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Accounting for Pre-Conditions for a Harmonious Community of States: Democratization and the Security Complex in East and Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between the character of political regimes and security in East and Southeast Asia. In doing so it draws both on the insights of regional security complex and liberal peace theories. The analysis of democratization processes is therefore juxtaposed with the general underdevelopment of democracy in the region. It is ascertained that the security paradox that features prominently in East and Southeast Asian international relations can be transcended. Democratization and modernization alone however do not suffice, in which case another normative basis is needed.

The main conclusion takes the author to accept the importance of culture in political community building. In that respect, a common denominator is sought in building a genuine Asian identity based on human values, to which major political philosophies and religions in the region subscribe. Consequently the convergence among social norms, political norms and peace is theorised.

Key words: Regional Security Complex, Security Paradox, East and Southeast Asia, Democratization, Identity.

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Introduction

On the 2nd of February 2013, Japan's coastguard arrested the captain of a 100-tonne coral fishing boat (Agence France-Presse 2013). All of the 13 crew members were of Chinese nationality. The captain happened to be aware of their position at the time the arrest took place, around 45 kilometres northeast of Miyako Island, in the Okinawan Chain. The official reason for such an occurrence was crystal clear: illegal fishing in the Japanese exclusive economic zone.¹ This is just one of many examples of Sino-Japanese clashes in a long history of events that the international media calls the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute. As such it accompanies other disputes in East and Southeast Asia that involve numerous states and serves as a linking element of their respective national security policies creating a typical regional security complex, a geographically defined area where national policies of security are intertwined to such an extent that they can no longer be analysed separately from one another (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). This paper therefore fuses East Asia and Southeast Asia into one logically conjoined space.

'Security paradox', a term elaborated by Booth and Wheeler, is a situation in which two or more actors, seeking only to improve their own security, provoke through their words or actions an increase in mutual tension, resulting in less security all around (Booth and Wheeler, 2008). In the case of the region in question, this can be very well illustrated with the examples of North Korea and its nuclear programme, Taiwanese Strait Relations or Japan vs. China security strategies, not to mention the South China Sea complex.

The central question addressed in this paper is about the relationship between political regimes and international security. The Democratic Peace Thesis posits that democracies do not wage wars with other democracies. However, as the democratization processes in East and Southeast Asia do not directly equate to liberal democracy in western nations, the Democratic Peace Thesis is only generally relevant to the matter at hand. If western style liberal democratization is not apropos to the region, what then should/could serve as a normative basis for building a peace community that is free from recurring territorial disputes that constantly feature in East and Southeast Asian newspaper headlines?

It is the contention of the author of this paper that nations of the region can achieve the kind of peaceful and harmonious relationships that feature in European politics only through building a common Asian identity. This can be created not on the basis of an artificial or superficial import of democratic elements but by fusing democratic elements with regional cultural philosophies such as Confucianism. For those countries from the region that do not share a Confucian cultural heritage, such as the Philippines or Malaysia, at least some of the values promoted by this political philosophy will feature prominently on their political agendas as long as democratization tendencies ‘work their magic’ within those societies.

The leading theoretical perspective applied in this paper is that of social constructivism and the idea of transcending national interests. In that respect, another thesis is invoked that promotes the idea of the convergence of democracy and Confucianism. It is claimed that the transcendence of national identities can only be successful if grounded on an existing normative basis, the notion that not only enriches academic discourse but also serves an informative purpose to public policy circles and citizens, who are not only caught up in the middle of international crises but who often pay the highest price with their liberties or even their security.

The regional security complex – regional security paradox

Here are some of the recurring territorial disputes in East and Southeast Asian countries.

1. On the 11th of September 2012 the media reported on a transaction completed between the Japanese Government and Kunioki Kurihara, who represented the owners of some of the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Tiaoyutai Islands. Bought for around US\$22 million, the islands stirred major unrest across China. The media reported on Japanese factories being destroyed and Japanese goods (owned by Chinese themselves) vandalised. As much as previous shows of national anger against Japan tended to be ‘administered’ by Beijing and used for domestic purposes, this time the ‘patriotic uprising’ appeared to be genuine.
2. There is an on-going dispute about the Paracel Islands between China and Vietnam. Interestingly, in that case Chinese claims that even those islands that are temporarily beneath the water’s surface still constitute Chinese territory, while at the same time denying such rights to the Japanese when they make similar claims.
3. Another ‘labyrinth’ of interests represents the Spratly Archipelago. China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei claim territorial rights. These 30-thousand

rocks and reefs do not for the time being, but might in the future, reveal energy resources just like examples mentioned above.

