

The Sino-Japanese Security Nexus

**Evaluating the Theoretical Adequacy of Exclusively Applied
IR Theories as Explanatory Devices of Empirical Case
Studies and the Practicability of an Eclectic Way Forward**



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Abstract

Since the beginning of this decade, Sino-Japanese relations have deteriorated to an antagonistic level not seen for half a century. For a region that will be ultimately defined by either cooperation or conflict, the ongoing relationship between these two Northeast Asian powers is pivotal for the international political economy and moreover, ongoing regional and global security. Whilst the three predominant international relations (IR) theories (realism, liberalism and social constructivism) illuminate many crucial insights into the recent breakdown in amicable Sino-Japanese relations, no single IR theory presents an adequate, stand-alone explanation for heightened tensions in the bi-lateral relationship. To overcome this theoretical deficiency, this thesis will incorporate the application of IR analytical eclecticism, and by combining strands of realist and constructivist thought, will seek to provide a more nuanced, yet holistic understanding of the factors impacting on increased Sino-Japanese tensions. By doing so, it hopes to bridge the gap between IR theory and the practical application of policy and therefore, present a real-world understanding of increased Sino-Japanese tensions for theorists and policy practitioners alike. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to provide a comprehensive understanding of Sino-Japanese tensions, it does hope to illustrate that analytical eclecticism is a neat tool when applied to specific case studies and therefore encourage its greater utilization in the field of international relations.

I declare that the following thesis is my own account and based on my own research. This thesis contains work, which has not been previously submitted for a university degree.

Signed:

Date: November 5, 2014.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

One can be forgiven for thinking that the security of the planet has deteriorated in recent times, with civil wars and the rise of the Islamic State wracking the Middle East and Russia's unilateral incursions into Eastern Europe. Likewise, following decades of relative peace and stability in Northeast Asia, in recent years increased regional tensions surrounding the Sino-Japanese relationship have concerned the international community. What was previously unthinkable just one decade ago, that being the possibility of armed conflict between these two global economic superpowers, is now also becoming increasingly contemplated by the region's denizens. According to a recent joint survey conducted by *China Daily* and *Genron*, a growing sense of hostility and mistrust now underlines the relationship between the two countries, with 53 per cent of Chinese and 29 per cent of Japanese respondents electing for the worst case scenario and expecting a war to break out before the end of the decade (Kedmey 2014). But what best explains this pessimistic outlook for the future of Sino-Japanese relations? In a pragmatic sense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2014) lists the most sensitive issues existing between Japan and China as questions of history, the dispute over the ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and the constraining effect the Japanese-United States (U.S.) alliance imposes on China. Similarly, for the Japanese, the rise of China has led to a more assertive Chinese foreign policy in the East China Sea and increased Chinese nationalist fervour has cultivated intense and widespread anti-Japanese feelings (McCurry 2013). In a theoretical sense, there exists a divergent range of international relations (IR) theories that attempt to elucidate the reasoning behind this increasingly strained relationship.

At its core, this thesis will seek to gauge what best explains this recent spike in adverse bi-lateral relations between China and Japan. In doing so, it will ascertain whether the three predominant IR theories (realism, liberalism and social constructivism) are adequate in their stand-alone explanations of the recent breakdown in the Sino-Japanese relationship. Additionally, it will argue that IR theoretical eclecticism offers an efficacious way forward in garnering a more nuanced understanding of this pivotal relationship. To begin, the introduction chapter will briefly outline the machinations of Northeast Asia and the Sino-Japanese relationship,

before providing some background on the most sensitive issues in their bi-lateral relationship, including the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, the recent transformation in Northeast Asian security boundaries, and reoccurring and unresolved questions of history.

In Chapter Two, a brief explanation of the three predominant IR schools (realism, liberalism and social constructivism) will be outlined in order to explain their key theoretical differences. Chapter Three will then apply the three IR schools to the case study of the Sino-Japanese relationship. For realism, Northeast Asia is the home of a high level of Sino-Japanese competition, with a rising superpower in China exerting expansionary aims amongst heightened security conflict with Japan. For liberalism, Northeast Asia is a region of cooperation, where the Sino-Japanese relationship is maintained through economic interdependence and membership to international institutions. Finally, for social constructivism, China-Japan relations are largely indeterminate and the construction of nationalistic identities are pronounced and complex, the strategic culture of elites assert great influence, and norms and rules play a significant role.

Chapter Four will introduce IR theoretical eclecticism as an analytical tool, including a history of eclectic thought and what it seeks to achieve in the study of international politics. Additionally, it will explore inter-paradigm debates and research traditions, the gap between IR theory and the implementation of pragmatic policy, and the application of analytical eclecticism including the markers of eclectic scholarship. In Chapter Five, it will be argued that an eclectic mix of realism and social constructivism presents itself as a superior, explanatory device for elucidating the reasoning behind an escalation in security tensions in the contemporary Sino-Japanese relationship. It will then explain anarchy in Northeast Asia, by combining both realist and social constructivist notions of this key variable of international politics. In doing so, it will analyze how the concepts of sovereignty, power and collective ideals, and also the security dilemma and socialization, can integrate to better describe an anarchical Northeast Asian system. Additionally, it will explain the influence that asymmetrical material power relations have on ideational constructs such as identity, by analyzing both the efficacy and inadequacy of realism's explanation and moreover, constructivism's explication of Sino-Japanese nationalistic identity construction. It

will then seek to combine aspects of the two theories in order to form an eclectic understanding, where systemic power and nationalism are deeply intertwined and symbiotic in nature. Finally, it will explore the interaction between domestic politics and the international system, where realist convictions about power and systemic dynamics converge with constructivist ideas about identity and nationalism. Consequently, domestically driven dynamics such as nationalist fervor run the risk of flowing over into the arena of international politics.

Chapter 1.1. Northeast Asia

Northeast Asia is home to the second and third largest economies on the planet (China and Japan), two established nuclear powers (Russia and China) and an emerging rogue nuclear power (North Korea). The region is also one of the most heavily militarized regions on the planet and the United States (U.S.) alone has 50 000 troops in Japan and 28 500 military servicemen stationed in South Korea. Following decades of relative peace and stability in Northeast Asia, many observers have been alarmed at the recent escalation in interstate tension between its two largest economic powers. The meteoric rise of China has made its neighbor Japan nervous and increasingly uncertain about Chinese intentions and moreover, unsure about the future direction of the crucially important Sino-Japanese relationship. Disconcertingly, a conflict between these enormous economic powers would be felt through all reaches of the global economy. In addition, there are significant questions revolving around what the inevitable rise of China presents to U.S. hegemony and its pivotal role as an offshore balancer in the region. Evidently, with the U.S. and Japan as close allies, the rise of China has serious ramifications for the future of the Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter 1.2. Sino-Japanese Relations

Japan and China are close geographical neighbours in Northeast Asia and are situated at opposite ends of the East China Sea. Historically, up until the mid nineteenth century, Japan had been highly influenced by Chinese civilization and culture. Following western intervention into the region, via the Opium Wars in China (1839-1860) and the opening up of Japan by the U.S. Perry Expedition (1852-1854), Japan strived towards modernization (Meiji Restoration) and began to regard China as an antiquated and crumbling civilization. In the twentieth century, the relationship between Japan and China was severely strained beginning with its invasion of

Manchuria in the 1930s and ending with its occupation of China before and during World War II, including the infamous 1937 Nanking Massacre.

Since World War II, the Sino-Japanese relationship became increasingly healthier, driven mainly by mutually beneficial, economic gains. The economies of China and Japan are the planet's second and third largest, with total trade between the economic giants accounting for \$334 billion in 2012 (Schuman 2013). For contemporary Japan, attempting to recover from two decades of economic stagnation, key exports to China are a prime source of economic growth. For China, where Japanese imports account for the largest portion, many of the high-tech goods are indispensable to China's continued economic growth. However, beginning in the early part of this decade, the Sino-Japanese relationship became decidedly more forbidding, driven mainly by questions of history and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, which have increased tensions in the East China Sea. In fact, Australian Strategic Policy Institute director Peter Jennings argues that "relations between Japan and China are as tense as they have been for a generation and... politically the region is on edge" (McGrath 2013). Consequently, the region's security architecture has been significantly transformed in recent years.

