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# Post-Cold War Japan-ROK relations: a pluralist approach

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**Post-Cold War JAPAN-ROK relations: a pluralist approach**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTUION

### The Puzzle

This thesis explores why the relationship between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) has been volatile in the post-Cold War period. For example, in late 1998, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and South Korean President Kim Dae Jung signed *the Joint and Declaration and Action for a New Korea-Japan Partnership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. This meant that the ROK and Japan began to overcome their contentious relations and opened an epoch of cooperation. Yet, this cooperative relationship did not last long. Their cooperative relations terminated in April 2001, as the ROK recalled its ambassador - Choi Sang Yong - to Tokyo to protest against the Japanese government's approval of middle school textbooks which whitewashed Japan's wartime atrocities during the occupation period.

This instance is just one typical case for how Japan-ROK relations have been volatile throughout the Cold War period, as well as the post-Cold War period. Figure 1 schematically depicts their volatile relations during the post-Cold War period.<sup>1</sup> As illustrated, although there have been periods of cooperation, their relations have frequently conflictive. The relationship between them has been damaged repeatedly by disputes and friction. As a result, for instance,<sup>2</sup> joint ministerial meetings have

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<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 is constructed as a result of what the previous studies denoted as periods of cooperation and of friction (e.g., Kristof 1998; Cha 2001; Choi 2004; Koo 2005; Moon et al 2005; Lee 2006 Kim 2006; Rozman and Lee 2006).

<sup>2</sup> There various cases in which the two Asian countries postponed or cancelled scheduled

sometimes been delayed or cancelled. Japan-ROK summit talks have also been occasionally postponed or suspended. In 2005, a diplomatic war against Japan was proclaimed by South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun. Victor Cha (1997-a: 3) argues that “the normal state of relations between Japan and the ROK is characterized by friction.” In addition, it has been said among Japanese and Koreans that the phrase “so near, yet so far”<sup>3</sup> best describes Japan-ROK relations.<sup>4</sup>

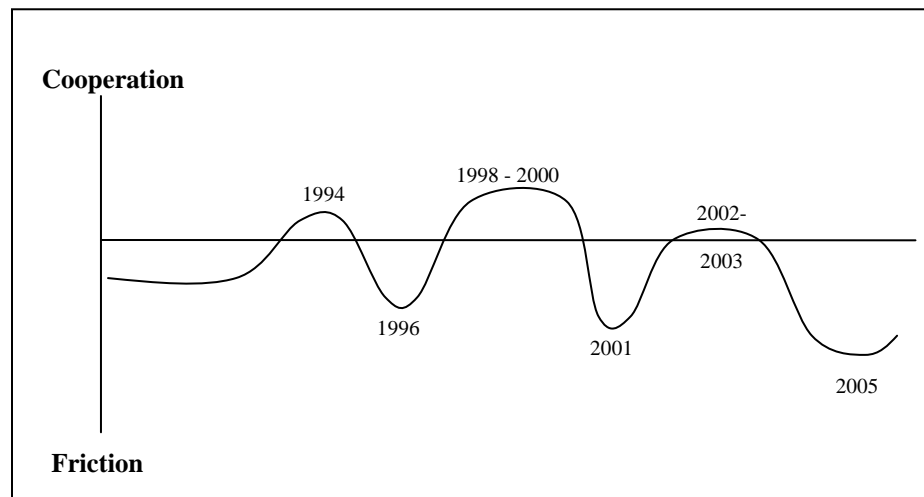


Figure 1. Reality in Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War period

This volatile relationship between Japan and South Korea poses a question for

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meetings. For instance, South Korean president cancelled a meeting with Japanese lawmakers in February 10, 1996. Japanese and South Korean leaders began ‘shuttle diplomacy,’ in which leaders of the two countries paid mutual visits twice a year, in July 2004, but the exchanges did not continue. The ‘shuttle diplomacy’ was stopped a year later. The joint foreign affair ministerial meeting between Japan and the ROK was cancelled in late 2005.

<sup>3</sup> In Japan, Korea is characterized as “*chikakute toi kuni*” (a country that is both close and far) and Koreans depict Japan as “*kapkpkodo mon nara*” (a country that is both close and far). See Kim (2006).

<sup>4</sup> There is distinction between physical distance and psychological distance. For instance, Ferguson and Mansbach (2004: 69) collectively argue “Psychological distance is the degree of dissimilarity between cognitive frameworks or ways of looking at, assigning meaning to and coping with the world regardless of geographic distance.”



international relations (IR) theories. It is difficult for each of the three mainstream IR perspectives to adequately explain why there have been such variations in levels of cooperation and friction in Japan-ROK relations over time, as each anticipates either a pattern of cooperation or conflict. Realists assume that Japan and South Korea are likely to cooperate with each other because they jointly confront bellicose and provocative threats from Russia, China, and/or North Korea. Liberals envision a cooperative pattern because the two countries are economically interdependent and share democratic institutions and norms. By contrast, constructivists expect conflict because identities and norms have grown apart owing to the repeated emergence of historical antagonism related to selected issues. These identities and norms have conditioned their perception of competing interests, thereby producing a contentious and conflictive relationship.

As seen above, accounting for why the Japanese-South Korean relationship has combined cooperation and conflict in unexpected ways is a challenging task for international relations theory and has become fashionable to explore the reasons for their relations. There have been a variety of studies seeking to account for the volatile relationship (e.g. Lee 1985; Hong 1985; Wakasuki 1992; Cha 1997-a; Kristof 1998; Hwang 2003; Koo 2005), yet, most of these studies have not successfully explained why their relations have been conflictive as well as cooperative. Probably, the most successful approach in accounting for the long-term variation of Japan-ROK relations is the *quasi-alliance* theory articulated by Cha (1997-a). The crux of his quasi-alliance theory is that the security commitment of the United States to its two allies is a key

causal determinant of the changes in Japan-ROK bilateral behavior in the Cold War period. However, is the idea of quasi-alliance still applicable to explaining the volatile Japan-ROK relations in post-Cold War era? This thesis argues that quasi-alliance theory is significantly less credible in the post-Cold War era because variations in Japan-ROK bilateral behavior have been independent of the changes in the level of the US security commitment to its allies. Furthermore, this thesis contends that although their volatile relations are not explained by a single IR paradigm, the variations of the Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War are accounted for if we selectively use and combine different IR theoretical perspectives. For the study of Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War, this leads us to favor a pluralist approach which is capable of analyzing material and ideational factors simultaneously through selectively integrating theoretical insights from the different IR research traditions.

Having briefly described the puzzle and the pluralist approach for the post-Cold war Japan-ROK relations, we will turn to the concept of a pluralist approach and pluralist accounts for post-Cold War Japan-ROK relations in detail in chapter 3.

### **Importance of This Research**

The importance of this study is primarily threefold. First, this research is important because it offers adequate explanations for variations in Japan-ROK bilateral behavior. Instead of claiming that the pluralist theoretical explanations presented in this thesis are the only account for volatile Japan-ROK relations, this study seeks to sufficiently demonstrate we can adequately explain their volatile

relations if we selectively draw insights on three IR paradigms, given that each IR paradigm cannot account for the relations alone.

Second, it contributes to the security study of East Asia. The cooperation between Japan and the ROK is critical for stability and peace on Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula where the interest of the four superpowers intersect (e.g., Cha 1997-a; Kim and Glosserman 2004). Perhaps whether Northeast Asia appears to be “ripe of rivalry” is to a large extent dependent upon the cooperation between them with the help of the United States. In addition, if these two democracies do not cooperate with each other, it is difficult to lead to the transformation of North Korea, or to establish a pacific collective security institution in the region. Accordingly, this study is valuable as it identifies how to improve their relations by analyzing what has caused the relations to be contentious and conflictive.

Finally, it contributes to the study of international relations. There may be many cases that are important affairs but are treated as anomalies because each IR paradigm tends to focus on their own preselected variables and particular aspects of problems. Volatile Japan-ROK relations fall into this category. However, as Katzenstein and Okawara (2004) argue, it is important to make sense of empirical anomalies, which often appear to be fundamentally critical affairs and should be adequately explained by any feasible ways. To resolve this issue, this study suggests that one alternative to account for anomalous affairs is to combine insights from different IR perspectives. In addition, this study shows that it is not desirable to approach an anomalous problem with a single IR research context and ignore the

advantages of other perspectives' explanations. In this regard, this study contributes to the development of IR.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The remaining parts of this thesis are organized as follows. Chapter 2 conducts the literature survey on the previous studies of Japan-ROK relations. Chapter 3 explores the theoretical insights of the three competing IR research traditions and their inadequacy for accounting for their relations and shows the pluralist accounts for their relations. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the conclusion of the study.

## **Chapter 2. LITERATURE SURVEY**

### **Review on the Previous Studies**

This section is devoted to illustrating how previous studies explained Japan-ROK relations. The majority of the previous studies are single, case-oriented studies which aim at accounting for the conflictive side of the relationship between South Korea and Japan in the wake of a past colonial issue. These studies do not offer theoretical accounts either for the cooperative relations, or for the long-term variation of the Japan-ROK behavior. They are, in general, inclined toward explaining the effect of the historical animosity on their relations and conducted mostly by area specialists.

There is another set of studies employing the essence of liberalism. They focus on explaining why a friction derived from historical and territorial issues has not escalated to an actual military conflict. Yet, they are still case studies and cannot account for the lasting volatility in Japan-ROK relations. Only a few of the studies have attempted to account for the long-term variation. These studies, however, prove to be inadequate.

### **Case Study-Oriented Research**

**Historical Animosity-Driven Lens:** Many scholars of the study of Japan-ROK relations (e.g., Lee 1985; Hong 1985; Wakasuki 1992; Kristof 1998) emphasize the important role of historical animosity between Japanese and Koreans in understanding the unpredictable relationship between the two countries. They argue

that psychological barriers stemming largely from Japan's occupation in the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945 are the primary causes of friction.

According to the scholars of the historical animosity-driven perspective, during Korea's colonial subjugation by Japan for thirty six years, the Japanese colonial government sought to assimilate Koreans and to reconstruct the Korean society as "little Japan." As a part of this strategy, the imperial government banned Korean language and forced Koreans to employ Japanese surnames and worship the Shinto religion. It distorted Korean history, destroyed various legacies, and national treasures, some of which were transported to Japan.

In addition, the colonial government executed labor-conscription programs and sent roughly the twenty percent of Korea's rural population into mining and military-industrial manufacturing areas.<sup>5</sup> Numerous ordinary Koreans were also drafted into the Japanese military. Moreover, thousands of Korean women served as sex slaves. Needless to say, Korean protests for national independence were suppressed and many of the activists and supporters for independence were often brutally tortured and killed.

Certainly, Japanese colonial policies were not always ruthless and brutal. The colonial government produced some benefits for the development of South Korea, such as improvements to the Korean educational system, a governmental bureaucracy, and modernized industry and infrastructure. In addition, there was a period in which bureaucrat-origin governor-generals ruled Korea by performing an appeasement policy

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<sup>5</sup> According to Cha(1997-a: 19), the Japanese government "abruptly transported nearly 20 percent of the rural population to low-skill mining and factory jobs in northern Korea, Manchuria, Sakhalin, and Japan under subhuman working conditions."

(Lee 1985). Yet, area specialists claim that, for Koreans, harsher periods tend to be remembered more vividly and persistently than those of moderate rule.

These collective memories<sup>6</sup> have been the basis for Koreans' bitterness toward the Japanese. Anti-Japanese sentiment has become a major part of Korean national identity and nationalism (e.g., Lee 1985; Cha 1997-a; Kristof 1998; Hwang 2003). This historical antagonism has passed down generation to generation through mass media, folklore, and formal and informal history education. March 1<sup>st</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup> have been national holidays to commemorate the March First Proclamation of Korean Independence from Japan and the Liberation from Japan, respectively, since the creation of the ROK. South Koreans collectively recall brutal Japanese militarism on these two days. In this context, this historical antagonism has been profoundly embedded in the South Korean society.

Unlike the South Korean society, the brutal colonial past history has barely been recognized and has often been disregarded in Japanese society. Japanese in general do not know how brutally its imperial government ruled its colonies, including Korea, because the Japanese education system, which is controlled by the Ministry of Education compelling teachers to use approved textbooks, played a great role in playing down Japanese war aggression (McCargo 2004: 152). There is also a sense of superiority on the part of the Japanese, the formal colonizers. This sense of superiority was often vocalized by Japanese high ranking officials. For instance, statements of Wajima Eiji, director of Control Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, evidently reflected

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<sup>6</sup> Understanding collective memory is important for this thesis. As Consuelo Cruz (2000) points out, collective memory is able to impel actors to define themselves intersubjectively. In state-centric analysis, it can serve as a key trait of national identity.

such a feeling. In 1949, he said: “The Japanese have always considered the Koreans to be an inferior race. A very elaborate study on the racial characteristics of Koreans had been prepared during the war and it had concluded that the mental and social capacities of the Koreans were of a very primitive nature.”<sup>7</sup> There were also Japanese officials’ and politicians’ attempts to justify the colonization and ignore the need for apology for war victims.<sup>8</sup> Area specialists thus contend that these Japanese superiority sentiments inherent in collective perceptions of Japan as a former colonizer of Korea were a basis for the Japanese general attitude toward Koreans (Cha 1997-a: 20).

As a result, for scholars who focus on historical antagonism, material threats and the United States have not been critical variables for understanding Japan-ROK relations. Instead, they see psychological factors such as historical animosity or mistrust as critical variables in changing Japan-ROK relations and the lack of collective identity<sup>9</sup> between Japan and South Korea preventing the two countries from creating mutual interests and cooperation (Moon et al. 2005). When issues related to deep-seated enmity break out, historical antagonism brings about friction. This antagonism also makes it difficult for the two countries to cooperate with each other even if mutual security cooperation between them is perceived (Hwang 2003: 95-96).

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in (Cheong 1991: 72).

<sup>8</sup> See Lee (1985) and Cha (1997-a) for more information.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, Koreans and Japanese have multiple identities. Yet, since there are a hierarchy of identities and a tendency that at any issue, one or a few identities outweighs the rest of identities (see Ferguson and Mansbach [2004]), the lack of collective identities in the study of the ROK-Japanese relations specifically means that in the wake of past colonial and territorial issues, Japanese and especially Koreans drop the shared identities derived, for instance, from globalization and Asian culture, and focus on the identities related to the colonial issues. See also Samuel Kim (2006) who argues that the rises of the past colonial and territorial issues inspire colonial/imperial recall among ordinary Koreans.



Their views are useful for explaining the cases that Japan-ROK relations were damaged by the rise of the historical animosity-related issues.

Yet, although historical antagonism-focused scholars' descriptive/narrative view is certainly credible to understand their relations, their view fails to answer why there have been both cooperative and contentious periods in their relations during the post-Cold War. They are not able to account for long-term variations in the two countries' foreign policy outcomes (Cha 1997-a; Hwang 2003).

**Economic Interdependence-Driven Lens:** Some scholars (Manosevitz 2003; Koo 2005) explored Japan-ROK relations by looking at the positive impact of economic interdependence on their relationship. Manosevitz (2003) argues that, rather than threats from North Korea, shared economic interests drawn from significant economic interdependence increased the desire for and the durability of the cooperation between the ROK and Japan in the post-Cold War period. He then claims that these interests have pushed the two states to reach “adolescence in their security relationship, meaning that even with some political issues remaining unresolved, interest in low-level security cooperation is solid, with room to grow” (Manosevitz 2003: 802). Similarly, Koo (2005) contends that, since South Korea and Japan are economically interdependent, the Tokto (in Korean)/Takeshima (in Japanese) (hereafter Tokto) territorial disputes are apt to be contained, if not ended. He envisions that economic interdependence between Japan and South Korea are likely to prevent the collapse of the Japan-ROK governmental relations even when historical antagonism-related issues cause turbulence in their relations.

Despite their insights on the positive impact of economic interdependence on Japan-ROK relations, these authors' accounts cannot avoid confronting the criticism that there have been cases in which diplomatic relations have deteriorated. For instance, when the Japanese Ministry of Education approved history textbooks which whitewashed Japanese military aggression, South Korea recalled its ambassador, froze private-sector exchanges, and postponed the cultural market opening in 2001. In addition, in 2005, there was the South Korean President Roh's declaration<sup>10</sup> on "a virtual diplomatic war on Japan."

It is a challenging assignment for the liberal perspective to account for emergence of these conflictive activities. It is not persuasive to argue that these conflictive activities are irrelevant as counter-evidence since there has been no actual military conflict between the ROK and Japan. Although economic interdependence is certainly an important variable for the study of their relations, it is not a single determinant of the behaviors of the ROK and Japan.

### **Studies on the Long-Term Variations**

**Quasi Alliance Theory:** As already discussed, quasi-alliance theory is the most successful efforts to date for explaining the long-term variations of the bilateral relationship between South Korea and Japan. "A quasi alliance is one in which two states remain unallied but share a third party as a common ally" (Cha 1997-a: 3).