4. Korea and Japan still have not settled on the Liancourt Rocks, tiny islands without any drinkable water. When Lee Myung Bak, the President of Korea, visited one of them in August 2012, Japan withdrew its ambassador from Seoul.
5. Japan has been engaged with Russia in a long lasting (since 1875) dispute over the Kuril Islands. Any initiatives of resolving this issue fail, since Japan thinks and acts in all-or-nothing terms.²
6. Scarborough Shoal, also known as Huangyan Island, is a disputed territory claimed by China, Taiwan and the Philippines. Since 2012, the territory has been controlled by the People's Republic of China.
7. China has embarked on a process of building dams on the upstream Mekong River, which may possibly heavily affect water resources in Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam due to limitations of the amount of nutrient-rich sediment flowing down the river. This most probably will have a large impact on some 18 million people living in the delta region in South Vietnam, the world's second largest rice exporter.³

In recent years regional defence expenditure in Asia has been steeply rising.⁴ In nominal terms, major actors engaged in ongoing disputes in East and Southeast Asia have seen sharp increases in their defence budgets. China for that matter, as much as the PLA wishes to reveal, has been heavily arming its military. It alone accounts for almost 50% of defence expenditure in the East Asia region. Specifically, it continues to extend its naval power by maintaining counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean and carrying out recent naval exercises (April 2010 and June 2011) in the Western Pacific. On top of that, China's first aircraft carrier (former Soviet carrier *Varyag*) has been doing first rounds in the Yellow Sea.⁵ In nominal terms China spent US\$89.76 billion on its defence in 2011, a figure that excludes local government defence-related spending.

Despite long lasting economic hardships, Japan continues to be the second biggest spender in East Asia, with a defence budget for 2011 at the level of US\$58.42 billion, accounting for around 30% of defence spending in East Asia. Other major players include: South Korea with a US\$28.48 billion defence budget (around 15% of regional East Asian spending) and

Taiwan with a US\$ 9.90 billion defence budget (a mere 5.31% in the Sub-Regional breakdown).

On a more general level it should be mentioned that Japan aims to develop major military platforms primarily in reaction to the North Korean nuclear programme and Chinese military modernization, a reaction that clearly fits with the security paradox narrative. The latest news of boosting the Japanese-American joint missile defence system (currently based on the installation of the second antimissile radar system on Japanese soil) (BBC NEWS Asia 2012a, 2012b) announced in September this year genuinely stirred things up.⁶ Obviously both Japan and the US emphasize that the system is designed only to counter North Korean nuclear capabilities. Yet, unsurprisingly, it is seen in China as potential threat:

“The joint missile defense system objectively encourages Japan to keep an aggressive position in the Diaoyu Islands dispute, which sends China a very negative message,” said Shi Yinhong, a professor of international studies at Renmin University in Beijing. “Japan would not have been so aggressive without the support and actions of the U.S.” (Shanker and Johnson, 2012)

Also, in recent years, South Korea’s military modernisation is advancing expeditiously, in a similar fashion to that of Japan’s. Strong emphasis is on enhancing air and naval capabilities while maintaining a powerful army (The Military Balance 2012, p. 205). Consequently, South Korea has recently announced that it will expand its deal with the United States to almost triple the range of its ballistic missile system.⁷ This puts North Korean military facilities, which were previously out of range, within reach, as well as parts of China and Japan. As experts indicate, The Republic of Korea navy is known to be planning to defend Seoul’s territorial claims in the East Sea against the growing naval power of China and Japan.

Last but not least, Taiwan defence thinking remains almost entirely on maintaining a deterrent to Chinese military strategy aimed at intimidating or occupying the Island, viewed as a renegade province by Beijing (The Military Balance 2012, p. 205). After blocking a renewed request from Taipei in June 2011 for 66 F-16C/Ds, Washington announced last September that it was going to sell Taiwan an upgrade programme for 145 F-16A/B aircraft acquired during the 1990s (The Military Balance 2012, p. 206).

As for South East Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, all exercise rising defence budgets mainly in order to improve air and naval capabilities. In all cases the rationale behind such an approach to national defence spending embraces the complexities of regional uncertainties (the regional security complex) and relations with neighbouring states (other minds' problems and an ambiguous symbolism of weapons).⁸ Consequently South China Sea tensions have continued their salience on the regional agenda throughout the last couple of years. That includes pretty much everything from 'gunboat diplomacy' to brief but intensive confrontations between naval, paramilitary and civilian vessels.

In that respect, Indonesia has been investing, particularly in sea denial capacities, in response to potential intervention or outright interference from larger powers as well as sub-regional peers, meaning Malaysia. Consequently, the latter has been investing as much as their domestic political agenda allows on similar capabilities.

Singapore's defence spending remains the highest in the region (almost 30%), focusing on a balanced distribution of resources between all the elements of the military triad (air force, navy and land army), given the lack of strategic depth and consequent vulnerabilities of the city-state in the region.

Thailand for its part has been recently involved in border tensions with Myanmar and Cambodia. On top of that, the country has increasingly paid attention to securing its maritime interests largely aimed at, not surprisingly, developing sea-denial capabilities.