Chapter 1.3. The Transformation of Security Boundaries in Northeast Asia

On November 23, 2013 China flew a signals intelligence sortie consisted of Shaanxi Y-8CB Tupolev and Tu-154MD Type II aircraft across the East China Sea and into the Japanese Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). The Chinese incursion marked the unilateral declaration by China of the establishment of a East China Sea ADIZ (Donald 2014). Significantly, the newly formed Chinese ADIZ encroaches markedly on Japan's ADIZ, including the hotly contested Senkaku Islands, but it also intrudes into South Korea's ADIZ to the north and Taiwan's ADIZ to the south. An ADIZ is a buffer zone established on the grounds of national security that extends beyond a country's airspace and is designed to allow authorities the time to obtain the location, identification and control of foreign aircraft (Abeyratne 2012, 88). The U.S. established both Japan's ADIZ in the aftermath of World War II and South Korea's ADIZ in 1951 during the Korean War. Following three days of widespread international condemnation of China and intense criticism from Japan, two U.S. B-52 bombers flew in retaliation through the newly established Chinese ADIZ.

In March 2014 the Japanese government released information concerning the escalation of significant incursions by Chinese aircraft into the Japanese ADIZ. The Japanese figures highlight a significant rise in Japan Air Self-Defence Force (JASDF) interceptions being launched against Chinese aircraft. Throughout the 2000s the JASDF engaged in only a handful of retaliatory scrambles, but since the new decade began the numbers have risen alarmingly, from 150 in 2011 to 300 in 2012 to 146 times in the first three months of 2013 (Donald 2014). With the establishment of the Chinese ADIZ in late 2013, the numbers of incursions and scrambles have proliferated, along with the chances for an unintended armed confrontation.

Illustration 1. *Air Defence Identification Zones (ADIZ) in Northeast Asia.*



Source: East Asia Intel.

Chapter 1.4. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute

The establishment of the Chinese ADIZ in part reflects the significant disagreement that exists between China and Japan, over the rightful ownership of a small group of rocky outcrops in the East China Sea. Whilst for many this tiny archipelago may appear strategically inconsequential, there has been growing international concern that the dispute surrounding the lawful possession of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands could lead to a serious deterioration in broader Sino-Japanese relations. Possibly no other altercation between the two East Asian heavyweights highlights the recent decline in their bilateral relations more illuminatingly than this territorial spat, which will remain a major issue for the foreseeable future (Panda 2014). Although the islands may seem tangibly insignificant for much of the globe, any escalation in the dispute will have great ramifications for Sino-Japanese relations and moreover, the politically sensitive East Asian region.

Tensions over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands have risen to dangerous levels due to competing claims of sovereignty, which are based on both resource-related and historical dimensions. At the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese businessman Koga Tatsushiro purchased the uninhabited islands in order to build a bonito processing plant, which remained in use until the 1940s. Following World War II, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands were administered by the U.S. as part of its broader occupation of Japan, and the islands were eventually returned to Japanese control as part of the 1971 reversion of Okinawa Island (Smith 2014). Soon after, the Tatsushiro family sold the islands to the Kurihara family. China and Taiwan began contesting the sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands following the release of a United Nations (UN) geological survey of the East China Sea, which revealed the existence of vast energy resources. In the period 2002 to 2012, the Japanese Ministry of Defence leased the islands from the Kurihara family. In 2012, the Japanese government announced plans to purchase the islands and in September 2012 the central government nationalized its control over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. In direct response, the Chinese government strongly objected to the purchase, declaring that China would not “sit back and watch its territorial sovereignty violated” (Fackler 2012).

Chapter 1.5. Questions of History

Another area of concern in the cooling of Sino-Japanese relations are the ever-present ‘questions of history’, which focus on Japanese behaviour towards China in the latter half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Any perceived indiscretions regarding Japanese intervention in the Chinese ‘century of humiliation’, have the propensity to inflame relations and cause a sharp spike in nationalistic fervour. At its core, arguments over questions of history revolve around the revisionist nature of Japanese history textbooks and furthermore, by reoccurring visits by Japanese leaders to infamous war memorials (Pilling 2012). The foundation of these issues is centred on the wartime conduct of the Japanese and the perceived inability of Japan to properly apologise for its past conduct, particularly Japanese militarism immediately before and during World War II.

Chapter 1.6. IR Theory and its Application to the Sino-Japanese Relationship

Over the past decade there has been much written in relation to whether the Sino-Japanese relationship will be representative of a region intent on being defined by cooperation or competition. In particular, the main strands IR theory have a lot to say on the security predicament in Northeast Asia. A realist understanding of the region, such as that propounded by John Mearsheimer (2001), generally outlines an increasing level of Sino-Japanese competition, where China is increasingly viewed as a rising superpower with expansionary aims situated in a region experiencing heightened security conflict. A liberalist understanding, such as that outlined by John Ikenberry (2001), generally views the region as one of cooperation, where the relationship between China and Japan is maintained through economic interdependence, membership to international institutions, and the virtues of capitalist peace. A social constructivist view of China-Japan relations, such as that of Christopher Hughes (2008), is largely indeterminate and the construction of nationalistic identities are pronounced and complex, the strategic culture of elites assert great influence, and norms and rules play a significant role in forging closer ties in an otherwise thorny relationship. Although these three predominant IR theories claim to provide plenty of answers, they also generate a wealth of additional questions.

Just how efficacious are these theoretical paradigms at adequately explaining the contemporary security nexus in Northeast Asia?

Can any one of them provide an acceptable 'stand alone' explanation?

What factors can each of these theories persuasively explain and what areas of the Sino-Japanese relationship do they fail to satisfactorily elucidate?

Is there a niche available in IR theory for a pluralistic combination of these theories as an explanatory device for empirical case studies such as increased tensions in the Sino-Japanese relationship?

If so, is the further advancement of theoretical eclecticism in IR a possible way forward?

And finally, what would such an explanation look like?

This thesis will now present itself in two distinct parts. The first section revolves around outlining the three dominant IR theories and providing their explanations of the security nexus in Northeast Asia. Is the Sino-Japanese relationship based on cooperation or competition or both or neither? What do these theories tell us? The second part of the thesis will explore if a pluralistic or eclectic theoretical understanding of IR could provide a clearer way forward as an explanatory device, particularly when applied directly to the specific case study of increased tension in the Sino-Japanese security relationship. In doing so, it will test the efficacy of realist and social constructivist IR theories to provide an adequate, exclusive or 'stand alone' explanation, of the security nexus in Northeast Asia. What do they clearly explicate and what do they miss? Finally, it will seek to amalgamate realist notions of power and systemic factors with constructivist ideas about identity and nationalism, in order to present a more nuanced, theoretically based but policy relevant understanding of the Sino-Japanese security nexus.

Chapter 2. The Main Schools of International Relations

The study of international relations has a long and distinguished history. In the twentieth century IR theory became more formalised under the banners of the two predominant theoretical schools, realism and liberalism. Beginning in the 1980s, the lively argument between neo-realists and neo-liberalists has continued to dominate the mainstream debate in international relations. Additionally, in the early 1990s social constructivism joined the IR theoretical fray. These three predominant IR theoretical paradigms or frameworks provide many differing interpretations under their respective umbrellas. In the contemporary world, neo-realists and neo-liberalists have the greatest impact on the discourse of international relations and the implementation of foreign policy, although some of the ideas of social constructivism are rapidly growing in influence.

Chapter 2.1. Realism

Realism is a school of IR theory, which originated in the historical works of Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. The works of these early realists are rather pessimistic and view humankind as being fearful, competitive, conflictual, self-centred and egocentric. Human beings are viewed as being self-interested and self-reliant and therefore are primarily motivated by seeking more power in order to survive. Following on from this basis and as an academic field, realism emerged in the middle of the twentieth century with the works of classical realists such as E. H. Carr in *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1939) and Hans J. Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1948).

The predominant realist theory in the contemporary period is known as neo-realism. In 1979, Kenneth Waltz became arguably the most prominent realist scholar with his book *Theory of International Politics*. Although structural realism concurs with classical realism that international politics is a struggle for power, Waltz and neo-realism argue that instead of being because of human nature it is the structure of the system, with the lack of an overarching authority above states and the relative distribution of power in the system, that are the determining factors. Thus, structural realism has four main propositions; the international system is anarchic, states are the fundamental actors, states are unitary, self-interested and rational actors, and their

primary concern is survival in a self-help system (Waltz 1979). The most prominent realist scholar of the twenty first century has been John Mearsheimer and his theory of offensive realism is outlined in his 2001 book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Mearsheimer (2001, 21) concurs with the basic assumptions of Waltz but argues that “offensive realism parts company with defensive realism over the question of how much power states want”. Essentially, Mearsheimer takes Waltz’s structural or defensive realism a step further and declares that states will always maximise their power position relative to other states and where possible, become the hegemonic power in the system.

