Can Military Normalization in Japan and Opcon Transfer in South Korea Enhance Regional Stability? A Conflict Management Framework for Rivalry Dyads

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Much conventional thinking on conflict in Northeast Asia assumes Japan's military normalization and South Korea's operational control (opcon) transfer will increase tensions and heighten the risks of violent conflict. This paper will argue it is time to review and reassess such thinking by asking whether military normalization in Japan and opcon transfer in South Korea can enhance regional stability and peace. Using an interdisciplinary approach comprised of theoretical elements from the literature on rivalry dyads, historical grievance discourse analysis and conflict management, this paper creates a framework of 'conflict management process flow' in an attempt to lessen issue dissonance and reassess these two policies. The paper begins with a basic introduction of the issue at hand, followed by an explanation of what is termed a process map of conflict management flow-a tool for reframing rivalries. Section three is a general discussion of tensions and conflict in NE Asia, guided by the concepts of rivalry dyad and status dilemma. The paper proceeds with two case study sections. The first being an examination of military normalization by Japan and its possible affect on rival neighbors; the second discussing the issue of opcon transfer in South Korea and its possible affect on rival neighbors. The paper concludes with thoughts on the prospects for enhanced regional stability should military normalization in Japan and opcon transfer in South Korea occur. This paper may be unique in its attempt to evaluate these policies as elements of the conflict management process and harbingers of peace.

Key Words: conflict, enduring rivalry, Japan, military, Northeast Asia, South Korea

Northeast (NE) Asia is a rather unique region in terms of international relations; it has two developed, democratic states, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea), lacking full sovereignty in their exercise of military

power. Japan's constraint of sovereignty is housed in Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, a constitution imposed by a World War II victor, the United States (US), on the vanquished Japanese. Article 9 states, "...the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." South Korea also had its sovereignty constrained by US policymakers. During the Korean War (1950-1953), the US took operational control (opcon) of South Korean armed forces, a situation that continues in the present; this means it is the US and not South Korea with military control of South Korean forces in times of war. The de facto outcome of these arrangements is that neither Japan nor South Korea has full flexibility of response or policy in times of strategic crisis, when threats and/or the escalation of force may be warranted or necessary to signal resolve. Both the revision of Article 9 in Japan, and opcon transfer back to the Korean state, are hotly debated topics in their respective countries and among regional neighbors, generating tensions that threaten to evolve into open, violent conflict.

Relatively recently, a confluence of events has coalesced to create a rise of strategic tensions in NE Asia. These events include the economic and political rise of China; the US pivot to Asia; North Korea's ongoing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs; the 2010 sinking of the South Korean naval corvette Cheonan; the shelling of South Korean territory by North Korea; conflict escalations over the Senkakus/Diaoyus territorial dispute; continued tensions over the Dokdo/Takeshima territorial dispute; the reinterpretation of Article 9 of Japan's constitution by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's government; and the continued animosity over historical grievances toward Japan by South Korea and China, to name just some of the issues weighing on the region. Keeping recent events in perspective can be a difficult task for even the most ardent NE Asia watcher, as events play out across the structural, interstate, domestic and individual levels of analysis common in international relations theory. In addition, analysis must deal with a truly unique situation. The "normalization" of Japan's military (the moniker given to the reinterpretation of Article 9 and associated policies) and opcon transfer in South Korea are an adjustment to flexibility and control of policymaking that are endogenous to each state, respectively. That is, neither increases the relative power of Japan or South Korea at the expense of rivals, nor in and of themselves increase power in material terms for either state. Both are simply a loosening of constraints that do not necessarily signal a preference for enhanced offensive military capability. In fact, the Japanese government has yet to ask for a referendum to alter Article 9 (as required by its democratic constitution) and South Korea has asked for and received another delay of opcon transfer beyond its scheduled December 2015 date (Harper 2014). Nonetheless, such

changes spark rising tensions with NE Asian neighbors.

Present orthodoxy seems to dictate that normalization of the Japanese military and Korean opcon transfer will add fuel to the fire of already rising regional tensions. This paper is meant as a review and assessment of that orthodoxy. It is not unreasonable to question whether the perpetuation of constrained sovereignty, in the form of military limitations, leads to incongruities in regional relations that keep tensions high. Therefore, this paper asks the question: can Japan's military normalization and South Korea's acceptance of opcon transfer enhance the prospects of peace in NE Asia? Though numerous writings have addressed rising conflict tensions in NE Asia as a consequence of military normalization and opcon transfer, this paper may be unique in its attempt to evaluate these policies as elements of the conflict management process and harbingers of peace.

In this vein, it is important for the reader to acknowledge that conflict management is often a convoluted, layered and drawn out process. In interstate affairs, it tends to be undertaken in the most complex of scenarios, where multiple variables or events of seeming lesser importance must be dealt with before working on more intractable issues. For tensions in NE Asia, the setting is no different. The context—the environment in which the conflict, the subsequent negotiation and the bargaining process take place, which is shaped by factors such as the history of the conflict, the previous interactions of the parties and the international environment (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009, 23)—is complex. As noted in numerous books, articles and other outlets, the structural reality in NE Asia is that two great powers—China and the US—are vying for influence, and this has led to tensions in their relationship. They are undeniably the most important dyad in the region from a security standpoint. Nonetheless, their behavior is also constrained by the behavior of other actors.

A weakness in this paper may very well be that it does not analyze the China-US dyad. From the perspectives of structural realism or security studies, this may be a damning oversight. However, if one determines that the China-US dyad is the most important, then stabilizing their peaceful relations becomes the end-game. As tantalizing as solving the end-game dilemma can be, in conflict management terms, first one must dispense with the multiple layers that feed the tensions of the over-arching, structural conflict. This paper looks at two of those layers in NE Asia, military normalization and opcon transfer. It then tries to frame them in the conflict management process to offer a new perspective from which to view each policy. This is an attempt to utilize a multidimensional lens when viewing the conflict region in hopes of providing more contextual specificity to the region—a mark of recent nontraditional approaches to conflict resolution (*Ibid.*, 16).

At a fundamental level, the question is whether cooperation, as opposed to ten-

sion in certain security terms, would become the chosen mode of interaction among states, if the same sovereign control of military forces existed for all rivals in NE Asia. Normally, such ruminations might invite an inquiry of power parity or power preponderance (balance of power or balance of threat), perhaps a security dilemma or spiraling effect analysis, or a Realist or Liberal analysis. Yet, as remarked earlier, Japan's normalization and Korea's opcon transfer do not change material capability nor do they constrain rival states' options or decrease rivals' relative power, rather they signal a process change that may alter conflict behavior. Therefore, rather than analyze one facet of these policies in terms of material capability or tit-for-tat responses and probabilities, this paper tries to reorient and reframe the policies in conflict management terms.

