The Structural Sources of Security Tension in Northeast Asia: Reconciliation Dynamics and the Effects of the Security-Status Dilemma

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Historical reconciliation has been an enduring problem in Northeast Asia and an oft-cited source of the “Asian paradox.” This article examines the varying degrees of reconciliation dynamics observed in the U.S.-Japan, China-Japan, ROK-Japan, and ROK-China dyads in order to provide a more systematic understanding of the “Asian paradox.” Contrary to the conventional wisdom that interstate reconciliation hinges upon a certain set of domestic and/or individual variables, this study posits that the process and outcome of reconciliation are determined by a particular set of structural tendencies exhibited in a dyadic relationship. More specifically, this article contends that the interaction of security and status dilemmas in the post-conflict stage can either foment or forestall reconciliation between former adversary states. Strategic incentives for reconciliation remain low when a dyad experiences a heightened sense of both security and status dilemmas; and the absence of both security and status dilemmas presents structural conditions ripe for meaningful reconciliation. Introducing a simple two-by-two model using the security-status dilemmas hypothesis, this article offers a parsimonious and generalizable theory on international reconciliation from a systemic perspective. Ranging from deep reconciliation (U.S.-Japan) to no reconciliation (China-Japan), and shallow reconciliation (ROK-Japan) to latent reconciliation (ROK-China), the case studies illustrate the saliency of the security-status dilemmas model. The findings also suggest that the attendant “Asian paradox” can be construed as a byproduct of the divergent reconciliation dynamics observed in the region.

Key Words: international reconciliation, security dilemma, status dilemma, Asian paradox, Northeast Asia

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How do former enemy states reconcile their historical ill feelings and mutual animosity in the post-conflict era? Why are some dyads of former enemy states more successful at historical reconciliation than others? What are the structural conditions conducive or inimical to interstate reconciliation? Since the end of the Second World War, historical reconciliation has remained a politically complicated and emotionally challenging issue in Northeast Asia. In spite of the absence of war—or presence of peace—between states, ongoing security tensions based on mutual suspicion and mistrust, outright denunciation and defamation, and public name-calling and shaming have determined and influenced the direction of interstate relations and security prospects in the region. Despite peace treaties, normalization of diplomatic relations, and decades of economic cooperation and interdependence achieved in the region, substantial security tensions between states remain problematic in Northeast Asia.

For decades, both scholars and policymakers have attributed the issue of historical reconciliation—or lack thereof—as an ineluctable source of this problem. Placing the concept of interstate reconciliation at its core, this article examines the reconciliation dynamics in Northeast Asia using systemic characteristics as independent variables. The existing literature on the topic mostly deals with first- and second-level variables, providing explanations based on the role of domestic agents and the state's remembrance effects (He 2009; Ku 2008; Lind 2008). No prior research has been conducted thus far on the effects of systemic variables and structural conditions propitious or deleterious to interstate reconciliation.

This study attempts to fill this gap in the existing literature by using the traditional concept of security dilemma and the emerging concept of status dilemma. Considering these systemic factors as the most crucial determinants of the post-conflict reconciliation process and its outcome, this article introduces a simple two-by-two model to explain the varying degrees and different stages of interstate reconciliation between former enemy states in Northeast Asia. By doing so, it also shows how the reconciliation dynamics hypothesis can be a useful tool for explaining the so-called “Asian paradox,” a parallel development of close economic cooperation and persistent security tensions between states.

In an anarchic international environment, states compete for both power and status, both of which are considered to enhance the security prospects and guarantee their chances of survival. Each state's pursuit of power and status, however, inevitably threatens others in the system, creating the condition of a

security dilemma as well as a status dilemma.¹ States engage in alliance politics—balancing or bandwagoning being the most popular—to deal with both the security and status dilemmas in the system. Historical reconciliation between former enemy states, or a lack thereof, occurs under these intrinsic structural conditions of the international political environment. Strategic incentives for reconciliation vary depending on the different structural conditions, and states face different levels of security and status dilemmas vis-à-vis others in the system. Thus, it is the interaction of security and status dilemmas at the system level that either fosters or foments historical reconciliation between former adversary states, the outcome of which may result in one of the following four categories—(a) no reconciliation, (b) shallow reconciliation, (c) latent reconciliation, and (d) deep reconciliation—in the post-conflict period.²

More specifically, this study posits that at one end of the reconciliation spectrum, the presence of a low-level security dilemma and a low-level status dilemma in a dyadic relationship between former adversary states creates structural conditions favorable for deep reconciliation. At the other extreme, however, it is hypothesized that there will be no reconciliation when a dyad of former enemy states faces a significant level of a security dilemma and an equally heightened sense of a status dilemma. A shallow reconciliation may result when there is a low-level security dilemma but a high-level status dilemma observed in a dyad. Finally, the presence of a high-level security dilemma but a low-level status dilemma may lead to a condition of what may be called a latent reconciliation between former enemy states. In this case, the dyadic relationship and the chances of deep reconciliation are heavily dependent upon the nature of both states' third-party relationships and interest structures with third-party stakeholders.

The security-status dilemmas hypothesis proposed in this study will be tested on four former enemy dyads in Northeast Asia—(a) U.S.-Japan, (b) China-

¹ Recently, a growing number of scholars have shown interest in the concept of status dilemma in exploring the phenomena of status competition between states. William C. Wohlforth (2014, 115) is credited with developing the concept, claiming that, "The process of signaling and recognizing status claims is at least as subject to uncertainty and complex strategic incentives as are the security politics with which scholars of international politics are familiar." In a similar vein, emphasizing the role of identity in international politics, Erik Ringmar (2002, 116-123) develops the so-called "recognition game" to suggest that interstate relations are not so much a game of prisoner's dilemma in which decisions to cooperate or defect determine outcomes ranging from peace to war, but more of a recognition game whereby identity recognition among states in the system determines the level of conflictual or cooperative relations.