Chapter 2.2. Liberalism

Liberalism is also a preeminent school of IR theory and its origins are found in the liberal thinking surrounding the Enlightenment, via John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham. Liberalism is essentially an optimistic understanding of the human condition and the core issue for liberalists is achieving a lasting world peace and developing cooperation in international relations. International peace and cooperation can be achieved, through the promotion of individual liberty, free trade, prosperity, interdependence, self-determination, democratic governance and international collective security (Dunne 2008). In short, liberals seek to project values such as justice, liberty, order and toleration from the domestic to the international sphere. The predominant strand of contemporary liberalism is called neo-liberalism or liberal institutionalism. Following on from Robert O. Keohane’s 1984 book *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* and the 1989 book *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* that he co-authored with Joseph Nye, neo-liberalists are concerned with absolute rather than relative gains and seek to explain under what circumstances states do and do not cooperate.

At the core of the theory, neo-liberalists are interested in international norms, regimes and institutions, which they believe can organise arrangements and compromises that are mutually beneficial to all participants. They assume that states are the fundamental units of analysis, which they view as rational actors seeking to maximise absolute gains through cooperative behaviour, but importantly, are not the only actors in the international system. Moreover, the greatest obstacle to successful cooperation is cheating by states, but instructively, states will shift to institutions that are mutually

beneficial and provide opportunities to maximise their interests. In recent times, neo-liberal works such as G. John Ikenberry's 2001 book *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* have come to the theoretical fore. He takes the concept of power seriously and contends that institutions were created due to the asymmetries present in global power following the end of World War II. Ikenberry (2001: 5-6) argues that the US could have abandoned the defeated nations following the Second World War and dominated its enemies, but they alternatively chose to transform the international system by utilizing institutions in order to establish political control and commit compliant states to a post-war order that is both stable and durable.

Chapter 2.3. Social Constructivism

Where realism and liberalism share an epistemology and an agreement on many core issues, social constructivism differs greatly and is an indeterminate explanatory device that views international relations as being socially constructed. Many constructivists question the fundamental belief that state interactions are purely the outcome of objective factors and argue that subjective factors, which are formed from individual and group interpretations such as beliefs and ideas, also shape international relations (Wendt 1992, 392). Alexander Wendt's 1999 book *A Social Theory of International Politics* is the seminal text in the social constructivist literature and explains the fundamental elements that underwrite the thinking behind the school. Constructivists generally accept certain basic claims such as the existence of social facts, the social construction of reality, and the constitution of an actor's interests, identity and subjectivity (Barnett 2008, 171). Alexander Wendt (1999, 1) argues that the "structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature". Due to the fact that constructivists reject that anarchy is determined by the structure of the international system, it allows them the ability to analyze the behavior, identities and interests of international actors in their theorizing of international relations. Social constructivism provides insights into the identities of actors, the power of elites, and the efficacy of rules and norms in conditioning state behaviour.

Chapter 3. IR Theory Applied to the Sino-Japanese Security Nexus

When these three IR theories are applied to the case study of the Sino-Japanese security nexus, three differing explanations of the Chinese-Japanese relationship emerge. A realist understanding of the region generally outlines an increasing level of Sino-Japanese competition, a liberalist understanding generally views the region as one of cooperation, and a social constructivist view of China-Japan relations is largely indeterminate and the construction of nationalistic identities are pronounced.

Chapter 3.1. Realism and the Sino-Japanese Relationship

A realist view of Northeast Asia perceives a high level of Sino-Japanese competition, with a rising superpower in China exerting expansionary aims amongst heightened security conflict with Japan.

3.1.1. The Anarchical Global System

When the pessimistic realist lens is shone on the world of international relations, a competitive international system defined by anarchy is the predominant feature. Without the existence of a higher global authority, which can compel order and settle disputes, states must assemble their own material power in order to ensure their own survival (Waltz 1979, 89; Mearsheimer 2001, 29). This anarchical condition of the international system is crucial in influencing outcomes in Sino-Japanese relations, where a rising superpower in China is conceived to have expansionary intentions in a region undergoing heightened security competition (Friedberg 2005, 17). The main attribute in the contemporary Chinese-Japanese relationship is the sustained meteoric rise of China. Whilst the economic rise of China has courted much analysis, simply put, economic forecasters assert that China will become the largest economy on the planet before the beginning of the next decade (Layne 2012, 206). For leading realist theorist John Mearsheimer (2006, 161), the history of international politics is a long sequence of rising powers striving for regional hegemony, and instructively, the rise of China to a regional hegemon is the indisputable dynamic that influences international relations in Northeast Asia. Without doubt the rise of China has exerted a great deal of influence globally, and for realists, it will impact more directly on the Asia-Pacific with pronounced ramifications for the Sino-Japanese relationship.

3.1.2. The Unknowable Ambitions of Other States

Another mainstay of realist theory addresses the unknowable ambitions of states, as actors in an anarchical international system. According to offensive realists, when faced with a world of uncertain circumstances, states have little choice but to accumulate as much power as possible, with a focus on ensuring their ongoing survival (D'Anieri 2011, 41). Consequently, the domination of the Asia-Pacific region is paramount in Chinese intent, in conjunction with China's growth in economic power. In a strategic sense, China aims to open up the gap in power between itself and potentially dangerous regional states such as Japan, thus making sure that no other state in the region has the capability, now and into the future, of posing a threat to Chinese interests (Mearsheimer 2010, 389). The Chinese state will need to develop and broaden China's regional aims and objectives, in order to maximize its power position. The pivotal factor precipitating contemporary Sino-Japanese security tensions is an escalation in strategic rivalry, whereby an expansion of influence across the Asia-Pacific entails exponential growth in Chinese power (Pant 2011, 26). This aspect of realist theory is an illuminating explanatory device, especially in the context of a rising China and its increasingly strained relationship with Japan.

3.1.3. Security Competition in Northeast Asia

In a zero sum world defined by anarchy, self-help and survival, realists view the issue of security competition amongst rival states as a given (Dunne & Schmidt 2008, 102). Acute security competition between rival states can cause a buildup in military assets and forces, which can be prone to spiraling out of control. A 'security dilemma' can arise following the expansion of military capabilities by a state in order to increase its security, but consequently this buildup causes another state to worry about its relative security, which then leads it to increase its military capacity (Glaser 2010, 24). The region of Northeast Asia represents one of the most militarized zones on the planet and realist theory argues that security competition will only continue to proliferate. Auslin & Green (2007, 215) argue that Chinese military capabilities continue to expand rapidly and the "double-digit growth of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) over the past decade has worried Japanese observers". In direct response to Chinese military growth, Japan is compelled to ensure it possesses adequate security in an increasingly volatile region. Japan considers China an actual and potentially greater military threat in the future, which will have to be countered in the ensuing years

(Pant 2011, 26). Additionally, the further militarization of Japan is increased exponentially if a growing hegemon in the shape of China attempts to obstruct the U.S. from managing its offshore balancing role in Northeast Asia (Mearsheimer 2010, 389). Although realist assumptions paint a bleak picture, they do provide a robust argument for the ongoing escalation in Sino-Japanese security competition.

Chapter 3.2. Liberalism and the Sino-Japanese Relationship

A liberalist understanding of Northeast Asia views the region as one of cooperation, where the Sino-Japanese relationship is maintained through economic interdependence and membership to international institutions.

3.2.1. Interstate Cooperation

A liberal understanding of international relations is relatively optimistic and posits that there is a compelling likelihood of cordial relations, due to the propensity of states to cooperate. Liberal theory focuses on the potential of international institutions, economic interdependence and democracy, to promote peaceful and deeper ties between states (Friedberg 2005, 12). When a liberalist IR lens is shone on the Sino-Japanese relationship, international cooperation comes to the fore. The presence of international institutions can enhance the degree of interstate communication, thereby reducing the likelihood of uncertainty, which can plague states in understanding the intentions of other states in an anarchical international system (Keohane 1984, 49). For liberalism, the developing engagement of China into the regional economic and security order is indicative of the peaceful socialization of the growing superpower. The integration of China into the regional order creates factors that ensure a closer relationship with Japan, whereby Japanese leaders are more comfortable when China complies with international rules and norms, and Chinese elites consider that Japan is trying to integrate rather than contain China (Goh 2011, 893). Illustratively, Japan has driven attempts to ensure Chinese involvement in Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to promote trade liberalisation, the conception of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) as the primary regional security apparatus involving China, and the formalization of the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) as an important East Asian economic institution (Goh 2011, 893). These multilateral platforms for regular regional engagement increase the frequency of dialogue between states and therefore

improve the likelihood of increased cooperation between the two regional heavyweights.