Vietnam is greatly concerned with Chinese assertiveness and its territorial claims, especially in the South China Sea. Following suit, Hanoi has been trying to improve its air and naval capabilities contracting the purchase of six submarines due for delivery between 2014 and 2017 (The Military Balance 2012, p. 207).

To sum up, concerns over China's growing power and assertiveness, a lack of clarity over the US strategic role and quite well-grounded animosity over North Korea's behaviour, together with renewed concerns about Taiwan's security, prompt governments in the region to justify increases in their defence budgets. The regional security complex is thus far characterised by the increasing probability of a regional arms race aimed at boosting regional powers' defensive as well as offensive capabilities. On top of that, this regional security complex has the potential for a 'transition belt', since India is obviously uneasy about Chinese military

advancement and is likely to balance it somehow, which in turn draws our attention to Pakistan – its established adversary (Till 2012).⁹

American pivot to Asia - America's Pacific century and its consequences for regional stability

As a superpower, the United States of America has at least two reasons to get involved in regional power politics. First, and perhaps more imminently, from a strategic point of view, the United States has formal military ties with a number of countries in the region i.e. Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea (Strategic Comments 2012a, 2012b). Second, and more generally, it is in America's financial and diplomatic interests. Worsening conflict between China and Japan would definitely slow down their economies¹⁰ which would in turn affect the shipping routes¹¹ that happen to be of great value also to the US economy (Hondam 2012).¹²

Not coincidentally, in January 2012, within two weeks of the public announcement by President Barack Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta of the much-discussed US pivot to Asia, the Pentagon released the Joint Operational Access Concept. This document is based on the central idea of 'Cross-domain synergy', which indicates the importance of inter-service co-operation, such as between the Navy and Air Force, neatly tagged as 'Air-Sea Battle Concept' (Department of Defense, 2012). As US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indicated during her visit to the Cook Islands in September 2012:

'This is a vast and dynamic region (Asia-Pacific region) - a key driver of global economics and politics - and the United States has a historical presence in this region,' she said. 'That's why I have said that the 21st century will be "America's Pacific century" - with an emphasis on "Pacific." The "Pacific" half of "Asia-Pacific" doesn't always get as much attention as it should, but the United States knows that this region is strategically and economically vital, and becoming more so.'
(Voice of America 2012)

In less diplomatic language of IR experts, the US and its allies are now faced with the prospect of a growing number of nations, some of them potential adversaries, armed with conventional precision weapons systems that have a comparable accuracy and reach to those of their own inventories. Washington last found itself in this situation towards the end of the

Cold War. In fact there are two areas where the US military could face serious anti-access/area denial: the western Pacific (China) and the Persian Gulf (Iran's capabilities supplied by China). (The Military Balance 2012)

The Link – democratization and peace inducement

One of the first authors to explicitly draw our attention the connection between democracy and the level of wealth after WWII was American political sociologist and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, Seymour Martin Lipset. In his seminal study of 1960, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Lipset draws on earlier work of Max Webber, who suggested that modern democracy in its clearest form could occur only under capitalist industrialization (Lipset 1981, p. 28). Cautiously and tentatively, as scientists are, Lipset demonstrates the connection between the political systems in Europe and the Americas, with their general high level of wealth, their considerable high degree of industrialization and urbanization as well as impressive levels of education for their time (Lipset 1981, p. 33). His tests consequently confirm the hypothesis referring to the importance of 'middle-class' society and its stabilizing function of the political system based on democratic governance.¹³ Crucially, Lipset does indicate the causal relationship between economic development and political systems, encapsulated by a three-phase model. It starts with urbanization as cities epitomize modern industrial economies. The complexity of skills required to function in an urban society then breeds literacy, which forms the basis of the third phase, the emergence of mass media and their role in disseminating literacy skills and, more importantly, preparing the grounds for participatory society.

Much of the latest history in East and Southeast Asia is in fact a breath-taking development of its societies in terms of economic, social and political progress. Measured against Western liberal democracies Asia's headway might seem modest but a quick look at some macroeconomic data confirms impressive improvements. According to Asian Development Bank (2012), Asian cities are growing rapidly. In the next 20 years another 1.1 billion people will live in cities. Crucially, by the year 2030 it is expected that 55% of the population of Asia will be urban (Asian Development Bank 2012). Parallel to unprecedented urbanization one also observes increase in adult literacy in East and South East Asia. Although, traditionally these are the regions with world lowest rankings, it seems that especially in recent years the situation has amended. China for example can boast 95.1% of total