Cha observed that Japan-ROK relations in the Cold War period were volatile

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<sup>10</sup> Korea Times, March 24, 2005.

despite collectively being threatened by communist adversaries. He then realized that accounting for the volatile relations was a difficult task for the realist school of thought, according to which countries confronting common threats should be cooperative and friendly (Walt 1985; Cha 1997-a). Eventually, he argued that the anomalous relations were accounted for by transforming realist balance-of-threats theory. The transformation resulted in the creation of quasi-alliance theory, depicted in Figure 2.

High Threats		Low Threats	
Balance of Threat → cooperative (alliance formation likely)		Balance of Threat → non-cooperative (alliance formation unlikely)	
High commitment (USA)	Low commitment (USA)	High commitment (USA)	Low commitment (USA)
Quasi Alliance → Non-cooperative	Quasi Alliance → Cooperative (alignment likely)	Quasi Alliance → Non-cooperative	Quasi Alliance → Cooperative (alignment likely)

Figure 2. Quasi-Alliance Theory

According to Cha's parsimonious theory, historical antagonism arising from Japan's occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945 prevented the ROK and Japan not only from establishing a consistent security relationship, but also from cooperating with each other, even though they confronted common threats. Instead, since it was imperative for the two countries to find a means to protect their security from the communist threats, they each decided to ally bilaterally with the United States, resulting in sharing the US as a common ally. In this context, the ROK and Japan could engage in conflict and did not need to cooperate with each other since their security was fully protected under the umbrella of American security. However, on

those occasions when the US reduced its defense commitment to the region, the fear of being abandoned by the superpower produced Korean-Japanese cooperation, not only because of increased threat but also because of their desire to reinvigorate the US security commitment. Accordingly, quasi-alliance theory explains the volatility of Japan-ROK relations in the Cold War period by looking at the variability of the US security commitment to each. Cha predicted that this quasi-alliance theory would continuously dictate their relations in the post-Cold War (Cha 1997-a: 207-210).

Although it seems strange that Japan-ROK relations would be more cooperative and friendly if the United States stayed away from the region, this thesis acknowledges the importance of Cha's theory to the study of their volatile relations. However, this study also contends that the idea of quasi-alliance is not sufficient for understanding volatile Japan-ROK relations in post-Cold War era, for two reasons. First, variations in Japan-ROK bilateral behavior have been independent of the changes in the level of the US security commitment to its allies. For example, when the North Korean nuclear crises posed significant threats for Japan and South Korea and the United States was committed to the management of these crises, quasi-alliance theory would predict the ROK and Japan do not need to cooperate with each other. Contrary to this expectation, Seoul and Tokyo did cooperate with other in the wake of the two nuclear crises. Regardless of the change in the US security commitment to them, South Korea sometimes worked with Japan through the trilateral cooperation system, but sometimes the ROK remained reluctant to cooperate with Japan, which will be analyzed shortly. Second, the United States has lost its leverage on

contemporary Japan-ROK relations to some degree. This is because external material threats have played a less important role in the relations than in earlier periods, so that post-Cold War Japan-ROK relations have moved into a new period in which their relationship is less likely than ever to be explained by the pure logic of material security. Consequently, their volatile relations in the post-Cold War are not explained by quasi-alliance theory.

### **Chapter 3. PLURALIST EXPLANATION**

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, it explores the theoretical insights of the three prevailing IR paradigms (realism, liberalism, and constructivism). Second, it demonstrates the theoretical approach of this thesis. Finally, it shows the explanations of pluralist approach for why Japan-ROK relations have been volatile in the post-Cold War period, as schematically depicted in Figure 1. Japan-ROK relations, which had entered a period of contention at the beginning part of the post-Cold War era, began to establish institutionalized exchanges and consultations in the wake of the first North Korean nuclear crisis. Their cooperative efforts soon faded in the eruption of the Tokto territorial dispute in 1996. Yet, their conflictive relations again turned cooperative in the face of the ROK's IMF crisis and the North Korean missile test-fire in the late 1990s. Their relations reached the peak of cooperation in this period. As rapidly as it emerged in this period, their cooperation was soon terminated in 2001. However, as the two states confronted the second North Korean nuclear crisis, they attempted to improve their deteriorated relationship and paved a road for cooperation. Once more, this cooperation did not last long as the ROK president proclaimed a diplomatic war against Japan and cancelled a summit with the Japanese Prime Minister in the face of the second territorial dispute and history textbook issue in 2005.

#### **Parsimonious IR Paradigms**

The main purpose of this section is to explore the theoretical insights of the

three prevailing IR paradigms. The existence of the volatility of Japan-ROK relations itself is a sufficient reason for the inapplicability of each IR research tradition to study it. As a result, their relations are anomalous for each IR paradigm. However, each IR paradigm produces valuable insights for certain issues. Volatile Japan-ROK relations can be explained if we selectively use and combine these insights, the essence of a pluralist approach. In this context, to make sufficient and adequate explanations for the volatility of Japan-ROK relations, we need to have a good understanding of the premises<sup>11</sup> of each IR paradigm, which produces different insights and distinctive focal points on the forces that cause state behaviors, drive the sources of conflict, and foster conditions for peace and stability.

Additionally, this section briefly shows that, in addition to the inadequacy of each IR paradigm for explaining volatility, each paradigm's best assumption of Japan-ROK relations is inadequate because each focuses only on its own research context and variables.

### **Realism**

Realism, argues Michael Doyle (1997: 41), "is our dominant theory. Most international relations scholars are either self-identified or readily identifiable Realists." Realists hold a skeptical attitude toward schemes for peaceful international order and are the theorists of the "the state of war" (Doyle 1997: 42). Not surprisingly, realism does not consist of an explicit set of assumptions and propositions. The realist school of thought takes several forms. Mearsheimer (2003) divides realism into three

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<sup>11</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review comprehensively every assumption and proposition that each IR paradigm or sub-perspective of each IR paradigm proposes.

sub-groups (human nature realism, defensive realism, and offensive realism) and Robert Jervis (1999) makes a twofold categorization (defensive and offensive realism).

Despite various sub-realism theories and their different virtues, realists share several important insights on the portrayal of world politics.<sup>12</sup> For realists (e.g., Morgenthau 1961; Waltz 1979; Walt 1985; Mearsheimer 2003), the international system is best described as a condition of anarchy in which no ultimate authority exists to govern relations among states. In anarchy, states are the principle actors and constantly confront a security dilemma in which an increase in one state's security decreases the security of others. They must seek their survival, a prerequisite to achieving any goals, through the principle of self-help. They struggle for power and their computation about power dominates their action. In this context, international politics is fundamentally driven by power distribution (or, distribution of capabilities) among states. Also, under anarchy war is always possible and genuine peace is not likely.

In addition to the above shared insights, realists share another primary consensual insight on interstate relations. That is, balance of power is an inevitable strategy in interstate relations for states to achieve their survival under the anarchic system if they cannot do better. Balancing power is also vital for states to prevent wars and maintain peace in international relations. Realists even view that the diplomacy of cooperation between states is rooted in each state's balancing actions (Morgenthau 1961).

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, Mearsheimer (1994-95: 2003) epitomizes realists' shared core assumptions.



Balance of power is one of the most frequently used concepts in international politics and is the heart of realist strategy (e.g., Walt 1985: 5; Nye 2000). The balance of power refers to “an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximates of affairs. The balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable but are an essential stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations” (Morgenthau 1961: 176). The primary assumption of the balance-of-power theory is that states act to prevent any other state from achieving a preponderance of power (Nye 2000). Specifically, there are two fundamental reasons why states choose to balance (Walt 1985: 5-7). First, states risk their survival if they fail to restrain a potential hegemonic power before it becomes significantly powerful and second, joining the weaker side increases the new member’s leverage because the more vulnerable side has greater need for help.

As seen above, there is no doubt that realists regard balancing strategy as indispensable for the survival of states in the anarchic system. Yet, for realists the concept of power, its definition and measurement, is elusive at best, although they share the necessity of the balancing strategy. In place of power, the concept of threat was introduced to shed light on states’ balancing behavior. Stephen M. Walt (1985: 8) argues that states balance against threats, rather than against power alone so he proposed an alternative—the so-called balance of threats theory, based on the rationale that “although the distribution of power is an extremely important factor, the level of threat is also affected by geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.” According to this balance-of-threats theory, states tend to align one with

another when the level of threats increases. As a consequence, it seems that the balance-of-threats theory, which offers a richer theoretical framework of states' balancing behavior,<sup>13</sup> is a better alternative than the balance-of-power theory.

Despite their different insights on power and threats between the balance-of-power and balance-of-threats theorists, realists agree on the core principle of balancing. There is no doubt for realists that since states are in a security dilemma under anarchy, a balancing strategy is the most prudent way to assure states' survival.

**Inadequacy:** Realism makes various predictions and suggests implications for the balancing behavior of interstate relations, but often fails to infer correctly the direction of balancing. This is mainly because its assumptions about the direction of balancing are limited to exploring material factors, without considering theoretical assumptions that invoke the *formation* of interests and threats or on any mechanism for understanding the shifts in threat perception and identities. Realist balancing theory alone cannot speak to the direction of states' balancing behavior if it does not borrow insights from other IR perspectives (e.g., constructivism).

Realism proposes that Japan and South Korea should cooperate with each other because they confront common adversaries—China and North Korea. For instance, as soon as the Cold War ended, realists predicted the advent of multi-polar system in Northeast Asia calling it “Ripe for Rivalry” (Friedberg 1993) and “Emerging Structure” (Waltz 1993) and envisioned a dangerous and conflictive security

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<sup>13</sup> Balance-of-threats theory fails to provide the mechanism for explaining why states differently perceive threats, which makes it subject to serious criticism (Katzenstein et al. 1996).

environment in the region.<sup>14</sup> To prevent this instability, Mearsheimer (2001) argued that the regional balance of power grouping among the US, the ROK, and Japan against China, a potential disruptive force of the regional status-quo system in Northeast Asia, was inevitable.

However, the reality of Japan-ROK relations has not, in general, reflected this realist view. Three examples illustrate the point. First, Japan and the ROK have remained reluctant to conclude a bilateral defense treaty, despite confronting serious common threats and pressure from the United States. Second, it still remains uncertain whether Japan and the ROK have worked together with the US to balance China. Japan has been reluctant to work with the United States particularly to contain or balance China, although it has barely made efforts to break its security dependence on the US (Green 2001; Grims 2003). In this context, Green (2001) argues that post-Cold War Japan acted with so-called “reluctant realism” behavior for most of the period. That is, for most of the post-Cold War period, Japan has pursued its China policy separately from strengthening its solidarity with the US. It has also been discussed by some Japanese politicians that Japan might recognize China’s hegemony in the region and drop a policy of comprehensive remilitarization (Katzenstein and Okawara 2004: 110). In this vein, Japan has seen a friendly relationship with China (Green 2001). Likewise, the ROK has not met the realist prediction that it would work with the US and Japan to balance China. During the post-Cold War era, South Korea has sought to

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<sup>14</sup> Waltz emphasizes the role of economic interests and competition in the globalizing post-Cold War era. For instance, “Economic competition is often as keen as military competition and since nuclear weapons limit the use of force among great powers at the strategic level, we may expect economic and technological competition among them to become more intense” (Waltz 1993: 59).

maintain a friendly relationship with its traditional partner and ally, the US, as well as with China, contrary to the Cold-War period. While South Korea has undergone shifts in the domestic and international environment in the post-Cold War, it has begun to worry about the issue of entrapment—“being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interests that one does not share, or shares only partially”<sup>15</sup>(Chung 2001). South Korea has sought to avoid involvement in the US-Sino relations since the Kim Dae-Jung government. For South Korea, China has been definitely neither an entity for containment nor a strategic supplement for leaving the alliance with the United States. Interestingly, the ROK finds the rationale for the continuation of the US force presence on the Korean peninsula in Japan, because it envisions that Japan would not re-militarize swiftly to compete against China as far as the US force stays in Japan and the ROK (e.g., Christensen 2003; Kim and Glosserman 2004).

Third, even when both states simultaneously confronted a provocative and emergent security threat from North Korea, South Korea and Japan have been contentious and reluctant to work together to balance the DPRK ( e.g., their conflictive relations in 1996 and their conflictive relations in 2005).

Consequently, the inadequacy of the realist balancing theory is found in the fact that realism assumes the direction of states’ balancing without understanding the effect of ideational factors on interstate relations. To understand why there is the gap between the behavior of South Korea and Japan and the realist assumptions on the direction of balancing, it is necessary to explore ideational factors.

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<sup>15</sup> Snyder (1984: 467).

## **Liberalism**

Like realism, there are diverse research forms and theoretical insights in liberalism. However, it seems safe to claim that there are three shared assumptions of the liberal school of thought (Moravcsik 1997: 516-520). The three assumptions are: (1) the fundamental actors in international politics are individuals and private groups who utilize organized exchange and collective action to promote differentiated interests under constraints imposed by material scarcity, conflicting values, and variations in societal influence; (2) states represent some subset of domestic society, on the basis that state officials define state preferences and act purposively in world politics; and (3) the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behavior.

As implied in their assumptions, unlike realists, liberals envision that a state is not a *black box*. They hold a more benign and optimistic perspective on global politics than do realists who assume that an increase in one state's interest gain decreases the interest gain of others. They are, in general, interested in cooperation between states (Grieco 1988). For liberals, cooperation among states takes place within the anarchic system, although anarchy plays a role in constraining state motives and actions. States seek various goals, security being one of them. As states are able to act under the principle of "tit for tat" through persistent interactions, they can realize that mutual cooperation is the best long-term strategy, ensuring that states can cooperate with each

other (Axelrod 1984).<sup>16</sup> In addition, states do not resort directly to violence or repression to resolve the conflicts of interests and institutions can serve as means and mediators to resolve issues. As a result, some liberals envision a world in which, not merely states, but also other actors participate in world affairs, in which a clear hierarchy of issues does not exist, and in which military force is not effective instrument of policy (Keohane and Nye 1977).

This liberals' optimistic view of global politics is associated with several fundamental trends (Berger 2000). The first is the increase of trade and economic interdependence<sup>17</sup> throughout the world. The second is the proliferation of international norms, institutions, and regimes designed to regulate and coordinate cooperation among states. The third is the growing role of international and domestic institutions in world politics.

According to liberals, states dwell in a world of economic interdependence such that cooperation among states is essential and shared economic interests create a demand for international institutions and rules (Keohane 1984). Increased international transactions such as trade and the mobility of capital supported by technological developments lead to economic interdependence among states. This economic interdependence makes the costs of conflicts higher. International institutions (or regimes) are created to manage issues stemming from increased

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<sup>16</sup> Axelrod (1984: 173) argues that “the two key requisites for cooperation to thrive are that the cooperation be based on reciprocity, and that the shadow of the future is important enough to make this reciprocity stable.”

<sup>17</sup> Interdependence (the so-called mutual or reciprocal dependence) refers to “situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries” (Keohane and Nye 1977: 7)

international flows and interactions. These institutions in turn play a significant role in resolving the conflict of interests, aiding in cooperation, and reducing the severity of the security dilemma. Joseph Nye Jr. (2000: 45) argues that institutions stabilize peaceful expectations that anarchy is limited and stabilized by institutions in four ways: (1) institutions provide a sense of continuity; (2) they provide an opportunity for reciprocity; (3) they increase transparency and the flow of information; and (4) they afford ways to resolve conflicts. International institutions also help actors to cooperate not only by changing repeated practices, rules, and principles, but also by changing the properties of actors.

The positive effect of economic interdependence and international institutions is enhanced in democratic states. A dyad is more peaceful if it features democracies, economic interdependence, and membership in international institutions—the so-called “triangulating peace” argument (Russett and Oneal 2001). Moreover, democracy alone has a positive impact on international relations as democracies rarely go a war against each other—the so-called “democratic peace theory” (e.g., Doyle 1992; Russett 1993).<sup>18</sup> One reasoning of the democratic peace argument is that democratic institutions and norms inhibit the use of aggression. Democratic citizens tend to abhor violence and constrain their leaders from pursuing aggressive violent foreign policies. Institutional constraints of democracy also restrain leaders and therefore reduce the

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<sup>18</sup> See Russett (1993: 4) “(a) Democracies rarely fight each other (an empirical statement) because (b) they have other means of resolving conflicts between them and therefore do not need to fight each other (a prudential statement), and (c) they perceive that democracies should not fight each other (a normative statement about principles of right behavior), which reinforces the empirical statement.” Therefore, as democratic peace theorists believe that democratic states are likely to exercise peaceful restraints and negotiate rather than escalate disputes (e.g., Doyle 1992: 308-309),

chance of war. The other reasoning of the argument is that multilateral institutions which tie democracies together tend to constrain states' use of violence.

**Inadequacy:** Apparently, the liberals' best assumption for Japan-ROK relations is that the two states should have friendly relations because they are the only dyad in Northeast Asia which satisfies all three requirements for a peaceful relationship (democracy, international institutions, and economic interdependence). However, reality does not mirror this view. The liberal theoretical framework lacks the capability to account for Japan-ROK relations. We should be careful about applying liberals' grand propositions to these relations, since liberalism does not have its own theoretical assumptions about the impact of ideational factors on relations. For instance, promotion of democracy as a positive value does not always generate the outcome which democratic peace theorists anticipate. The proposition that the bilateral relationship between the ROK and Japan is likely to be cooperative is problematic at best. This is because this liberal proposition is established neither through an exploration of whether the ROK and Japan share the identities and norms of democracy, nor through an analysis of what democracy has done for the nationalist identity conflicts between the ROK and Japan.