3.2.2. Economic Interdependence

For liberalist scholars, economic interdependence between actors constitutes a mutually beneficial outcome, whereby greater economic interaction obliges states to avoid conflict and maintain peace. Many liberals contend that bilateral economic interdependence reduces the likelihood of interstate war, with large volumes of trade between states making conflict significantly less likely (Weede 2010, 206). Following the opening up of China to global trade in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping, with a policy based on ‘Economic Reforms and Openness’, Sino-Japanese trade volumes have steadily increased. Bilateral trade between the two Asian economic giants is in excess of US\$300 billion per annum, with the current economic enmeshment of China and Japan becoming increasingly entrenched (Ranasinghe 2014). The economic interdependence in the Sino-Japanese relationship is evident in the fact that Japanese exports are required by China commensurate to Japan’s requirement to export them. Moreover, China requires advanced Japanese-made high-tech components on many of the products that undergo a final assembly in China, in order to sustain the Chinese export miracle (Katz 2013). This tremendous volume of bilateral trade enshrines economic interdependence and verifies a mutually beneficial China-Japan relationship.

3.2.3. Democratic Peace Theory

Unlike realism, liberalist scholars are considerate of the internal political composition of nations and identify the efficacy of democracy as a driving force for cooperation and peace amongst states. Democratic peace theory contends that democratic nations rarely resort to armed conflict with other democracies and moreover, liberals argue that the more numerous powerful democratic countries lessens the likelihood of war amongst the great powers (Russett & O’Neal 2001, 85). Japan has been an established democracy for over half a century, although a long-standing authoritarian form of government has continued to govern China. Although some Chinese scholars have asserted that democracy is gradually ‘creeping’ into the Sino political consciousness, for many others, the democratization of a future Chinese state is far from assured (Pei 1995, 64; Cheng 2011, xxi). Therefore, the risk of armed conflict is more plausible

between an autocracy and possibly unstable developing democracy such as China with a democracy such as Japan, and for this reason a cordial Sino-Japanese relationship appears in jeopardy (Weede 2010, 208).

Chapter 3.3. Social Constructivism and the Sino-Japanese Relationship

A social constructivist view of China-Japan relations is largely indeterminate and the construction of nationalistic identities are pronounced and complex, the strategic culture of elites assert great influence, and norms and rules play a significant role in the Sino-Japanese relationship.

3.3.1. The Construction of Identity

In contrast to realism and liberalism, which share an epistemology and agreement on many fundamental issues, social constructivism diverges significantly and is an indeterminate explanatory device that considers international politics as being socially constructed. Social constructivists fundamentally question the understanding that interactions between states are exclusively the outcome of objective factors and moreover, argue that subjective factors, which are formed from individual and group interpretations such as beliefs and ideas, also determine outcomes in international relations (Wendt 1992, 392). The construction of identity, the political culture of elites, and the existence of norms and rules are all fundamental components in a social constructivist understanding of international relations (Friedberg 2005, 34). Constructivists view the concept of identity as asserting a major influence on the relationship between actors and contend that mental constructs and existing social structures are deeply embedded in the consciousness of nation states. Contemporarily, the fundamental source of instability in the Asia-Pacific is largely dictated by the divergent construction of nationalistic identity in the regions major actors (Berger 2000, 420). Persistent ‘questions of history’ have periodically escalated feelings of nationalistic fervor in China, especially when associated to Japanese war crimes committed last century by the then expansionist and imperialist empire. For many Chinese, the ‘century of humiliation’ remains a sore point, in which their once great civilization was ‘carved up like a melon’ by Japanese and European imperialists from the mid-nineteenth century through to the end of the Second World War (Cohen 2007, 683; Kaufman 2010, 1). The significance of culture and history in forming identity is not addressed adequately by realism and liberalism and therefore, social

constructivism can only improve the analysis of the Sino-Japanese relationship, where nationalist ‘social facts’ exert much influence.

3.3.2. The Role of Elites

Social constructivists contend that identity affects the strategic culture of states via their elites, which can then substantially influence what a nation determines to be in its own political interest. Factors such as culture and history not only determine Japan’s current perception of its own anti-militaristic identity but they also influence the differing way China perceives Japan. This Chinese perception of Japanese identity transforms the agenda of the policy crafted by Chinese elites, which observe Japanese foreign policy behavior through the lens of their shared history and therefore highlight the more militaristic aspects of Japanese security policy (Li 2008, 118). For Chinese foreign policy expert Rex Li (2013), the “identity discourse in China over the past few years has been driven by the government... [and] similarly, the Japanese government has been actively promoting national identity discourse that reflects its political and security agenda”. Therefore, the determination of whether the Sino-Japanese relationship is predominantly competitive or cooperative, is impacted directly by the ideas and beliefs of elites on the strategic culture of another country. For some, Chinese elites tend to view the international order in zero-sum terms whilst Japan has predominantly adopted a liberalist outlook, which may directly explain contemporary Japanese elites reluctantly adopting an increasingly realist position (Hemmings 2010).

3.3.3. International Rules and Norms

Social constructivists assert that the commitment of actors to comply with international rules and norms as representative of strong ties between nations. Constructivist theorists believe that when an actor embraces a regime of norms and rules, they are complying with what is widely accepted as appropriate behavior in the international system and not just what is rationally and economically beneficial. The internationalisation and institutionalisation of norms follows a particular ‘life cycle of norms’, which begins with their emergence onto the international stage and evolves through their socialisation and imitation by others and finally, into their internalisation by the adopting state (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998, 894-905). Evidently, the Chinese have progressively adopted more and more international rules and norms that have been espoused by the Japanese and the international liberal

economic order since World War II. Critical theorist Alastair Johnston (2004, 70) contends that based on “China’s involvement in the ‘international community’... Chinese performance is generally improving” to the point that it now participates in international organisations at a rate of approximately eighty percent that of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member nations. Moreover, the huge growth in the Chinese international profile should ensure that a ‘seat at the table’ will be taken by China and it will undertake a major role in shaping future international norms, rules and institutions (Medeiros 2009, xxi). Social constructivists assert that repeated Sino-Japanese interaction, due to increased joint involvement in international regimes of rules and norms, will only encourage more trust and forge a closer China-Japan relationship.

Chapter 4. Analytical Eclecticism

Eclecticism is a conceptual methodology, which foregoes theoretical rigidity to a set of assumptions or a particular paradigm and rather, employs multiple theories in order to advance compatible insights into multifarious topics, issues or subjects. Although it has attracted criticism for being overly simplistic and inconsistent, it has remained common in the fields of philosophical and political study for over two millennia.

Chapter 4.1. The History of Eclecticism in the Study of Politics

The term ‘eclecticism’ derives from the Greek word *eklektikos*, which literally translates to “choosing the best” or to “pick out and select” (Liddell & Scott 2014). Among its early proponents was the Greco-Roman scholar Cicero, who was thoroughly eclectic in his innovative unification of Stoic, New Academic and Peripatetic doctrines. Cicero’s political thought would have a profound effect on a broad number of political scholars a millennia and a half following his death. Renowned historian of political thought Neal Wood (1988, 2-11) argues that Cicero’s “very eclecticism drew so many to his writings... [via his] canvassing of opposing points of view and weighing one against the other”. Cicero’s postulations were significant in forming the political thoughts of Bodin, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Mill and Diderot but importantly, his eclectic understanding of politics greatly informed both the forefather of liberalism John Locke and early realists such as Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli.

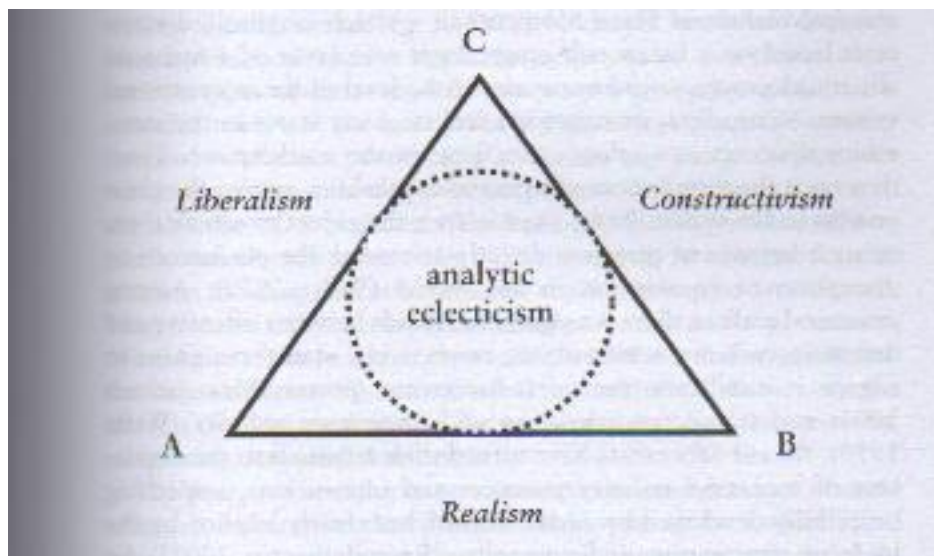
Chapter 4.2. What is Eclecticism in International Relations?