population (over the age of 15) who can read and write.¹⁴ Other countries/economies all feature prominently on the world's literacy map exhibiting rates above or around 95%: such as South Korea (99.2%), Indonesia (95.6%), Japan (99%), Malaysia (95.4%), Philippines (95%), Singapore (98%), Taiwan (96.1%), Thailand (95.6%) and Vietnam (95.4%). Turning to the third phase of Lipset's model, the emergence of mass media it is striking how popular television has become over the last ten years in most of East and Southeast Asian states. Access to television is taken for granted and many countries offer a plethora of news channels. Not always are these channels of highest quality, with some of the countries doing their best to censor the free flow of information but the massive spread of internet seems to cut through non-democratic governments efforts to curb the freedom of information. The popularity of social media such blogs makes it impossible even in China to effectively limit the access of its citizens to uncensored data. According to Internet World Stats (usage and population statistics) Asia alone accounts for 44.8% of internet users worldwide (as of 30 June 2012). This number is naturally correlated with the number of people living in Asia but importantly, statistics show unparalleled growth of internet usage in many countries in the region oftentimes reaching more than twenty times increase since 2000.¹⁵ What is more in case of East Asia 70% of internet users access its content many times a day, which testifies to its availability (Internet Society 2012).

Somewhat in the spirit of Lipset, James McGann draws our attention to the relationship between democratization and market reforms (McGann 2010, p.16-20). It is important to notice here that democratization is seen by most scholars as a non-predefined process of moving towards democracy – a complex, dynamic and long term affair.¹⁶ As McGann rightly observes, 'while market reforms involve a variety of elements, most economists and political scientists agree that it is a strategy of economic transformation that entails institutional and structural changes consisting of shrinking the role of the state in tandem with strengthening the power of the free market' (McGann 2010, p. 16). He identifies four basic elements of market reform that can also be observed in the context of the regions of East and Southeast Asia. (1) Stabilization: fiscal and monetary discipline that brings market uncertainties, such as inflation, under control. (2) Liberalization: allows for free-market determination of prices and the reduction of trade barriers. (3) Privatization: creation of a system of private ownership of goods with aims to achieve superior allocation of resources and better productivity of assets. (4) Institutionalization: development of competition policies based on rational self-interests of the economic actors.

A quick look at the region allows us to identify at least some of the above-mentioned indicators.¹⁷ According to the Index of Economic Freedom (2012), a series of ten economic measurements created by The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, in 2012 only North Korea is considered 'repressed' (Index of Economic Freedom). The next category upwards – 'mostly unfree' - includes the Philippines, Vietnam and China. Malaysia and Thailand fall into the 'moderately free' category, while Taiwan and Japan find themselves under the 'mostly free' category. This mixed picture makes sense only after we juxtapose the country scores with those from previous years, especially when it comes to trade freedom that speaks volumes on the recent openness of the markets. Additionally, almost all countries in the region have liberalized their markets, allowing prices of most commodities to be more or less set by the interplay of supply and demand (Huffington Post 2012).¹⁸ As for privatization, both China and Vietnam have recently introduced reforms allowing individuals to purchase properties or lease land respectively.¹⁹ The Chinese case seems to be of particular reference here. In 1978 Beijing started implementing economic reforms based on the capitalist market principles. Even accounting for 2005 reversal of Deng Xiaoping's reforms by the conservative administration of Hu-Wen the country has seen unprecedented economic progress that lies at the basis of its political importance at the beginning of the 21st century. Democratic reforms, although on lips of top officials of the country for some time, might still be ahead of China it seems that the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party is not as staunchly against any liberalisation: the case of Hong Kong (one country, two systems) as well as tentative experiments with 'transparent exercise of power'.²⁰

On the other hand as Azar Gat rightly observes, 'It is widely contended that economic and social development creates pressures for democratization that an authoritarian state structure cannot contain. There is also the view that "closed societies" may be able to excel in mass manufacturing but not in the advanced stages of the information society' (Gat, 2012). Earlier examples of the spread of Internet as well as electronic mass media and social media throughout the region seem to support the modernization/democratization thesis.

Continuing in the same fashion, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2012) identify modernization as a syndrome of social changes related to industrialization. They assert that its capitalist version has prevailed over Marxist understanding. Traditional understanding of modernization theory would dictate that in the case of East Asia, especially the democratization of South Korea and Taiwan, they did consequently reinforce capitalist

dynamics: producing for the world market enables economic growth; investing the returns in human capital and upgrading the workforce to produce high-tech goods brings higher returns and enlarges the educated middle class; once the middle class becomes large and articulate enough, it presses for liberal democracy – the most effective political system for advanced industrial societies. Such comprehension has however been heavily criticised in recent years by the supporters of dependency theory and its broader version, world system theory. As Inglehart and Welzel compellingly put it, since the 1970s, new evidence has emerged to strongly suggest that modernization is much more complicated a social phenomenon than previously conceived.