In order to do this, the next section of the paper offers a 'process map of conflict management flow' within which to frame East Asian rivalries. The map is a tool to help identify where an issue may be placed in the conflict management process. The subsequent section defines the terms of inquiry. This will entail a general exposition on the region of NE Asia, choosing a construct for analysis and negating the use of security dilemma-type analysis for regional actors. The construct for analysis will focus primarily on three dyads in NE Asia: Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korea-North Korea. Section four will be an examination of military normalization in Japan and its affect on regional neighbors. It will be argued that Japan is first and foremost in a status dilemma with China and plagued by domestic politics and historical memory in all of its dyads. The case of Japan will be followed by a study of military opcon transfer in South Korea and how this will affect regional neighbors. Using primarily discourse analysis, an argument is made that a normalization of alliance relations and full sovereignty of South Korea will undermine North Korean propaganda and may lead to altered calculations by North Korea in the two Koreas dyad. The paper will conclude by offering the prospects for enhanced regional stability if military normalization continues in Japan and opcon transfer occurs in South Korea. If one begins with the basic assumption that none of the rival states in NE Asia want a full-blown war with another, then this method of inquiry offers a spectrum of opportunity to decrease tensions and enhance peace.

FRAMING EAST ASIAN RIVALRIES

The policies of military normalization and opcon transfer as aids for regional peace are what this paper is trying to assess. As such, these are practical policy considerations that do not rise to grand theory. Yet, leaders must consider the

strategic environment if they desire to avoid an escalation of conflict during these transitions. To assess these practical policies, this paper introduces a process map of conflict management flow identifying general steps of action from status quo to conflict resolution (see figure 1). The point of the process map is to present a breakdown of the general issue areas and how they are linked to actor actions during the conflict. It is also to provide some clarity on the separation of major issues within the dyad context.

The process map starts from the status quo, which is a current grouping of contentious issues that require actors to negotiate. The process map ends at conflict resolution. Conflict resolution here follows the Goertz and Regan standards: a fundamental change in dyadic relationships where the resort to militarized actions is no longer necessary (1997, 323). This is different from conflict management where there is a reduction of conflict levels within a dyadic relationship, without eliminating all hostilities. Rivals therefore will still view their relationship in militarized terms. Conflict management looks at the short-term and medium-term time frames —the medium term being a détente of sorts (an elongated period of non-militarized confrontation that entails some negotiated frameworks) (*Ibid*.). The long-term time frame is the resolved conflict. Therefore, in simple terms, the process map covers short-, medium- and long-term possibilities.

Figure 1. Process Map of Conflict Management Flow for NE Asia Dyads: Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korea-North Korea
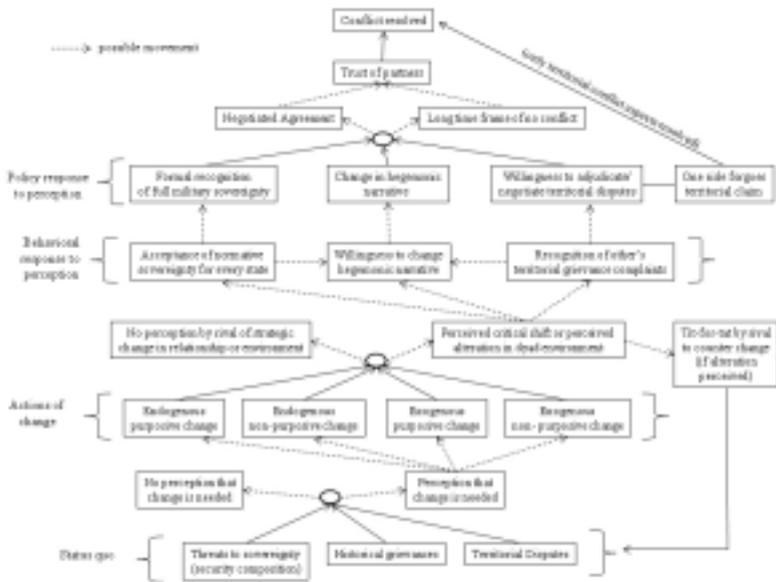
From the beginning, the status quo can either prompt an actor to perceive a change is necessary or determine no change is necessary. If a perception for change is determined, the actor will either do nothing (locked into the status quo unable to choose or implement a policy) or choose to follow a policy action of change. The actions of change can either be endogenous (within the dyad) or exogenous (when dyad dynamics are affected by outside actions, such as conflict management in another dyad). These endogenous and exogenous actions can be either purposive (actions specifically designed for conflict management) or non-purposive (actions not designed specifically for conflict management but with a consequence that aids conflict management) (see Andersen et al. 2001, 240-241). Endogenous and exogenous actions can lead to three probable outcomes: no perception of change in the dyad relationship or environment; a perceived "critical shift" in the dyad relationship or environment; or an alteration to the relationship or environment that is not perceived as strategic. If no perception of change is internalized, then the status quo is not fundamentally changed; the action is simply absorbed as one more aspect of the prevailing status quo. If an alteration is perceived that does not rise to strategic change, a tit-for-tat policy by the rival can be expected and a 'new' status quo, which accounts for these reciprocal policy interactions, begins. However, if an endogenous or exogenous action leads to the perception of a critical shift in the dyad relationship or environment, then a behavioral response to that action is expected.

Both Wehner (2010) and Lind (2013) contend that a perceived critical shift—a crisis of discourse or a significant perhaps dire change in the strategic environment—to the dyad dynamic is necessary to spark a change in actor behavior. For Wehner, this is a crisis of discourse, when the public perceives the domestic discourse of "othering" does not match policy initiatives; for Lind, it is a shift in the strategic security environment increasing the security threat perception of a rival that will induce behavioral change. In process terms, this behavioral change would most likely manifest in acceptance of another actor's desired change, recognition of another actor's claims, or willingness to address an issue of contention by interactive means. Such a behavioral response can give rise to a subsequent policy response. Nonetheless, any number of factors can keep a policy response from reaching fruition. These may include alliance politics, domestic political concerns, other actor changes that affect willingness to move forward or any other of a number of factors. These policy responses, with positive reinforcement and feedback, can in turn give rise to negotiated agreements (formal or informal) and enhanced trust, which in the long-term, can lead to conflict resolution. Policy responses can also encounter difficulties, whether endogenous or exogenous, that can derail the management process and lead to tit-for-tat

exchanges or the solidifying of a new status quo. The management process is fraught with obstacles, some of which may be unassailable, and therefore, at any point in time, the management process could collapse leading to the deterioration of relations and a return to a new status quo.

Figure 1 is a process map that is reflective of each of the individual dyads in NE Asia under study here: Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korea-North Korea. The status quo for each individual dyad consists of the major issues of contention: threats to sovereignty (which includes security composition and military capabilities), historical grievances and territorial disputes. These happen to correspond relatively well to the definition of Vasquez (1996) requiring a rivalry to have issues, contention over those issues and psychological hostility. Obviously, Japan's military normalization and South Korea's opcon transfer are changes to the status quo. In terms of dyad relations, each would be considered an 'endogenous non-purposive change' that falls at the 'actions for change' level of the conflict. Why this is so will be elucidated in the subsequent sections.