The first thing that needs to be determined is what exactly is eclecticism in the study of international politics. Two of its predominant proponents Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein (2010, 10) define ‘eclectic’ as:

“any approach that seeks to extricate, translate, and selectively integrate analytic elements – concepts, logics, mechanisms, and interpretations – of theories or narratives that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance”.

Therefore, theoretical eclecticism seeks to overcome two fundamental problems that exist within the study of IR. The first is the seemingly unresolvable nature of the key inter-paradigm debates, and the second, revolves around attempting to narrow the gap between IR theory and the real-world problems that must be addressed by pragmatic policy implementation. The eclectic IR theoretical project contains a reluctance to accept metatheory due to a deep-seated skepticism pertaining to the resolvability of core IR ontological and epistemological debates. Reus-Smit (2011, 3) contends that the IR eclectic perspective views metatheoretical inquiry as an ‘academic parlour game’ and a ‘side show’, which drags intellectuals away from the genuine, social purposes of the IR academy. Additionally, IR theoretical eclecticism contains a fundamental commitment to the practical and therefore, seeks a scholarly focus towards the pragmatic solution of concrete, real world problems.

Illustration 2. *The International Relations Paradigmatic Triad.*



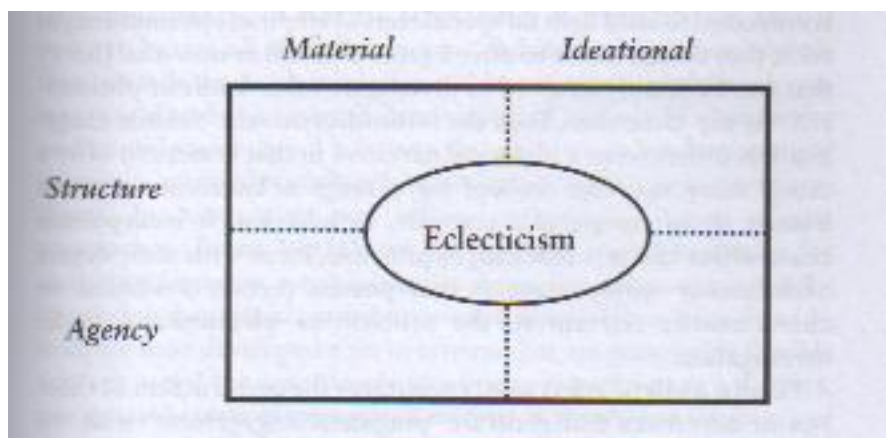
Source: Sil & Katzenstein (2010, 27).

Chapter 4.3. Transcending Inter-Paradigm Debates and Research Traditions

As witnessed in the previous chapter, the boundaries that exist between the three predominant theoretical paradigms or metatheories are reasonably rigid and therefore not straightforward to transverse. A ‘metatheory’ is defined as a “theory the subject matter of which is another theory” (Reus-Smit 2011, 4). In the study of IR, a metatheory is accepted to be a set of logical and coherent preceding principles and rules, which then establish the circumstances required to postulate second order

theories. Customarily, these principles are generally categorized as consisting of an epistemological or ontological nature. Epistemology refers to the scope, nature and credibility of knowledge, whereas ontology is the ‘nature of being’, which refers to what can be said to exist, their categorization, and their relationship to one another (Reus-Smit 2011, 4). Whilst many think of the boundaries between realism, liberalism and social constructivism as consisting of concrete real world assumptions, they are more epistemological and ontological dividing lines. The factors that constantly divide these paradigmatic schools of thought are not based on their actual claims about specific phenomena, but focus primarily on distinct metatheoretical assumptions regarding the development and support of such claims (Sil and Katzenstein 2010, 4).

Illustration 3. *Eclecticism and the Ontological Divides.*



Source: Sil & Katzenstein (2010, 21).

It is important to note that the existence of discrete versions, implicit in each of the paradigms, indicates that these paradigmatic fault lines are less sealed than is customarily taken for granted. Due to the fact that they incorporate many ontological and epistemological principles, which are not uniformly weighted and ordered within each metatheory, the paradigmatic postulates may be reformulated to allow some points of convergence on substantive arguments (Sil & Katzenstein 2010, 31). With this in light, eclecticism examines the ways in which actors in international politics pursue both material and ideational preferences, the fashion in which diverse environments influence actors’ opportunities and limitations, and also the degree in which ideational and material factors of these conditions are transformed by the

differing ways actors are able to act on their preferences (Sil & Katzenstein 2010, 21). These points of convergence go to the heart of key concepts that underline realism, liberalism and social constructivism. Katzenstein & Okawara (2001, 154) argue that eclecticism has been gaining ground in the face of parsimonious and incomplete singular theory due to “the complex links between power, interests and norms defy analytical capture by any one paradigm”. Such convergence in these fundamental areas indicates the distinct possibility that eclecticism can only enhance the pragmatic study of international politics.

Chapter 4.4. The Gap Between IR Theory and Policy

Another key difficulty in IR that analytical eclecticism seeks to overcome is the separation between IR theory and the prescription of pragmatic foreign policy. Renowned IR scholar Joseph Nye (2009) laments the growing gap between theory and policy in which IR scholars fail to pay enough attention to how their insights relate to the policy world. For Sil and Katzenstein (2010, 2) an important aspect of analytical eclecticism is about:

“exploring substantive relationships and revealing hidden connections among elements of seemingly incommensurable paradigm-bound theories, with an eye to generating novel insights that bear on policy debates and practical dilemmas”.

Evidently, in the process of casting a broader theoretical net, a wider range of explanations may be considered by the researcher when applying an eclectic framework to a particular phenomenon or unique case study. At its core, analytical eclecticism contends that IR scholarship should speak more directly to the practical problems of contemporary global politics. In the engagement of specific questions, constructivists, realists and liberals will mainly differ amongst themselves, although it is possible that some of them may be able to connect on significant characterizations and recommendations, in order to answer distinct questions in international politics (Sil & Katzenstein 2010, 34). With a myriad of concrete factors directly influencing outcomes in Northeast Asia, analytical eclecticism presents itself as a useful tool in which to provide a more nuanced understanding of the reasoning behind the spike in security competition between China and Japan.

Chapter 4.5. The Practical Application of Analytical Eclecticism

The practical application of analytical eclecticism revolves around the way in which the question is discerned and articulated, the complexity of the interpretative strategy, and the scope of practical engagement with real world problems. Firstly, the practice of analytical eclecticism promotes the articulation of questions that express, and not merely simplify, the intricacy of social events. Secondly, is the consideration of the diversity, plurality and connection of causal processes that produce a specific, social phenomenon. Finally, analytical eclecticism urges the building of theories that produce ‘pragmatic engagement’ with real world social conditions (Sil & Katzenstein 2010, 22). These factors are outlined as the ‘markers’ of eclectic scholarship.

Chapter 4.5.1. The ‘Markers’ of Eclectic Scholarship

In ‘Beyond Paradigms’, Sil and Katzenstein (2010, 19) distinguish an eclectic approach to IR from paradigm-bound research based on the following three ‘markers’:

1. Open-ended problem formulation encompassing complexity of phenomena, not intended to advance or fill gaps in paradigm-bound scholarship.
2. Middle-range causal account incorporating complex interactions among multiple mechanisms and logics drawn from more than one paradigm.
3. Findings and arguments that pragmatically engage both academic debates and the practical dilemmas of policymakers/practitioners.

Chapter 5. An Eclectic Understanding of the Sino-Japanese Security Nexus

This thesis will now build a theoretically eclectic understanding of the Sino-Japanese relationship. By incorporating Sil and Katzenstein's 'markers', first, it seeks to answer a complex problem; why has the Sino-Japanese relationship soured and security tensions spiked so significantly in recent years? Second, it will draw on both realism and social constructivism in order to present a nuanced, middle range causal account of the contemporarily antagonistic, Sino-Japanese security relationship. Finally, it will engage both practical policy problems and academic discourse, in order to present findings that lead to a more pragmatically complete answer to the question.

Chapter 5.1. The Convergence of Realism and Constructivism as an Explanatory Device For Heightened Sino-Japanese Security Tensions

This chapter will seek to combine realist and social constructivist theory, in order to elucidate a clearer understanding of what is undermining cordial relations between China and Japan. To begin, a brief word on why liberalism is not included in the eclectic analysis of increased conflict in Northeast Asia and significantly, the downturn in Sino-Japanese relations. Liberalism is an optimistic theory that delivers a robust set of explanations as to why cordial relations can exist between states, including interstate cooperation and economic interdependence. These liberalist assumptions go a long way in explaining the deepening ties between China and Japan beginning in the 1970s and up until the beginning of this decade however, they have less to say about the downturn in the relationship over the last five years. Although liberals have tended to agree with realists, in that conflict is a regular characteristic of an anarchic international system, they fail to directly associate anarchy with conflict and war (Dunne 2008, 108). Whilst some liberal theorists contend that factors such as imperialism, a failure in balance of power, and relations between democratic and undemocratic regimes can cause conflict, their analysis is not as robust as realist notions of systemic power relations and constructivist ideas about identity as a cause of Sino-Japanese conflict. As Stanley Hoffman (1987, 396) explicates, the "essence of Liberalism is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace [whereas] the essence of international politics is exactly the opposite: troubled peace, at best, or the state of war".