The new modernization theory differs from its older version in a number of important aspects, of which two are of special interest from the point of view of this paper. First, the rise of post-industrial society brings another set of cultural changes that move in a different direction; instead of bureaucratization and centralization, the new trend is toward an emphasis on individual autonomy and self-expression values, which consequently lead to a growing emancipation from authority, a point further elaborated by Heidi and Alvin Toffler in their phenomenal *Revolutionary Wealth*. Second, modernization does not automatically lead to democracy, but rather, in the long run it does bring about social and cultural changes that make democratization increasingly probable (Inglehart and Welzel 2012). Consequently, beyond a certain point it becomes difficult to avoid democratization, because repressing mass demands for more open societies becomes increasingly costly and detrimental to economic effectiveness, which is what recent political developments in Singapore and to a lesser extent in China confirm.

An objective and observable trend all over the world of the shift from survival to self-expression values has been linked to the rise of post-industrial societies. Facilitated by the emergence of mass communication and especially availability of instant tele-communication technologies based on the development of the Internet, emancipation of individualism seems to ‘spill over’ into societies all over the globe and transcend national, ideological or cultural boundaries. Under such circumstances, the universality of basic human rights, such as the right to speak up and criticize political authorities, comes unquestioned.

In *Revolutionary Wealth*, the Tofflers emphasise the importance of knowledge in post-industrial economies (Toffler and Toffler 2006). Their essential point is that future wealth

will be based on the production and utilization of knowledge rather than on material goods. This kind of arrangement will consequently enforce reorganization of societies from centrally managed communities based on group logic to coordinated communities, not necessarily confined within any political or cultural boundaries, based on the role of individuals as conscious 'pro-sumers'. This can only further undermine the role of the state as the only holder of legitimate force and will consequently loosen the tight grip that some authorities wish to hold on their citizens.

In recent years there have been some democratic developments in China. 'Beneath China's seemingly monolithic political structure, the social infrastructure of democratization is emerging, and it has progressed further than most observers realize. China is now approaching the level of mass emphasis on self-expression values at which Chile, Poland, South Korea, and Taiwan made their transitions to democracy'. Accordingly as long as the Chinese Communist Party leaders control their state's military and security forces, democratic institutions will not emerge at the national level. Nonetheless, the point is that growing mass pressure for liberalization is beginning to appear, and repressing them will bring growing costs in terms of economic inefficiency and low public morale (Inglehart and Welzel, 2012). As Zhengxu Wang asserts '... during the period of 2015-2020, citizens in China will be ready for and will demand a formal democratic government' (Wang 2008, 202).

Democratic Peace theory: will democracy bring harmony in the region?

Democratic peace theory posits that democracies don't go to war with each other (dyadic version). There are a number of explanations elegantly reasoning why this should be the case:

- democratic leaders must answer to the voters for war, and therefore have an incentive to seek alternatives;
- such statesmen have practice settling matters by discussion, not by arms, and do the same in foreign policy;
- democracies view non-democracies or their people as threatening and go to war with them over issues which would have been settled peacefully between democracies;
- democracies tend to be wealthier than other countries, and the wealthy tend to avoid war, having more to lose.

Traditionally, democratic peace theory has been criticised on the basis of statistical significance, definitional aspects (how do we define democracy and wars), methodological scope (small wars vs. big wars and other conflicts) or data availability.

By contrast, the security complex in Asia, just as everywhere else in the world, is underpinned by uncertainty. As such, uncertainty in relations between states is often framed as an existential condition of humankind. It is based on ideational as well as material factors that reinforce each other, mainly ‘other minds problem’ and ‘ambiguous symbolism of weapons’.

The ‘other minds problem’ refers to a situation where it is impossible to know for certain what other players think and consequently how they are going to respond to any particular event in international relations. Realists contend that in a world underpinned by uncertainty and ruled by anarchy, states have no choice but to turn to self-help. This in turn dictates that political leaders distrust other states and maximise the power of their own state as the only guarantor of survival. Cooperation is possible, but being prudent about national security essentially means operating according to the old Latin adage of “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” – if you wish for peace, prepare for war.

Technology as such is neutral. That is to say, it is neither positive nor negative and therefore does not threaten the national security of states by its own virtue. Particular weapons systems likewise bear no threat to national security by the sole fact of their existence. It could even be claimed that nuclear warheads have little relevance to peace or security, as long as they are manufactured and stored properly, and unless they are conceptualised as tools of military strategy. ‘Ambiguous symbolism of weapons’ rests on this very conundrum. A weapons system gains relevance and the potential for destruction or reinforcement of national security only when and to the extent to which it is conceived as such by politicians and generals. On top of that, most weapons are not homogeneous in their application. They can be used for both defensive and offensive purposes. In a nutshell, there is no way of knowing the character of a particular weapon until it is put to use or less indicatively, declared as offensive or defensive.

These two form the very basis of the security dilemma, a phenomenon by which states can perceive the actions of each other as threatening to national security or not. Consequently, as game theory posits, any given players rationally pursuing their self-interests may end up

worse off, which in security studies is referred to as the 'security paradox'. The first part of this paper essentially makes this point with reference to East and Southeast Asia. What follows is an attempt to address this seemingly 'unresolvable' perplexity.

