured. This does not occur in isolation but dynamically in the presence of other global actors. It "takes at least two parties to have an interaction, and others may tell different stories about shared or overlapping pasts" (Gries, 2005, p. 8). Pasts are to be remembered and analyzed, but an unhealthy preoccupation of viewing global affairs in a review mirror makes for reckless guidance when it blinds one of greater horizons and hazards ahead as is in East Asia. Besides having a preoccupation with the past, the states of East Asia share other commonalities, including some informal but socially engrained adherence to Confucianism, an emphasis upon nationalism, and an association with race and nationhood.

Confucianism and Identity

Pinpointing East Asian commonalities such as shared consciousness, identity, or cohesion is problematic because “few if any of these attributes are present within the region” (S. S. Kim, 2004, p. 28). If there is a commonality among the East Asian community, it is the influence of Confucian thought upon the region. However, the complexity of quantitatively measuring Confucian values, which involves tracing their origin in classic texts, their historical development, as well as evidence of contemporary influence, is a very complex undertaking. Many values, including Confucian values, are universal, but their unique application within a culture, “their particular weighting within a scale of national values, is the elusive yet defining question for each nation” (Sheridan, 1999, p. 17). Confucian thought and ideas about communitarianism are the basis of an Asian values perspective as an alternative to Western individualist liberal values. It is also presented as the “alternative conceptualization of an East Asian international order” versus the “hegemonic ambition of the liberal mantra of democratic peace” (Acharya & Buzan, 2007, p. 302). Overall, Confucianism is a frame of reference to explain East Asia and is a key for understanding the East Asian commonalities (Kim, 2009, p. 857).

Confucianism is still dominant in East Asian cultural and ethnical systems. Sunhyuk Kim maintained it “encourages theoretical orthodoxy and ideological purity (therefore) compromise, negotiation, bargaining, and accommodation are antithetical” to Confucian thought. A pronounced hierarchical system “between the superior and the inferior is the hallmark of Confucian social order (S. Kim, 2004, p. 159). In this system, Confucius perceives state as a product of social evolution and therefore it is only a byproduct of society. Neither Confucius nor his disciples give any formal definition of the State (Kim, 2009, p. 858). Confucianism provides pedagogic patterns including the status of teachers, exam-driven curriculums, a culture of patriarchal authority

and hierarchy, respect for seniority, conformity to group norms, and individual performance in academia tied to family honor (Kim, 2009, p. 869).

What is regarded as uniquely Confucian is the East Asian meritocracy epitomized in the tradition of exam-oriented schooling and the exam-based selection of the civil servants in East Asia. The state’s control over school curriculum and other facets of schooling and selection processes in East Asian countries in order to guarantee the merit-based equality¹ of educational opportunity, in principle, can be regarded as a particular attribute of the Confucian pedagogic tradition (Kim, 2009, p. 858). There is a Confucian belief that knowledge is the beginning of cosmic order in this sequence: learn Confucian ideas and canon, self-cultivation, self-realization, and family regulation. At the state level this includes conformity and orthodoxy, benevolent rule by a dominating state, and the penetration of society by the state (Alagappa, 2004, p. 13). Japan, Korea, and China show preferences of group over the individual, group harmony over personal conflict, submission to seniority without question, observance of a social hierarchy of relationships, and self-sacrifice in favor of collective communal goods (Akaha, 2008, p. 159).

Nationalism and Identity

The idea of a Chinese, Korean, or Japanese people is a social construct using ethno-cultural vocabulary. Cultural nationalism assumes a group of people, when viewing themselves, share a set of underlying values, norms, beliefs, and understanding that they form a singular culture. This narrow cultural and racial nationalism that is ubiquitous in East Asia is contrary to Westernized “global” cosmopolitan and Western norms. Westerners like to imagine themselves as enlightened cosmopolitans and this paradox is also a form of cultural “nationalism”. Neither nationalism nor ethnicity in East Asia is vanishing as part of an outdated order and they remain part of a modern set of

identities central to international social and political struggles (Calhoun, 2007, p. 51). Calls to nationhood are not just domestic calls for social solidarity, common descent, or any other grounds for establishing a political community but are international demands for some degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency, and claims to certain rights within an international system of states (Calhoun, 2007, p. 56).