DEFINING THE TERMS OF INQUIRY

To answer any question the terms of inquiry must be determined. For the question of military normalization and opcon transfer in conflict management terms, the most obvious elements are NE Asia, Japan, South Korea, strategic security and conflict. Although these elements are easily discernible within the question, they do not provide a construct for analysis in and of themselves. To answer our question, we must choose and define our elements without overlooking the fact that these are parts of a much larger whole.

THE REGION OF NORTHEAST ASIA

For the purposes of this paper, NE Asia consists of the People's Republic of China (China), Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea), the Republic of China (Taiwan), Russia and the United States. The region is dynamic politically, economically and culturally, and it has a history riddled with conflict. It is a region marked by heterogeneity of regime type, with democratic and authoritarian regimes of varying degrees; heterogeneity of economic development, with developed OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member economies and lesser developed economies; and cultural heterogeneity, with numerous ethnic and linguistic groups calling the region home.

Strategically speaking, NE Asia is not the most congenial political region in the

world. Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd referred to East Asia as a "maritime Balkans", observing it as "riven with overlapping alliances, loyalties and hatred" with a rise in "primitive, almost atavistic nationalism" (Rudd 2013). He also noted its strategic complexity where "at least six states or political entities are engaged in territorial disputes with China, three of which are close strategic partners of the United States" (*Ibid*.). Rudd's assessment may be a bit strong and on the negative side, but it is descriptively rich. It is important to note that in Rudd's maritime Balkans, NE Asian states account for the bulk of the firepower. In fact, when considering global military firepower, five of the seven states mentioned are listed in the top ten most powerful states, six in the top fifteen and only one (North Korea) does not reach top thirty status (Global Firepower 2015). Nevertheless, Shim and Flamm make a salient analytical point when they remind readers that "restricted decision-making in foreign policy as well as the constrained projection of a country's own power capabilities" is a "rather (neglected) reality that all actors in the region face" (2012, 5-6). They note rightly that neither China, Japan, Russia nor the US can project power easily over others in the region, even though these are populous, militarily strong, economic powerhouses. This is in part due to geopolitical considerations—Japan and Taiwan are island nations, South Korea is a peninsular state and the US relies heavily on basing agreements with alliance partners for a military presence. Shim and Flamm remind readers that these constraints of power projection are all too noticeable in the case of North Korea, where no single state or group of states can seemingly curtail the progression of its nuclear weapons or ballistic missile programs (ibid), and such constraints are an intrinsic aspect of Japan and South Korea, two states with constrained sovereignty. These constraints highlight all too well the idea that multiple layers exist and must be accounted for in a conflict management process. Although parsimony may be aided by a focus on one dyad to explain regional tensions, say the China-US dyad, China and the US do not control the actions of other states in the region, even if they do possess heavy influence, such as that of the US with its allies Japan and South Korea. As stated previously, all actors in the region must operate in an environment of structural competition between China and the US, and their competition greatly affects the other actors. Nonetheless, a more realistic landscape, especially from a conflict management perspective, is that of numerous actors in numerous conflicts with varying amounts of agency.

To summarize, one might say the region is a tense, conflict riven area filled with states unable to easily project power capabilities and influence other actors yet still willing to use force for territorial revision, and where states in general believe in the idea of state sovereignty though granting full sovereignty or military sov-

ereignty to South Korea and Japan are still unacceptable to some actors. This is an important context to note for the inability to impose one's will demonstrates a parity of influence and/or strength in the region that may open the possibility for conflict resolution processes or can prolong or escalate an already tense conflictive status quo.

THE CONSTRUCT OF ENDURING RIVALRY

Although NE Asia may indeed be a complex and dangerous neighborhood, there has been much study on the region and some useful constructs developed. We are focusing on the policies of military normalization and opcon transfer, therefore, to lessen issue dissonance in some sense, it is best to focus on the major actors affected by these policy choices. These appear to be Japan, China, South Korea and North Korea. This is not say our other major actor in the region, the US, is not affected. Nevertheless, a loosening of constraints on Japan and South Korea would give both states more flexibility in addressing conflicts, which means the US would become more reactive to these actors' choices, having lost a modicum of control—direct control in the case of South Korea. This also means other states in the region, which may currently view Japan and South Korea as clients of the US with little agency, may need to elevate their concerns regarding these actors' abilities to act alone when strategic tensions heighten.

Considering the aforementioned, a fitting construct for our purposes is found in the literature regarding strategic or enduring rivalries. This construct allows for a narrowing of complexity by focusing on two states with troubled relations. The construct does not negate the importance of exogenous influences on the dyad, but they can be viewed from the focal point of the dyad thereby lessening issue dissonance. One element of discord in the literature is agreement on the definition of rivalry, be it strategic rivalry or enduring rivalry. Prins seems to sidestep the issue by writing "despite the minor difference of opinion, rivalry scholars appear to agree that militarized competition between states, a heightened sense of threat perception, and an expectation of future conflict characterize rivalry" (2005, 326). Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson's extensive examination of 173 dyads from six different definitions of rivalry concludes that a consensus coalesces around only twenty-three dyads, two of which are China-Japan and South Korea-North Korea (2007, 38-57). Depending on the definition, a China-Japan rivalry ended either in 1945, 1951, 1958 or 1999; the South Korea-North Korea rivalry has been ongoing since 1945.

The definition preferred for this paper, due to its clarity of description, is given by Vasquez. He defines rivalry as "a relationship characterized by extreme competition, and usually psychological hostility, in which the issue positions of con-

tenders are governed primarily by their attitude toward each other rather than by the stakes at hand" (Vasquez 1996, 532). The definition may not lead to easily identifiable or quantifiable dispute-density measurement—the process of identifying rivalry dyads by the frequency of militarized disputes over some specified time period (see Goertz and Diehl 1993; Colaresi et al. 2007, 15)—but its contextualization of a rivalry expands its utility and it does not include the intimately linked duality of competitor and enemy (a new perceptual approach in Colaresi et al. 2007). Vasquez deepens his notions of rivalry by explaining that the underlying issues of rivalry are driven by viewing these contentious issues from an "actor dimension", which is driven by hostility or other negative affect, as opposed to a "stake dimension", which is driven by a cost-benefit analysis. This negative driven actor dimension is reinforced by the relative parity of power between the actors, enabling neither to impose their will on the other. This in turn leads to actors being unable to make a decision without agreement of the other. Ultimately, the actor dimension "results from persistent disagreement and the use of negative acts which build up negative affect" leading to all issues of contention becoming linked in an "us versus them" mentality. Taken together, Vasquez determines three characteristics of a rivalry: (a) the issues which are the foundation of the rivalry, (b) the contention over the issues, which between equals give rise to persistent disagreement, and (c) psychological hostility, which arises from the persistent disagreement (1996, 532-533). As stated earlier, these characteristics are reflective of the major issues of contention within our dyads, deemed the status quo, in figure 1: threats to sovereignty, historical grievances and territorial disputes.