In the rich literature conceptualizing and theorizing the problem of the 'security paradox' there are three major types of logic addressing such a conundrum.

Fatalist logic posits that security competition can never be escaped from in international relations. Among many, human nature and the condition of international anarchy will determine essentially conflicting relationships. This can be exemplified by more or less the same instances as those referring to the security dilemma above.

Mitigator logic essentially allows for amelioration of the security dilemma, at least for the time being, thanks to international institutions, especially regimes and societies. Here Southeast Asia is often analysed from the perspective of regionalization of international relations with emphasis on institutionalization and socialization phenomena.

Transcender logic, following the idea that human society is self-constitutive, posits that humans have agency and are therefore in power to become what they wish. In particular a community of peace and trust is possible even if currently improbable. This logic is essentially tantamount to social constructivism, as much of it focuses on identities of societies and allows changes that will ultimately not only transform the interests of states but perhaps even the structure of international systems (Wendt 1992). So far, the brightest example of such a concept is epitomized in the phenomenon of European integration that has thoroughly reconceptualised and remodelled European societies and consequently states so far that 'war in Europe is truly unthinkable' (Schuman 1950).

Europe of course in that respect is part of the western world and its 'embedded' liberalism. Many academics share the point of view that western liberal democracy as a universally applicable model has no future (Helgesen 2002). So what other democratic options are there? And consequently, if we are reasoning within the paradigm of democratization, what other democratic options might apply in Asia?

Whether based on liberal or civil-republican notions of citizenship, it is the contention of the author of this paper that current developments will inevitably bring more democratic

elements into Asian societies and governance systems that are practised in the region. With that, changes to local identities are likely to follow. What is at stake is not the eradication of local identities, though these more often than not compete with one another or with nationalism imposed by the state (Kinnvall and Jonsson 2002, p. 263). Rather, as in the case of Europe, it is about an emergence of new components of truly Asian identity that will allow individuals, and more importantly whole societies, to view one another as partners sharing common concerns like security.

Peace – democratization – Confucianism nexus

Democratization processes in East and Southeast Asia, as observed by many scholars researching in this field, do not automatically bring about liberal democratic governments. Thus democratization in Asia remains a fairly underdeveloped phenomenon in terms of both procedural and cognitive aspects of governing for the people and by the people. If this is the case, how can societies in the region achieve harmony of interests and build a local ‘security community’?

Karl Deutsch in his seminal study, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, identified two conditions facilitating formation of a pluralistic security community that is the type that European Union has come to represent (Deutsch, et al. 1957). The first one revolved around peaceful interactions of the political units involved. The second revolved around the compatible major values relevant to political decision-making. The former can be more or less easily established on the basis of reciprocity that undermines confidence-building measures, arms limitation regimes or membership in international organizations. The latter however seems to be much more of a challenge, not only due to its elusiveness, but mainly because of its basic normative character that invokes national, religious or ideological characteristics.

In terms of its cultural diversity, Asia remains one of the most heterogeneous continents. East and Southeast Asia are not exceptions in this regard. However, a number of countries in the region are heavily influenced by Confucianism, which should make it viable to build a specific identity bridge between them. Of great relevance in this respect is a convergence argument put forward by various scholars (Hall and Ames 1999, Tan 2003, 2007, Hahn and Bell 2004, Ackerly 2005; Bell 2006; Bai 2008; S. M. Kim 2008, 2011). It serves the purpose of building a coherent and inter-subjective three-fold relationship: the character of

relationships between states (peace), political systems (democracy) and cultural values (Confucianism).

According to proponents of this thesis, there are fundamental similarities between democracy and Confucianism that potentially can serve as a platform for building new forms of government.²¹ In that respect, traditional Confucian values of order and efficiency are seen as especially helpful in building stronger democracies, as they promote societal stability and forge a deep sense of cooperation. Also the Confucian principles of benevolence and reciprocity are identified as those stressing humanism leading to the promotion of democratic 'governments for the people' and are not based on procedural elements that would be characteristic of 'governments by the people' only (Bell 1995).²²

In fact Confucianism is still strong among many societies in East Asia. Even Chinese Communist Party has recently embarked on the revitalization of this ethical and philosophical system as a cornerstone of a new/old normative basis. Daniel Bell of Tsinghua University even suggests that perhaps one day Chinese Communist Party might actually become Chinese Confucian Party (Bell, 1995, p. 3-18, Whitehead 2002, p. 6-26).

The region analysed in this paper, East and Southeast Asia, is however not exclusively influenced by Confucian values. China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam are noticeably rich with Confucian legacies. Although we do not know what is in fact happening within North Korean society, North Korea arguably should fall into the same category. Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, all players in the regional security complex, represent three distinct cultures largely underlined by three different religions: Islam, Buddhism and Christianity respectively.