² The four different types of reconciliation outcomes used in this study—or the reconciliation dynamics—are modeled after the works of He (2009) and Ku (2008).

Japan, (c) ROK-Japan, and (d) ROK-China dyads. Although the United States is not technically an East Asian state by geographical definition, its significant influence in the regional security framework and geopolitics in the post-WWII era warrants an investigation. The U.S.-China dyad (former enemies in the Korean War) is precluded due to redundancy with the ROK-China dyad. Furthermore, North Korea is not included in the case selection because without a peace treaty the country is technically still at war with both the ROK and the United States.

This research contributes to international relations (IR) and security scholarship in the following ways. First, it incorporates the understudied concept of reconciliation into the existing literature of IR in a way that is compatible with the theory of structural realism. Second, by using the concept of status dilemma as an independent variable alongside security dilemma, this study demonstrates the theoretical compatibility between the two. Finally, by examining the reconciliation dynamics in Northeast Asia from a systemic perspective and showing the structure-level barriers, this article offers a more comprehensive understanding of both the challenges and opportunities in devising policy prescriptions for the thorny issue of historical reconciliation and the ongoing “Asian paradox” in the region.

The next section begins with a discussion of the concept of reconciliation and existing explanations. An alternative hypothesis based on a two-by-two model using the interplay of security and status dilemmas will then be introduced. Qualitative analyses on four different dyads will be provided, which will be followed by a conclusion. Conducting a comprehensive comparative analysis of four different dyads is undoubtedly a taxing enterprise. For that reason, this article is only able to provide a rather brief examination of each dyadic case. Although the findings in this research should sufficiently illustrate the validity of the security-status dilemmas hypothesis and demonstrate its compatibility with existing arguments, further research and investigation is warranted.

INTERNATIONAL RECONCILIATION: CONTEXT AND DEFINITION

The concept of reconciliation has not received much attention in the traditional IR literature. However, historical reconciliation has been a central political issue in Northeast Asia. In one way or another, many IR scholars from various theoretical camps have referenced the issue in close connection to the ongoing security tensions in the region. Furthermore, the lack of genuine interstate reconciliation—especially in ROK-Japanese and Sino-Japanese relations—has

been cited as one of the major sources for the so-called “Asian paradox” (Manning 1993, 55). Paradoxically, seven decades after the end of WWII, various public opinion surveys conducted in Northeast Asian states continue to show unusually high levels of antagonism, disapproval, and distrust directed at neighbors.³ Historical reconciliation, therefore, matters a great deal and continues to influence the direction of international politics in Northeast Asia.

Reconciliation is interlinked with many other terms in varying degrees. Recognition, remembrance, forgiveness, and apology are only a few other important concepts closely correlated with reconciliation. It is, therefore, necessary to establish a clear conceptual definition from the outset. First, it should be noted that there exists a difference between intrastate and interstate reconciliation. While the former stresses the importance of a socio-psychological dimension and places more emphasis on fostering social healing through reconstructing past acts of injustice, the latter is “more concerned with building new relationships through institutions and practices that address the parties’ interests” (Ross 2004, 199). Viewed in this light, there exists a wide-ranging overlap between the elements of peace-building and those for facilitating reconciliation at an interstate level, since both must deal with institution-building and interest structures.

However, the presence of peace, or absence of war, between states does not necessarily mean that the relevant states have achieved a sufficient level of reconciliation. In other words, the correlation and interdependence between peace and reconciliation are context-specific, and reconciliation generally cannot be said to be a necessary condition for peace, and vice versa. More importantly, reconciliation is inherently distinct from the concept of peace as “it implies freedom for political action, to liberate oneself from the prison of time, to be born anew in politics” (Levy and Sznaider 2006, 84). According to Kelman (2008, 24), a crucial feature of “the identity change constituting reconciliation is the removal of the negation of the other as a central component of one’s own identity

³ For instance, a 2014 global public opinion poll conducted by the BBC showed that the Japanese and the Chinese hold the most negative views towards the other state’s influence in the world. Seventy-five percent of Japanese and 90 percent of Chinese responded negatively toward the other state’s influence in the world, with only three percent of Japanese and five percent of Chinese responding favorably. The same survey revealed that South Koreans hold the second most negative view of Japan in the world, with 79 percent of South Koreans responding negatively and only 15 percent answering favorably to Japan’s influence in the world. Similarly, only 13 percent of Japanese answered favorably to South Korea’s influence in the world (BBC World Service Poll 2014). Another global opinion survey conducted in 2014 suggested that, “The Chinese and South Koreans hold a particularly negative opinion of the Japanese leader (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe)” (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2014).

.... (which) implies a degree of acceptance of the other's identity." Viewed in this light, reconciliation must be seen as a process and outcome that is socially constructed through an "intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests in the system" (Wendt 1992, 401).

Then, how do we know for certain when two former adversary states have moved past the historical feelings of animosity and towards the path of reconciliation? How should we determine the threshold with which to observe whether states have accomplished a sustainable level of interstate reconciliation? To begin with, reconciliation "involves changing the relationship between parties in conflict both instrumentally and emotionally in a more positive direction so that each can more easily envision a joint future" (Ross 2004, 200). In other words, reconciliation encompasses "changes in the ways in which former enemy populations think about each other, feel about each other, and act toward one another as they learn to live together" (Kelman 2008, 16).