In addition to an intellectual support of nationalism in China, there is strategic political support of nationalism. For example, the manipulation of Chinese prejudices towards Japan is a strategic weapon the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wields. The Japan-bashing and hate-filled demonstrations in Chinese cities in April 2005 could be interpreted as a ploy to legitimize China's efforts at preventing Japan from occupying a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Friedman posited that the CCP's efforts to discredit Japan are "part of a policy to make China the pre-eminent power in the region, something that worries the Japanese government far more than the nationalistic politics of party competition in South Korea" (Friedman, 2006, p. 208). The Japanese perceive Korean animosity against Japan as primarily emotional, whereas China's hatred towards Japan is more purposeful and sinister. Professor Seizaburo Sato of the Institute for International Studies sees anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea as a "ritualized part of Korean politics" stemming from the "emotional style of Korean politics...but China's anti-Japanese sentiment on the other hand, he asserts is 'Machiavellian' with the intention of gaining strategic advantage over Japan" (Sheridan, 1999, p. 212).

Ethno-cultural nationalism also plays an important role in Japanese self-identity. A good Japanese citizen is a member of the Japanese state (*kokumin*) and a member of the Japanese nation (*Nihonjin*). He speaks Japanese, observes traditions (*dento*), and follows Shintoism. Although it was the villain in Korean-Japanese relations, Japanese nationalists transform the issue by fomenting public anger over the abduction of

Japanese citizens by North Korean secret agents in the 1970s and the 1980s. Japan's mass media and school curriculum have skirted the country's horrific relations with the Koreans and focused rather on the abduction cases and the propagated Japanese war crimes against Koreans have been exaggerated (Wada, 2006, p. 52).

Korea suffered much under Japanese colonial rule. Time has not healed the wounds of anger Korea harbors for Japan. However, the democratic Japan of today is not the same ferocious Japan that oppressed Korea. The emotional bitterness towards Japan, Sheridan remarked, is both "immature and unproductive" because it "blinds" Koreans to the social and political strategic interests² that they share with Japan, including "the profound values the two societies have in common" (Sheridan, 1999, p. 239). North Korea's (i.e. the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK) guiding ideology is nationalism and not communism. As a strategy struggle against Western-led globalization, the DPRK uses nuclear nationalism to gain international respect (Shin & Chang, 2004, p. 144).

The perceptions of Taiwanese towards Koreans are negative. For example, Department of Health (DOH) Minister Yaung Chih-liang (楊志良) when speaking on Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) system at an international conference held by the Washington-based Center for Strategy and International Studies (CSIS) presented his views on Korea. Yaung mentioned that after a Korean delegation came to Taiwan to visit him and to learn from Taiwan's national health care system he said, "South Korean people would never say they copied from Taiwan ... It's just like when Korea also said Confucius was from Korea. I detest (討厭) Korean people" (Hsiu-chuan & Tsao, 2010, par. 3). His views are not unusual, but held by many people in Taiwan towards Koreans. This is in spite of the soft power of Korean soap operas in Taiwan. In fact, popular cultures have diffused broadly in East Asia yet "the dissemination of popular cultures and the formation of common regional identities are different matters" (Yoshimatsu, 2009, p. 763).

Race and Identity

Promoting national spirit and consciousness within East Asia has not waned under globalization. In Korea for example, asserting racial distinctiveness and unity of the Korean nation was reinforced by the negative experience of subjugation by Japanese colonial rule. Japan's attempt to assimilate Koreans was based on colonial racism, or "nissen dosoron", which claimed that Koreans although sharing common racial origins were racially subordinate to the Japanese (Shin & Chang, 2004, p. 122). Koreans protested by asserting their own brand of racial origins and national culture. They argued for a "unitary nation in blood and culture," and to question such unity would have been a denial of the struggle against Japanese imperialism and the Japanese rule rather than erase Korean national consciousness reinforced Korean claims of a monolithic racial and cultural identity (Shin & Chang, 2004, p. 122).