According to Vasquez's extensive empirical study of war and rivals, contiguousness and territorial disputes are significant factors for engaging in dyadic wars. Noncontiguous states are more likely to be drawn into a war due to multilateral obligations (*Ibid.*). Senese and Vasquez corroborate this by writing "territorial issues, if handled in a certain way, are posited as the most war prone. Territorial issues are intrinsically salient and attract hard-line domestic constituencies, which makes compromise difficult" (Senese and Vasquez 2008, 2). Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson conclude that "spatial overtones" (i.e. territorial aspects of disputes) are more likely to lead to conflict escalation than "positional overtones" (i.e. position in the international or regional hierarchy), and these spatial overtones are exacerbated by proximity. However, when both spatial and positional are salient in a subsystem, it is less likely that one type of rivalry is more war prone (Colaresi et al. 2007, 188). Kinsella and Russett also conclude that inducements to conflict are proximity, contiguity and major power status (2002, 1052). The idea that relative power parity reinforces the viewing of issues from

the actor dimension is upheld by Alsharabati and Kugler, who conclude that if the status quo is not agreed by rivals then parity will lead to confrontation (2008, 373), and by Hwang and Kugler who conclude that the absence of power parity in NE Asia makes the probability of war minimal in the short-term (1998, 109). However, this study was in 1998, and power parity conditions have converged for a number of players in the region.

In addition to the structural and interactive elements of power parity and the issues of territorial contestation (whether contiguous or noncontiguous), the aspect of conflict continuation must be considered. Levy and Thompson remind us that much has been written supporting the idea that history plays an important role in conflict escalation for rival dyads. "Empirical findings do suggest that (a) earlier disputes make later disputes more probable, and (b) the greater the number of disputes or crises between rivals, the greater the probability that any subsequent dispute or crisis between them will escalate to war" (Levy and Thompson 2010, 58). A logical corollary is the perpetuation of disagreement over time makes conflict mitigation more difficult for elites in a rivalry dyad, but putting this into more operational terms is useful. This perpetuation of disagreement generally leads to the "us versus them" mentality that is manifested in a hegemonic narrative of "the other". This hegemonic narrative is the outcome of history as grievance, the idea that historical wrongs have not been atoned for by the perpetrators of those wrongs in a rivalry dyad. Wehner (2010) provides an excellent case study of Chile and Bolivia that explicates the ideas of historical grievance and hegemonic narrative. These aspects of conflict are more easily ascertained through practical case study examples, so they will be expounded on in the Japan and Korea cases presented later in the paper. However, both Wehner and Lind (2013) contend these are symptoms of deeper issues which are actually the causes of conflict, though conflict is more easily perpetuated through the inability to alleviate the symptoms of historical grievance.

STATUS NOT SECURITY DILEMMA

The dyad construct seems ideal for focusing attention on state-centered conflicts without losing sight of the region's overall strategic picture. The construct of enduring rivalries allows us to frame our main actors into three significant dyads: Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korean-North Korea. As this is a paper dealing with alleviating military constraints on particular actors, it would be appropriate to address the idea of status in our main dyads.

First, although there is talk of an arms race in NE Asia (Hardy 2014; Kang 2013), this is not due to a security dilemma. In his conceptual analysis of the security dilemma, Tang cuts to the quick when he trims a security dilemma down to

three essential elements: (a) anarchy (which leads to uncertainty, fear and the need for self-help for survival or security), (b) a lack of malign intentions on both sides and (c) some accumulation of power (including offensive capabilities) (2009, 595). South Korea and North Korea are still technically at war and they have engaged militarily on numerous occasions, though mostly defensively by the South. As for our other two dyads, although elements one and three are present, a lack of malign intentions is ambiguous at best, since no power can impose its will on the others regarding territorial disputes, which have been points of contention with military escalations. Japan and South Korea seem unlikely to get embroiled in a war, though Korea perceives malign intent from Japan due to its territorial claims to Dokdo/Takeshima. China and Japan have escalated military tensions of the Senkakus/Diaoyus territory and both perceive malign intent from the other.

Although the South Korea-North Korea dyad is cast in war (with only a truce agreement) and Japan-South Korea may have no 'dilemma' per se from a theoretical perspective, it seems that the China-Japan dyad may be caught in a status dilemma. A status dilemma occurs when a newly enhanced state believes it should be accorded higher status but other actors refuse to grant it. In this case, both China and Japan are seeking status changes at the global and regional levels, and the actions to make those changes are overlapping and add to their rivalry. In a status dilemma, the enhanced state attempts to rectify this "status dissonance" possibly through assertive action. Such actions may lead to arms racing, rivalry, crisis and war. According to Wohlforth, "the implications of the status dilemma are analogous to the security dilemma" (2014, 118-119) —states will take actions to secure their own status, which may undermine another state's position, leading that state to take countermeasures leading to a spiral of status competition. Important to consider is the fact that solving the security problem will not necessarily solve the status problem (Ibid.). Therefore, positional overtones in the rivalry remain for which leaders must contend. We can now use our rivalry dyad construct through which to view our cases of Japan's military normalization and South Korea's opcon transfer.

MILITARY NORMALIZATION AND SIGNIFICANT DYAD RELATIONS

As noted earlier, there are three significant dyads of concern in this examination: Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korea-North Korea. Two of which-Japan—China and South Korea—North Korea-are consensus rivalry dyads

depending on the period of history. The policies of Japan's military normalization affect each of these dyads differently. This section considers military normalization in terms of the individual dyads most directly affected. Of course military normalization will also affect relations directly with the US, but the US is not in a rivalry dyad with Japan so considering the affects from a conflict management dyad is not presented here. As well, although North Korea would be affected, security priorities for that regime tend toward provocations by the US and South Korea, as opposed to direct provocations from Japan. Therefore, analyzing the affect on North Korea seems unwarranted for this paper's purpose.

THE JAPAN-CHINA DYAD AND MILITARY NORMALIZATION

We have already determined that China and Japan may be locked in a status dilemma. In fact, status may be the root cause for military normalization in Japan. Some press is devoted to the idea that the Abe Shinzo administration and its conservative allies in Japan are pushing for military normalization to recapture Japan's sovereignty and end the humiliation of an imposed constitution that limits military action (Takahashi 2013; Lind 2014). Although this is certainly the case in some respects, military normalization began entering the mainstream after the first Persian Gulf War, when Japan was accused of "checkbook diplomacy", unbefitting the second biggest economic power in the world. Other actors, particularly the US, felt Japan should be contributing not just money but also men and material to the war effort and to the maintenance of world peace more generally. This perception of inferior status began a process of reinterpretation of Article 9 that continues today. Nonetheless, the catalysts fueling normalization today are the very real security challenges of a nuclear armed North Korea and a rising China (Yuzawa 2014; Atanassova-Cornelis 2010).