In addition, the impact of international security institutions on their relations is ambiguous, since liberalism does not have theoretical assumptions that invoke the formation of interests and identities. Liberals would expect that the security coordination and cooperation through the trilateral alliance system between Japan, South Korea, and the United States should have paved the way for the cooperative



Japan-ROK relations. However, reality does not mirror this view.

The US-ROK alliance has lasted more than five decades and has been the symbol of cooperation between the United States and South Korea. The United States Forces in Korea (USFK) has provided military support for South Korea. To manage and maintain the cooperative alliance system, South Korea and the United States have regularly hosted summit talks, conferences, and annual meetings such as the ROK-US Military Committee Meeting (MCM), the ROK-US Security Policy Initiative Meeting (SPIM), and the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). In this context, it would be expected that the more than fifty year-old US-ROK alliance has been efficient and effective, not merely in consolidating a cooperative relationship between the United States and the ROK, but also in generating mutually positive images. Yet, reality in the post-Cold War period has revealed that the effects of the alliance are ambiguous. The US-ROK alliance relations have evolved continuously and the significance of the alliance to the ROK has eroded during a process in which a profound shift in power distribution took place on the Korean peninsula and South Korean national power, wealth, and international status increased (Chung 2001; Kang et al. 2003). Evidently, the over 50 year-old US-ROK alliance could not help prevent the South Korean population's perception that the need for a friendly relationship with the US had diminished. In 2005 a opinion poll by Dong-A Newspaper, respondents answered that the United States is more threatening to the security of South Korea than is China.<sup>19</sup> The alliance also had no way to stop South Korea from demanding that the United

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<sup>19</sup> April 31, 2005. <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/poll-05-2.htm>

States hands over to the ROK the war-time Operational Control (OPCON), which had been assigned to a general of the United States since the Korean War of 1950.

Security cooperation between the ROK and Japan through the trilateral alliance system has frequently been trivial or nominal. As Cha (1997-a) points out, the southern triangle relationship among the US, Japan, and South Korea has not completed establishing a third leg of the bilateral alliance between South Korea and Japan. In addition, there have been several attempts to establish security cooperation between them through institutional efforts, but, there have existed no influential security institutions which have successfully tied South Korea and Japan and, as a consequence brought a cooperative relationship between them. For example, in October 1994, the United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework to dismantle a North Korea's nuclear program, and the KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization), which included the United States, Japan, and South Korea, was created in 1995 to implement the key provisions of the Agreed Framework. However, the KEDO was disbanded by the Bush Administration in 2003 without realizing its expectations. Since the Taepo-dong missile test-firing, the United States, Japan, and South Korea have made efforts to build a coordinated policy toward North Korea under the trilateral coordination and oversight group (TCOG), which was created to feature a coordinated approach to North Korea. Nonetheless, South Korea has frequently not agreed on policies formulated by the cooperation between the Bush administration and Koizumi government. For instance, the ROK joined neither the US-led missile defense program, nor the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative) program.

Consequently, the inadequacy of liberalism is derived from the fact that it posits the positive roles of interdependence, democracy, and institutions in global politics without delving into the effect of ideational factors on Japan-ROK relations. To understand why there is the gap between the foreign policy behavior of the two states and the liberal grand propositions, it is necessary to explore ideal factors, such as identities, norms, and shared ideas.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivism is “about human consciousness and its role in international life” (Ruggie 1998: 856). Specifically, it is an approach which claims that human interaction is primarily guided by intersubjectively shared ideational factors, not solely material factors, while criticizing the rationalists’ core assumption that collective action should be analyzed in the context “which takes self-interested actors as constant and exogenously given and focuses on the selective incentives that might induce them to cooperate” (Wendt 1994: 384).<sup>20</sup>

Constructivism assumes emphasizes the socially constructed nature of global politics and its focal spheres of research are, in general, interests, identities, norms, knowledge, culture, and the role of ideas. It assumes that interests and identities are not exogenous, but are the products of the social practices that mutually constitute actors and social structures. It also envisions that intersubjectively shared ideas serve as an ideational structure which is able not only to constrain and shape actors’ behavior and interests, but also to guide actors to redefine their interests and identities,

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<sup>20</sup> Wendt (1999: 27 and 33-40) argues that rationalism is a perspective that focuses on the logic of choice under constraints and treats identity and interests as exogenously given.

while this ideational structure is also reproduced and altered by the discursive practices of actors (Copeland 2000). However, constructivism is not a substantive theory in that it neither makes any generalizable claims about the content of ideational/social structure or the nature of actors at work in global politics, nor produces any generalizable predictions of political behavior. In essence, a social structure is neutral with respect to cooperation and conflict among actors. Substantive explanations and predictions of political behavior are always dependent upon what the content of ideational/social structure is, what the relevant actors are, and what they want. Constructivism is therefore “a social theory that makes claims about the nature of social life and social change” (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 393).

As already implied above, in the eyes of constructivists, identities play an important role in global politics. The nature of the interactions between actors is not simply the product of objective material factors. Interests imply choices and actions but are the product of identities. “Identities are the basis of interests” (Wendt 1992: 398). They are constructed through a process of social interaction. Identities perform three necessary functions in a society: they tell individuals who they are and they tell individuals who others are. Actors are able to distinguish self from other through identities; they are able identify who is a friend, rival, or enemy through their identities. In this vein, in telling an individual who they are, identities strongly imply “a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors” (Hopf 1998: 175). While interacting with one another, actors can recall different identities dependent upon the

salience of issues and attribute different identities to others. As a consequence the shift in their identities leads to the changes of interests.

Constructivism also emphasizes the role of norms in global politics. For constructivists, a norm, defined as “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity,”<sup>21</sup> serves as a social structure which can provide actors with understandings of their interests. It emerges and pervades in the process of socialization and exists as practices, or shared knowledge. In some situations, norms “operate like rules that define the identity of an actor, thus having ‘constitutive effects’ that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity. In other situations, norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity” (Katzenstein et al. 1996: 5). In such instances, norms are an important constraint on human behaviors and inform actors about what they ought to do and avoid—norms have “regulative” effects that specify standards of appropriate action. It is difficult for an actor to engage in an act which a norm considers as an inappropriate one (Finnmore and Sikkink 1998). Consequently, norms either define (or constitute) identities, or prescribe (or regulate) behavior, or they do both (Katzenstein et al. 1996).

Through analyzing identities and norms, constructivism has returned IR students to several important foundational questions. For instance, constructivists suggest that national security does not always depend on relative military capabilities. They emphasize the socially constructed context of threats by arguing that simply

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<sup>21</sup> Finnmore and Sikkink (1998: 891).

computing relative military capabilities does not imply anything about the behavior of states without looking at the identities of states. The very evident case of this assumption is that the US is concerned more about the few nuclear weapons of North Korea than the numerous nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom. Understanding the role of the identities of states in interstate relations is integral to accounting for this case. States' identities are shaped through their interactions. States understand others according to the identity they attributes to them, while simultaneously reproducing their own identity (Hopf 1998). These state identities shape the state's preferences and consequent actions. In this vein, states are able to distinguish "us" with from "them" through identities and can attribute friendship or antagonism to other states.<sup>22</sup> If a state identifies another state as a threat, it would not be surprising for the first state to assume a hostile and aggressive stance toward the latter. This logic leads Hammer and Katzenstein (2002: 584) to argue that "a threat is rooted not solely in differential material capabilities but also in the view of the difference between self and other that shapes interpretations of actor intentions and interests." National security is not explained simply by looking at material factors, such as relative military capability and distribution of capabilities. It also involves social factors, such as culture, identities, and norms.

Moreover, constructivists find fault in realists' core assumption that anarchy is inherently a zero sum-oriented, self-help system in which states negatively identify with each other threats. They claim that anarchy explains little by itself and does not

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<sup>22</sup> Nationalism is collective identity par excellence and national identity is dependent upon how a nation exclusively identity itself from other nations.

propose any a priori structure of anarchy, and that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ (Wendt 1992). For constructivists, there is no logic of anarchy apart from social practices that reproduce and transform state’s view of self and other. There can be various anarchic cultures including enmity, rivalry, and friendship. The anarchic culture depends on the social practices among states. In each anarchic culture, states play certain types of roles vis-à-vis one another, complete with certain behavior norms. For instance, in a culture of anarchy characterized by enmity, states cast each other in the role of “enemy” and use violence to resolve issues. Yet, this culture of anarchy is sustained only if states continue to identify each other as enemies. This leads to the suggestion that anarchy is what states make of it.

Therefore, constructivist theoretical framework is best suited to the analysis of “how identities and interests can change over time, thereby producing subtle shifts in the behavior of states and occasionally triggering far reaching but unexpected shifts in international affairs” (Walt 1998: 44). In addition, focusing on norms and collective identity, one of the most essential implications for interstate relations that constructivists suggest is that cooperation is unlikely to take place unless two states share norms and consider each other as a “we” (Katzenstein et al 1996; Telhami and Barnett 2002).

**Inadequacy:** The best constructivist prediction for Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War period would be friction. Constructivists would see that Japan and the ROK had not overcome enmity derived from historical antagonism and that has served as a primary cognitive and ideational structure for South Koreans and

Japanese.<sup>23</sup> Also, they would argue that identities and norms between the ROK and Japan have grown apart in the changes in the domestic and international security environment and the recurrent rises of colonial past and territorial issues. They would conclude that Korean-Japanese perceptions of threats and interests had grown apart, and that, consequently, the two states would have produced non-cooperative and contentious relationship.

This constructivist explanation is, however, sufficient and adequate only for conflictive relations. It is difficult for constructivists to explain that, despite the effect of norms and nationalist identity conflicts on their relations, Japan and South Korea have *also* worked together from time to time. For instance, South Korea and Japan held the defense ministry meeting and legislators meeting and attempted to make a coordinated policy toward North Korea. They have also had a variety of the practices of security cooperation such as Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), Search and Rescue (SAR) drill, Working-Level Policy Meetings, Defense Minister Summits, and Port Calls. In addition, South Korean leaders have attempted to limit the harmful impact of colonial issues and territorial disputes on Japan-ROK relations and lead to future-oriented relations with Japan by utilizing new policy ideas<sup>24</sup> (e.g., Kim Dae Jung's Korea-Japan Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), while Japanese leaders have similarly attempted to establish a peaceful relationship with ROK (e.g., Hosokawa

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<sup>23</sup> Cha (1997-a: 23) also points out that mutual enmity constitutes the baseline of the ROK-Japanese interactions.

<sup>24</sup> Ideas are also important factor in governmental policy initiative. According to Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 3), "Ideas influence policy when the principled or causal beliefs they embody provide road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals or ends mean relationships, when they affect outcomes of strategic situation in which there is no unique equilibrium, and when they become embedded in political institutions."



apology, and Murayama formal apology, Obuchi's Korea-Japan Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and Koizumi's shuttle diplomacy with Roh Moo Hyun government).

Constructivism, thus, fails to explain the cooperative side of the relationship between the ROK and Japan. This is because constructivism does not have theoretical insights into a sudden change of an actor's behavior, instead, focusing on how the past shapes the way actors understand their present circumstances (Copleland 2000). Consequently, constructivism does not make generalizable predictions about when the changes in political behavior will occur.

## **Theoretical Approach of the Study**

### **Pluralist Approach**

The idea of pluralist approach is derived from that of analytical eclecticism which aims to solve anomalies by selectively combining insights from realism, liberalism, and constructivism. This analytical eclecticism is articulated by IR scholars who argue that IR perspectives tend to account for world politics only within their own research context and ignore the advantages of other perspectives' explanations (e.g., Katzenstein and Okawara 2001; Katzenstein and Sil 2004). According to such scholars, focusing exclusively on one IR perspective and excluding the others is less valuable than "making sense of empirical anomalies and stripping notions of what is natural of their intuitive plausibility" (Katzenstein and Okawara 2004: 97). "Drawing upon clusters of empirical observations, causal logics, and interpretations spanning

different research traditions” is critical to solving an abnormal problem in world politics (Katzenstein and Sil 2004: 16). In addition, the complex links among power, interest, and norms defy analytic capture by any one IR paradigm, and can be made more intelligible by drawing selectively on different IR paradigmatic traditions (Katzenstein and Okawara 2001: 154). For these reasons, it is argued that analytical eclecticism is an alternative which is able to demonstrate the difficulties of IR perspectives in making sense of important cases, and explain and interpret a set of observations that are abstract, irrational, or cannot be understood by a single IR perspective (Katzenstein and Okawara 2001).

Yet there is a difference between the pluralist approach and analytical eclecticism, although the pluralist approach is a problem-solving approach like analytical eclecticism and shares analytical eclecticism’s theoretical insights. Analytical eclecticism tends to neglect diverse observations and substantive descriptions that lack IR theoretical considerations,<sup>25</sup> whereas the pluralist approach includes these. It is critical to grasp field observations and area specialists’ descriptive/narrative views for identifying important factors that are potentially critical in recognizing and accounting for a problem but are barely identifiable in IR theories. This is implied in the criticism that IR theories are inadequate to explain security dynamics in Northeast Asia because these theories do not reflect the impact of history, culture, and tradition on security relationships among Northeast Asian countries (e.g.,

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<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Young W. Kihl (2006: 1) also makes a plea for going beyond analytical eclecticism in rethinking security in East Asia and argues a ‘syncretistic approach’ which aims to combine research traditions of field observation and participatory analysis with a clear set of theoretical concerns.

Cha 1997; Berger 2000; Kang 2003; Hwang 2003).<sup>26</sup> It is inadequate to combine selectively different IR theories to explain, in particular, an anomalous problem without grasping the problem and its elements through field observation and descriptions and insights from diverse disciplines. Simply mixing IR theories for an abnormal problem may easily produce an inadequate and overly parsimonious account. For this reason, the pluralist approach first focuses on identifying and grasping important factors in a problem with the help of the area specialists' descriptive/narrative views. It then focuses on accounting for the problem by a set of the eclectically chosen IR research paradigms. Accordingly, a pluralist approach is able to complement the methodological weakness of analytical eclecticism. In this vein, a pluralist approach is able to go beyond analytical eclecticism in accounting for post-Cold War Japan-ROK relations.

There are a variety of the advantages in the pluralist approach. The pluralist approach helps us to sever the link between IR research perspectives and the substantive interpretations constructed within them. That prevents us from looking only at certain preselected variables and particular aspects of a problem. It also helps us to recognize that an observation or claim by different IR perspectives can converge in wider implications, despite their differences regarding foundations, methodology, and domains of inquiry (Katzenstein and Sil 2004). Finally, a pluralist approach can account for issues without leaving behind important anomalies, although it may be criticized for a lack of parsimony.

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<sup>26</sup> I acknowledge that this criticism is mainly directed at rationalist theories (e.g., realism, neo-realism, liberalism, neo-liberal institutionalism), rather than constructivism.

### **Japan-ROK Relations and the Case for a Pluralist Approach**

As briefly discussed above, this study advocates a pluralist approach to account for volatile Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War era. There are three principal theoretical perspectives available to explain these relations. None, however, proves adequate. The fact that this relationship has been cooperative and conflictive is sufficient evidence for the inapplicability of three mainstream IR research traditions to explain it. However, this anomalous relationship is explained if we selectively use and combine theoretical insights of the three IR paradigms.

During the post-Cold War period, South Korea and Japan have undergone fundamental shifts in their domestic and international political environments. Externally, the end of the Cold War led to the collapse of the security competition between the USSR-North Korea-China Northern Triangle and the US-ROK-Japan Southern Triangle. It provided the two Asian countries with the possibility to implement new foreign policies and seek more independent security arrangements. Internally, Japan has experienced a rise of neo-conservatism, the collapse of Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), a revival of nationalism, and a growing right-wing movement (Lee 2006), whereas South Korea has undergone a rise of nationalism, improvement in inter-Korean relations, and democratization (Kim 2006).

These shifts have led to the emergence of various intervening factors that contributed to the volatility of their relations; these factors will be analyzed in detail throughout the following sections. First, South Korea has worried about Japan's re-militarization and expansionism (Cha 2000; Christensen 2003; Kim 2006; Lee 2006),

whereas Japan has been concerned about losing its power influence on the Korean Peninsula and the possibility of a collapse of the status quo security environment in Korea (Cha 2000; Kim and Glosserman 2004). Second, inter-Korean relations have improved over time, whereas Japan-North Korean relations have not improved but become exacerbated, making it difficult for Japan and South Korea to coordinate policy toward North Korean issues (Kim 2006). Third, there has been little consensus among the US, Japan, the ROK as to whether China is a new threat (Shambaugh 2004). Fourth, public support for the US troops in both South Korea and Japan has begun to decline, and the US-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation system has sometimes been ineffective (Kim and Glosserman 2004: 8). Fifth, the US-ROK alliance and the US-Japan alliances have begun to move in different directions. In general, the US-Japan alliance has been strengthened but the US-ROK alliance has shown a downward tendency (e.g., Kim and Glosserman 2004; Kim 2006; Nam, Sakata, and Dujarric 2006). Sixth, there has been an increase in the number of the issues involving historical antagonism between South Korea and Japan, which greatly contributed to intensifying mutual enmity derived from historical animosity and constituted the baseline of Japan-ROK relations since the close of the colonial period.