Greg Sheridan asserted, Japan's greatest weakness is not economic stagnation but "rather its conception of citizenship as being intimately linked with ethnicity, as evidenced in its unwillingness to accord full citizenship rights even to its Korean minority ... even after generations of residency" (1999, p. 214). There is a commonly shared perception among the Japanese that they are a homogeneous people, in racial, ethnic, and cultural terms. The notion of "nation" or "nationality" as a culturally rooted and ethnically defined reality is firmly held by most Japanese people (Akaha, 2008, p. 158).

The Chinese are also guilty of associating the nation with race—to be a Han Chinese the "race" is to be Chinese national.³ This is one of the arguments Beijing uses against Taiwan when addressing the issue of statehood. According to Beijing, Taiwan is a part of China because of the common Han race residing on both sides of the Straits. China's attitude toward race and nationality is also a source of great tension for its ethnic minorities, which is well-documented

in Western media, particularly the issues of Tibet and Xingjiang.

EAST ASIA'S POLITICAL INTERESTS

Political, economic, and security interests are interests of power. Power interests shape identity and influence state behavior. Interactions among East Asian states are rational to the extent that they are for the purpose of increasing one's power. The states of East Asia are interacting to enhance their political economic and security interests, but do they see this interaction as zero-sum or win-win? Is China willing to take on a burden of responsibility by providing some sort of public goods to the region?

Because of its sheer size, China has the most to gain in absolute terms, and very likely in relative terms, thus enhancing its regional hegemonic position. Will China restrain and gain trust, or will it assert and create mistrust among its longtime neighbors? China's interaction and behavior are of much greater interest to Korea and Japan than regional norms (if any exist besides the norm of non-interference). It is impossible to discuss the political climate of East Asia without understanding the central role of China in setting the cooperative or competitive tone in the region. If regional cooperation is to work, China alone has the power to make this a reality (Friedman & Kim, 2006, p. 206). Japan and Korea's accommodation of a rising China is clearly the most pressing challenge for the East Asia region. Concerns about a rising China are a key determinant of not just the process of regional integration, but also of what the region should be (Breslin, 2009).

Hegemonic Interests

Historically, China has seen itself as the central power figure in Asia and it seeks to resume that position. "This Sino-centric order was not just glorious for all involved, but benefited all as well," claimed Beijing University's Ye Zicheng. Further, "Unipolarity (and) the Sino-centric East

Asian system was in the interest of both China and the other nations within the system” (Ye, 2004, as cited in Gries, 2005, p. 12). Only Chinese make such claims and not their neighbors who in fact fear a regional Chinese hegemony. Herein is irony. Chinese strategic rhetoric discourse is strongly against (US) hegemony and promotes equality at the global level, but embraces hegemony and “promote(s) hierarchy at the regional East Asian level” (Gries, 2005, p. 13). The basis for this seeming contradiction is simple: China must first become a regional hegemon before it can become a global hegemon, so while it criticizes US global hegemony Beijing actively peruses regional hegemony and accuses any US activity in the Asian region as an attempt to contain China.

Much is made of the tribute system for understanding regional politics of East Asia. The concept of a Chinese tribute system is a “Western invention for descriptive purposes” and however well argued it is “ultimately inadequate because historical East Asian politics was not confined to (a) tribute (or) its associated practices” (Feng, 2009, pp. 600-601). The term “tribute system” was an English invention devised during the 19th century and translated back into Chinese as *chaogong-tixi* (朝貢體系). The terms *chao* and *gong* do appear in Chinese historical sources, but the Chinese had no conception of it as a system as such, but from this concept, it is argued that China’s relations with other states were hierarchic just like Chinese society (Feng, 2009, p. 626).