Military normalization is a moniker to describe a number of legal and military policies that taken together stretch the limits of Article 9. Ultimate normalization of sovereignty in the anarchic international system would be a constitutional revision to Article 9 to allow full flexibility of military force for offensive and defensive purposes. This goes beyond the reinterpretation of Article 9, as a constitutional referendum must be held, gaining a majority of public support, and both houses of the Diet must uphold the referendum by a two-thirds vote, to change the constitution in democratic Japan. The likelihood of a referendum is not likely at this time (see Tsuruoka and Kujiraoka 2014; Inoue and Gough 2014; Iinuma 2014; Michishita 2014).

Military policies, on the other hand, have continued unabated for some time, with notable expansion in the use of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Military doctrine has seen a shift from the Basic Defense Force doctrine, in place since

1976, to the Dynamic Defense Force doctrine of 2010, to Abe's new "proactive pacifism" (Fouse 2011; Miller 2014). Changes in doctrine have been accompanied by a legal process and legal changes that enable the SDF to operate regionally and globally. These include the Higuchi Report (1994), which argued for a more active military role overseas; the revised US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines (1997) and the "Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan" (1999), which enabled Japan to take greater security measures during a crisis in NE Asia; the "Law Concerning Ship Inspection Activities in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan" (2000), which enabled joint inspections by Japan and the United States of shipping on the high seas; special emergency laws allowing the SDF to provide non-combat roles and support overseas in response to terrorism; Prime Minister Aso Taro's anti-piracy legislation (2009), which reinterpreted the "maritime police clause" of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces Act; and the reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow collective self-defense by the Abe administration in 2014 (see Kim 2011; Taylor and Walsh, 2014). The legal shifts have allowed for the building of a Japanese defense base overseas in Djibouti, peace-keeping operations in the South Sudan, military non-combat missions to Iraq and Afghanistan, anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, to name some of the most high-profile operations.

Japan's changes in policy lead to discord in the Japan-China rivalry dyad in two distinct issue areas: the territorial dispute over the Senkakus/Diaoyus and diplomatic discord over historical grievances. Military normalization has already provided the legal and military means to respond to perceived provocation or incursion by China in areas surrounding Japan; this includes the Senkakus, which are administered by Japan. Such policies have not discouraged China from voicing its declared rights to the territory or undertaking provocative military action in the region. Tit-for-tat exchanges have flared occasionally for the past thirty years (Griffith 2014). Both countries claim sovereignty over the islands (Pollack and Blasko 2014; Gupta 2014); the two countries have overlapping Air Defense Zones (ADZ) that include the islands (Manicom 2013; BBC 2013); and the presence of military vessels seem to increase from time to time (Gupta 2013). Nonetheless, neither country has let this flare into uncontrolled military conflict in the past. Additionally, both countries have refrained from deep sea drilling in the area, which could escalate tensions considerably. This makes the dispute a serious concern, but a dispute that is being managed.

Military normalization has seemingly only heightened historical grievances with China. Such grievances stem from treatment by the Japanese in the years prior to and during the Second World War, when Imperial Japan had invaded the Asian mainland and tried to establish the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity

Sphere. Millions of Chinese civilians were brutally slaughtered and repressed by Japanese Imperial Forces during this time. Nonetheless, following World War II, the Chinese did not begin exploring historical grievances with Japan. After the Communists won the Chinese Civil War, they focused on rebuilding the nation, and in fact, buried the historical memory of Japanese atrocities, in order to build reciprocal relations with Japan in the 1970s, as a counter the common Soviet threat. Yinan He (2009) argues that during the 1950s-60s, when the Chinese and Japanese governments saw each other as mutual threats due to their positions in the global order, their respective historical narratives actually converged around the idea of wartime Japanese atrocities being committed by only a small group of elite in the Japanese leadership. For Japan, this was a means to avoid placing blame on the entire Japanese state for wartime aggressions; for China, this was a way to win the hearts of the Japanese people and receive diplomatic recognition from Japan.

The history problem for China and Japan really began with a controversy over history textbooks in 1982. The whitewashing of aggression by Japan and the need for the Communist Party to find a political diversion from domestic political problems led to animosity toward the Japanese by the Chinese. The perceived lack of contrition by Japan for wartime atrocities morphed into a perception by the Chinese public and elites that Japan would act aggressively again (He 2009, 8). This historical memory issue coincided with a rise in mutual threat perception and a corresponding parity of power that strains bilateral relations. In addition, the Communist Party has seen ideological threats as a main source of contention for loyalty in the state, prompting a heightened urgency in patriotic education and nationalist inculcation (Gustafsson 2014). This has contributed greatly to the divergence of historical narratives and the "othering" process toward Japan.

THE JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA DYAD AND MILITARY NORMALIZATION

The issues for the Japan-South Korea dyad mirror those of the China-Japan dyad. South Korea also has a territorial dispute (Dokdo/Takeshima) and historical grievances it feels have not been addressed. A significant difference for this dyad, however, is that both states are alliance partners of the US, which may help mitigate some aspects of conflict escalation. Significantly, like the Chinese public and elites, South Koreans have morphed a perception of inadequate contrition by Japan for its colonial past into a perceived renewed aggression by Japan toward Asia. Dyad relations have seemingly deteriorated to their lowest point in years, with their leaders unable to convene a summit meeting.

The issues of territory and historical narrative are intimately woven in this particular case. The Japanese claim to Takeshima dates back to 1905, a period when

Korea had lost diplomatic sovereignty to Japan. The colonial humiliation and loss of territory at the hands of Japan led to a "never again" syndrome. Therefore, for Koreans, Dokdo is a symbol of national interest, national prestige and national independence. It is an intrinsic national interest (Yoon 2007). Much like China, for the first few decades after the end of World War II, South Korea was not a militarily or economically strong country. Therefore, it suppressed its threat perception of Japan, establishing diplomatic relations in 1965, in order to secure support against the strategic threats of North Korea and other communist states. However, with its economic growth and rise in international status throughout the 1990s, the impact of external threat perceptions decreased and South Korea began prioritizing policies based on its threat perception of Japan. Historical memory had ceased to be a constant and now acts as a variable in South Korea decision-making (Choi 2013).

MILITARY NORMALIZATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FLOW

If we consider military normalization as a policy, it appears as though it will not induce a perceived critical shift that in turn induces behavioral change in dyad relations. The probability of a lack of behavioral change can be determined with an historical review of conflict behavior in the dyad. Japan has made numerous legal and military changes as part of it normalization process, yet none of these has led to a noticeable convergence in historical narratives over the past thirty years. Rather, the normalization process seems to have been internalized by China as a tit-for-tat dynamic, or a propaganda style narrative for domestic consumption, requiring an increase in harsh diplomatic discourse or reciprocal changes in military policy. Essentially, the status quo has absorbed these normalization policies with no fundamental effect for positive conflict management and eventual 'deep reconciliation'—the internalizing of friendship and peace to where violent conflict or confrontation is unthinkable between differing groups (He 2009). This same behavioral response is evident with South Korea. The ROK has also internalized a tit-for-tat dynamic and negative historical dynamic that is not likely to change with the current policies of normalization and the reinterpretation of Article 9.