Yinan He (2009, 1-2) develops the concept of deep reconciliation to define and determine the threshold as follows:

[D]eep interstate reconciliation is posited on the assumption that countries share the understanding that war is unthinkable and hold generally amicable feelings toward each other. Deep reconciliation is a kind of relationship that has to be cemented not only by shared short-run security needs but also by sustainable mutual understanding and trust. Because the enduring memory of past trauma can fuel mutual grievances and mistrust, nations cannot avoid addressing historical memory when searching for a path to reconciliation.

Therefore, there exist varying degrees and stages of reconciliation, not just its presence or absence, and that there are both strong and weak versions of reconciliation (Ross 2004, 200). In this regard, He's typology can help us to understand the distinctions between different types of reconciliation. Borrowing from Alexander George's model of three different categories of peace existing in post-conflict international relations—precarious peace, conditional peace, and stable peace—He develops three different stages of interstate reconciliation categorized into (a) non-reconciliation, (b) shallow reconciliation, and (c) deep reconciliation as shown below in Table 1. Moving from non-reconciliation to deep reconciliation requires changes in perception at both inter-governmental and inter-societal levels—(a) from an imminent expectation of war to shared expectations of no war between the governments, and (b) from popular hatred and fear to harmonious mutual feelings among peoples. Thus, the convergence of changing perceptions and attitudes must occur not only between the

governments of the former adversary states but also between societies.

Table 1. Different Stages of Interstate Reconciliation

	Shallow Reconciliation			
	Non-reconciliation	Friction	Rapprochement	Deep Reconciliation
Government-to-government	Imminent expectation of war	Moderate expectation of war: Prepare for remote war	Moderate expectation of war: Cautious cooperation	Shared expectation of no war
	No national recognition	Partial national recognition: Sovereignty disputes politicized	Partial national recognition: Sovereignty disputes deferred	Full national recognition
	Minimal economic interaction	Limited economic interaction: Economic friction politicized	Limited economic interaction: Economic friction subdued	Comprehensive and smooth economic interaction
People-to-people	Popular hatred and fear	Moderate popular tension: Estrangement and suspicion	Moderate popular tension: Illusory friendship possible	Harmonious mutual feeling

Source: He (2009, 17)

Traditionally, the concept of reconciliation has been “burdened by religious overtones and cultural loadings and used synonymously with conflict resolution, or even conflict settlement, particularly in the political discourse” (Rouhana 2004, 34). However, it is a qualitatively different process from either conflict settlement or conflict resolution because reconciliation “seeks to achieve a kind of relationship between the parties characterized by genuine mutual recognition, trust, mutual granting of legitimacy, and achieving existential security based on the conviction that one’s own and the other’s collective existence are not in question” (Rouhana 2004, 35-37). A peace treaty or restoration of diplomatic relations between states can be established at the stage of conflict settlement without necessarily achieving conflict resolution or deep reconciliation. In a similar vein, a peace agreement does not necessarily guarantee that the interstate relations between former enemy states will effortlessly progress towards reconciliation. For instance, even though the ROK and Japan were able to officially achieve the normalization of diplomatic relations with the Treaty on Basic Relations in 1965, the treaty and the long talks failed to substantially “narrow their differences on the nature of the colonial

rule” due to “a tremendous gap in the perception of each other’s historical, political, and international status” (Kim 2009, 93). Postwar Sino-Japanese relations have shown a similar pattern. The warming relationship between Beijing and Tokyo during the 1970s “never produced deep reconciliation because Chinese and Japanese elites did not try to settle their memory disagreement but simply set aside to clear the way for their immediate strategic cooperation” (He 2009, 7).

EXISTING EXPLANATIONS: DOMESTIC AGENTS AND REMEMBRANCE EFFECTS

The previous section has shown that interstate reconciliation by logic requires attitudinal, perceptual, and behavioral changes from both former perpetrators and the victim states to which they caused injury. However, Lind (2008, 18) argues that, “using aspects of the victim’s response to an apology to measure the existence of an apology invites serious problems of inference.”⁴ Thus, in her comparative analysis of the postwar remembrance effects of Germany and Japan toward their former adversary states, Lind (2008, 180) argues that, “Contrition is vital for postwar reconciliation, and the more deeply countries repent their past violence, the more they will improve relations with their former adversaries.” According to Lind, Germany’s frank apology and Japan’s “flip-flopping” tendency explained the variation in reconciliation outcomes. However, in terms of the causal relationship between remembrance and reconciliation, Lind makes some contradictory observations and offers mixed outcomes from her research. Although formal apologies are proven to have positive causal effects on interstate reconciliation, Lind (2008, 16-17) suggests that there are also risks associated with contrition, and that “more (contrition) is not always better, or even necessary, for countries to repair their relations” because it may invoke domestic backlash, which can jeopardize any meaningful efforts at interstate reconciliation. Moreover, Lind relied solely on the remembrance effects of the former aggressor state and, thus, failed to account for the crucial fact that interstate reconciliation required a convergence of historical and identity perceptions between both the former aggressor and the victim states.