This chapter will initially incorporate the arguments of realist scholar John Mearsheimer with that of social constructivist Alexander Wendt, in order to present a more nuanced understanding of an anarchical Northeast Asian system. Second, it will look at the influence of asymmetrical power relations on Sino-Japanese identity by converging realist notions of power and security competition with constructivist ideas about nationalistic identity. Finally, it will investigate the symbiotic nature in the relationship between domestic culture and the Northeast Asian system, by integrating a social constructivist belief in the strategic culture of elites with a realist view of an international system defined by power.

Chapter 5.2. Understanding Anarchy in Northeast Asia: The Combination of Realist and Constructivist Perspectives

The influence of international anarchy plays a crucial role in the explanation of Sino-Japanese behavior in the realm of system level interaction. Although the definition of anarchy diverges considerably when viewed through the alternate realist and constructivist lenses, predominantly due to their respective positivist and ideational underpinnings, aspects of each understanding of the phenomena can only help in better elucidating the reasons behind heightened Sino-Japanese tensions. This section will seek to incorporate the arguments of realist John Mearsheimer (2001) who views the international system as inherently anarchic and marked by war and competition with a focus on sovereignty, power and the security dilemma, with that of social constructivist Alexander Wendt (1992) who proposes a subjective and transient notion of anarchy with an emphasis on sovereignty, collective ideals and socialization. These combined concepts of anarchy will be directly applied to understanding tensions in the East China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute in order to form a more robust explanation.

Chapter 5.2.1. Sovereignty

When considering the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute, the issue of maintaining the integrity of each state's territorial sovereignty exerts considerable influence over the rationale undertaken by both China and Japan. The concept of sovereignty is an essential component in the understanding of anarchy by realist scholars. For realists, the concept of sovereignty is directly related to the maintenance of territorial integrity, due to the absence of a higher ruling body in the international system. Mearsheimer

(2001, 30) argues that “states seek to maintain their territorial integrity”, due to survival being the fundamental goal of states. The realist take on sovereignty offers some insights into the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute, whereby Japan regards its control of the islands as integral to its territorial stability, and China considers Japanese ownership as an illegitimate, strategic threat. Somewhat problematically for realism, whilst the islands do possess energy and fishing resources, the strategic location of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is not paramount in upholding either Chinese or Japanese territorial integrity.

Alternatively, social constructivists argue that sovereignty exists due to the socialization of states in an international system, where the concept represents a significant norm. From a Chinese perspective, the ownership of the islands represents an ideational struggle, whereby China is loath to set precedence and concede ownership to Japan with an eye to further territorial disputes. Wendt (1992, 395) views sovereignty as an institution, whereby states exhibit a “mutual recognition of one another’s right to exercise exclusive political authority within territorial limits”. When viewed through this prism, the Japanese view the Chinese contestation of the islands as a nonacceptance of Japanese territorial sovereignty and therefore a security threat. Wendt (1992, 403) contends that in a world where common recognition is the foundation of security, “states will come to define their security in terms of preserving their property rights over particular territories”. In the case of maintaining sovereignty in Sino-Japanese relations, both realism and constructivism add significant insights into the pragmatic behavior displayed by both states in their dispute over the ownership of the islands.

Chapter 5.2.2. Power and Collective Ideals

The concepts of power and collective ideals can be combined, in order to show why the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island conflict is indicative of China and Japan maintaining their relative standing in the international system in order to survive. For realists, the anarchical nature of the international system is directly related to the concept of power, as the fundamental priority of rationally minded states (Mearsheimer 2001, 43). Whilst Japan endeavors to maximize its power in order to uphold Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the Chinese aim to dissuade and challenge Japan through military intervention and intimidate the Japanese with a show

of China's burgeoning power. For realists, power can be the 'actual' power of an army, navy and air force, or the 'potential' power that a growing economy and population may establish in the future (Mearsheimer 2001, 61). The Japanese consider actual and potential Chinese power, in the form of the world's biggest economy, largest population and growing armed forces, as more formidable than its own power and a threat to its regional status. Consequently, the Japanese have sought to balance against Chinese power by steadfastly defending their sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Whilst the Chinese have dozens of maritime disputes with numerous neighbors in the South and East China Seas, the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute receives the most attention and remains the most likely to escalate into conflict (Economy et. al 2013). For realists, the question of why this particular dispute dominates other maritime disagreements can be viewed as somewhat problematic in the development of an adequate explanation.

In order to form a more nuanced understanding, social constructivists propose the idea of collective ideals, which are constructed through repetitive interaction in the international system. In contrast to realism, social constructivism proposes that the identities of states are defined by merely participating in the international system. Within a socially constructed world, each specific identity is defined in an inherently social way and the "conceptions of self and interest tend to mirror the practices of significant others over time" (Wendt 1992, 396). This constructivist perspective can help explain a Northeast Asian system of self-help, whereby a state has no other choice but to defend itself when faced by the behavior of the significant other. The long relationship between Japan and China has mutually constructed the competitive anarchy inherent in their system following decades and decades of ambitious and over-zealous behavior towards one another. The Sino-Japanese dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands simply reflects the competitive behavior inherent throughout the history of their ongoing relationship.

Chapter 5.2.3. The Security Dilemma and Socialization

The realist understanding of the security dilemma is a fundamental component in the concept of anarchy, whereby security is relative to the capabilities of other states. Due to anarchy's competitive environment, if a state increases its own security it will consequently threaten the security of another state and create a spiral of suspicion,

incited by prejudiced perceptions. The security dilemma causes uncooperative behavior between states, due to the self-interested actions by the actors invariably leading to inadvertent consequences (Mearsheimer 2001, 36). A realist explanation of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute revolves around China and Japan as rival states, both of whom put a premium on maintaining or increasing their relative standing in Northeast Asia. Therefore, realism contends that when the Japanese government purchased the islands from a Japanese family in 2012, China began sending military forces to the islands in order to challenge Japanese sovereignty over the islands and as an indication of greater Chinese power. Japan then responded to China by increasing its military protection of the islands and so forth. Although the security dilemma defines anarchy adequately and the recent spike in security tensions over the islands, it struggles to provide an explanation as to why the relationship fluctuates from peace to hostility and from hostility to peace.

Social constructivism can add to this explanation by advancing notions of long established patterns of socialization, as a reasoning behind the transformation from a balanced to an antagonistic system. Social constructivists maintain that anarchy is the likely result of socialization via long standing processes of Sino-Japanese interaction. Wendt (1992, 393) contends that “self-help and competitive power politics may be produced causally by processes of interaction between states in which anarchy plays only a permissive role”. The interaction between states via socialization then encourages further interactions in an international system that defines the concerns of states. Through this process of “reciprocal interaction” the creation and instantiation of enduring social structures defines identities and interests (Wendt 1992, 404). Consequently, the Sino-Japanese relationship has developed through extended reciprocal interaction, whereby both actors have an understanding of a competitive system and therefore have established the identity and interests of each actor. When the Sino-Japanese relationship is viewed as a competitive construct through extended periods of time, the latest security dilemma over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands becomes just another form of security one-upmanship in a long history of competitive interaction.

Chapter 5.3. The Influence of Asymmetrical Material Power on Identity

Another key area in which to help elucidate a more nuanced understanding behind the recent spike in adverse Sino-Japanese security relations can be reached by converging realist notions of power with constructivist ideas about nationalistic identity. To be sure, the rise of China continues to transform balance of power considerations in Northeast Asia, whilst simultaneously Chinese and Japanese nationalism also exerts considerable tensions amongst the region's key actors. Although problematic for some realists and constructivists, the convergence of material and ideational factors, along with a broader level of analysis in order to account for both systemic level and unit level (state) considerations, can present a more holistic explication of Sino-Japanese tensions. This chapter will begin by setting out both the strengths and weaknesses of each explanation, and conclude by analyzing how some factors in both sets of principles can converge in order to influence one another.