Under these changing environments, the two countries' foreign policy outcomes have not been determined solely by realist material security dynamics, liberal interdependence dynamics, or constructivist identity and norm dynamics. Nonetheless, the fact that post-Cold War Japan-ROK relations have been often contentious and conflictive attracts us to favor constructivism to study their relations.

As constructivism suggests, past colonial issues have been an important sphere in the study of the relationship between Japan and South Korea more than ever before. There is no doubt that their relationship has been contentious and unstable in the recurrent rise of the past colonial and territorial issues which have pushed the two countries into conflicts involving their nationalist identities (i.e. *de facto* conflicts between anti-Japanese identity among Koreans and nationalist identity among Japanese) and, as a consequence, enmity derived from historical antagonism has continuously served as a primary ideational structure for South Koreans and Japanese. In addition, as some of the past colonial issues were more salient than others; in some cases, sufficiently conflictive to cause cancellation of summit talks or recall of an ambassador.

As already discussed, constructivism alone cannot account for volatile Japan-ROK relations, although it offers critical insights for their conflict. In fact, Japan and the ROK have not always been in conflict with each other. As other contingent issues have emerged, it has been difficult for them to discount or entirely ignore the need for cooperation. They have cooperated with each other in the process of managing other important contingent issues owing to the three factors; first, North Korea has continuously engaged in provocative activities; second, both Japan and South Korea have shared a similar economic system and are economically interdependent; third, while Japan and South Korea have been allies of the United States, the uncertain foreign policy of the US has affected their relations.

Diplomatic cooperation, for instance, occurred when the two countries were simultaneously threatened by North Korea, resulting in a shift from friction to

cooperation. Their cooperative relationship can not be explained by a single IR paradigm. Such cooperation is explained by a combination of the realists' balancing logic and the constructivists' collective anti-communist identity and norms. As discussed in the section of the essence of IR paradigms, realism offers insights as to how threats affect the behavior of the two countries but does not provide insights into why their relations suddenly stop being affected by conflicts of nationalist identity. Constructivism is able to explain these through the analysis of the shifts in the hierarchy of identities and norms. If an issue evokes one or a few of an actor's various identities, the hierarchy of the actor's identities changes according to the salience of the issue (Ferguson and Mansbach 2000: 151) and if the hierarchy alters the interests of the actor, as constructivism suggests, there is a shift in the actor's subsequent action.

In this sense, if we combine the insights of realism and constructivism, we can formulate a critical theoretical framework for their cooperative bilateral behavior. This framework suggests the following: Japan and the ROK had shaped anti-communist identity through the collective efforts to work against the communist bloc. This collective identity had been another primary baseline of the Japan-ROK interactions, among others. When they were jointly threatened by North Korean provocations, these became the most salient issue between them. Their survival and security, as realists (e.g., Waltz 1979; Walt 1985) suggest, became a primary concern. Realism, however, does not explain why they did act cooperatively when both had the security guarantor – the US. In this context, realism alone cannot explain this dynamic. To account for this, constructivist insights are indispensable. When they were threatened, their

“nested” anti-communist identity was recalled.<sup>27</sup> This collective identity was also strengthened by the security imperative that the two countries faced immediately after the threatening action. This collective identity became the basis of the foreign policies of the two states and served as a basis for imposing the need for cooperative exchanges between the two states. Thus, Japan and the ROK could shape mutual interests to cope jointly with this threatening issue and frame a united front toward North Korea. They also could disregard other conflictive issues between them.

As a consequence, to account for post-Cold War ROK-Japan relations, which have often been conflictive owing to the recurrent emergence of past colonial issues but could not *always* be conflictive owing to other contingent salient issues, we will be successful if we use a pluralist approach which is capable of analyzing material and ideational factors simultaneously through selectively combining the theoretical insights from different IR paradigms.

### **Pluralist Accounts for Japan-ROK relations**

The purpose of this section is to use pluralist accounts to explain the volatile Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War, especially in two specific periods. This is because analyzing such volatile relations in these two periods is sufficient enough to illustrate why their relations have been conflictive and cooperative and why the relations are explained by a pluralist approach. The first part focuses on their relations

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<sup>27</sup> The concept of *nesting* helps to understand this phenomenon. Nesting refers to process by which “memories and myths are enshrined and old identities handed down, making them available for revival or refurbishing.” (Ferguson and Mansbach 2004: 170).



in the period of the emergence of the three episodes (the Tokto territorial dispute, the South Korean IMF crisis, and the North Korean Taepo-Dong missile test). The second part deals with their relations in the period of the eruptions of the events (the Second North Korean Nuclear crisis, the textbook issue, and the second territorial dispute).

## **Japan-ROK Relations 1996 To 1999**

### **The Tokto Crisis and the Peak of Their Cooperative Relations**

The contentious relationship between Japan and South Korea climaxed in the emergence of the territorial dispute in 1996. Tokto, two islands surrounded by a group of tiny, rocky and uninhabited islets, is located in the body of water called the East Sea (or Sea of Japan), and some 87 kilometers east of South Korea's Ullung island and 157 kilometers northwest of Oki, Japan's westernmost island. Tokto has been a territory of Korea for most of written history, but it was governed by Japan for the 41 years of the colonial period (Choi 2005). The South Korean government deployed a band of Korean police officials on Tokto in 1952, and they have occupied it since.

The first Tokto territorial dispute between South Korea and Japan erupted in 1952. The ROK proclaimed sovereignty over the adjacent seas on January 8, 1952. Japan protested against that proclamation. Since then, a series of territorial disputes have taken place as Japan occasionally denounces the ROK's occupation of the islands. However, the first crisis-level territorial dispute erupted in 1996. It occurred as the ROK's Kim Young-Sam administration announced a plan to construct a wharf facility on Tokto on February 7, 1996, and the Hashimoto government in Japan protested

against the plan one day after the announcement. The Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda publicly proclaimed “Takeshima is a Japanese territory.”<sup>28</sup>

In response to the Japan’s sovereignty claim, the ROK government issued a set of strong countermeasures. President Kim announced that he would not tolerate further Japanese provocations and warned Japan to correct its ill-conceived claims and remarks on Tokto, as well as other, past colonial issues. The government cancelled the scheduled President’s meeting with a delegation of the Japanese ruling coalition led by Yamasaki Taku, chair of the LDP’s Policy Affairs Research Council. In addition, South Korean news media simultaneously released news that Cheongwadae (the President House) considered canceling all scheduled diplomatic exchanges with Japan, including the scheduled summit during the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, various groups which focused on the colonial past and territorial issues led to the so-called “Tokto movement” in South Korea (Choi 2005: 470). In Japan, however, the government did nothing to appease the ROK’s anger. In July, 1996, a member of a Japan’s right-wing group (Okoku Kenseito / Imperial Constitutional Government Party) dashed his car into the gate of the Korean embassy in Tokyo, set the car on fire, and claimed Japanese sovereignty over Tokto. In addition, Japan’s right wing parties, including LDP, asserted the Japanese sovereignty over Tokto as an election pledge for general elections to the lower house, which were scheduled for October 20, 1996 (Choi 2005: 480). In response to the Japanese politicians’ claims, South Korean lawmakers passed bills aimed at preserving the ecosystem on Tokto during September

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<sup>28</sup> www.koreahearl.com, February 8, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Donga Ilbo February 11, 1996

1997's regular National Assembly session to assure the ROK's sovereignty over the island. This led to Japan's official protests to the ROK. Thus, a series of serious diplomatic tit-for-tat actions took place during the period of the Tokto dispute. Japan-ROK relations were consequently contentious and conflictive.

As the 1997 ROK's IMF crisis and the 1998 North Korean Taepo-Dong missile crisis emerged, South Korea and Japan rapidly began not only to improve their chilled relationship, but also to limit the harmful impact of historical colonial issues and territorial disputes on their relations by tabling current issues and calling for future-oriented relations. On October 8, 1998, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi and the ROK President Kim signed *the Joint and Declaration and Action for a New Korea-Japan Partnership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* at a summit. It was a fundamental step for improving their contentious relationship.

During the summit meeting:

The Prime Minister Obuchi expressed "deep remorse" and a "heartfelt apology" for Japan's colonial and wartime misdeeds, and he said, "I believe many Japanese people share these feelings." He also urged the peoples of both countries to take part in joint activities to improve bilateral ties. The President Kim stressed the importance of mutual efforts to build future-oriented relations by overcoming their unfortunate shared history. The two leaders agreed to 1) further reinforce bilateral relations by holding bilateral summit meetings regularly and enhancing ministerial talks on foreign affairs and other fields, 2) strengthen the role of the United Nations in

creating a safer and more peaceful world, 3) acknowledge the importance of promoting the construction of light-water reactors in North Korea under the auspices of the KEDO, 4) enhance economic cooperation and exchanges including the extension of loans from the Export-Import Bank of Japan, 5) make joint efforts toward the success of the World Cup soccer tournament in 2002, and 6) promote cultural exchanges through opening Japanese mass culture into South Korea. The leaders also made a radical but constructive agreement which is the Japanese Emperor's visit to South Korea.<sup>30</sup>

After this declaration, Japan and South Korea carried out policies for the provisions of the joint declaration, and implemented confidence-building measures. For instance, Japan-ROK relations increasingly featured defense exchanges and consultations. In 1999, the Japanese defense agency and South Korean defense ministry installed three hotlines for the purpose of security cooperation. In waters between the two countries, the South Korean and Japanese navies conducted the first joint search and rescue drill consisting of three Maritime SDF destroyers, two ROK Navy destroyers, and aerial and intelligence support, engaging in joint formation training and tactical maneuvers. In addition, their relations witnessed a significant increase in the number of visitors between the two countries. There was half-million visitor increase in the number of Japanese tourists in South Korea and a three hundred thousand visitor increase in the number of Korean tourists in Japan between 1998 and

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<sup>30</sup> Japantimes, October 8, 1998.

2000.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, a 500 % increase in the FDI inflows to the ROK from Japan occurred.<sup>32</sup>

How could Japan and South Korea turn their relations from friction to cooperation during this period? What took place in their relations? In addition, what caused this shift in their relations? To answer these questions, it is imperative to selectively combine the realist, liberal, and constructivist insights. The pluralist account helps us shed light on those volatile relations during this period.

### **Pluralist Explanation**

No single IR perspective is capable of explaining such volatile ROK-Japan relations in this period. However, we can adequately explain their conflictive relationship by using constructivism. In addition, their cooperative relationship can be sufficiently accounted for either by a combination of liberalism and constructivism, or by that of realism and constructivism.

### **Constructivist Account**

Constructivism can provide critical insights to explain the conflictive relations between Japan and South Korea during this period. As already discussed, states understand other states according to the identity they attribute to them, while simultaneously reproducing their own identity (e.g., Katzenstein et al 1996; Hopf 1998; Wendt 1999). States are able to distinguish their friends from their adversaries through their identities. States, as Wendt (1999) argues, see other states as threats

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<sup>31</sup> Korea Tourism Organization.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy of the ROK.

under the ideational structure of enmity. Furthermore, they do not cooperate with each other if they do not share norms, or share collective identities.

As these constructivist insights suggest, it would be natural for Japan and the ROK to conflict with each other in this period, if for no other reason than their conflicts of nationalist identity and mutual enmity derived from historical antagonism, which was still a primary ideational structure for South Koreans and Japanese.

**Shifts in the Domestic and International Environment, Nationalist Identity Conflicts, and the Tokto Dispute:** Before the eruption of the Tokto territorial dispute, both countries underwent shifts in domestic and international environments. Nationalism in the two Asian states rose dramatically in the process of dealing with the domestic and international environmental changes. New norms (e.g., a norm of the resolution of the pending issues and colonial legacies in the ROK and a norm of a normal Japan in Japan), which could damage their ideational glue (structure) that bound them to cooperate with each other, also emerged and pervaded both countries. As a result, past colonial and territorial issues and nationalistic activities recurrently erupted. This resulted in recalling and strengthening anti-Japanese identity among Koreans and nationalist identity among Japanese.

Following the end of Cold-War, the communist bloc collapsed in Northeast Asia. The rationale for the provision of the United States' security guarantees to its two allies in the region was undermined, since its alliance with the ROK and Japan existed to balance the communist bloc. The US questioned whether it should continuously maintain a security presence in the region and reduced its troop strength

in Japan and South Korea to some degree in response to the security environment change.<sup>33</sup> This produced a rise of Japanese uncertainty about the United States' security commitment, while Japan still had a great security concern about "rising" China, unstable Russia, and even North Korea (Berger 1993).

In addition, the United States-led coalition against Saddam Hussein had accused Japan of "check-book diplomacy," failing to appreciate Japan's \$13 billion contribution to the first Gulf War (Hayes 2005: 264). Furthermore, growing trade issues between the US and Japan erupted, while Japan was suffering unprecedented economic recession after the collapse of the bubble economy from the early 1990's. Undoubtedly, these dynamics further increased Japanese uncertainty about their security and future. In the meantime, the 1995 Okinawa rape incident resulted in an eruption of nation-wide anti-American sentiment in Japan damaging the support for continued American troops' presence (Heginbotham and Samuels 1998). Under these circumstances, Japan began to debate seriously whether it should keep pursuing its grand Cold War strategy, the so-called Yoshida Doctrine, in which the core aim was to spur and improve its economic development while keeping security commitments to the lowest level possible by following the lead of the US (Brown 1994).<sup>34</sup> A

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<sup>33</sup> On July 31, 1989, the US congress passed the Nunn-Warner revised resolution that called for a reduction of the U.S. Forces in South Korea (Suh et al. 2004). A few months later, in 1990, the George H. W. Bush administration adopted the East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI), which involves reductions in US bases and facilities in East Asia. The US performed its reduction plan in two phases (1990-1992 and 1992-1995). According to the first phase, the United States withdraw 7,000 men from South Korea and 5,000-6,000 soldiers from Japan, and the Bush administration withdrew all U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991, as a part of the EASI. Only the first phase was completed as it was planned but the second was not (Kang 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Japan did not discard its foreign policy doctrine. The US and Japan attempted to reinforce their alliance in the wake of a series of the North Korean threats and the 1995-1996 Taiwan

nationwide debate on its appropriate international role in the world had begun.

The emergence of neo-conservatism consisting mainly of the post-war generation and growing Japanese nationalism took place during this period (Matthews 2003; Lee 2006). Neo-conservative leaders such as secretary-general of the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party Ozawa Ichiro and Tokyo governor Sinto Ishihara) advocated a more assertive and active international role for Japan by claiming that Japan should be able to say “No” to the US. They opposed apologizing for accepting guilt for war-time aggression since they considered that criticizing Japan’s role in the World War II led to condemnation of Japan’s modern history (Shibuichi 2005: 200). Their desire and efforts to develop more independent security policies, increase Japan’s military strength, and glorify past imperialist history stimulated to a large extent the Japanese nationalism whose core vision is that the Japanese are ethnically homogeneous and are superior to and different from other peoples (Berger 1993; Inoguchi 2005).<sup>35</sup> In addition, these activities greatly contributed to imbuing nationalist identity in Japan’s younger generations who had no first-hand memory of the 1910-1945 colonial occupation, knew little of their country’s dark past, such as the brutalities committed by their imperial army, and were genuinely ignorant of what there is to repent (Kristof 1998; Sadada 2006).

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Strait crisis (Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003). Japan and the US made the April Clinton-Hashimoto joint declaration and signed the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security in 1996. One year later, they eventually agreed and approved the Revised Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation in 1997. However, it is certain that the degree to which Japan relied on the US for its security began to decrease to a large extent.

<sup>35</sup> The immense popularity of the two books *Blueprint for a New Japan* by Ozawa Ichiro and *The Japan that can say No: The New U.S.-Japan Relations Card* by Shintaro Ishihara was evidence for growing Japanese nationalism and the influence of neo-conservatism.



Moreover, neo-conservatives played a growing role in the decline of the conservative LDP, the ruling party since 1955. The conservative LDP lost control of the Diet and the government in 1993 mainly because the neo-conservative politicians left the LDP, created new parties, and substantially absorbed traditional LDP supporters by calling for reform and accusing the LDP of lethargy and corruption. Apparently, this collapse did not mean that the Japanese conservatives had lost their power to progressive groups; rather, a separation between traditional conservatives and neo-conservatives within the LDP occurred.