Contrary to Lind, He’s national mythmaking theory used a dyadic approach, taking into account the interaction between former adversary states. According to He (2009, 40), “The more divergent two countries’ historical narratives after

⁴ Italics in original.

their past traumatic conflict, the more difficult they will be to reconcile; the more convergent their narratives, the more easily they will reconcile.” In this regard, similar to Lind’s approach, He also considered remembrance as the key independent variable in explaining the reconciliation outcome. Whereas Lind focused on the degree of contrition in determining how the former aggressor state remembered its own past, He looked at the level of memory convergence/divergence between the former enemy states. Thus, unlike Lind, He’s analysis considered the importance of the dyadic relationship in studying interstate reconciliation.

Remembrance affects interstate relations in a number of different ways, and how states decide to remember their own past depends also on an array of internal and external factors. In this regard, it is important to note that remembrance at an interstate level is a political act as it reveals intentions, which directly influence the perceptions of observers (Park 2007, 71). Introducing a national mythmaking theory, He (2009, 40-42) developed three categories for memory convergence/divergence between former enemy states in the post-conflict period—(a) combative narratives, (b) conflictual narratives, and (c) convergent narratives—and posited that each condition observed in a dyadic relationship can lead to (a) non-reconciliation, (b) shallow reconciliation, and (c) deep reconciliation, respectively.

While taking advantage of He’s typology of divergent reconciliation outcomes, Ku developed a political leadership-NGO hypothesis to explain the different outcomes in the postwar ROK-Japanese and Franco-German reconciliation cases. According to Ku (2008, 15-17), the presence of joint political leadership for reconciliation and the dominance of reconciliation-promoting NGO activities vis-à-vis nationalistic NGOs led to reconciliation as evidenced by the early postwar Franco-German reconciliation case. On the contrary, the fluctuating prospects for historical reconciliation between the ROK and Japan in the postwar era have been the result of the combined effects of weak joint political leadership and the dominance of nationalistic NGO activities in each state. Table 2 below shows Ku’s hypothesis focusing on the role of domestic agents.

Ku’s approach conforms to the notion that historical reconciliation is necessarily a two-level process at the intergovernmental and inter-societal levels. For a deep reconciliation to develop between former enemy states, the government-to-government relationship and people-to-people interactions must project “a sustained condition of nonviolent, mutually acceptable coexistence where former adversaries come to re-envision one another as deserving equal moral respect and political standing” (Verdeja 2013, 65). Ku’s explanation accounts for the varying degrees of reconciliation and not just its presence or

Table 2. Four Possible Outcomes of International Reconciliation

Joint Leadership NGO Activities	Strong	Weak
Pro-R > Nationalistic*	I. Reconciliation	II. Latent Reconciliation
Pro-R < Nationalistic	III. Partial Reconciliation	IV. Non-Reconciliation

Source: Ku (2008, 12)

*: pro-reconciliation NGOs are more vibrant than nationalistic NGOs

absence and, therefore, it can be useful for a time-series analysis looking at the fluctuating levels of interstate reconciliation in a particular dyad. Nonetheless, similar to the other existing explanations explored here, it fails to control for or take into account systemic variables and structural conditions in a dyadic relationship. Thus, the existing literature on interstate reconciliation has provided mostly context-specific explanations lacking generalizability and broad applicability across different sets of dyads situated in different structural conditions. In order to fill in the gaps and make up for the weaknesses in the existing literature, this study introduces an alternative explanation using systemic conditions as independent variables.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS: RECONCILIATION DYNAMICS BASED ON SECURITY-STATUS DILEMMAS

This article attempts to answer the question of why some former enemy states are more successful at achieving historical reconciliation than others. Although there are many domestic- and individual-level variables that can help answer this question, this research considers systemic factors as the most crucial determinant of interstate relations both during and after the conflict period. Accordingly, this study posits an alternative hypothesis as stated below, and Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the security-status dilemmas model proposed here and reconciliation dynamics.

Hypothesis: *The interaction of the security dilemma and the status dilemma in a dyadic relationship between former enemy states can either make or break the chances for historical reconciliation.*

As shown above in Table 3, when two former enemy states are faced with a significant level of both a security dilemma and a status dilemma in the post-

Table 3. Security-Status Dilemmas and Reconciliation Dynamics

		Security Dilemma	
		Low	High
Status Dilemma	Low	I. Deep Reconciliation	II. Latent Reconciliation
	High	III. Shallow Reconciliation	IV. No Reconciliation

conflict period, strategic incentives for a genuine historical reconciliation continue to remain low in the dyadic relationship (Quadrant IV). On the contrary, if two former enemy states face neither a security dilemma nor a status dilemma, the structural conditions are ripe for deep reconciliation (Quadrant I). When a dyadic relationship experiences a high-level security dilemma but shows mutual recognition of each other's status and identity in the system, reconciliation may still take place but only on the surface (Quadrant II). A latent reconciliation can progress toward deep reconciliation with the resolution of a status dilemma. In a similar vein, a shallow reconciliation may result from former enemy states experiencing a low-level security dilemma but a heightened source of tension from the status dilemma (Quadrant III). In this case, bilateral efforts to jointly address the status dilemma can significantly increase the chances of deep reconciliation.

Security dilemmas alone do not sufficiently explain different reconciliation dynamics in the system. Under perfect conditions, a security dilemma is considered a constant. Thus, the alternative hypothesis posited in this study considers the interaction of both security and status dilemmas as independent variables. As a survival mechanism, states compete for not only power but also status within international society. If the security dilemma is concerned primarily with the domain of brute force and sheer military power, the status dilemma exists between states for the attainment of relative standing and recognition. Status is defined here as "collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes," or "standing in the hierarchy of a group based on criteria such as prestige, honor, and deference" (Kang 2010, 19; Larson 2014, 7). Status is both sticky and fungible, which is why it serves as a "powerful and independent motivator of behavior" for states (Larson 2014, 12; Wohlforth 2009, 29).