Chapter 5.3.1. Realism and Asymmetrical Power Dynamics in Northeast Asia

For realists, the competitive Sino-Japanese relationship can be fundamentally regarded as a rational strategy by both actors, due to the transformation in the external, structural environment, whereby fluid power dynamics present opportunities and restrictions for states in achieving their respective goals. The disintegration of the Cold War security architecture, transforming power comparisons and increasing regional unpredictability between China and Japan are all crucial factors, in the formulation of an explanation for the downturn in contemporary Sino-Japanese relations (Kokubun 2006). In no small part, this is attributable to the meteoric rise of China over the last three decades, which is in direct opposition to over two decades of Japanese economic stagnation. The new geometrical arrangement of Northeast Asia is asymmetrical and problematic for future Sino-Japanese cooperation, with the 'setting sun' of Japan being eclipsed by the Chinese 'ascending dragon' (Glosserman 2006). With Chinese power set for continued growth into the future, the asymmetry in the Sino-Japanese relationship is also likely to multiply exponentially.

The potential power of a state is primarily based on the level of its wealth coupled with the size of its population. These two resources are the fundamental factors that states must possess in order to build an ominous and formidable military force (Mearsheimer 2001, 43). In the case of China, which possesses the planet's largest

population and is soon to be the world's greatest economic power, the ability of the Chinese regime to amass a considerable military force in the future should not be underestimated. Although Japan's key ally the U.S. still has a military budget three times larger than China, Chinese defence acquisitions continue to expand at a rate considerably greater than the U.S., coupled with an intensification in its regional belligerence (Barker 2014). The future distribution of military power between China and Japan is a crucial factor in a realist understanding of adverse security relations between the two great Northeast Asian powers.

The level of fear amongst states can be markedly increased by the way in which power is distributed amongst the actors in the system. The crucial consideration revolves around whether the distribution of power is evaluated as being comparable between the key states. When distinct power asymmetries exist, the configuration usually contains a potential hegemon, and this type of system of 'unbalanced multipolarity' creates the most fear between states (Mearsheimer 2001, 44). The continued rise of China, for some, is foreshadowing its eventual domination of Northeast Asia, which would evidently create a system of unbalanced multi-polarity and transform the region into one where conflict is much more likely to occur. Similar to preceding potential hegemonies throughout history, China would be liable to grow into a genuine hegemon and cause its rivals to try to constrain China, because engagement is unlikely to dampen Chinese desire for even greater power (Mearsheimer 2001, 400). For some realist scholars, this particular power dynamic is likely to lead to an increased chance of conflict and war between China and Japan.

The theory of hegemonic war is elucidated in order to caution that a war may occur, when the power of a hegemon declines combined with the rise of a challenger, in a regional balance of power. Gilpin's (1988, 591) theory contends that a stable system is maintained by a sole dominant state or hegemon. The stable system is thrown off balance with the relative growth of a secondary state, whereby the challenger and the declining hegemon inevitably contend for supremacy, and this interstate competition has the propensity to escalate into war. As the alliance of U.S. and Japanese power continues to wane relative to the growth in Chinese power, many realists assert that the Sino-Japanese relationship will be strained and conflict and war becomes more possible (Mearsheimer 2001). Once again, the rise of China has the capacity to

transform crucial power dynamics in Northeast Asia and create an asymmetrical power balance, which Gilpin's theory insists, will create a greater likelihood of conflict.

For all its advantages in explicating a structurally driven understanding of the decay in amicable Sino-Japanese relations, realism can tend to struggle in its explanation of the role that nationalism plays in the relationship. Although realism provides a clear picture of international relations via material and systemic factors, it forgoes any in depth consideration regarding the role of ideational and state level elements on international politics (Lapid 1996, 6). IR theorist Thomas Berger (2000) contends that realist IR theory contains many significant deficiencies in its explanation of events in Northeast Asia, where Sino-Japanese relations are distinguished by an escalation in nationalist incitement that continually escapes orthodox realist beliefs. Underappreciated by realist logic, Northeast Asian instability is equally driven by the existence of factors relating to identity and in particular a form of oppositional hostile nationalism, as it is by the common realist variables such as overarching systemic power considerations (Friedberg 1993, 5). Therefore, it is crucial to entertain a social constructivist understanding of nationalistic identity, which is required to help elucidate a more nuanced understanding of how power asymmetry has led to the breakdown in amicable Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter 5.3.2. Constructivism and Sino-Japanese Nationalistic Identity

For social constructivists, the understanding that interactions between states are exclusively the outcome of objective factors, such as systemic dynamics and power is problematic. Subjective factors, which are formed from individual and group interpretations such as beliefs and ideas, also determine outcomes in international relations (Wendt 1992, 392). Social constructivists argue that the concept of identity asserts a considerable influence on the relationship between states, and therefore contend that mental constructs and existing social structures are deeply embedded in the consciousness of nation states. For many constructivists, the fundamental source of contemporary instability in the Asia-Pacific is largely dictated by the divergent construction of nationalistic identity in the regions major actors (Berger 2000, 420). Additionally, the constructions of nationalistic identities are deeply intertwined with the shared history that exists between nation states. Kennedy-Pipe (2000, 753) argues

that a dialogue between IR theory and international history would be beneficial in analyzing many contemporary security relationships and moreover, contends that critical theory may be one avenue forward in incorporating a better understanding of how history and identity can dictate contemporary outcomes in international politics.

Social constructivists argue the rise of an increasing nationalist animosity between China and Japan, based on a number of slightly differing theses. Of these, the argument that revolves around a pronounced clash of identities in Sino-Japanese relations, receives a great deal of attention from social constructivist scholars. At its core, the exploitation of historical memories by China and Japan are utilized to institute nationally based myths that then fuel a revisionist discourse, which is primarily culpable for inflaming contemporary Sino-Japanese hostility (Lai 2013, 20). In recent years, there have been often violent anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese protests on both sides of the East China Sea, where both sides claim a historical ownership over an uninhabited island group. Although public anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan is often restricted to ultra-nationalist groups, recent tensions created by the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, have inflamed a rare showing of broad-based Japanese hostility towards China. The East China Sea dispute has invigorated Japanese ultra-nationalists, who believe that China's claims to the islands, coupled with Chinese growing power and fierce anti-Japanese protests across the country, illustrate the need for a far more assertive Japanese foreign policy. Correspondingly, Chinese nationalist demonstrators have burnt Japanese company premises and Japanese made cars and have used highly derogatory language, with calls for war and even a nuclear attack against Japan (Nakamoto 2012). Crucially, both ultra-nationalist Chinese and Japanese protest groups have the power to redirect and influence the tone of the foreign policy undertaken by their respective Northeast Asian governments.

Another predominant constructivist argument, focuses on the reinterpretation of foreign policy built on the basis of one identity in correlation to another. This constructivist notion is a central component to the deteriorating bilateral relationship, due to the respective identities of the actors being diametrically opposed. Drawing on this explanation, Chinese nationalism can be viewed as a historical memory that is expounded via Imperial Japan's incursions into China last century, whereas the Japanese endeavor to reinterpret the memory in a positive way and distance

themselves from such a negative association to crimes committed during World War II (Sato 2006, 6). The Yasukuni Shrine in Japan is viewed by China, who underwent Japanese occupation before and during World War II, as a distinct symbol of Japanese militarism due to the honouring of wartime commanders and criminals. In 2013 and 2014, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited or sent ritual offerings to the Yasukuni Shrine, which precipitated a stern and very public castigation from China. The Chinese Foreign Ministry conveyed ‘serious concern’ over the visit and said that “China reiterates that only by Japan earnestly and squarely facing, deeply reflecting upon its history of invasion and clearly distancing itself from militarism, can China-Japan relations realize healthy and stable development” (Seig 2014). For social constructivists, these individual interpretations of history are deeply embedded in the consciousness of both nations and the conflicting narratives point to the irreconcilable nature of a fundamental part of the Sino-Japanese relationship.

Although social constructivism is advantageous in its explication of the impact of ideational and state level elements on international politics, it forgoes any in depth consideration regarding the role of structurally driven dynamics causing decay in amicable Sino-Japanese relations. Consequently, social constructivist interpretations are often criticized due to their emphasis on state level explanations and for often ignoring systemic considerations, when attempting to articulate the reasoning behind Sino-Japanese behavior (Lai 2013, 20). Furthermore, many social constructivists are errant in their marginalization of material factors, whilst simultaneously advancing the ideational characteristics typical in Chinese-Japanese relationship, which constrains the efficacy of the theory to make consistent and methodical evaluations. With this in mind, it is advantageous to now converge the realist understanding of asymmetrical power dynamics with a constructivist understanding on the role of nationalistic identity, in order to view a more holistic picture of Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter 5.3.3. Towards A Synergy of Systemic and Ideational Factors

This chapter will now seek to converge realist notions of systemic power with constructivist ideational factors by analyzing how one set of variables, such as asymmetrical Sino-Japanese power relations, can come to inform and advance notions of nationalistic identity. The Sino-Japanese relationship is full of complex factors that

have been affected by both social and systemic aspects, which are informed by multifarious causations in their political, economic, cultural and military interactions (Wan 2006, 3). Following realism, the demise of the Cold War has generated the reorientation of regional power structures, and along with an expansion in economic development in Northeast Asia, has consequently transformed the regional balance of power. Exacerbating this deep structural transformation in the system have been opportunistic attempts by China and Japan to recast their respective domestic and regional characters. Consequently, this has incited rejuvenation in a form of combative nationalism in China and Japan, with both strands evolving in contradictory ways and adversarial directions (Yahuda 2006, 164). In this eclectic context, the enormous material, structural changes that have transformed the region, have been seized upon opportunistically by both sides and consequently, it has further imbedded a form of ideational, nationalistic endeavor from both China and Japan.