The rise of China and concerns about a re-emerging Sino-centric regional order redirected South Korean IR scholars’ concern to broader issues, such as the clash of civilizations (Chun, 2010, p. 73). South Koreans feel the heat of China’s overbearing geographical proximity and for most of Korea’s history has been heavily influenced by China’s Big Brother posture towards Korea. Japan too has in the past defined its own existence as a frog in a well with China providing the well that surrounds Japan (Gries, 2005, p. 9). Chinese dynasties had the “official right” to intervene in the domestic politics of neighbors, from the selection of the name of the

Korean dynasties to selecting individual rulers (Yoo, 2005, p. 22). This is what happened during the Yi/Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910) and serves as a historical reminder of Korean submission to Chinese hegemony (Gries, 2005). In the final year of his life (2011), Kim Jong-il increased his travel to Beijing presumably to discuss the succession of his son Kim Jong-un to the throne of supreme leader of North Korea.

China is not the only East Asian power, past or present, with regional hegemonic aspirations. Some East Asians believe that the notion of regionalism began with Japan’s past militaristic regionalization packaged as the Greater East Asia Co Prosperity Sphere. These unhappy memories of Japan’s imposed regionalism, “foster and preserve among the peoples of East Asian countries a deep resentment toward Japan” (Wada, 2006, p. 39). Another weakness in the region preventing political integration is “the relative weakness of the mobilization of transnational business interests in favor of closer regional cooperation and continuing wide disparities in terms of levels of economic development and political systems” (Webber, 2010, p. 2).

Economic Interests

East Asia has not succeeded in creating a regional identity in the global community. Despite the tremendous literature on regionalism, the dearth of any literature on East Asia “as a distinct region is striking:” within Asia “only Southeast Asia receives recognition as a region” because of the 1967 creation of ASEAN (S. S. Kim, 2004, p. 24). Increasing economic and cultural interactions among East Asia potentially fosters a regional identity; however, this rosy view remains problematic because:

Rather than automatically facilitating regional identity, transnational interaction may exacerbate negative perceptions toward neighboring countries and transnational contact may raise more economic and cultural conflicts, and may highlight the

real differences among them. (Kim & Jhee, 2008, pp. 159, 165)

ASEAN Plus Three (APT) includes China, South Korea, and Japan. It is however not based on any treaty or formal binding agreements among the participating states. The institutions that have been constructed under APT are mirror images of the deficiencies of ASEAN. East Asian states “have eschewed measures that would constrain their policy-making autonomy” so that regional cooperation is little more than a verbal exchange (Ravenhill, 2010, p. 201). Many projects have been launched under APT yet “these are typically initiated and financed by one of the Plus Three countries with little or no input from the others:” the outcome is a series of bilateral ASEAN Plus One (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) rather than true East Asian schemes (Ravenhill, 2010, p. 201).

The one point on which the APT unanimously wholeheartedly agrees upon is the principle of noninterference in the affairs of member states contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) of 1976 first signed by the members of ASEAN. TAC is chock-full of references to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the exclusive right of a government to govern their population within their boundaries. These principles “articulate a sense of vulnerability, which arises from the fear that external powers may seek to compromise their sovereignty” (Dunn, Nyers, & Stubbs, 2010, p. 298). The only principle to which APT adheres is that of non-interference. Norms are what states make of them and “the only fundamental norm it has reinforced is a realist commitment, not to the region, but to the sovereign inviolability of the nation-state” (Jones & Smith, 2007, p. 185).

Following the 1997 Asian crisis, Asian regionalism found a new wind in the sails of cooperation. The lead was initially taken by Japan, which emphasized monetary cooperation. After the high point of the 2000 ASEAN+3 development of the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI), however, the progress of monetary integration stalled for nearly a decade and was revived by

the global financial crisis, which resulted in renewed calls for regional financial cooperation and member states contributing US\$120 billion to the CMI. This is considered the most effective regional financial cooperation mechanism. Michael Yahuda, on multilateralism in East Asia, observed “real politics occurs bilaterally” because new nations are “jealous of independence, sovereignty, new governments, and new nations” (Wang, Westad, & Yahuda, 2010). Economic integration, to the extent that it has taken place, occurs through bilateral free trade agreements between states both within and outside the region (Jones & Smith, 2007).