Unlike with a security dilemma, there still exists no empirical evidence to suggest that status dilemmas alone can lead states to armed conflict. However, there are sufficient reasons to "suspect that they could feed arms acquisitions,

commitments to support clients in regional conflicts, or forgone opportunities for cooperation” (Wohlforth 2014, 139). In theory, and for the sake of argument, states within an alliance system should face no heightened sense of a security dilemma with each other.⁵ However, even between close military allies, a status competition over the relative ranking order may still exist. Therefore, it should be assumed that even in the absence of a security dilemma, one state’s unwillingness to recognize the other’s status may still present barriers to deep reconciliation between former enemy states. The combined effects of security and status dilemmas can, therefore, provide a systematic and parsimonious answer to the question of why some former enemy states are more successful than others at achieving historical reconciliation.

DIVERGENT RECONCILIATION DYNAMICS AND THE ATTENDANT ASIAN PARADOX

This section shows how different reconciliation dynamics observed in different dyadic relationships between former adversary states in Northeast Asia are the result of the combined effects of security and status dilemmas. The findings here largely corroborate the hypothesis articulated in the previous section. The U.S.-Japan, China-Japan, ROK-Japan, and ROK-China dyads are examined here to account for the variation in the dependent variable. Each dyad consists of two former adversary states that have had shared experiences of violence in their contemporary history. Table 4 below summarizes the results, and shows the causal link between the security-status dilemmas model and the outcome of reconciliation dynamics.

POSTWAR U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS: A CASE OF DEEP RECONCILIATION

The existing literature on interstate reconciliation pays meager attention to the postwar U.S.-Japan reconciliation case. The United States became involved in the Pacific War after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. By the end of the war, with two atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the United States and the allied forces brought Japan to unconditional surrender. Despite the wartime brutality and sheer destructiveness experienced by both sides, the post-WWII bilateral relationship between the United States

⁵ However, alliances are never absolutely firm, especially in a multipolar system, and security dilemmas also can be present in alliance politics in the form of fear of abandonment and risk of entrapment (Snyder 1984, 466-467).

Table 4. Interaction of Security and Status Dilemmas and Reconciliation Dynamics in Northeast Asia

		Security Dilemma	
		Low	High
Status Dilemma	Low	I. Deep Reconciliation (U.S.-Japan Dyad)	II. Latent Reconciliation (ROK-China Dyad)
	High	III. Shallow Reconciliation (ROK-Japan Dyad)	IV. No Reconciliation (China-Japan Dyad)

and Japan quickly turned from one of bitter enemies to the closest allies in the region based on mutual trust and friendship.

The allies' occupation of Japan, led by the U.S. military, lasted for seven years from 1945 to 1952. Following the San Francisco Treaty, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan was signed in 1952, signifying the beginning of the security alliance between the two former enemies. Japan's acceptance of an unconditional surrender—or "embrace of defeat"—coupled with the U.S. security needs to counter the looming communist threats from both the Soviet Union and the newly established People's Republic of China created favorable conditions for a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two countries (Dower 1999, 328). The use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought a decisive victory to the U.S. and allied forces, leaving no room for uncertainty in terms of postwar power relations or status hierarchy. In this regard, Rouhana (2004, 40) contends that, "reconciliation becomes possible when the weaker party is either eliminated or reduced to a status that cannot significantly threaten the existing social and political order." From the onset, therefore, the postwar dyadic relationship between the United States and Japan showed no major signs of either a security dilemma or a status dilemma.

U.S.-Japan relations, of course, showed periods of ebb and flow. In the 1960s, Japan's rapid recovery and economic development began to raise a perception of threat in the United States. Japan's capacity to rebuild and transform its war-torn economy into a highly efficient and technologically competitive market—registering an average growth rate of ten percent in the 1960s—was termed an "economic miracle" by some observers. Its growing economic prowess coupled with the relative decline of the United States in the 1980s created conditions for trade friction that would become a major source of conflict between the allies.

The U.S. occupation of Japan began in the immediate aftermath of the war, and Washington was encouraged to create a strong state in Japan for a number of reasons. First, from a political standpoint, Washington had to gear up for the ensuing possibilities of communist expansion in the region. The communist threats looming large from the Soviet Union and the newly-established People's Republic of China posed imminent threats to U.S. security and interests in the region, and Washington needed Japan to become its closest ally with a strong and efficient government in place. Second, economically speaking, Washington was well aware that a strong state was necessary for Japan's rapid economic recovery to provide both a much-needed bulwark against the growing sympathy for communist ideals in the region, as well as to create an efficient market and industrial base for U.S. business and economic interests.

With the success of a strong developmental state, Japan's "progression from the earlier phases of industrialization to advanced industrialism have been extremely rapid" (Flanagan 1991, 38). Between the 1960s and 1980s, the Japanese economy moved from labor-intensive industries to a capital-intensive phase of development, and toward a knowledge-intensive phase of industrialization at a ten-year interval (Flanagan 1991, 39). With Japan's rapid economic growth and aggressive export campaign, the U.S.-Japan bilateral relations began showing signs of turmoil. Between 1973 and 1982, the Japanese share of the U.S. automobile market rose from 6 percent to nearly 23 percent (Flanagan 1991, 39). The swiftness of the Japanese automobile invasion, coupled with the fact that "it is the symbolism of the car as an American invention and the centerpiece of the American way of life," that significantly contributed to the growing U.S. perception of a threat from Japan's remarkable economic prowess (Flanagan 1991, 39-40).