What may prompt the perception of a critical shift and hence behavioral change that moves in the direction of narrative convergence is a revision of Article 9 that ends its pacifist limitations. A total revision would most likely play to the fears of China and South Korea that the Japanese people and government intend to take a more aggressive, confrontational approach to other Asian countries. This perception would be easy to rationalize as a constitutional change requires a public referendum passed by majority vote, and two-thirds votes in both houses of the

Diet, to be enacted. In such a case, the short-term time frame would most likely be one of heightened tension and precarious conflict management. However, it is possible in the medium-term time frame that lack of offensive military aggression by Japan, and a cooperative spirit by Japan, would mitigate the fears of China and South Korea, opening the door for détente and eventual resolution. The change of perception by China and South Korea may come slowly over time, with the realization that if Japan is fully sovereign and still does not take offensive action against neighbors, then perhaps Japan has learned the error of its ways for past behavior. It would not be an acute perception of a critical shift but a perception of change nonetheless.

   A note here on the affect of domestic politics and leadership on dyad relations would seem appropriate. The above analysis does not take account of either variable, which may appear remiss. Quite obviously, leadership decisions matter in the context of conflict and those decisions are often influenced by domestic politics. Any cooperative spirit by Japan or détente and resolution with its rivals, would require strong leadership in each state. Currently, the unwillingness of South Korean President Park Geun Hye to participate in a summit meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo shows that any elements of détente offered by Japan must be reciprocated to be effective. The case study of Japan has been used to reflect the thinking of Lind regarding critical shifts as a consequence of strategic environment. Japan has evolved its military normalization policy through twelve different government administrations, if one begins in 1994 with Murayama Tomiichi. Therefore, the legal and military changes that have been fostered seem more appropriate variables for analysis than the leadership discourse. However, as reflective of Wehner's contention that critical shifts come from a crisis of discourse, discourse analysis and leadership will be presented as variables in the following section on South Korea's opcon transfer.

OPCON TRANSFER AND SIGNIFICANT DYAD RELATIONS

Having already discussed military normalization in terms of dyad relations, it is appropriate to turn now to opcon transfer between South Korea and the US and how that policy will affect dyad relations. There should be little doubt that the most affected dyad by opcon policy is South Korea-North Korea. These two countries are still technically at war, and therefore, military policy changes that give the South greater capacity to wage war will have a greater propensity to heighten tension in that dyad compared to others. The other significant dyad discussed is South Korea-Japan. As with Japan, the US is an ally of South Korea and therefore

presenting the two as a rivalry dyad in a conflict management process would not be appropriate. One could argue that the China-South Korea dyad should be analyzed as well, but like Japan-North Korea and military normalization, the China-South Korea dyad seems secondary in priority and has therefore been omitted.

SOUTH KOREA-NORTH KOREA DYAD AND OPCON TRANSFER

Since the end of World War II, when the Korean peninsula was divided at the 38th parallel, the rivalry dyad of South Korea-North Korea has been marked by continued military hostilities that involve both threats and actions. The worst of these military confrontations was the Korean War (1950-1953), which ended in an armistice agreement and the continuing division of the peninsula. The most recent major action was the sinking of the South Korean naval corvette *Cheonan* in April 2010 (officially attributed to North Korea by the South Korean government), which was followed by the North's artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong island (South Korean territory), in November of that same year. From the South Korean perspective, the most contentious security issue on the peninsula today is North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs; from the perspective of North Korea, the most contentious issue is South Korea's security alliance with the US. It is quite easy to get caught up in the tit-for-tat exchanges that are common occurrences in this dyad, but if one does so, he risks losing the forest through the trees.

   Lind's (2013) contention that narratives are highly malleable and converge among rivals when strategic factors compel reconciliation would be greatly tested in the South Korea-North Korea dyad. Unlike her case studies of Franco-German relations and South Korea-Japan relations, where narratives between sovereign entities converge, the narrative of South Korea espoused by the North may not be malleable enough to converge. The North Korean narrative of South Korea is directly linked to regime and state survival, as well as claims to legitimacy over all territory possessed by the South—the narrative is strategic at its core. To grant legitimacy to South Korea is to give up the right to contend for South Korean territory and the hearts and minds of all Koreans, which is the raison d'état of the DPRK.[1] This is the forest: the legitimacy and survivability of the North Korean regime for all Koreans. The narrative of South Korea espoused by the North is therefore a driving factor in strategic decisions by the North. It is a cause and a symptom of current conflict between the Koreas.

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[1] This line of thinking was confirmed in a personal interview by the author with B.R. Myers, Associate Professor of International Studies, Dongseo University, Busan, South Korea (August 28, 2014).

The division of the Korean peninsula at the end of World War II allowed each state to follow radically different modes of political and economic development. A personality cult and communist economy took hold in the North, under the leadership of independence fighter Kim Il Sung, and a US-backed, authoritarian capitalist system took hold in the South. The two countries have been technically at war since the summer of 1950, when the North invaded the South to reunite the Korean people under one system. The devastating Korean War, which saw the involvement of Chinese, US and UN forces, ended with an armistice agreement in 1953. The hostilities that continue today do so in order to reconcile the fundamental contention between these two states: the question of which state can claim to be the legitimate repository of the Korean peoples' political aspirations. To believe that North Korean leaders no longer believe they are the only, legitimate option to uphold the aspirations of all Koreans is to have a misunderstanding of this conflict at its most basic level. The North Korean leadership is more interested in racial purity and the essence of what it means to be Korean than it is in economic development (see Myers 2010). It does not view South Korea's political and economic success (in Washington Consensus terms) as a legitimating factor; it views it as a poison of the Korean race.

To protect its position as the legitimate representative of all Korean people, and to solidify its personality-cult regime structure, North Korea has employed a military-first policy coupled with a pervasive propaganda program. Suh writes, "conceptually, North Korea's 'military-first' policy means 'to value the military and to believe that reinforcing the military is the most important task'" (2002, 172). The consequence of this is relative inflexibility in conflict management. The North Korean hegemonic narrative paints South Korea as a "Yankee colony" with the puppet strings pulled by the US. Elites in the government, especially members of the more conservative domestic political party, are "Yankee lackeys" and traitors of the Korean people. The North Korean government's military-first policy is the necessary strategic inducement to force the Yankees to allow inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation, which is presented as the deepest desire of the South Korean people (Myers 2010). There are several elements of significance in this narrative. First, it promotes the North's military-first policy as essential to all Koreans, who desire a unified state. Therefore, ending the military-first policy is not an option, unless the US and its Yankee colony relent in their quest for total control of the peninsula and regime change in the North. Secondly, the South Korean state is not a legitimate entity to represent the Korean people, and therefore negotiating a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict, directly with South Korean representatives is not an option (although non-security economic and cultural issues do get negotiated from time to time). Thirdly, and perhaps most

significantly, the South Korean state is not a sovereign entity to be recognized as an independent agent. It is a puppet regime of the US, and therefore, the US is the most important other for conflict management and negotiation involving the peninsula.