Traditionally, Japan's politics had been divided between right and left. In general, leftist groups supported apologizing for war-time aggression and opposed Japan's engagement in international security politics, the amendment of its pacific constitution, and the country's rearmament. The rightist groups, or traditional conservatives, generally emphasized economic development under the United States' security umbrella, opposed the leftists' view, and tended to glorify Japan's imperialist expansion (Berger 1993; Hayes 2005; Shibuichi 2005). In the post-Cold War period, however, the progressive groups began to have difficulty holding the right-wing in check for two reasons. First, the collapse of the communist bloc reduced the size of left-wing's constituency. Second, the decline of the leading leftist party—the Social Democratic Party of Japan—contributed to damaging Japanese confidence in leftist groups (Rozman and Lee 2006; Lee 2006). The SDPJ's strategic choice—forming a coalition government with right wing parties including the LDP in 1994—caused a terrible backlash. In return for aligning with the LDP, the head of the SDPJ, Tomiichi

Murayama, became the prime minister of Japan for a short period. But the SDPJ's strategic choice damaged its leftist party ideology and propaganda lasting for several decades and made its traditional constituencies abandon their party. As a consequence, the traditional political competition between right and left began to vanish, and the new divide between conservatives simultaneously began to emerge and take root in Japanese politics (Hayes 2005; Inoguchi 2005; Lee 2006). The rightist groups began to attract more attention from the Japanese population.

These changes unleashed right wing elites (politicians, bureaucrats, and professionals) and groups (e.g., Japan War-Bereaved Families Association which consists of approximately 10,400,000 households, the Military Pension Federation, the Association of Shinto Shrines, and the Japan Conference) to pursue activities aiming at resurrecting nationalism. They were bent on establishing a norm calling for a "normal/strong" Japan. They wanted Japan to defend its security by itself. This led to a nation-wide debate about whether Japan should be a normal state possessing a national military, rather than the Self Defense Force (Green 2001; Moon et al 2005). In addition, they pushed their government to pass policies aiming at strengthening its military capability and to pursue a proactive foreign policy role in international politics. In this context, Japan's Diet passed a bill which allows the Self-Defense Force (SDF) to participate in PKO activities, which meant that the bill authorized the first Japanese SDF's military operation overseas since the lost in WWII.<sup>36</sup> The Diet also officially began to discuss the amendment of its pacific constitution (or at least revise

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<sup>36</sup> The law passed in Japan led to serious concerns not solely in South Korea but also countries in Northeast Asia that have bitter memories of Japanese colonialism. (Lee 2006; Moon et al 2005)

Article 9<sup>37</sup>). Consequently, nationalism grew and became a magnet for gathering and concentrating right-wing support and much of the population. Nationalist identity among Japanese citizens was thus invigorated.

This period witnessed the rise of a variety of Japanese nationalistic activities. Some of these had a potential for making Koreans recall their anti-Japanese identity and producing anti-Japanese sentiment. For instance, as a strategy for appealing to growing nationalism, Japanese right-wing leaders frequently asserted that the Pacific War was not a war of invasion but a benign act to liberate East Asia from Western imperialists and preserve common interests in East Asia. Specifically, Prime Minister Murayama made a remark before the upper house in 1995 that Japanese annexation of Korea was recognized as legitimate within the prevailing international context.<sup>38</sup> The Minister of the Management and Coordination Agency Eto Takami also publicly claimed that Japan did some positive things for Korea during the colonial period.<sup>39</sup> These examples of Japanese nationalism heightened colonial/imperial memories among Koreans and became a serious threat to South Korean national identity.

In South Korea, democratization took place in 1987, resulting in the end of authoritarianism. This democratic transition brought fundamental changes in the state-society relationship, such as liberalization of electoral politics, the emergence of civil society, and, as a consequence, the weakening of the power of the government (Kihl

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<sup>37</sup> Article 9 states: Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

<sup>38</sup> Segye Ilbo, October 11, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Segye Ilbo, November 9, 1995

2005: 238). The collapse of the Cold War undoubtedly contributed to accelerating these changes and produced a possibility for the ROK to implement new foreign policies and seek more independent security arrangements. This collapse and democratization made the main authoritarian ROK's anti-communism policy practice, which consisted of stimulating the fear of another possible North Korean invasion of South Korea, seemed less credible and sustainable (Kihl 2005: 241).<sup>40</sup>

In response to these shifts, the ROK undertook to revise its foreign policies. The Roh Tae Woo administration, inaugurated in 1988, implemented an alternative strategy: the so-called "Nordpolitik" which aimed at reducing tension between North Korea and South Korea through inter-Korean exchanges and improving relations with communist countries such as the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern European states (Kihl 2005: 241). Certainly, the ROK's confidence, stemming from its rapid economic growth and development, greatly contributed to its decision to change its foreign policy direction. As a consequence of the ROK's Nordpolitik, South Korea normalized its political relationship with Beijing and Moscow as well as its economic ties with China and Russia. In addition, intermittently inter-Korean exchanges began. Moreover, these dynamics resulted in the reduction of the Koreans' support for the US-ROK alliance to some degree, as the alliance had been an outcome of the security competition against the communist bloc. South Korea's need for economic and political support from Japan began to decrease.

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<sup>40</sup> Authoritarian regimes in South Korea used a so-called "diversionary theory." The theory states that domestic circumstances motivate the ruling elites to divert a population's attention from domestic to international problems by pursuing an international conflict. See Oneal et al (2006) for details of the theory.

With these shifts in domestic and international environments, Korean civil society became an important political actor.<sup>41</sup> Democratization, in particular, had a great impact as it allowed citizens the freedom to discuss formerly suppressed or censored issues (Calder 2004). Civil society played a great role in reopening past, unresolved colonial issues, as well as founding numerous civic organizations to confront these issues. As a result, Korean nationalism,<sup>42</sup> whose core vision had been a nation independent from Japanese and communist threats since the emergence of the ROK, flourished. Koreans' anti-Japanese sentiment was also stimulated in this process and became more prominent. Domestic politics consequently became an increasingly important factor in Korean policymaking toward Japan.

As South Korea became a democracy and as the communist bloc collapsed, numerous civic organizations (e.g., Association for the Pacific War Victims, Korea Chongshindae's Institute,<sup>43</sup> the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan) emerged to confront unresolved past colonial problems in South Korea. Civil organizations and groups of war victims, such as the Association of Pacific War Victims, Bereaved Families of Koreans and Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice, demanded their government play an active role in resolving the

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41 According to Kihl (2005: 238-239), "Although the role of public opinion and interest groups in foreign policy making has traditionally not been strong in Korean civil society, this is rapidly changing with the process of democratic consolidation. The greater input and changing roles of the interest groups in Korea's nascent civil society, for instance, are underscored by an active role of such civil society groups as business organizations, labor unions, church groups, intellectuals, student organization and civic organizations."

<sup>42</sup> See Lee (1985) for further information.

<sup>43</sup> Chongshindae is a Korean term for the women drafted for military sexual slavery by Japan during the Japanese colonial period.

issues. These groups served as norm entrepreneurs<sup>44</sup> to promote a norm for settling colonial issues while focusing on disseminating information on such issues, urging the ROK government to liquidate the legacies of Japanese imperialism, protesting against "insensitive" Japanese remarks or gestures, and disputing such issues in public. These norm entrepreneurs could persuade Koreans to follow the norm of the resolution of the colonial past issues because, in the eyes of Koreans, Japan had not taken sufficient steps to deal with these issues and the ROK government had not adequately liquidated pro-Japanese legacies. The actions of the norm entrepreneurs had an impact not only on older generations of Koreans which still had difficulty coming to terms with the memory of their colonial past, but also on younger generations who had never experienced the colonial period but had learned the bitter history of colonialism through formal history education and mass media. Past colonial issues began to receive greater and greater attention from the Korean publics.

For instance,<sup>45</sup> in May 1990 the Association for the Pacific War Victims and other groups demanded the governments of both Japan and the ROK to disclose the lists of names of war victims, and held sixteen days of nation-wide demonstrations to call for a resolution, which caused the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to halt its operations

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<sup>44</sup> For constructivists such as Finnmore and Sikkink, norms "are built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community.....Norm entrepreneurs are critical for norm emergence because they call attention to issues or even 'create' issues by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them.... The construction of cognitive frames is an essential component of norm entrepreneurs' political strategies, since, when they are successful, the new frames resonate with broader public understanding and are adopted as new ways of talking about and understanding issues" (Finnmore et al 1998: 896-897).

<sup>45</sup> Available at the homepage of Association for the Pacific War Victims ([www.victims.co.kr](http://www.victims.co.kr))

for three days. As a consequence of these actions, during a visit to Japan on May 24, the South Korean President submitted a “request to disclose the names of relocated Koreans” to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first time in the 45 years—since the end of the Pacific war. Lists containing 90,804 names were returned to the South Korean government in January 1991.

As seen in this example, past colonial issues became an important issue on the agenda of South Korea’s domestic politics. Simultaneously, South Korean nationalism grew. The desire to resolve wartime issues and liquidate the legacies of the colonial experience began to be pervasive. It became difficult for the ROK democratic government, which found its legitimacy in the public’s support for its efforts, to disregard these norms.

In the meantime, a leader of the 1987 democratization movement, Kim Young-Sam, became President in 1993. The Kim administration called for a national campaign to correct historical distortions, including publicizing the misdeeds of the South Korea’s authoritarian regimes and of the occupation regime (Moon et al. 2005). One of the central subjects of this campaign was to remove vestiges of the Japanese imperialism and liquidate past colonial legacies. This act was responsive to what most of the Korean population wanted. This was evidence for growing nationalism, as well as the impact of the norm on the politics of South Korea.

The Kim administration laid out and initiated a series of plans for the campaign. It embarked on restoring the palace of the Chosun Dynasty and demolished the building used by the Japanese governor-general during the colonial period, a

building symbolizing the Japanese occupation. In addition, the government pushed hard on such issues as accountability, compensation for comfort women, and apologies for the Pacific war (Moon et al. 2005: 566). During this period, Korean anti-Japanese nationalist identity was stimulated by its own government and the NGOs. It goes without saying that growing Japanese nationalism led Koreans to recall their anti-Japanese identity and provided growing anti-Japanese sentiment, resulting in turn in the rise of Korean nationalism.

Thus, with the shifts in domestic and international environments, the recurrent emergence of past colonial issues pushed the two countries into conflicts of anti-Japanese identity among Koreans and nationalist identity among the Japanese. This resulted in a failure to overcome the essential cognitive baseline of their interactions—enmity.

Meanwhile, the Tokto territorial issue emerged between Japan and South Korea. The ROK government essentially had two purposes in constructing a wharf on Tokto. The first was related to the issue of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1983 included a 200 nautical-mile EEZ. This law went into effect in 1994. However, neither South Korea nor Japan did ratify the UNCLOS. This was because the East Sea is not wide enough to provide the both parties with the 200 nautical-mile EEZ. As the law entered into force, they could not delay ratifying the UNCLOS any longer and had to negotiate about a base point for EEZ delimitation. As a result, the Kim government decided to construct the wharf facilities to consolidate further its sovereignty over Tokto and to



provide bargaining leverage upcoming EEZ negotiation.<sup>46</sup>

The second purpose was to demonstrate to its public that the government was firmly preparing for any possible Japanese provocation by acting preemptively. The ROK was faced growing nationalism. It had also been provoked by improper comments from Japan on the colonial history and on Tokto. Thus failing to take preemptive actions was difficult for the democratic government, which was well aware that Tokto would become a focus of diplomatic trouble between Japan and the ROK. It feared that Japanese provocations regarding Tokto's ownership would pose a serious threat to South Korean national identity and, accordingly, would cause a decline of the President's party in the general election in April, 1996 (Choi 2005: 473).

In response to the ROK's wharf construction plan, the Hashimoto government publicly declared that the Tokto was its territory and was illegally occupied by the ROK. Japan's claim on sovereignty over Tokto was intolerable for the ROK because its claim stemmed from the assertion that the Korean government (the Chosen Dynasty) and the Japanese government had legitimately made the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 and the Japanese Annexation of Korea Treaty in 1910. This claim agitated Koreans and exacerbated their anti-Japanese sentiment. Various civil groups led to the so-called "Tokto movement." In response to its people's anger and protests, as well as its own interests, the ROK government carried out a set of strong countermeasures.

Consequently, during this post-Cold War period, nationalism in the two Asian

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<sup>46</sup> However, EEZ boundary negotiations have not finished as of 2007. Currently Tokdo is included in the ROK-Japan joint fisheries zone, but the 12 nautical miles that demarcate territorial waters surrounding Tokdo have been steadfastly upheld by the ROK (www.Koreat.net May 12, 2006)

states grew dramatically. The rise of Japanese nationalism, which enhanced a sense of superiority toward its former colonial subjects, contributed to South Koreans' perception of Japan as a potential threat, not a partner. Korea's anti-Japanese identity was also reinforced in response to growing Japanese nationalism. The sensitive reactions of the ROK to Japanese domestic politics contributed to growing nationalism in Japan and encouraged Japan to perceive South Korea as an unfriendly neighbor. As a result, the ROK and Japan was unable to overcome their enmity. This was reflected in public opinion polls. For instance, in a poll conducted in 1993, Japanese ranked South Korea third on the list of the most-disliked nations, behind Russia and North Korea, while South Koreans ranked Japan second on the list, after North Korea (Shuja 1996). The Tokto territorial dispute eventually erupted in the midst of the nationalist identity conflicts between them. This issue served as a tipping point in their relations, turned highly conflictive and hostile. Consonant with Putnam's "two-level games" (1988),<sup>47</sup> the Japanese government faced with pressure from its public strongly protested against the ROK's Tokto Wharf construction plan and, by the same logic, the South Korean government took strong measures in response to this territorial issue. In addition, as their nationalist identity was strengthened during this dispute, the two countries were averse to offering positive policy initiatives toward each other. In this

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<sup>47</sup> According to Robert Putnam (1988: 434), "The politics of many international negotiations can usefully be conceived as a two-level game. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign." The level I game refers to the international level game, whereas the level II game refers to the national level game.

context, Japan-ROK relations were rapidly chilled and a series of serious diplomatic disputes erupted.

However, their conflictive relations did not last long. Their relations became cooperative in the wake of the ROK's IMF crisis and the North Korean Taepo-Dong missile crisis. A selective combination of different IR perspectives helps shed light on how South Korea and Japan could be cooperative and improve their contentious relations.

### **A Combination of Liberalism and Constructivism and A Combination of Realism and Constructivism**

If we combine the insights of liberal interdependence and those of constructivism into collective identities, we can formulate a critical theoretical framework for their bilateral behavior in the face of the IMF crisis. A framework would be as follows: Japan and the ROK had constructed a collective identity through economic interaction. This identity had been another primary baseline of Japan-ROK interactions. In the face of the ROK's economic crisis, a high level of economic interdependence between them became the priority issue for Japan-ROK relations. As liberals (e.g., Keohane and Nye 1977; Keohane 1984; Russett and Oneal 2003) suggest, the reality that economic cooperation was an imperative emerged immediately after the ROK's economic crisis because the collapse of the ROK economy was directly or indirectly a serious threat to Japan's economy given their economies' interdependence.

Faced with the ROK's economic crisis, Japan and the ROK shared the economic cooperation imperative and realized that they were economically

interdependent and needed to remain economic partners (Moon et. al 2005). The two governments played a primary role in reminding their publics of their shared identity of economic partnership. As Keohane (1984: 243) suggests, it was natural that the two governments' policies must be adjusted to one another because frictions between the two interdependent states had been severe and the economic cooperation imperative emerged immediately after the ROK's economic crisis. This resulted in recalling and intensifying their shared identity of economic partnership guiding both Koreans and Japanese to understand that reciprocal economic relations between the two countries should develop in accordance with economic rather than political logic and that economic cooperation should not be a prey for political conflicts derived from the historical and territorial issues.<sup>48</sup> In this context, faced with the need for cooperation, Japan and South Korea could assist each other. Thus, they moved to cooperate in the wake of South Korea's financial crisis.

**Difficulty in Ignoring the Need for Cooperation:** In November 1997, the financial and foreign exchange crisis began, even as South Korea was enjoying world-wide recognition as a newly industrialized country as well as a leading developing country.<sup>49</sup> For Korean society, the crisis was viewed as an event that could reduce national pride and harm the economy overnight. In response to the economic crisis, and apart from seeking help from the IMF's bail out program, the Kim government decided to ask its economic partner, Japan, for economic assistance. At that time, the ROK was Japan's second leading trading partner in Asia which was, in turn, ROK's

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<sup>48</sup> Washington Post, May 18, 2001

<sup>49</sup> It actually occurred just a year after the ROK celebrated its entry into the club of the world's developed countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

largest trading partner in the region (Moon et. al 2005). Both practiced state-guided industrialization and export-oriented strategies.

Simultaneously, the South Korean government emphasized its economic interdependence with Japan and the complementary nature of the two economies (Moon et al 2005).<sup>50</sup> President Kim also publicized that South Korea wished to establish a cooperative relationship with Japan, not only to overcome the economic crisis, but also to achieve the North-South relationship development through the Sunshine policy, which sought to “lead North Korea down a path toward peace, reform, and openness through reconciliation, interaction, and cooperation with the South” (Kihl 2005: 249).<sup>51</sup>

In addition, the Korean government called for dealing with past colonial and territorial issues separately from economic issues. It called on its population to advance toward a new era which would not be captive of its colonial past and would be capable of consolidating a cooperative relationship with Japan.<sup>52</sup> It initiated several conciliatory gestures and focused on creating a new momentum for ending the vicious circle of mutual distrust. At the same time, it was careful about commenting on the colonial issues or provoking anti-Japanese sentiment. To the extent to which anti-Japanese sentiment in the Korean society had been pervasive, a colonial past issue could be sufficient to end the momentum for developing a cooperative relationship with Japan. Therefore, the government had to avoid expressing sympathy for civil

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<sup>50</sup> The Kim government expected the positive effect of the shared values on the ROK-Japanese relations since uniting people with one another is a major shared value.