Nevertheless, the origins of the tension were not rooted in issues of wartime memory, and economic competition between the two former enemy states was not framed as a threat to historical reconciliation in either country. In effect, the trade problems did not cause substantial damage to U.S.-Japan security cooperation (Weinstein 1991, 88). In the Cold War era, strict compartmentalization of defense and trade issues by relevant government agencies in each country ensured that bilateral cooperation in high politics need not be disrupted by competition and conflicts in areas of low politics (Fukuyama and Oh 1993, 51-52).

Despite a chronic U.S. trade deficit with Japan and increasing demands by Washington that Japan make changes to its business practices, the U.S.-Japan military alliance and political partnership came out of the Cold War largely unshaken. In the absence of a Soviet communist threat, Japan still faced

numerous regional security problems in the post-Cold War era, including (a) territorial disputes surrounding the Spratly Islands, (b) increasing Chinese military and economic capabilities, and (c) continuing threats posed by North Korea (Fukuyama and Oh 1993). Regarding this, and on the future prospects of Washington-Tokyo security ties, Fukuyama and Oh (1993, 53) wrote:

The future shape of the U.S.-Japan security relationship will be determined not only by the balance of Japanese political views on the need for such a relationship but also by more basic factors relating to the similarity of Japanese and American societies. Throughout the Cold War, both Americans and Japanese argued that the two countries shared similar values in their commitment to liberal democracy and to market-oriented economic policies. In the absence of a common Soviet threat, those common values and institutions will become the main glue holding the two allies together. To the extent that Japan believes it is an American-style democracy and converges *de facto* with the United States as a society, the more likely it is that the two countries will see things in a similar manner and sustain a high level of trust and cooperation.

Although several U.S. security experts expressed concerns and suspicions in the post-Cold War era that Japan might seek more independent and divergent security policies outside its alliance framework with the United States, this has not occurred thus far. On the contrary, both the government-to-government and people-to-people interactions in the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship have shown a consistent level of mutual trust and reciprocal commitment to cooperation. For instance, a 2015 public opinion poll conducted in both states shows that approximately two-thirds of Americans and three-quarters of Japanese trust the other state “either a great deal or a fair amount” (Stokes 2015). The same poll also indicated that the Americans and Japanese shared similar perceptions toward China, that the level of trust toward China was significantly lower than the trust level shown toward each other, and that the majority of both Americans and Japanese perceived that their alliance was important to check and balance against China’s rise (Stokes 2015).

In more recent years, the United States moved to encourage Japan to become a normalized military power. Starting with North Korea’s nuclear crisis in 1994 and China’s rise in the 2000s, the United States “has systematically pushed its ally to develop new military roles and capabilities” and assume more responsibility in the regional security apparatus (Twining 2007, 80). The absence of both a security dilemma and a status dilemma between the two countries allowed for such developments. Both the United States and Japan

have perceived each other as deserving equal moral and political standing in the system, which indicates that the two former enemy states have successfully achieved deep reconciliation.

POSTWAR CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS: A CASE OF NO RECONCILIATION

The contemporary Sino-Japanese relationship has a relatively short history when observing it from the time in which the two countries normalized their diplomatic relations. In many respects, the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and China can be seen as the result of the U.S. engagement policy with China. With the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, U.S.-China relations officially started in 1979. Recognizing the strategic importance of China, the United States agreed on the One China policy and transferred its diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to mainland China.

In China-Japan relations, the prospects for a genuine reconciliation appeared to be low from the beginning. Soon after the normalization of relations, the history textbook controversy began to surface in 1982 and again in 1986, which then turned into a periodic political controversy between the two former enemies. Particularly during the 1986 history textbook controversy, Chinese anger erupted over the Japanese government's approval of its new history textbook diluting the facts regarding the Nanjing Massacre in which "the Japanese imperialist army killed more than 200,000 Chinese civilians" (Beal et al. 2001, 182). In conjunction with the already extant mistrust and suspicion, the Chinese have demonstrated their concerns about and fears of rising Japanese nationalism amid Japan's economic difficulties after the Japanese bubble burst in the late 1980s.

In more recent years, Sino-Japanese relations have shown typical characteristics of status competition in the international system. For instance, Shogo Suzuki (2008, 46) suggests that both China and Japan in the 21st century are seemingly insecure and frustrated with their status and standing in the world despite the fact that both states "do meet the criteria often associated with great powers." There exist significant variations in great power status, too. Regarding this, Suzuki (2008, 53-58) argued that both China and Japan fit the description of "frustrated great powers" as opposed to "legitimate great powers," and Chinese and Japanese participation in UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) missions could be seen as the status-seeking behavior of each state through what Erik Ringmar calls a "recognition game" whereby each frustrated great power attempts to "impress legitimate great powers in their quest for great power status" (Black and Hwang 2012, 432).