There have been numerous volumes written on relationship between Islam and politics in general and Muslim values and democracy in particular (Lewis, 1996). Recent events in the Middle East and North Africa relating to the continuation of the third wave of democratization seem to negate all claims about the basic incompatibility of Islam and Democracy (Council and Foreign Relations 2011). On the other hand, examples of Christian democrats acting to a large extent as founders of European Communities confirm what the Vatican has claimed from the beginning of the twentieth century about the links between human rights, democracy and European integration (Chelini-Pont 2010).

Doh Chull Shin, in his latest analysis on the relationship between Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia, agrees with scholars such as Amartya Sen, Francis Fukuyama, William de Bary, Donald K Emmerson, Stephen Levine, Diane Mauzy and Mark Thomson that the Asian Values thesis is basically wrong on numerous levels. Perhaps most importantly, there are no specific 'Asian values'. Those that are oftentimes seen as exclusively Asian such as authority, consensus, harmony and order, are also shared by many other cultures. The same goes to paternalism, reciprocity and familism, which are not exclusively Asian. Indeed they are arguably simply human. It follows logically that there is no fundamental incongruence between democracy and Confucianism on the one hand and any other religiously or philosophically based societal system on the other.

Consequently there is an objective and urgent need among East and Southeast Asian decision makers, as well as societies at large, to recognise basic human values that could and should serve as a normative basis for the construction of regional identity that would lead to the emergence of a truly embedded security community. Community that is based on human values in a regional geographical context where processes of democratization exist will inevitably foster the inter-subjective awareness of common values such as peace. In other words, democratization processes on their own will not necessarily bring about automatic peace and harmonious community in the region, but an intentional building of common identity aided by democratization should lead to achieving such.

Arguably, changes in the direction of political pluralism and democratization will most likely bring about greater security dilemma sensitivity. A phenomenon by which actors intend and are capable of perceiving motives behind acts of foreign or domestic politics therefore shows responsiveness towards the potential complexity of the military intentions of others (Booth and Wheeler, 2008). In the case of East and Southeast Asia, that would be tantamount to understanding that nationalistic stances in say China or Japan are to a great extent designed for domestic audiences. In particular, as Booth and Wheeler indicate, security dilemma sensitivity refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behaviour, including crucially the role that one's own actions may play in provoking that fear. In other words, Chinese policy makers need to understand how their assertiveness is perceived by neighbouring nations. Usually woven in defensive rhetoric, Chinese acts of foreign policy are more often than not seen as essentially offensive. This argument may and

should naturally be turned around and put forward against Japan, Vietnam, South Korea and all other states that are involved in territorial disputes in the region.

Drawing conclusions: from classical power politics to perpetual harmony?

As of the beginning of the twenty-first century, East and Southeast Asian politics are pretty much stuck in the nineteenth century, where ‘gunboat diplomacy’ features in international relations. Consequently, coercion and control seem to be preferred security strategies resulting in a ubiquitous security paradox. The regional arms race mentioned in the first part of this paper, juxtaposed with territorial disputes undermined by economic and nationalistic tensions, make a classic case for security studies experts seeking to account for alternatives based on a consensual approach.

Admittedly, existing regional institutions of cooperation such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and especially its Regional Forum - ARF, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) or SCO (The Shanghai Cooperation Organization) tend to be ineffective. This is partly due to large membership size (the ASEAN Regional Forum, which seems to be the most proper platform to address security problems in the region, includes 27 member states) or due to exclusive character (it takes ASEAN Plus Three to include China, Japan and Korea into the structure.²³ This configuration however focuses mainly on economic issues. Alternatively, the weakness of institutionalism in the region could be attributed to the lack of Asian identity, which excludes Asian political leaders from thinking in terms of the whole region.²⁴ As John Ikenberry (2012) affirms:

*...it is highly unlikely the region will merge existing institutions into a singular regional organization, such as an Asian version of the European Union (EU). Rather, there will be a wide array of institutions operating semi-independently. Asia is and will remain a layered cake of regional institutions. [...] Finally, these multilateral institutions and groupings are consistent with America's bilateral security pacts. The US and the other countries in the region do not need to choose between the old alliances and new multilateral security arrangements. Both have a role.*²⁵

To address the puzzle of security complex resolution in the region of East and Southeast Asia, this paper invokes the general tenets of the liberal peace theory in its dyadic form. The

processes of democratization in the region, undeniably present, have not produced western style liberal democracies so far and are not likely to produce them in the near future. Scholars vary in their theories with regards to the reasons behind such developments (underdevelopments) of democracy. Suffice it to say, that cultural theories based on the character of regional social norms influenced by philosophical systems such as Confucianism or prevailing religions such as Islam or Buddhism seem to exclude democratic developments. The author claims that first, there is nothing in their social norms that should prevent all nations of East and Southeast Asia from arriving at democratic political systems in the future (though not necessarily liberal democratic systems). Second, indeed the only viable key to the region's transcending the security paradox lies at the very foundation of their normative basis – social norms. These, after careful study, turn out to be universal norms based on values of humanity shared by all nations or ethnicities but expressed in the regional context. Transcendence therefore is viable as long as the democratization process (underlined by the emancipation of individuals) is paired with conscious building of a genuine regional common identity denominator, a task that should be undertaken by political elites as well as the intellectual avant-garde. This offers a fertile ground for further analysis relevant for broad circles of policy makers, academics and the public.