This hegemonic narrative structure makes opcon transfer more strategically significant than it may otherwise have been. Opcon transfer from the US to South Korea at its most basic level is simply a policy change within alliance relations. Regarding military conflict, the worry in alliance relationships is the ability of one partner to entangle or entrap another. Entrapment—being dragged into a conflict over an ally's interest that one does not share (Snyder quoted in Kim 2011, 351)—has remained a worry of the US since it first signed the Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROK in October 1953 (see Pinkston 2014; Cumings 2013). At the time of the signing, there were worries that South Korean President Rhee Syngman still desired a Southern invasion of the North to unite Korea under a South Korean administration. Nonetheless, the US felt without a security guarantee, North Korea would opt for a second invasion sometime in the future, so the defense treaty was signed. Kim argues there is little chance of entrapment with the US-ROK treaty as Article 3 stipulates alliance partners will come to the aid of the other if an armed attack is made "in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other" (2011, 360-364). The US therefore protected itself from South Korean ambitions of territorial revisionism and avoided automatic commitments like those found with NATO.

This brings us directly to the implications of opcon transfer. Opcon transfer will be significant for both states in the dyad. Many ROK military officers believe US opcon is insurance against US abandonment in the face of North Korean escalation. For others, opcon transfer would complete ROK sovereignty and allow more flexibility in response to North Korean provocations and therefore act as a deterrent to future aggression. For the US, opcon transfer would mean that Seoul must bring more assets to the alliance lessening US burdens (Pinkston 2014). This debate is unsettled as of yet. The Roh Moo Hyun administration proposed opcon transfer in the mid-2000s; a date for transfer was initially scheduled for 2012. This was delayed to 2015 after a bilateral meeting between US President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak, and it was pushed back indefinitely in a meeting between US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and South Korean Defense Minister Han Min Koo, in October 2014 (Harper 2014). Currently, it seems that opcon transfer is subject to the "conditions" of asymmetrical military capabilities on the peninsula. That is, until the ROK has defenses for the North's weapons of mass destruction (Won 2014). This particular line of rea-

soning ends with symmetrical military capability and parity of force between the South and the North as a prerequisite of opcon transfer —symmetrical capability being of such strategic significance as to possibly warrant a behavioral change in perception by one of the states. Not lost in the debate is the simple fact that should opcon transfer occur, South Korea's sovereignty will be complete, having all of the positive and negative consequences that may entail.

For North Korea, the restoration of ROK sovereignty will undermine a fundamental pillar of the state's narrative of the South.[2] No longer will South Korea be a Yankee colony and puppet of the imperialists. Rather, the South Korean government would be the only legitimate sovereign power protecting the political aspirations of the Korean people on South Korean territory. North Korea has often called for direct peace negotiations with the US to end hostilities, but the US has often resisted such negotiations (see Fox News 2003; Stearns 2013). With military sovereignty restored to the South, the US, international community and other regional actors would not likely entertain the idea of a peace process without the participation of South Korea. In other words, North Korea would be backed into a proverbial corner. It would have to negotiate any peace agreement with South Korea as a legitimate signatory, which to its people may very well signal a failure of state policy —the military first policy —a state policy for which they alone have suffered the burden. Having signed away the raison d'état, the North Korean regime may find survival to be precarious at best. Under this scenario, opcon transfer would be of exceptional strategic significance. Nonetheless, the narrative of South Korea may lack the modicum of flexibility needed to induce a behavioral change in perception.

The preceding analysis may rely too heavily on North Korean beliefs and propaganda for some. The influence exerted by propaganda on the behavior of North Korea is contested. Some like Myers find it highly influential in decision-making and to ignore it or under represent this influence is a peril. For Cha (2012) the military-first policy "eliminated any separation between the military and civilian spheres, to the point that North Korean culture is essentially a military culture"

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[2] Personal interview by the author with B.R. Myers (August 28, 2014). Myers contends that North Korean regime stability is due in large part to its ideological narrative, which paints South Korea as a state with a "lack of subjectivity". The North Korean regime rationalizes South Korea's economic superiority as a trade-off for subjectivity at the elite level, and makes the subsequent claim that this trade-off is not desired by the South Korean people. If opcon transfer is achieved, no longer could the North Korean regime claim that South Korean superiority is provided by the US and not an achievement by South Korea as an independent state. Myers believes this could be fundamentally destabilizing for the North and force them to invade the South, to justify their claims that South Koreans desire unification under North Korean auspices.

(92). He goes on further to claim that "despotic regimes like North Korea cannot survive without ideology to justify their iron grip" and that the current leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, "will be forced to cling to the core but outdated ideological principles that worked during the Cold War" for survival (106). For others, it is a secondary or nearly non-existent variable in strategic thinking by the North Koreans; for instance, when Manyin and Nanto (2011) describe the Kaesong Industrial Complex as a "possible beachhead for market reforms in the DPRK" (Summary) with the "potential to serve as a "Trojan-horse" (5)—conclusions drawn with little reflection on state ideology but with medium to long-term strategic consequences. Despite the contestation regarding the influence and importance of ideology and propaganda to North Korean strategic thinking, the analysis here has shown a discourse analysis not unlike that used by Lind, Myers and He in previous works, to name but a few authors. The analysis is an effort to show one possible scenario in the conflict management process; in that manner, it is hopefully effective. It does not pretend to be an accurate prediction on how the future relationship in the dyad will unfold.

THE JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA DYAD AND OPCON TRANSFER

Unlike the South Korea-North Korea dyad, opcon transfer may not have enough strategic significance to change behavioral perceptions in the Japan-South Korea dyad. As noted earlier, South Korea and Japan have had convergence of historical narratives in the past. With leadership, this can happen again, though, as mentioned earlier, the unwillingness of President Park to have a summit meeting with Prime Minister Abe does not make this likely soon. Nonetheless, current narrative dissonance, which is heightened for domestic political purposes in both countries, is hardly a reason for armed conflict. After all, both countries are alliance partners of the US and they enjoy significant reciprocal economic and cultural relations. The recent signing of a military intelligence sharing agreement shows how closely these two countries can work (Fackler 2014). However, the territorial dispute of Dokdo/Takeshima could become a greater issue.