<sup>51</sup> Korea Herald, October 2, 1998.

<sup>52</sup> This idea was not new. As already discussed, every administration in both countries suggested this idea when it was inaugurated.

organizations' demands for resolving the pending issues and so awakening Korean anti-Japanese identity (Choi 2005).

Despite the government's efforts, much of the population was skeptical and indifferent about paving the way for cooperation with Japan. This was because they believed that seeking Japanese economic wounded its national pride. Also, South Koreans had been unsettled by the Japanese politicians' remarks on colonial history and Tokto sovereignty claims, as well as the Japanese government's lukewarm action on compensation and apology regarding the comfort-women issue.

However, as the perspective of a combination of liberalism and constructivism suggests, South Koreans had identified Japan as their economic and security partner to a large degree, independent of their anti-Japanese identity. The ROK governmental efforts, however, inspired its people's economic-partnership identity with Japan, and they began to perceive that political conflicts derived from the historical and territorial issues should not harm the economic cooperation between the ROK and Japan (Moon et al. 2005) and that the issues should be handled independently. During this time, Japan extended \$10 billion through the IMF rescue package, rolled short-term loans over long-term ones, and invested \$1.75 billion through foreign direct investment in the ROK in 1998 (Kim 2006). Japanese economic assistance contributed to reducing Koreans' anti-Japanese sentiment and identity to some degree (Rozman and Lee 2006: 765). With the effect of the economic-partnership identity derived from the economic interdependence and interactions, South Korea could further deepen the cooperative relationship with Japan by actions such as enhancing cultural exchanges and removing

a ban on Japanese pop culture.

In return, Japan positively reacted to the ROK's pro-Japanese initiatives and offered economic assistance to overcome the financial crisis to its decades-old economic and security partner. At that time, Japan was seeking to gain political influence be fitting its international status as the world's second largest economy through its economic aid policies to the world (Rozman 1999). As part of this strategy, it had pursued the Asia-first policy, especially multilateral-oriented economic policies. Suddenly, the economy of South Korea, Japan's second largest economic collaborator in the region, began a melt down after the Asian economic crisis which had began with the Thai Baht exchange crisis. In the face of the South Korean IMF crisis, the Japanese government, which had a major interest in defending the Asian model of economic development against the US-led IMF bailout operation,<sup>53</sup> had great sympathy for the ROK government. South Korea had maintained a high level of economic cooperation with Japan, had followed the Asian model of economic development based on state-guided industrialization and exports-oriented strategies, and had been an important strategic partner in coping with North Korean threats (Moon et al. 2005; Lee 2006). The Japanese government was also concerned that since the two economies were linked, the 1997 South Korean economic crisis would be an obstacle to its efforts to

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<sup>53</sup> At that time Japan initially welcomed the IMF bailout program to overcome Asian countries' financial crisis, but rejected the IMF's loan program as the financial crisis became pervasive throughout Asia. It became accepted that Asian-Miracle, or Asian-Style Economic Model, ended (Lee 2006). For this reason, Japan undertook a bolder regional economic initiative by offering a great amount of economic assistance to the crisis-suffering Asian countries and proposing the creation of the Asian Monetary Fund (Lee 2006; Moon et al. 2005; Ketzenstein et al 2003). It also hoped to create a yen bloc in Asia (Heginbotham et al. 1998).

overcome its own economic recession, which had persisted almost for a decade. Therefore, the Japanese government provided a significant amount of economic-rescue loans to South Korea. According to one survey, 78 percent of Japanese respondents supported its government's decision to assist the ROK.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, Japan's motivation for establishing a cooperative relationship with South Korea increased in the face of the South Korean financial crisis.

Burgeoning cooperation between Japan and South Korea accelerated, as on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998, North Korea suddenly fired a Taepo-Dong 1 missile into the Northern Pacific which was believed to have a range of 1,700 to 2,200km and so was able to strike most cities in Japan.<sup>55</sup> Resulting their cooperation reflected a combination of realist balancing and constructivist insights. The missile issue certainly posed a threat to Japan and the ROK and became a salient issue for the two. As a result, their anti-communist identity was revived and strengthened by the security imperative faced by the two countries. Japan and the ROK wasted no time in responding North Korea's provocative action, which reflects Walt's balance of threats. The collective identity served as a rationale for cooperative exchanges between the two states. Japan and the ROK could shape mutual interests to manage this threatening issue and drop other conflictive issues, therefore augmenting their cooperation.

Prior to the test, Japan had been enthusiastically bent on transforming and improving its post-Cold War relationship with North Korea. During the Cold War period, Japan had had little interest in a normal relationship with North Korea. In turn,

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<sup>54</sup> Korea Times October 11, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Korea Herald, September 3, 1998.



North Korea also had had no significant strategic or ideological reason to interact with Japan since it had allied to the Soviet Union and China and had received ample assistance from each. However, with the end of the Cold War, both of them were aware of the impracticality of continuing Cold War policies toward each other. From the early post-Cold War period, Japan began to seek greater influence on the Korean peninsula vis-à-vis Asian competitors such as China and Russia (Fouse 2004).

As the USSR and the ROK sought to normalize their relationship, Japan contemplated a normalization treaty with North Korea. In September 1990, a Japanese joint LDP-JSP (Liberal Democratic Party and Japan Socialist Party) delegation led by Kanemaru Shin, a vice president of the LDP, visited Pyongyang to seek to normalize Japan's relationship with the North. This occurred just in two weeks after South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo had met with Mikhail Gorbachev in San Francisco. After the Japan-North Korea talks, Tokyo and Pyongyang held eight rounds of normalization talks until November 1992. However, the Kanemaru Shin-led normalization efforts came to naught owing to the disputes within factions of LDP, oppositions by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shin's corruption scandal, and objection by United States and South Korea<sup>56</sup> (Toshimira 2000; Bell 2005). After this failure, Japan and North Korea had barely had diplomatic exchanges. Nor had they made efforts to resume normalizations talks.

In 1993, the first North Korean nuclear crisis erupted. Japan sought to

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<sup>56</sup> Seoul was seriously concerned that the large amount of reparations Shin promised would impinge on its own policy toward North Korea. Washington was also concerned that the financial aid might be used for nuclear development programs and requested that inspection of North Korean nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be a precondition in further normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang (Fouse 2004).

transform North Korea's nuclear facilities to peaceful power facilities through a coordinated policy with the US and the ROK. It supported the US-ROK-led engagement policy toward North Korea, which encouraged opening and spurring economic growth and development in North Korea which would lead to change (Cha et al 2003: 15-16). It promised to provide \$10 billion for the KEDO projects, which was the second largest contribution to the KEDO after the ROK, and humanitarian and economic assistance to North Korea.

Simultaneously, Japan was independently determined to achieve a normalized relationship with North Korea by restarting normalization talks.<sup>57</sup> As it had not played a critical role in resolving the nuclear standoff, Japan was concerned about being left behind Washington and Seoul in establishing a diplomatic relationship with Pyongyang, as well as losing influence over Pyongyang (Kim et al. 2000: 601; Kang and Kaseda 2001: 54). In addition, despite the peaceful resolution of the first North Korean nuclear issue, Japan was seriously worried about North Korean possession of weapons of mass destruction, such as mid-range missiles and biochemical weapons. This was reflected in the fact that Japan's 1997 edition of White Paper on Defense still described North Korea as the "major destabilizing factor" in East Asian Security.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, Japan took various steps to normalize with North Korea. Conditions were unfavorable however, and normalization talks between Japan and North Korea were continuously stalled owing to the kidnapping of Japanese nationals during

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<sup>57</sup> Japanese lawmakers from ruling coalition parties visited Pyongyang on March 28, 1995 and signed with North Korean Labor Party members to reopen normalization talks without any preconditions (Fouse 2004). After that, Japan and North Korea continued the talks up to the missile launch.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Kim (2006)

the Cold War period (Manyin 2003: 2).<sup>59</sup>

In the meanwhile, in September, 1998, North Korea suddenly conducted the Taepo-Dong 1 missile test-fire. The missile flew over Japan's territory, but Tokyo was completely unaware of the missile firing. Even after the U.S. military informed it of the launch, Japan could not point out where the missile landed, exposing the inadequacy of its missile detecting capability.<sup>60</sup> Japan was shocked and humiliated by the fact that North Korea had built a substantial projection capability for weapons of mass destruction. As a result, this missile test firing exacerbated Japan's fear about the North Korean threat. Japanese anti-North Korean sentiment and identities intensified significantly.

Faced with growing anti-North Korean sentiment among its people, the Japanese government wasted no time in following realist reasoning that would require Japan not only to increase its power, but also to work with its security provider, the US, and its long-time strategic partner, the ROK with which it shared the threat and an anti-communist identity, in a bid to balance North Korea.<sup>61</sup> It promptly halted its food aid to North Korea, froze the \$1 billion which provided under Geneva agreement to construct light-water reactors for North Korea, and suspended all negotiations with North Korea on normalizing their diplomatic relationship. Japan also embarked on

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<sup>59</sup> It was argued that North Korean agents kidnapped many Japanese. In fact, in 2002, the North acknowledged that its agents kidnapped 13 Japanese nationals, and that among 13 abducted Japanese, eight were dead and five were alive. Later, North Korea repatriated the five to Japan and sent the bones of a dead Japanese female to her mother country.

<sup>60</sup> Korea Herald, September 3, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> <http://news.hankooki.com>, August 9, 1998. Japan had not increased its defense budget for the previous three years. In 1999, the ministry of foreign affairs announced that Japan increased defense budget by 1.6 percent in the response to the North Korean missile test firing. It allotted 29.7 billion yen for anti-missile defense system.

increasing consultations with United States and South Korea to respond to the missile launch and prevent North Korea from further developing long-range missiles.

Consequently, the missile launch greatly augmented Japan's motivation for working with South Korea.

On the South Korean side, the missile test also contributed to promptly offering cooperative measures to Japan. At that time, the ROK was pursuing its liberal engagement policy toward North Korea, the so-called Sunshine policy. However, the ROK's engagement initiative had not been due to a tangible reduction in North Korean military threats. South Korea still listed North Korea as its "main enemy" in its White Paper on Defense in 1997. Instead, the Sunshine policy was pursued because the ROK hoped to prevent the worst-case scenario of unification through the engagement measures. South Korea recognized that in the 1990s, North Korea had persistently faced desperate economic crises and no longer received foreign aid from the communist bloc, a situation which caused the deaths of approximately one million people. In this sense, South Korea had seriously been concerned about the continuation of North Korea's economic crisis and thus had begun to take steps to prevent the case of a sudden collapse of North Korea. Such a collapse would impose catastrophic socio-economic costs on the ROK itself, far worse than that faced by Germany after its unification. Based on this rationale, the ROK had pursued a soft-landing-driven engagement policy toward North Korea (Kihl 2005).

In the meantime, the missile launch took place. Undoubtedly, the missile launch served as an immediate threat to South Korea. This recalled South Koreans'

anti-communist identity, which consequently caused the re-emergence of anti-North Korean sentiment. As a result, Seoul again sought greater efforts with its security partners, including Japan, to deal with this provocative action.

Faced with anti-North Korean public sentiment, South Korea warned that Pyongyang would face economic and political penalties, including the suspension of food aid if it continued to conduct missile test firings<sup>62</sup> ROK Defense Minister, Chun Yong-Tak, flew to Tokyo one day after the test to meet with Japanese Defense Minister Fukushiro Nukaga to discuss the missile firing and joint defense against a potential North Korean missile attack.<sup>63</sup> The two ministers agreed that the North's missile launch posed a grave threat to the security and peace to the Korean peninsula, but to the entire region. They also agreed that as the first visible result of their closer cooperation, the two countries would hold a director-level meeting devoted to consulting and coordinating a joint posture in dealing with the North's missile program.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, lawmakers from both countries joined forces to urge North Korea to stop developing, launching, and exporting missiles.

The two governments significantly increased consultations and collaboration. They were intent on establishing a united front against another possible missile launch and making policy coordination, while stepping up firm military preparations. Trilateral cooperation was also increased. Although the Japanese government had initially implemented hard-line measures immediately after the missile launch, it had to ease its hard-line policy and pursue a coordinated measure with its partners because

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<sup>62</sup> CNN.com, September 2, 1998.

<sup>63</sup> Korea Herald, September 2, 1998.

<sup>64</sup> Korea Times, September 2, 1998.

it deemed it too risky to carry on a unilateral realist balancing policy. Japan retracted the suspension of its commitment to the KEDO on October 21, 1998, and again Japan sought to engage North Korea. Therefore, the United States, Japan, and South Korea built the trilateral coordination and oversight group (TCOG) to coordinate policy toward North Korea. Also, in the face of the North Korean missile test, Japan and the ROK embarked on pursuing extensive security cooperation with each other, as would be expected from the mixture of the realist and constructivist elements.

As a result of these two events, the two Asian countries were more actively motivated to cooperate, resulting in the signing of the Japan-ROK Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This joint declaration suggested that Japan and South Korea were dramatically improving relations. Japan and South Korea began to pursue cooperative policies and implement confidence-building measures toward each other.

To sum up, such Japan-South Korean relations in this period afford a typical case for a pluralist approach. Nationalist identity conflicts between Japan and South Korea were a primary factor in their deteriorating relations. It was difficult for the two countries to cooperate with each other in the midst of the ideational conflicts. Yet, the financial crisis and the North Korean missile launch dampened conflictive identities in their relations. Their conflictive relations turned cooperative during this period. Their cooperative relations reflected a combination of liberal interdependence and constructivist insights on norms and identities and that of realist balancing and constructivist insights.

## **Japan-ROK Relations 2001 To 2005**

### **Their Volatile Relations**

In the two and a half years after 1998, the relationship between Korea and Japan flourished as in ever before. Unfortunately, this cooperative relationship did not last long. It ended on April 10, 2001, as the ROK recalled its ambassador to Tokyo to protest the Japanese government's approval of middle school textbooks, which were written by a right-wing intellectual group—the Society for Making New History Books,<sup>65</sup> that seemed to whitewash Japan's wartime atrocities. However, the ROK and Japanese governments made efforts to improve their deteriorating relationship. The two governments held bilateral summit talks, six months after the event. They agreed to launch working-level negotiations to resolve the issue of alleged historical distortions in Japanese textbooks as well as other issues, including preparation for the 2002 World Cup which they were to co-host. The ROK government resumed military exchanges and market openings to Japanese culture and arts products, which had been suspended in July in protest Tokyo's refusal to revise the controversial history textbooks. In addition, faced with a second nuclear crisis,<sup>66</sup> Japan and the ROK agreed to pursue cooperation on a wide range of issues, including diplomatic collaboration on the North Korean issue, joint historical research, and counterterrorism (Kim 2006:

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<sup>65</sup> The Korean government officially requested that history books be revised with the removal of 35 items including the beautification of Japan's occupation over Korea, the omission of any word regarding comfort women, the description of Korea as a tributary state under China's control, and misinterpretation of ancient Korean history with Japanese influence. However, the Japanese government rejected the ROK government's demand.

<sup>66</sup> On October 16th, 2002, a US Senior official announced that Kang Suk-Ju, vice minister of Foreign Affairs in North Korea, admitted that the North Korea had a HEU (highly enriched uranium) program, which assured in the second North Korean nuclear crisis.

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Such Japan-ROK relations were consequently cooperative and amicable in this period. Their cooperative relationship was reflected in the speech of ROK president Roh on June 10, 2003 during a four-day state visit to Japan in which he told Japan's Lower House that the ROK, the United States, and Japan must continue close coordination and cooperation for the sake of regional security and added that he shared Japanese concerns about the North's nuclear and missile threats.<sup>67</sup> He continued "I am confident that an era of peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia is the common future of South Korea and Japan and the leaders of the two countries should tell this to the people."

Nevertheless, only two years later Japan-ROK relations deteriorated precipitously. In late February 2005, the inflammatory territorial Tokto issue associated with Japan's legal action re-emerged. Japan's Shimane Prefecture Council put forward to the legislature a bill that designated February 22 as "Takeshima Day." On the same day, the Japanese ambassador to the ROK, Toshiyuki Takano, publicly proclaimed his country's ownership of Tokto. Furthermore, the Japanese Foreign Ministry stated that "Takeshima is historically and legally part of the Japanese territory" and accused the ROK of "illegally occupying" Tokto.<sup>68</sup>

The ROK government immediately urged the Japanese central government to force the Shimane Prefecture government to withdraw the bill, since it had not yet been passed. The Koizumi government did not respond. This led President Roh to

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<sup>67</sup> [www.kois.go.kr](http://www.kois.go.kr).