Unlike U.S.-Japan relations, however, the issue of status between China

and Japan—or amongst East Asian states—dates back to the pre-modern era. In this regard, Kang (2010, 19) asserted that the political history of East Asia significantly differs from that of European states, and that the different political traditions and cultures should be accounted for in explaining various contemporary interstate relations and phenomena in these two regions. For thousands of years, the notion of status and its inherent social quality of hierarchy were deeply embedded in the political tradition and history of East Asia, which was a distinctive feature compared to Europe's Westphalian tradition of equality. On this, Kang (2010, 8) writes:

[A]lmost all the actors in East Asia accepted a set of unquestioned rules and institutions about the basic ways in which international relations worked. Known as the tribute system, and involving in particular a hierarchic rank ordering based on status, these rules were taken for granted as the way in which political actors interacted with one another. Largely derived from Chinese ideas over the centuries, by the fourteenth century, these ideas and institutions had become the rules of the game Like the basic rules and institutions of the Westphalian system today, different states modified, abandoned, and used these ideas in a flexible manner depending on situation and circumstance. The tribute system did form the core organizing principles of the system, and these principles endured for centuries as the basis for international interaction throughout East Asia. Within this system, cultural achievement in the form of status was as important a goal as was military and economic power. The status hierarchy and rank order were key components of this system, and ranking did not necessarily derive from political, economic, or military power.

China stood at the center of the tribute system as the hegemon for hundreds of years whose status “derived from its cultural achievements and social recognition by other political actors, not from its raw size or its military or economic power” (Kang 2010, 8). At the time, Chinese influence was dominant especially over the Sinicized Confucian states of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Even then, however, Sino-Japanese relations showed signs of conflict over each other's status. Although Japan imported “many of their domestic ideas, innovations, system of writing, and cultural knowledge from China,” Japan was always skeptical of China's hegemonic status and was “most hesitant about accepting Chinese ideas and Chinese dominance” (Kang 2010, 8-9).

China's political, economic, and cultural developments during the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties provided a model for Japan, and the two East Asian neighbors enjoyed what has been termed a “high tide” in Sino-

Japanese relations during these periods (Rose 1998, 6). However, official bilateral relations were cutoff between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries as Japan “moved away from its fascination with all things Chinese,” and as a result of increasing Japanese piracy activities along the coast of China (Rose 1998, 6). In the fifteenth century, strained diplomatic relations showed signs of improvement as Japan began to pay tribute and send missions to China. However, Japan continued to rank very low in China’s hierarchical worldview, and in the mid-sixteenth century, Japan withdrew from the China-centered tribute system. Despite the lack of official diplomatic relations, trade relations were maintained and bilateral trade volumes continued to increase up through the late seventeenth century. Japan’s isolationist policy during the Tokugawa shogunate, however, imposed heavy restrictions on trade with China in the eighteenth century, which was largely “a means of forcing China’s acceptance, or at least recognition, of Japan’s centrality in Asia and of reinforcing China’s low status in Japan’s hierarchy of partners” (Rose 1998, 7).

The divergent status perceptions between the two during these earlier periods were carried over into bilateral relations in the modern, post-WWII era. China’s encounter with the West’s increasing military pressure in the mid- to late-nineteenth century not only pushed China away to the periphery from being empire and regional hegemon and also destroyed the Sino-centric international system at the turn of the 20th century (Buzan 2010, 9). In the meantime, Japan’s rapid modernization efforts and adaptation to Western political, economic, and sociocultural ideas under Emperor Meiji ended the shogunate rule and placed the Japanese empire in the orbit of other Western great powers. China was then “reduced to quasi-colonial status, first by Western powers and Russia,” and then by Japan’s imperial ambitions (Buzan 2010, 9-10).

From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, China suffered a “century of humiliation” after being the former hegemon in East Asia for many centuries. A power transition of a sort took place between China and Japan by the early twentieth century. In addition, as the Japanese economy made a rapid recovery in the post-WWII era, Japan soon claimed the status of the world’s second-largest economy by the late 1960s. However, China was given a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, while Japan under the U.S. military occupation had adopted a peace constitution, forever renouncing war, restricting itself from maintaining armed forces, and depending heavily on the U.S. security umbrella. Since the early 21st century, however, the fortunes have turned the other way in Sino-Japanese status competition. China’s rapid economic development marked by two-digit average annual growth rates was met by Japan’s contracting economy, “staggering public debt, prolonged

deflation and low approval ratings,” which ultimately led to China overtaking Japan’s status in 2011 as the world’s second-largest economy (Monahan 2011).

Many theorists and experts have suggested that China’s growing economic prowess and its inevitable need to have matching military capabilities threaten international order. A rising China has often been portrayed as a destabilizing factor not only for the global political and security system but also for the liberal rules and institutions that Washington helped to establish in the postwar era (Ikenberry 2008, 24). In this regard, Japan’s status as the closest U.S. ally in the region—not to mention other barriers—prevents it from explicitly and fully acknowledging China’s ascendancy in the 21st century, especially when its own economic indicators have shown no meaningful signs of improvement. The U.S.-China confrontation and the U.S.-Japan alliance, therefore, have added other dimensions to the dynamics of the contemporary Sino-Japanese status competition. Wirth (2009, 470) describes the tripartite relations as follows:

Since the 1990s, the world has witnessed a China continuously increasing its ‘comprehensive national strength’ while promoting its ‘peaceful development’ and the construction of a ‘harmonious (international) society.’ At the same time, Japan is pursuing the path towards ‘normal state,’ becoming increasingly active in foreign and security policy. Both developments coupled with the influence of the United States in the Asia-Pacific represent considerable potential for rivalries and frictions between great powers in Northeast Asia.