East Asian states share common domestic foundations of economic development based on export driven models with tight political control. East Asia has created the environmental conditions for both domestic and regional economic stability to pursue these models (Solingen, 2006, p. 32). National mercantilist policies that promote exports while artificially restricting imports causes economic tensions between the economies in the region (Perkins, 2007, p. 44). The Great Recession has exasperated these tensions as traditional export markets outside the region are contracting, East Asia states are faced with the task of altering their models to focus more on regional consumer markets.

There are a number of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) especially between China and ASEAN members. The existence of an FTA does not contradict a developmental policy that is mercantilist. Member countries can still peg their currencies, and in the case of China, export more finished products in exchange for natural resources despite a FTA. Asian economic integration has witnessed an increase of FTAs between Asian countries from a mere six in 1996 to 70 in 2011. However, a dearth of empirical information on the FTAs is the biggest impediment to firms using FTAs as indicated by Asian Development Bank (ADB) firm-level surveys that show 70% of responding firms in the Philippines, 45% in China, and 34% in Korea citing low margins of

preference and delays and administrative costs for utilizing the FTAs (Kawai, 2011).

Despite increased economic integration there is however, based on 2003 data provided by *AsiaBarometer*, a very limited regional identity, and the link between national identity and regional identity is unlike that of other regions. "National identity in Northeast Asia is not compatible with regional identity: those who have a strong national identity in the region are less likely to have an Asian identity" (Kim & Jhee, 2008, p. 175). Contrary, to the liberal neo-functional hypothesis that increasing transnational activities promote both regional integration and regional identity, in "Northeast Asia, (this) has an opposite function in that international interaction undermines regional identity" (Kim & Jhee, 2008, p. 177).

Security Interests

East Asia and the West are metaphorically in different time zones facing dissimilar realities. Eastern states entered the modern states system during the age of Western imperialism, and many did not gain true independence and sovereignty until the conclusion of the Second World War. As a result, non-traditional human security issues are primary security concerns for Western Europe. Whereas in East Asia traditional security issues, such as the security dilemma, power transition, and territorial disputes, are central in determining the major motives of regional politics. Far from regional economic integration leading to a peace dividend, military spending in Asia has exploded. This breakout in military spending has been driven by China's robust modernization and development of its military, particularly its navy.

Increasing Chinese military dominance effects regional peace and East Asian security in at least four ways. First, China would be compelled to establish a regional hegemony, possibly by force. Second, the rise of Chinese power might trigger a response from Japan, bringing East Asia under the shadow of a new bipolar conflict (Roy, 1994, p. 156). Third, it would increase China's temptation

to force Taiwan to "return" to the motherland, which could easily trigger outside involvement, especially if Taiwan requests defensive assistance. Finally, if China becomes a regional hegemon it may choose to resolve territorial disputes by unilateral bullying rather than through multilateral means. China has often criticized the US for unilateralism, but in response to regional requests to handle territorial disputes multilaterally, China has insisted on bilateral approaches, which on account of its relative power are essentially unilateral.

CHINA'S BEHAVIOR AND EAST ASIAN NORMS

Regional norms in East Asian politics are central as they construct the social identities of agents in the area, and this helps define perceptions of each state and its interests. Norms can redefine interests in a way that may eventually subsume individual state identities within wider collectivities but it will be a long time before East Asia develops such powerful norms. Until then, whether China's international relations, are multilateral or bilateral will set the tone of any forthcoming diplomatic norms in East Asia.

When observing the behavior of China in East Asia and regional norms, it is clear that the former has much greater bearing on regional interests than the latter. In fact, China's behavior not only shapes the interests of its neighbors, but it also forms regional norms, the only definitive norm being non-interference. In cases when China's national political boundaries are in doubt, such as with Taiwan, China argues this is a domestic case where no other state should interfere.