Former South Korean President Lee Myung Bak has already shown that the Dokdo/Takeshima issue can be easily manipulated for domestic political approval. In his final year in office, desperate to improve his dismal approval poll ratings, President Lee became the first South Korean president to visit the islands, setting off a diplomatic firestorm, from which the relationship has yet to recover (Hornung 2012). In the future, South Korean politicians backed with the full sovereignty to declare war could escalate the dispute militarily, anxious to show resolve on the issue to domestic constituents, leading to a negative spiral of military escalation from which it is hard to extricate. The only other scenario of

significance is the possibility of Japan being entangled or entrapped by its alliance with the US, should the US get entangled in a renewal of high-intensity warfare between the North and the South. The US would greatly depend on its military bases in Japan for men, material and logistical support, while those bases and hence Japanese territory would be in range of North Korean weapons of mass destruction.

OPCON TRANSFER AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FLOW

Opcon transfer in South Korea is unlikely to be perceived as a critical shift by Japan, but it will most likely be perceived as a critical shift by North Korea and therefore require adjustments to dyad relations. This is not to say that North Korea will embrace a conflict management process toward reconciliation. Two probable options are that North Korea will adjust their propaganda for domestic consumption and continue to regard South Korea as a puppet regime of the West. Perhaps some changes in military calculations will occur where aggression is concerned, but essentially, the status quo will remain unchanged. Another option may be that the loss of a fundamental pillar of the raison d'état could lead to a violent conflagration prompted by a misinterpretation of alliance intentions by the US. In other words, although the perception of a critical shift is likely, it may not be an aid for peace.

In regards to Japan, opcon transfer will do little to change the dyad relationship. Historical grievances will remain a variable in decision-making for South Korean elites, and the willingness to defend Dokdo as a national interest will remain. It is highly unlikely though that South Korea will incite a violent conflict over the territory with a militarily powerful Japan. It is possible however that a lessening of alliance ties to the US and restoration of sovereignty will give South Korea the strength and willingness to induce narrative convergence with Japan, if Japan shows some reconciliatory behavior and a modicum of contrition for past historical wrongs.

CONCLUSION

This paper asked the question of whether military normalization by Japan and opcon transfer between the US and South Korea could enhance peace and stability in NE Asia. It is therefore meant as a means to question present orthodoxy, which seems to view these policies as exacerbating tensions in NE Asia. The paper may be unique therefore in its attempt to evaluate these policies as elements of the conflict management process and harbingers of peace. In order to provide this

alternative perspective, the study used an interdisciplinary approach comprised of elements from the literature on rivalry dyads, historical grievance discourse analysis and conflict management. Although this method may seem unorthodox, each of these methods on their own is well regarded in the international relations literature and their complementarity seems genuine enough to warrant an attempt at utilizing them in conjunction. The conflict management perspective allows the policies to be viewed in what is termed a 'process map of conflict management flow'. This process map provides a tool to help elucidate contextual specificity and identify where an issue may be placed in the conflict management process. The rivalry dyad construct allows one to focus on what are deemed the most significant dyads in a regional construct. For our study, the three most significant dyads for the two policies of military normalization and opcon transfer were Japan-China, Japan-South Korea and South Korea-North Korea. Historical grievance discourse analysis allows for a broader look beyond the dyads strategic environment, to assess the possibility of a critical shift in the dyad dynamic, which can lead to change in actor behavior.

The analysis here concludes that both military normalization and opcon transfer are endogenous non-purposive actions in the conflict management process. That is to say that both take place within a dyadic relationship and neither is used specifically as a tool to further a process of conflict management. That is not to say there is no purpose behind the policies. These policies will have a genuine effect on the relations of regional states, and the actors have their reasons for debating and implementing the policies. However, the policies as of yet have not been discussed between the rivals, or offered by one rival, as a way to enhance trust and peace—this makes them non-purposive by our terms. One could argue that these policies are exogenous, if viewed from the rival within the dyad.[3] If Japan and South Korea are thought to be implementing these policies at the behest of the US (as client states), then they would be exogenous to the dyad. However, such an argument would seem to overlook the fact that the military normalization policy in Japan has been ongoing for about twenty years and seems to have been internalized by the Japanese political system. In addition, the argument overlooks the fact that it is South Korea that has asked for delays of opcon transfer in the past, though the most recent delay seems to be sought by both the US and South Korea. Nevertheless, although theoretically the issues may be endogenous, both Japan and South Korea would need to signal their rivals that these policies are not determined by the US, which could be a tough sell.

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[3] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this very poignant criticism.

The debate of exogenous or endogenous from a rival's perspective highlights an important distinction: theory is not necessarily reality. The leaders of Japan and South Korea would need to "sell" their policies as purposive and endogenous, through continuous signaling of peaceful intentions. This may need to include the acceptance of summit meetings, lower level negotiations, media reports, etc., to help alleviate the fears and change the perceptions of the rival. Only then will such policies have the possibility of truly loosening conflict tensions within dyads and the region. As the process map (figure 1) shows, such signaling and policy alteration can lead to three possible outcomes: no change in perception of strategic change on behalf of a rival; perception of an alteration in policy that leads to tit-for-tat reciprocity; or the perception of a critical shift in the dyad relationship or environment. It is a perceived critical shift that can lead to a positive cycle of conflict management and a convergence of narratives by both rivals, if the management is well orchestrated. This study of military normalization concludes that this set of policies is not enough to induce the perception of a critical shift on behalf of China and South Korea. However, a revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, supported by the public and Diet, very well may be perceived as a critical shift by rivals in the dyads affected. The policy of opcon transfer is determined to be a significant strategic change and perceived as such by North Korea. However, North Korea may not have the necessary narrative malleability to induce narrative convergence with South Korea, and thereby begin a process of positive conflict management toward reconciliation. Opcon transfer is not likely to be perceived as critical by Japan nor likely to require a behavioral change in the relationship.

The implications of this approach for Japanese policymakers is a recognition that stretching the interpretation of Article 9 may beget more of the same reciprocal actions from Japan's neighbors—harsh diplomatic rhetoric and tit-for-tat military policies—if Japan does not take significant unilateral steps to repair strained relations with its rivals. In addition, a revision of Article 9 should be expected to heighten conflict in the short-term and possibly well into the medium-term. The implications of this approach for Korean policymakers is that opcon transfer could have significant negative effects, depending on how cornered North Korean elites feel after a fundamental pillar of their raison d'état is undermined.

In general research terms, the process map itself can be altered for rival dyads with different major issues, which may be a useful tool for viewing a conflict's general dynamics. In addition, it can be used in hopes of determining whether a policy will be perceived as a critical shift thereby altering rival behavior. In the future, it may be useful to apply game theory analysis or some other analytical method

to the 'actions of change' level of the process map, to better ascertain the probability of policy outcomes. The process map may be no significant addition to grand theory, but it may well be useful in clarifying conflict management flow and dynamics in a rivalry dyad.

The above analysis may very well have a number of perceived weaknesses. The lack of an analysis on the US-China dyad is one; the lack of a focus on domestic political variables and specific leaders may be another. Nonetheless, as conflict management is ultimately a layered process of solving many disputed issues within a complex environment, it is hoped the analysis offers a possible perspective for alternative thinking and future research, even as it falls short of solving regional tensions in NE Asia.

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