<sup>68</sup> Korea Herald, Feb 26, 2005.



adopt a still more rigorous approach. In a speech marking the 86th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement of 1919, Roh announced that Japan should apologize and compensate for its wrongdoings in the past, and promised that his administration would step up efforts to resolve the issue of individual victims' claims to seek indemnity from Japan.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the ROK's strong reactions, Japan's Shimane Prefecture Council passed the bill on March 16 without intervention from the central government. In addition, prior to the passage of the "Takeshima Day" bill, Koreans were informed that Japan's Ministry of Education planned to approve more history books which whitewashed its wartime atrocities and contained Japan's claim to ownership of Tokto. Eventually, the ROK president announced, "No matter what difficulties I may face, I will not back off or obscure the issue, but will continue to deal with the problem until I see a result the Korean people find acceptable."<sup>70</sup> He also declared "a diplomatic war against Japan."<sup>71</sup> Despite the ROK's harsh reactions to Japan's nationalist activities, Japan's Ministry of Education approved the history books. The Japanese government responded to the ROK's opposition by claiming private publications were beyond government control.

In the process of confronting Japan's unrepentant and provocative activities,

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<sup>69</sup> www.Korea.net., March 2, 2005.,

<sup>70</sup> Korea Herald, March 14, 2005.

<sup>71</sup> www.Korea.net, March 23, 2005. Regarding the Roh's stern remarks, some argued that the purpose of these remarks was to gain political support by appealing the ROK's nationalism and that this strategy caused a conflictive relationship with Japan (Rozman and Lee 2006). Certainly their argument is legitimate in that his remarks triggered the conflictive relations. However, this argument is not able to explain the continuity of the conflictive relationship between Japan and South Korea throughout the post-Cold War period.

the ROK government canceled shuttle diplomacy between heads of the two countries. In December, the ROK president Roh and Chinese President Hu Jintao refused to hold an annual meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi at the ASEAN Plus 3 Summit. Moreover, South Korea aligned with China to oppose the Japanese bid to attain a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.<sup>72</sup> They publicly denounced Japan's behavior and eventually succeeded in thwarting Japan's efforts to gain a permanent seat on the Council.

Thus, Japan-ROK relations were unusually volatile during this period. A pluralist view helps to explain this.

### **Pluralist Explanation**

The theoretical arguments for the volatile relations of South Korea and Japan during this period resemble those discussed in the previous volatility section, as the cyclical periods of friction followed by crises leading to cooperation. To explain conflictive Japan-ROK relations, this study uses constructivism. To account for their cooperative relations, it selectively combines insights from constructivist and rationalist theories.

### **Constructivist Account**

Japan-ROK relations during this period combined cooperation and conflict in unexpected ways that cannot be accounted for either by realist or by liberal theory. Of

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<sup>72</sup> Of course, since Japan strengthened its military activities by, for instance, dispatching naval forces to support the US-led military campaign in Afghanistan, launching reconnaissance satellites over North Korea, and increasing military budgets for obtaining missile defenses, they also motivated South Korea and Japan to work together (Kim 2006).

course, constructivism cannot account entirely for their cooperative relations either. However, constructivism can account adequately for their conflictive relations during this period, because their diplomatic row was a consequence of the interaction between the growing nationalism in Japan and its by-products (e.g., nationalist activities regarding colonial history) and the growing nationalism in South Korea and its by-products (e.g., strong reaction to Japanese national issues and calls for the resolution of past colonial issues and the liquidation of Japanese colonial legacies).

**The Continuation of Nationalist Identity Conflicts and the Nadir of Their Relations:** Nationalism continuously grew both in Japan and South Korea during the period of cooperation between Japan and the ROK beginning at 1998 (Kim 2006: 162; Hundt and Bleik 2007). In addition, there had been no substantial efforts to settle colonial past issues, although it had been expected among Koreans that Japan would take accountable and constructive steps for resolving the thorny issues. South Koreans' anti-Japanese identity had never completely disappeared during this period;<sup>73</sup> rather, it had been latent and nested. Certainly the norm of the resolution of the pending issues and colonial legacies also had not disappeared because the issues had not yet been settled. Instead, this norm had grown but was briefly less salient in Koreans' perceptions than the norm of the 21<sup>st</sup> century partnership. Likewise, in Japan perhaps the norm of the 21<sup>st</sup> century partnership emerged. But it failed to become sufficiently influential to reverse Japan's tilt toward the right. Japan's politicians and

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<sup>73</sup> For instance, the ROK was reluctant to approve a FDI (foreign direct investment) treaty with Japan partially because the Kim Dae Jung government "was concerned about domestic political backlash that would arise from the support of Japan-centered regional bloc. South Koreans are still bitter about Japanese colonial domination." (Moon et al 2005: 587)

right-wing sometimes reacted instead to growing domestic nationalism. For instance, the House of Representatives of Japan passed a controversial bill reinstating the Hinomaru (the sun flag) and Kimikayo (a hymn glorifying the emperor) as the official national flag and the national anthem, both symbols of Japanese imperialism.<sup>74</sup>

While nationalism was growing in both countries, the Japanese government approved the history books written by a right-wing intellectual group in the spring of 2001. The reason for the Japanese government's lack of action in disapproving the books, which held the potential for provoking a significant backlash in neighboring countries, reflects the fact that Japan was moving politically rightwards (Sasada 2004; Lee 2006).

The approval of the history textbooks which glorified Japan's modern history and whitewashed wrongdoings in the period of imperialism shocked Koreans who were concerned about the possible reappearance of Japanese nationalism and militarism. Japan's approval of the texts thus stimulated dormant South Koreans' anti-Japanese identity (Moon et al 2005: 594). This stoked Koreans' anti-Japanese national identity and shaped anti-Japanese attitudes and behavior. The norm of resolving past colonial issues again became pervasive on the cognitive image of the Korean public. In addition, the ROK's concerns about the Japanese right-wing movement and nationalism dramatically increased. In this context, the ROK democratic government issued protests, including the recall of its ambassador in Japan, and civil groups launched a nationwide campaign to boycott Japanese goods to protest Tokyo's

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<sup>74</sup> CNN.com, August 13, 1999.

authorization of “biased” history textbooks. In addition, this textbook issue led politicians and civil groups to call for the cancellation of the 1998 summit agreement between the two countries regarding a new partnership for the 21st century.<sup>75</sup>

Korean-Japanese relations further deteriorated as Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who voiced the need to revise Japan's "peace constitution," visited to the Yasukuni Shrine in August 2001, at which fourteen class A war criminals and the 2.5 million casualties of WWII were enshrined. His “unofficial” visit to the Shrine was viewed as representing the rise of nationalism and militarism (Shibuichi 2005: 203) and in accord with the growing sense of nationalism in Japan (Kim 2006: 190). His visit added fuel to anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans. Such sentiment challenged Korean national identity. In response, the ROK made strong protests, including diplomatic initiatives and rallies by civic groups. South Korea continued suspending security cooperation and putting off the market opening for Japanese cultural items which had been delayed immediately after the Japan had approved the new history textbook.

Non-cooperative diplomatic relations, however, did not persist in the face of their interdependence as reflected by the upcoming 2002 World Cup and interchanges in the private sector and in the face of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US. The two governments made efforts to restore normal diplomatic relations and prevent further deterioration of their bilateral relationship. In addition, efforts to improve their relations were accelerated in the wake the second North Korean nuclear crisis. As a

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<sup>75</sup> Korea Times, April 4, 2001.

result, their relations turned relatively stable and cooperative. This thesis will further discuss the shift from friction to cooperation in the following section.

Government efforts to patch their relations, however, could not bring an end to the recurrent reemergence of thorny colonial issues nor the public's spiraling absorption into the growing nationalistic sentiment in either country. Politics in the ROK became more progressive, while Japanese politics veered towards the right (Rozeman and Lee 2006: 783), and nationalism had become a means to domestic political success in both countries (Rozman and Lee 2006: 764).

In January 2005, the ROK Foreign Ministry disclosed declassified documents on the 1965 Korea-Japan normalization accord. These would enable individuals to initiate compensation lawsuits against the Japanese government for wartime abuses.<sup>76</sup> On the Japanese side, in the middle of the nuclear standoff in July 2003 Takami Eto, a senior Japanese ruling party lawmaker, announced that Japan's 1910 annexation of the Korean peninsula was "based on the mutual agreement and was accepted internationally."<sup>77</sup> Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara publicly proclaimed that his country never annexed the Korean Peninsula by force and that colonization was the choice of the Korean people.<sup>78</sup> In May 2004, a Japanese right-wing group called Nihon Shidokai tried to land on Tokto in order to lay claim Japan's territory.<sup>79</sup> In addition, since his inauguration, Prime Minister Koizumi continued his annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. Certainly, these issues, as Shibuichi (2005: 1999) suggests, led to

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<sup>76</sup> Asahi.com, January 17, 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Korea Times, July 13, 2003.

<sup>78</sup> Korea Times, October 29, 2003.

<sup>79</sup> Japan Times, May 7, 2004.

the continuation of the conflicts of nationalist identity between Koreans and Japanese.

Japan-ROK relations eventually deteriorated to their worst level in 2005. This happened in the midst of the North Korean nuclear standoff. The security imperative that had emerged in the face of the second North Korean nuclear crisis could not prevent Korean-Japanese relations from reaching their nadir. The nuclear standoff was not sufficient to prevent a deterioration of bilateral relations owing to conflicts of anti-Japanese identity among Koreans and nationalist identity among Japanese. The impact of the nuclear issue on their relations gradually faded away with the lingering nuclear standoff for three reasons: First and foremost, their relations had consistently witnessed the emergence of thorny colonial issues. This led the two countries to suffer continuously from conflicts of nationalist identity.

Second, South-North Korean relations and Japan-North Korean relations began to move in different directions. This caused a difference in the perception of the North Korean threat between South Koreans and Japanese, resulting in widening the level of anti-North Korean sentiment between them. An opinion poll by the Dong-A Newspaper indicated that 47.3 percent of the Japanese respondents felt threatened greatly by the North Korean nuclear development, whereas only 13.3 percent of the South Korean respondents felt similarly threatened.<sup>80</sup>

From the late 1990s, the ROK continuously pursued its engagement policy toward North Korea and, consequently, a new era promising rapprochement between two Koreas began to emerge. The improved bilateral relationship between North

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<sup>80</sup> April 31, 2005. <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/poll-05-2.htm>

Korea and the United States led by the Clinton administration following the June 2000 inter-Korean summit had also contributed to this development.<sup>81</sup> South Koreans' fears of the North Korean threat were reduced by the inter-Korean summit and the growth of inter-Korean economic exchanges. This provided a less adversarial attitude, particularly among post-Korean War generations, toward the North.<sup>82</sup> It also coincided with the ROK's search for "a modern, 21st-century Korean identity beyond the anti-communism identity of their parents" (Cha and Kang 2003: 171-172). An example of the erosion of South Korean anti-North Korean sentiment was the National Assembly members' consideration in 2003 of abolishing the National Security Law, a symbol of South Korean anti-North Koreanism. In addition, faced with the long-standing diplomatic disputes between the North and the US and the second nuclear standoff, many Koreans, particularly younger generations, blamed the United States for provoking North Korea to pursue nuclear brinkmanship, instead of decrying the North Korean wrongdoings. Democracy, economic development, and improved inter-Korean relations gave rise to young generations who perceive the United States, not as a savior in the Korean War, but as an overbearing ally and a past supporter of military-authoritarian regimes in Korea (Cha and Kang 2003: 171).

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<sup>81</sup> Right after the inter-Korean summit, the Clinton administration announced that it would embark on removing some of economic sanctions against North Korea. Following this US action, the improvement of the bilateral US-North Korea relations took place. The North Korean delegation, led by the Vice-Marshal Jo Myong Rok, visited the United States in October 2000 and in return, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited North Korea. During the meeting between Albright the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, Kim agreed to controls over missile production and an end to missile sales, if compensation were made. See Scalapino (2006) for details.

<sup>82</sup> Much of the South Korean population began to distinguish the North Korean citizens from the communist ruling elites and identified them as brothers calling for pan-Korean brotherhood.



As a consequence, the US's revelation of the North Korean HEU program did not shock and threaten South Koreans to the extent that the first nuclear issue and the Taepo-dong missile test-firing had. Indeed, one poll in South Korea indicated that sixty six percent of respondents supported their government's humanitarian assistance to North Korea despite of the North's nuclear program while thirty three percent said it should be halted immediately, seventy seven percent said that all problems related to North Korea should be settled through dialogue, and only twenty three percent said that the North's nuclear program was grave concern.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, Japanese perceptions of the North Korean threat were not reduced, but instead intensified. Prior to the emergence of the second nuclear crisis, Japan-North Korean relations had been bogged down for years. During this period, Japan's efforts to normalize relations with North Korea were unsuccessful. Then, the Taepo-Dong missile test-firing took place followed sinking the North Korean spy ship by the Japanese Coast Guard.<sup>84</sup> More important, the issues of return visits of Japanese wives and the abduction of Japanese nationals re-emerged, resulting in growing anti-North Korean sentiment in Japan. To deal with the North Korean issues and calm its angry public, the Japanese government demanded that North Korea settle the missile, nuclear, and abduction issues. North Korea made no constructive efforts to respond to the Japan's actions.

Despite the ongoing contentious Japanese and North Korean relationship, the two surprisingly held a summit talk in Pyongyang on September 17, 2002. Ostensibly,

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<sup>83</sup> Korea Times, November 11, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> www.telegraph.co.uk., December 23, 2001.

the negotiations were successful in as much as they produced a series of agreed provisions for normalizing their relationship and produced North Korea's pledge for a moratorium on missile test-firing. Conversely, it actually produced a serious backfire on Japan-North Korean relations.

Koizumi's visit to North Korea aimed at reducing the level of tension and paving the way to normalizing relations between the two countries.<sup>85</sup> Pyongyang welcomed his visit since the country desperately needed economic assistance from Japan. At that time, North Korea was in serious economic crisis and under international sanctions led by the Bush administration. Kim Jong-II and Koizumi agreed to "strive to normalization at the earliest possible date, settling once and for all the issues of the abducted Japanese, the nuclear program, and colonial period issues" (Wada 2003). It looked as though Japan and North Korea had agreed to open an era for peace and cooperation.

During the summit, Kim Jong Il officially acknowledged and apologized for North Korea's responsibility for kidnapping Japanese nationals, causing a serious political backlash in Japan. Immediately, anti-North Korean sentiment erupted. Japanese nationalist groups and politicians encouraged the Japanese public's anti-North Korean sentiment. What was worse was that the US's revelation of the North Korean HEU program took place only two weeks after the summit. Japanese nationalist groups and politicians, as well as its public in general, resented the Koizumi government for making a hasty decision on normalizing relationship with

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<sup>85</sup> Various scholars argue that his visit also aimed at turning his people's attention away from reform on LDP and factional disputes to foreign affairs.

North Korea (Kim 2006). Much of the public wanted their government to take strong steps in regards to the nuclear issue and to link the abduction issue to the nuclear issue. In addition, they expressed distrust of the Kim Jong Il regime. Public attitudes were such that unless the abduction issue was resolved, its government should not offer any incentives to North Korea for resolving the nuclear issue (Fouse 2004).

Under these circumstances, in managing the nuclear crisis the Japanese government was compelled to pursue the hard-line foreign policy toward North Korea. The Koizumi government sought coordinated steps with what the hawkish Bush administration implemented against North Korea, owing to its difficulty in softening the rage of electorates against the Kim Jong Il regime (Kihl 2005). At a May 2003 US-Japan summit meeting, Bush and Koizumi agreed not to tolerate North Korea's nuclear program. Koizumi also announced that Japan would crack down more vigorously on North Korean illegal activities.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, Koizumi attempted to push the abduction issue to become a primary agenda in the Six-Party Talks.

Third, the US-ROK alliance and the US-Japan alliance had been moving in different directions since the late 1990s (Kim and Glosserman 2004). This contributed to reducing the rationale for trilateral cooperation in the face of the North Korean issues.

The US-Japan alliance began to be reinforced in the wake of a series of North Korean threats and the rise of China (Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003). In this period and with the support of the US, Japan endeavored to achieve balanced international

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<sup>86</sup> Cnn.com, January 17, 2003.

roles as one of the world's economic leaders, as well as one of the world's military leaders, which resulted in the reinvigoration of their alliance. The strategic weight of Washington's Asian alliances began to shift increasingly toward developing Japan's security role in East Asia. Japan and the United States made the April Clinton-Hashimoto joint declaration and signed the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security in 1996. One year later, they eventually agreed and approved the Revised Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation in 1997.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Japan decided to participate in the US-led Missile Defense System, contributing to the system by providing technology and expenses (Kang and Kasada 2001: 56). In the 2000s, the Bush administration and the Koizumi government worked closely and displayed various signs of consolidated friendship between Japan and United States. For instance, in the wake of the terrorist attack on America on the September 11, 2001, the Japanese Diet passed in October 2001 Antiterrorism Special Law, which authorized the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to participate in logistic operations in the Bush administration's antiterrorist operation. In July 2003, the Diet also passed the Iraq Special Measures Laws, which directed the SDF to provide logistical support to the troops of the US and its allies. The strengthened bilateral US-Japan relationship was seen while they were working on the North Korean issues as well. Faced with the nuclear crisis, the Koizumi government performed coordinated steps with what the aggressive Bush administration implemented against North Korea. Japan also participated in the PSI

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<sup>87</sup> It looked as though Japan and the US embarked on enhancing the US-Japan alliance system through the new Guideline. Interestingly, Japan at that time also had some uncertainty about the security relationship with the US. See Katzenstein and Ojawa (2001) for more details.