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Notes

¹ A day later the captain and the crew were released by the Japanese Coastguard after the Chinese Consulate in Fukuoka guaranteed payment of a 4 million yen (USD ca. 43,000). See more at Gazette 2013.

² In 2006 Vladimir Putin offered the Island of Shikotan but the Japanese government declined the offer on the basis of claiming full sovereignty over all four Kuril Islands.

³ The Delta itself has been reported shrinking in recent years. To make matters worse Vietnam rice crops are vulnerable to rising sea level and severe weather conditions.

⁴ That is of course even when one factors the inflation and currency appreciation across the region. Regional expenditure rose by 13% in nominal terms – from US\$258.96bn in 2010 to US\$294.04bn in 2011. (The Military Balance 2012, p. 209).

⁵ Interestingly, the Chinese have also been recently reported to achieve initial operational capability of its DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile. See The Military Balance (2012, p. 212) for more.

⁶ Japan is already the site of one American X-band radar, officially known as the AN/TPY-2, which is a central element in a complex technical architecture for identifying ballistic missiles and coordinating a defense by interceptors.

⁷ Under a 2001 accord, South Korea had been prevented from developing and deploying ballistic missiles with a range of more than 300km (186 miles) because of concerns this could trigger a regional arms race. The new capabilities will allow South Korea to cover the whole of the North, along with parts of China and Japan (BBC NEWS Asia 2012b).

⁸ Explained in later parts of this paper.

⁹ For deeper analysis of regional security paradox, please refer to Till (2012, p. 432-433).

¹⁰ In mid-September some major Japanese brands closed down their factories in China amid rising tensions between the two countries. See more at Reuters (2012a).

¹¹ Ninety per cent of global trade by volume travels by sea, and 25 per cent of that, approximately 50,000 vessels a year, travels through a 1.7-mile-wide sliver of ocean at the Strait of Malacca. See more at Schwartz and Greenert (2012).

¹² For a telling argumentation see Honda (2012).

¹³ A society divided between a large improvised mass and a small favoured elite results, according to Lipset, either in oligarchy (traditionalist dictatorships found in parts of Latin America, Thailand, Spain or Portugal) or in tyranny (exemplified by communist regimes in Asia and Eastern Europe).

¹⁴ The World Factbook at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html#ch> [Accessed 11 September 2013].

¹⁵ For example China had 22,500,000 internet users in 2000 compared to 538,000,000 in 2012. See more at Internet World Stats (2013).

¹⁶ Democracy by itself as defined by Laurence Whitehead (2002, p.6-26), is best understood not as a non-predetermined end state, but as a long-term and somewhat open-ended outcome.

¹⁷ It is no place to laboriously and in a detailed fashion consider each and every country from that perspective. Instead a general approach will suffice for the purpose of this paper.

¹⁸ Even the ‘repressed’ economy of North Korea has recently seen the introduction of market economy elements. Recently international media were busy reporting news on the decisions taken in Pyongyang indicating North Korea might allow farmers to keep surplus food to sell or barter. “Peasants will have incentive to grow more food. They can keep and sell in the

market about 30-50 per cent of their harvest depending on the region” (see Boghani 2012 and Reuters, 2012 for more).

¹⁹ The new regulations allow even foreign developers to lease land in Vietnam. In the case of China, the Property Law introduced in 2007 protects the rights of private investors allowing them to possess, utilize, dispose of and obtain profits from the real property under the category of ‘ownership rights’.

²⁰ In March 2009 county-level Party Committees launched by the Party’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Organization Department of the Party’s Central Committee initiated a pilot project aimed at promoting “transparent exercise of power” in three localities. Next year it was expanded to include 69 counties across People’s Republic of China. See Lu (2013) for more.

²¹ See Shin (2012, p. 63-65) for more.

²² Institutionally speaking relevant is a model ‘Confucian democracy’ proposed by Bell (1995).

²³ See more on weaknesses of ASEAN at Friedrichs (2012, p.754-776).

²⁴ The 21st ASEAN Summit in November last year serves a good example here. The summit produced no agreement towards South China Sea disputes, as the Philippines and Vietnam prefer a multilateral approach to the problem, whereas Cambodia and Laos supported a resolution based on bilateral negotiations with China. See Bland (2012) for more.

²⁵ There is however a considerable drive towards some kind of political community based on the East Asia Summit designed to lead to the creation of an East Asian Community. This idea is however marred by the potential leadership disputes between China and Japan. See more at Breslin (2007).

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