The association of the decline in Japanese power with the simultaneous leap in Chinese power can form another eclectic realist/constructivist explanation based on the momentous, regional power shift. With continued Japanese stagnation since the 1990s and the extensively documented rise of China, particularly militarily and economically, the Japanese have responded by cultivating nationalistic convictions and a negative perception of China (Kokubun 2006, 149). This recent rise in Japanese nationalism is intended to combat the continuing rise of China and allay widespread domestic fears. Conversely to the weakened Japanese situation, the rise of China has seen the Chinese government adopt a more bold and decisive foreign policy, with an increased receptiveness to populist, nationalist opinion. These factors tend to complicate the strategic assessments of the regions key actors, as Chinese elites become susceptible to rampant nationalism, in which they must be seen to act assertively on matters such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute and past Japanese militarism (Zhao 2002, 39). Although nationalism has thus far failed to critically derail the functional administration of ongoing Sino-Japanese relations, it can shape the long-term appraisal of regional threats. In the case of China and Japan, structurally inspired nationalism is having a greater impact on propelling the contemporary security dilemma than specific foreign policy settings (Christensen 1999, 53). This eclectic blend of realist/constructivist thinking typically suggests that a transformation in power dynamics, which has caused and then been compounded by escalating

nationalism, has led to the contemporary spike in Sino-Japanese acrimony and increased regional rivalry.

Chapter 5.3.3. The Interaction Between Domestic Politics and the International System

Another area of analytical realist/constructivist convergence revolves around the interaction between domestic politics and the international system. Whilst realist theorists tend to 'black box' states in their analysis of international politics, the addition of constructivist ideas about the roles of elites can only enhance the explanatory power in regard to contemporary Sino-Japanese tensions. Illustratively, the use of identity and history can be utilized by Chinese elites, in order to apply political leverage on Japan in the international sphere and also shore up their ongoing legitimacy in the domestic arena. Chinese leaders delicately balance the Sino-Japanese relationship, by encouraging fierce anti-Japanese nationalism at home whilst simultaneously pursuing increased, economic cooperation with Japan abroad (Shirk 2007). For some, the Chinese government is playing a game of cat and mouse, whereby they constrain domestic and social upheaval at home in order to buy time and steadily increase the power of the Chinese state. Chinese elites can be viewed as rational, self-interested actors that tactically balance twin areas of legitimacy in order to preserve their power, ultimately holding order domestically while they await an increase in Chinese power in order to attain their international objectives (Downs & Saunders 1998, 122). In this eclectic context, constructivist ideas about the power of Chinese elites merge with realist notions of the international system and power.

This balancing of crucial, domestic and international considerations can sometimes take on a life of its own and once released, the genie can be difficult to rebottle. Although the reemergence of combative Sino-Japanese nationalism has been fundamentally intended for a domestic audience, the internal discourse has recently tended to overflow into the international arena and controversially affect the crucial day-to-day running of the bilateral relationship (Rose 2000, 179). The Beijing government has waged an ongoing propaganda campaign in order to cultivate a greater sense of nationalism, as the Chinese become a more forthright global power. For years, the Chinese government has constantly reminded its denizens of past Japanese atrocities, via emotional school textbook stories, state media reports, and

stridently anti-Japanese drama television series (Ng 2014). This ubiquitous anti-Japanese sentiment has escalated the conflict between Beijing and Tokyo over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, as Chinese citizens demand greater impetus from their government against perceived Japanese indiscretions.

Another area where domestic nationalism has caused a significant impact on international, structural considerations revolves around the significant disagreements over the legitimacy of the Chinese and Japanese ADIZs in the East China Sea. For many Sino observers, the development of Beijing's East China Sea ADIZ, which encroaches significantly on that of Japan's ADIZ, is an evident example of domestic nationalist discourse fuelling outcomes in the arena of international affairs (Lee 2014). Now that the disagreement over the ADIZ zones has escalated, Joshi (2013) argues that “China cannot rescind its expanded zone, nor Japan accept it as a fait accompli, without each provoking outrage from nationalist constituencies at home”. These factors become reciprocal, as domestic nationalism propels international disputes regarding sovereignty in the East China Sea, which then consequently fuel greater unrest back in the domestic arena in the form of mass protests. However, interpreting the mass protests as simply nationalistic would misread their intent, whereby Chun (2012) argues that “accumulated social discontent with a regime seen by many as externally weak and internally corrupt has found expression in maritime disputes between China and its neighbours”. In both understandings, the eclectic link between domestic considerations, such as nationalism and the structure of the international system, are inherently intertwined in the rise of Sino-Japanese tensions in the East China Sea.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to ascertain what best elucidates the recent escalation in adverse bi-lateral relations between China and Japan. It initially tested the adequacy of the three predominant IR theories in their stand-alone explanations of the contemporary breakdown in the Sino-Japanese relationship. Additionally, it argued that IR theoretical eclecticism, via a convergence of realist and constructivist theories, offers an efficacious way forward in garnering a more nuanced understanding of this pivotal Northeast Asian relationship.

The introduction chapter outlined the region of Northeast Asia and more pertinently, the Sino-Japanese relationship, before providing a brief background on the most prominent issues in the Chinese/Japanese relationship including the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, the recent transformation in Northeast Asian ADIZ boundaries, and the reoccurring questions of history. Chapter Two provided a brief explanation of the three predominant IR schools and Chapter Three then applied them to the case study of the Sino-Japanese relationship. For realism, Northeast Asia is the home of a high level of Sino-Japanese competition, with a rising superpower in China exerting expansionary aims amongst heightened security conflict with Japan. For liberalism, Northeast Asia is a region of cooperation, where the Sino-Japanese relationship is maintained through economic interdependence and membership to international institutions. For social constructivism, China-Japan relations is largely indeterminate and the construction of nationalistic identities are pronounced and complex, the strategic culture of elites assert great influence, and norms and rules play a significant role. Whilst all of the theories provide considerable insights, they also all fail to capture a complete understanding regarding the downturn in Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter Four introduced IR eclecticism as an analytical tool and elucidated what it seeks to achieve in the study of international politics. In doing so, it explored the inter-paradigm debates and research traditions, the gap between IR theory and the application of pragmatic policy, and the application of analytical eclecticism including the markers of eclectic scholarship. Chapter Five argued that an eclectic mix of realism and social constructivism presents itself as a superior explanatory device for elucidating the increase in tensions in the contemporary Sino-Japanese

relationship. It initially explained anarchy in Northeast Asia by combining both realist and social constructivist notions of this key variable in understanding international politics. Crucially, this allowed an expanded understanding of how sovereignty affects anarchy, how power and collective ideals can effectively combine as an explanatory device for an anarchical system, and the efficacy in converging the security dilemma with socialization to better elucidate the concept. Next, it sought to explain the affect asymmetrical material power has on notions of identity, by analyzing the efficacies and inadequacies of realism in the explanation of asymmetrical power relations and likewise, constructivism's understanding of Sino-Japanese nationalistic identity construction. It then sought to amalgamate the two theories in a synergy of understanding, whereby systemic power relations and socially constructed nationalism are deeply intertwined and symbiotic in nature. Finally, it explored the interaction between domestic politics and the international system, where realist notions of power and systemic influence meet with constructivist ideas of identity and nationalism. It is here that domestic driven agendas can be prone to flow over into the arena of international politics in a recurrent and reciprocal manner, whereby both tend to inform one another.

The future of Sino-Japanese relations remains an unknown variable in the ongoing analysis of the Northeast Asian security nexus. However, IR theory can provide an efficacious understanding of this globally crucial relationship. This thesis has argued that stand-alone IR theory is inadequate in presenting a nuanced yet holistic understanding of the reasoning behind a spike in adverse Chinese/Japanese relations. Additionally, it has contended that IR eclecticism provides a unique and powerful analytical toolkit, which can be utilized to explicate greater understanding via the convergence of material, realist systemic factors with ideational, constructivist notions of identity and nationalism. It is through the synergy of these two efficacious theories that a more complete picture of Sino-Japanese relations emerges into full view.

Chapter 7. Bibliography

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