Globalism and regionalism are normative concepts referring to shared values, norms, identity, and aspiration which grow out of "a series of complex, interrelated processes of stretching and accelerating region-wide interconnectedness in political, economic, and social relations" (S. S. Kim, 2004, p. 28). However, the discontinuity between propagated norms and actual behavior

indicates that China has taken advantage of liberal norms to advance its material power and strategic space. Yoshimatsu acknowledged, “The independent function of norms to guide and regulate the states to follow rules that are associated with particular identities is still underdeveloped in East Asia” (Yoshimatsu, 2009, pp. 761–762). China is in the enviable position to establish and submit to norms that are beneficial to the region, but there must be some sacrifice for this positive gain. China at present lacks the courage and moral resolve to embark on this forward thinking historical project because of its backward thinking and narrow minded zero sum approach to state relations.

Because China is *the* regional power, how it behaves and monitors its great power ambitions is essential for future cooperation in East Asia. Cooperation requires the CCP to “replace a narrow nationalism with an enlightened nationalism more open to win-win games;” otherwise, China is likely to undermine peace in the region (Friedman & Kim, 2006, p. 209). China’s domestic identity increases the likelihood it will use force to achieve its political goals. The CCP dominated authoritarian political system leaves much room for serious suspicions among its neighbors. Its authoritarianism and irredentist predictability in regional affairs reinforces these doubts. Huang and Xu stated that political reforms are a prerequisite for China’s ascendancy to an effective regional leadership role (Huang & Xu, 2007, p. 250).

Policy concerns of the CCP spans both the domestic and global realms. When confronted with domestic problems (or challenges), the state can turn to the international realm to overcome or mitigate such problems, in much the same way that when it confronts international or global constraints (or challenges) the state can turn to the domestic realm (Hobson, 2003, p. 230). Edward Friedman claimed “domestic Chinese politics hurts Northeast Asian regional cooperation” (Friedman, 2006, p. 127). A powerful China could and should be a boon for the region, but its chauvinistic politics, territorial ambitions, and hard security dilemmas overshadow the economic

benefits of a prospering China. Muthiah Alagappa argued that Chinese maximization of national power works against cooperation that might enhance the prosperity of potential competitors (Alagappa, 2003, p. 109). He stated:

The attainment of national survival and prosperity through participation in the global capitalist economy requires a stable and peaceful environment (but) peace and stability are often subsidiary goal(s) of Asian states because of the desire to place state before region. (Alagappa, 2003, p. 109)

East Asia as a region, besides sharing geographical proximity, finds some common ground in adhering in some form to a generalized Confucianism that stresses top down hierarchies, and a strong correlation between racial and national identity as tied up in history. Increased trade and social interaction (including popular culture) between and among states in the region has not led to a growing sense of trust and friendship. Increased Chinese tourism to Hong Kong, for instance, has hurt rather than helped relations between the Semi-Autonomous Region and the People’s Republic of China. These points of convergence, especially nationalism, historical mistrust, and bitterness is where globalization and regional economic integration is unable to overcome stubborn obstacles towards a pan-Asian identity and establishing regional norms other than the state-centric norm of non-interference.

China is the regional leader and sets the tone for East Asian cooperation. If the Chinese would begin to see themselves as Asians, and let go of the bitterness, especially towards Japan and irredentism towards Taiwan, that is a big part of their national identity, then the optimistic Constructivist outcome is a thriving and peaceful East Asia resulting from deliberate Chinese behavior to bring about a new East Asian identity. East Asian identity and integration is only probable if the advice of Confucius would be initiated from the top leaders, that is: 犧牲小我完成大我 (xi sheng xiao wo, wan cheng da wo) which translates

as, “I sacrifice the small me to make complete the greater we.” Just as the individual is required to make sacrifices for the community, China’s neighbors are looking to it to see if China’s leaders have the wisdom and foresight to make allowances on behalf of the larger community for regional stability; the goodwill would be returned many times over and go far to reduce tensions and costly military buildups.

ENDNOTES

¹ However *guanxi* gives access to good work upon graduation, especially in China.

² Korea has agreements or memorandums of understanding to share military intelligence with 21 other countries but not with Japan. This is expected to change soon however.

³ During the 2008 Summer Olympic opening ceremonies, a troupe marched out representing China’s numerous ethnic groups. Ironically every one of the ethnic representatives was a Han Chinese in ethnic garb.

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