(Proliferation Security Initiative) program to interdict North Korean WMD exports. Therefore, under the leadership of Bush and Koizumi, the Japan-US alliance was improved greatly and their friendship became more solidified than ever before.

On the other hand, the US-ROK alliance showed a downward tendency to some degree. The shift in the alliance is substantially related to the inter-Korean relations and the growth of South Korean nationalism. The newly inaugurated Bush administration in the United States did not welcome the ROK's engagement policy toward North Korea. In addition, it publicly claimed that the US would thoroughly review the Clinton administration's North Korean engagement policy (Kihl 2005). President George W. Bush frequently expressed a lack of trust toward the Kim Jong Il regime.<sup>88</sup> The US seemed to believe that the ROK's engagement policy was not a successful means to defuse the nuclear program (Scalapino 2006: 150). The Bush government thus pursued hard-line oriented policy measures toward North Korea. The US's North Korean policy change resulted not merely in diplomatic tit-for-tat disputes between the US and the North, but also in the escalation of fears in the Korean peninsula.

Contrary to the Bush administration's clear reservation of the Sunshine policy, the Roh Moo-Hyun government continued to pursue the North Korean engagement policy, inherited from the previous administration, as South Korean national power and international status increased and as nationalism grew.<sup>89</sup> During the ongoing

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<sup>88</sup> From the inauguration of George W. Bush in 2001, the President Bush articulated the term "rogue state" including the DPRK, expressed negative image of the Kim Jong Il, and labeled North Korea as a part of an "axis of evil."

<sup>89</sup> President Roh's vision for the South-North relations was rooted in the background of the

nuclear standoff, the Roh administration continuously pursued economic cooperation and provided the North with humanitarian aids for the severe shortage of food and devastated agricultural and economic conditions.

The Roh administration opposed the US's hawkish policy options in managing the North Korean nuclear crisis, such as international sanctions and consideration of a military strike. The Roh administration was also reluctant to participate in the US's China policies that had the potential to provoke China. For instance, since China was greatly concerned about enhancing US-led missile defense program in the Northeast Asia (Fridegberg 2005), the ROK, which saw a need for cooperating with Beijing due to the Chinese leverage with North Korea as well as its economic links with China, was hesitant to join the missile program (Suh 2004). More importantly, the ROK government demanded that the United States hand over war-time Operational Control (OPCON). Consequently, during this period the US-ROK alliance began to erode.

As discussed, the security imperative that South Korea and Japan faced immediately after the rise of nuclear crisis was not as prominent as what they had

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presidential election in 2002. He won on a groundswell of anti-American sentiment. In 2002, in the face of the deaths of the two middle school girls who were struck by a US military car, the improved inter-Korean relations and the rise of nationalism gave rise to anti-Americanism. This anti-Americanism swept the country and massive protests against the US took place in the ROK. It was not difficult for the ROK to observe that its people, including politicians, called for a change in US-South Korean relations. A presidential candidate from the ruling progressive party, Roh Moo-Hyun, was an advocate for a revision in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the ROK and the US and also protested the US's lukewarm reaction the incident. He won the election and soon after his inauguration, the Roh administration promised to continue the South-North economic cooperation despite the ongoing the nuclear standoff. It continued to provide the North with humanitarian aid because of a severe shortage of food and devastating agricultural and economic conditions.

faced during either the first nuclear crisis or the missile test-fire. In addition, as the nuclear standoff took place, the issue did not gain enough salience to avert their bilateral relations from being determined by issues of colonial history. As a result, the impact of the nuclear issue on ROK-Japanese relations faded in the lingering nuclear standoff. The binding role of the nuclear crisis eventually lost its effect between the two states giving way to the more prominent colonial issues.

In 2005, the conflict of Korea's anti-Japanese identity and Japan's nationalist identity reached its climax. As illustrated, prior to the Tokto issue, Japan's politicians and right-wings had continuously brought out and committed to nationalist activities in order to innervate the growing nationalism and the ROK's politicians and civil groups had also performed nationalist activities and had responded to or protested against the Japanese activities related to colonial history. Nationalism had continuously grown both in Japan and South Korea and consequently nationalist identities had been simulated both by their own politicians and the other's politicians.

The Tokto issue became a tipping point for Korean anger directed at Japan (Rozman and Lee 2006: 476). In the eyes of Koreans, Japan's provocative measures were seen as attempts to justify its invasion and deny Korea's independence—for example as already stated, Japan claimed February 22 "Takeshima Day," a day when Japanese government had incorporated Tokto into Japan's territory exactly 100 years ago. This issue was a direct threat to Korea's national identity and inspired "colonial/imperial recall among ordinary Koreans" (Kim 2006: 165), triggering protests across the country. Yet, no Japanese response came to the request of the ROK.

This led President Roh to employ a strong stance. When faced with the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment and a push for the resolution of colonial issues, Roh promised that the government would step up efforts to resolve the issue of individual victims' claims to seek indemnity from Japan.

For the Japanese society, it was difficult to understand the ROK government's reasons to intervene in its domestic political sphere and why South Koreans shared such staunch anti-Japanese sentiment (Lee 2006: 16). Many Japanese did not understand why Koreans were seriously attached to colonial issues, while many barely knew of the brutality during Japanese colonial occupation and still considered Koreans as "rough, uncouth and backward people."<sup>90</sup> In the eye of Japanese, the ROK's strong responses and protests were seen only as the ROK's meddling in the internal affairs of Japan. Japanese right-wing politicians and groups used these tough responses to strengthen Japanese nationalism, producing anti-Korean sentiment. In this context, without regard of the ROK's strong reactions, Japan's Shimane Prefecture Council eventually passed the bill on March 16 and the Ministry of Education planned to approve controversial history textbooks. These issues further increased Koreans' anti-Japanese sentiment placing the ROK government under pressure to respond. As a result, president Roh declared "a diplomatic war against Japan," all points previously addressed.

During this period, the anger of the ROK was so serious that the ROK viewed Japan's previous remark on the "regret" of the painful colonial past as "hypocrisy."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Korea Herald, December 14, 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Korea Herald, August 12, 2005.



Furthermore, Koreans, including the President, were so enraged that they made reference to North Korea's kidnapping of Japanese nationals in a similar way to Japan's atrocities during the colonial period, charging that Japan should understand the anger of Koreans because their pain during the colonial period was much more significant than that of the Japanese over the kidnapping issue (Takahashi 2005). To confront Japan's unrepentant and provocative activities, as already discussed, South Korea strongly protested against Japan.

Therefore, as constructivism posits, as a consequence of the interaction between the growing nationalism in Japan and its by-products and the growing nationalism in South Korea and its by-products, the national identity conflicts persistently took place and played a primary role in producing the conflictive relationship in this period. These identity conflicts in the rises of the past colonial issues seemed to trump almost every issue of their relations. Evidently, their relations was severely conflictive enough, for instance, to cancel summit talks twice although the year of 2005 was supposed to be a year of cooperation and reconciliation for the government agreed to call it "Korea-Japan Friendship Year" to celebrate the 40th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic ties.

Despite this contentious relationship in the conflicts of nationalist identity, Japan and Korea kept exchanges in some spheres and levels throughout this period. Although there was no dramatic shift in the relationship similar to the Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the two states made efforts to restore diplomatic relations and prevent the deterioration of the relationship. What, then, made the two countries continue the

exchanges and improve the conflictive relationship?

### **A Mix of Liberalism and Constructivism and A Combination of Realism and Constructivism**

**Hanging Together:** A mix of constructivism and liberalism can explain their cooperation during this period. Forfeiting economic relationships must be too costly for interdependent economies despite political friction, as liberals suggest.

Governments' policies must be adjusted to one another, even in cases in which conflicts between states become severe. As liberal reasons advocate, it was difficult for Japan and the ROK to continuously engage in tit-for-tat diplomatic row.

As political tension became severe in the face of the history book dispute in 2001, there emerged a serious concern that Japan and the ROK became so preoccupied with colonial issues that they could sabotage their social and economic ties. In the continuation of their diplomatic friction, the behavior of the ROK and Japan became constrained by the norm that political conflicts derived from colonial issues should be managed separately from other aspects of the relations. Their collective identity of partnership thus was resurrected. This identity began to have a bigger impact on Korean and Japanese interest formation than other nationalistic identities. They perceived that economic cooperation should not fall prey to political conflicts, derived from the historical and territorial issues, due to their interdependence (e.g., trade interdependence, incoming 2002 World Cup, interchanges in the private sector). As a result, governmental efforts to restore normal diplomatic relations and prevent a

further deterioration of their bilateral relationship emerged—adjust their policies to each other.

Accounting for cooperation in the wake of the nuclear crisis, we can use a combination of the realists' balancing logic and the constructivists' collective anti-communist identity. This is this same theoretical perspective which was applied to their relationship in the missile crisis in 1998.

As analyzed, owing to the changes in their domestic and international security environments, the degree of the security imperative that Japan and the ROK faced immediately after the rise of nuclear crisis was lower than that of the imperatives in the previous issues (Kim and Glosserman 2004: 8-9). Moreover, the expansion of Japanese military commitment to the US-led anti-terrorism issues was worrisome for the ROK (Kim 2006: 203).

However, there was no doubt that the North Korean nuclear issue posed an immediate threat to Japan and South Korea. After the emergence of the threat, this bold North Korean action became the most salient issue between them. Their security partnership-identity became paramount not only because they were jointly threatened by North Korea, but also because they had been jointly squeezed between the US-North Korean diplomatic tit-for-tat disputes. In addition, because the stalled nuclear negotiations were likely to boost the possibility of a military conflict, the ROK and Japan shared rising fears of impotence and the need for collaborative efforts. This resulted in further enhancing their threat and intensifying their collective identity. With this shared identity, the cooperative behavior of the two states, as realism envisions,

began to be determined by the threat.

These two security partners began to conduct policy consultations with each other. Japan and the ROK were determined to make a united front against North Korea and launch a non-military-oriented initiative. They also shared significant security concerns with reference to the US-North Korean relations and agreed that the issue should be resolved through a peaceful diplomatic approach.<sup>92</sup> The following example reflected their joint effort: since Japan and the ROK, as US allies, came under pressure to follow the US-led North Korean initiatives, they agreed that the KEDO should, as the US called for, suspend fuel oil deliveries to North Korea to condemn its pursuit of a nuclear weapons program. In return, they led the US to declare that “the US has no intention of invading North Korea.”<sup>93</sup>

As the nuclear crisis became more of a standoff, the security cooperation imperative that Japan and the ROK faced was further increased. The two security partners began with institutionalizing policy consultation with each other. Eventually, Roh and Koizumi frequently discussed how to settle the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully and discussed other ways to boost ties between South Korea and Japan, resulting in the establishment of shuttle diplomacy.

Although the degree of the impact of the North Korean threat decreased, the nuclear issue still threatened both Japan and the ROK. In the security cooperation imperative that they faced after the nuclear crisis, their security partnership was recalled and strengthened. They were bound to prevent a military outbreak on the

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<sup>92</sup> BBC.com, January 31, 2003.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in the Joint Statement by the TCOG on Japan 7, 2003. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>.

Korean peninsula. The two security partners' efforts to keep close coordination and cooperation continued to increase during this period.

To explain why the government kept diplomatic exchanges at least at a minimum level in 2005, when political tension was so conflictive that a diplomatic war was declared and summit talks were cancelled twice in 2005, we must use a combination of constructivism and liberalism.

As their relations became seriously conflictive in the recurrent rises of colonial history issues, there emerged a growing concern that the two countries became so preoccupied with these issues that they could sabotage their social and economic issues interconnecting them. South Korea and Japan could not ignore other salient issues, although the national identity conflicts prevented the Asian countries not only from consolidating a constructive and prosperous relationship through cooperation and consultations, but also from moving toward an era free from the shadows of the colonial history. The two states thus collectively perceived that the negative colonial legacies should be resolved. More important, they shared the norm that political conflicts derived from the historical and territorial issues should be managed separately from other aspects of their relations.

In this vein, it seems natural that national identity conflicts should not always take precedence over cooperation, stemming from the effect of economic interdependence and the boosted shared identities (e.g., the ROK and Japan have been identified as partners for creating peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia). In fact, Japan was the second largest trading partner to the ROK and the ROK served as the

second largest trading partner to Japan in the region. After the financial crisis, the economic ties between them gradually increased. For example, by 2004, total trade stood at \$67.8 billion, an increase of 133 percent from 1998 (Kim 2006). Cultural exchanges continued to blossom at the civil level, as well. Japan recently witnessed a boom of Korean pop culture with the success of Korean soap operas on Japanese television. Similarly, Japanese pop culture became increasingly popular in the ROK. Overall 10,000 Koreans visited Japan and 20,000 Japanese visited South Korea daily.<sup>94</sup> Had the ROK and Japan ignored these factors, their relationship would not have flourished as it has.

For these reasons, the ROK and Japan made efforts to ameliorate the cooled relationship. They tried to bolster non-political exchanges separate from their continued diplomatic stand-off. For instance, since the designation of 2005 as “Korea-Japan Friendship Year,” the tourism ministers of South Korea and Japan agreed to continue working closely to strengthen cultural, economic, and tourism ties despite recent political disputes.<sup>95</sup> The Japanese government also announced that it planned to grant a permanent visa waiver to South Korean tourists.

In addition to the governmental efforts, there were civilian efforts to improve the deteriorated relationship. In Japan, a concern over the movement toward the right and the resurgence of nationalism was gradually growing and those who shared the concern began to worry about their relationship with the ROK. Although they were highly outnumbered by the political right, they offered various measures of

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<sup>94</sup> Korea Tourism Organization (<http://english.tour2korea.com>)

<sup>95</sup> Koreatimes June 5, 2005.

cooperation including the *Korea-Japan Forum* consisting of political leaders, scholars, businessmen, and public intellectuals. The Forum focused on discussing various issues for cooperative relations and running a joint research group to make new history books not only for Japanese students, but also for Korean students.

Therefore, the two countries cooperated with each other, owing to economic interdependence and the long-standing nuclear standoff which increased the possibility of either military conflict or the risk of a sudden collapse of the North. Such cooperative relations reflected a combination of liberal interdependence and constructivist insights and that of realist balancing and constructivist insights.

## Chapter 4. CONCLUSION

Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War era have combined cooperation and conflict in unexpected ways. There have been no studies which account sufficiently for the long-term variation of their relations. Such volatile relations are anomalous to each parsimonious IR paradigm, which tends to account for relations among states only within their own research context and ignore the advantages of other perspectives' explanations. As scholars of the analytical eclecticism suggest (e.g., Katzenstein and Okawara 2001; Katzenstein and Sil 2004), each parsimonious IR perspective cannot account for Japan-ROK relations. Their anomalous relations can be explained if we selectively use and combine different IR perspectives, realism, liberalism, and constructivism, as each IR paradigm produces valuable insights for certain issues. According to this theoretical reasoning, this thesis sought to present that Japan-ROK relations in the post-Cold War era are explained adequately by a pluralist approach, which combines selectively different IR perspectives with grasping field observations and area specialists' descriptive/narrative views for identifying important factors that are critical to recognizing and accounting for a problem but are barely identifiable to each IR paradigm.

However, by no means the pluralist theoretical explanations presented in this thesis are the only account for volatile Japan-ROK relations. Instead, this research seeks to help us understand the complex nature of the conflictive and cooperative Japan-ROK relations and sufficiently demonstrate we can explain their volatile



relations if we selectively draw insights on three IR paradigms. As already discussed, making sense of empirical anomalies is more valuable than focusing exclusively on one parsimonious IR perspective and excluding others. Empirical anomalies including Japan-ROK relations, which often appear to be fundamentally critical affairs, should be adequately explained by any feasible method. In this regard, this study has significant interest in showing that one alternative to account for anomalous affairs is to combine insights from different IR perspectives, instead of looking only at certain preselected variables and particular aspects of a problem, and pursuing a single IR research context, and consequently ignoring the advantages of other perspectives' explanations.

Finally, this study identifies how to improve Japan-ROK relations by analyzing what has caused the relations to be contentious and conflictive. The ROK and Japan have not lost the psychological barriers stemming from Japan's occupation and thus shaped fixed identities toward each other. For Koreans, collective memories have been a basis for hatred toward the Japanese and this anti-Japanese sentiment has become a major part of Korean national identity and nationalism. For Japanese, little understanding of their ancestors' brutal rule on the Korean peninsula and their superior sentiment toward their colonized subjects have been a basis for misunderstanding Koreans' stern responses to the territorial and colonial issues. Simply speaking, they have not understood each other regarding these issues. In the period of growing nationalism with this "do-not-understand-phenomenon" in both countries, both Japanese and Korean politicians have manipulated or roused these thorny issues to

gain political support. This has intensified historical antagonism and prevented the two countries from trusting and cooperating with each other. Therefore, future-oriented relations have not taken place. It is vital for Japan and the ROK to overcome conflicts of nationalist identity by settling historical and territorial issues.

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