Beijing perceives that it will take another forty years—until the 2050s—before China can truly achieve the status of “a modernized, medium-level developed country” (Zheng 2005, 21). Despite its growing economic influence and impact on the world economy, a large proportion of its population still lives in poverty. For instance, China still ranks about 100th among all countries in per capita GDP (Zheng 2005, 19). Considering this, China is “a state that can be seen as both a powerful rising challenger and a weak developing country” (Pu and Schweller 2014, 142). China’s signaling behavior about its intentions, however, has been ambivalent in the eyes of its neighbors, including Japan. Although Beijing has explicitly stated that it would gain very little by engaging in conflicts with other states in the region, and that it has gone to great lengths to assure that “it has no intention of using force,” its signaling behavior still provides ample room for mistrust and misperception from its neighbors (Kang 2005, 552-553). Pu and Schweller (2014, 143) write on China’s mixed signaling behaviors as follows:

A “normal” prestige maximizer in the 1990s, China today sends contradictory status signals. There is an “assertive” China that demands greater accommodation of what it considers its core interests in Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea; and a “shirking” China, whose leaders are urging international audiences to recognize “the real China”—one that is not an up-and-coming superpower but, instead, a still relatively poor country. These variations in China’s status signaling challenge the standard view that a rising power always maximizes its status and prestige.

In recent years, Washington’s encouragement of Tokyo to become a normal military state and assume a more active role as an offshore balancer against China has inevitably raised Beijing’s threat perception towards its former enemy state. The heightened level of the status dilemma exhibited in the Sino-Japanese dyad—which also has ancient roots—has inevitably added another dimension to the postwar security dilemma between the two. Despite the constitutional constraints on Japan’s military, Beijing understands that Japan has long been a major military power in Asia with a well-equipped Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and advanced naval and air forces (Wu 2005, 124).

The increasing difficulty of managing the Sino-Japanese bilateral confrontation was well demonstrated by the escalation of territorial conflict surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in 2010 (Smith 2012, 370). In this regard, “Chinese maritime incursions into Japan’s territorial waters, and even more frequent survey activities in Japan’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) have demonstrated that there is little evidence that either country has backed away from their quite divergent interpretations of their maritime rights in the East China Sea” (Smith 2012, 372-373). Against this backdrop, U.S. President Barack Obama’s 2014 trip to Asia affirmed that “the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty covers the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands” and demonstrated Washington’s commitment to increase the U.S. troop presence in the Philippines, “moves regarded by China as infringing on its territorial integrity and strategic interests” in the region (Wang 2015, 72).

Certainly, domestic sources of barriers for interstate reconciliation have shown their effects as well. Bilateral conflicts over Japanese history textbooks and Japanese leaders’ Yasukuni Shrine visits have prompted occasional anger and public protest. For instance, the “violent outbursts of Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment in 2004 and 2005” were often portrayed as the result of difficult government relations arising from these domestic sources of constraints (Smith 2012, 371). Nevertheless, as the analysis in this section showed, it was difficult to ignore the structural elements and the fact that the process and outcome of

interstate reconciliation were necessarily hinged upon the interplay of security and status dilemmas between former enemy states. The postwar Sino-Japanese reconciliation process has been continuously hindered by the presence of heightened levels of both security and status dilemmas. Their combined effects at the system level have provided no strategic incentives thus far for the former enemies to move forward with historical reconciliation in this case.

POSTWAR ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS: A CASE OF SHALLOW RECONCILIATION

Similar to the view of Sino-Japanese relations, previous studies on postwar ROK-Japan relations have tended to focus on domestic variables. Despite their shared alliance partner, shared commitment to democratic practices and a free market economy, and shared culture of centuries of Confucian tradition, postwar bilateral relations between the ROK and Japan have not progressed towards a deep reconciliation. Collective efforts have been made in more recent years to foster mutual understanding and respect and facilitate closer security cooperation against the common threat posed by North Korea's nuclear proliferation. In early 2016, the governments of the ROK and Japan reached a "final and irreversible" deal, resolving a decades-long spat over reparations for the "comfort women" victims (Gale 2016). Certainly, the trends over the past half century of ROK-Japan diplomatic relations have shown gradual improvements and a progressive tendency toward deep reconciliation. Nonetheless, the ROK and Japan have always experienced a relatively high level of status dilemma between the two regardless of their security situation. In this regard, convergence of status perceptions between Seoul and Tokyo has yet to come to fruition.

In the first two decades since the end of WWII, diplomatic relations between the ROK and Japan were almost nonexistent. The two states established official diplomatic relations only in 1965 under Washington's heavy pressure (Cha 1996, 123-124). Numerous attempts had been made rather early in the postwar era to normalize relations between the ROK and Japan following the division of Korea and, subsequently, the Japanese government recognizing the ROK government as the only legitimate government on the Korean Peninsula. At the time of the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951, which officially ended WWII in the Pacific theater between Japan and allied forces, North and South Korea were engaged in a war with each other, and so neither party was invited to the San Francisco Treaty negotiations. The ROK and Japan, therefore, began to engage in a separate normalization process in 1951 by attempting to restore relations between the two nations.

The normalization process took unusually long, lasting for thirteen years and

four months between 1951 and 1965, during which time the two parties held talks only on seven different occasions and “much of the time was spent on the ‘special past relations’” (Kim 2009, 93). The resultant document from that winding and tortuous series of talks was the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the ROK, signed on June 22, 1965. According to one study, however, both parties expressed that “matters concerning basic relations did not need to take the form of a treaty, but the Treaty on Basic Relations was concluded” because both the Korean and Japanese governments agreed that the two nations needed to resolve (a) “basic relations including the question of history involving the two countries,” and (b) “pending issues such as property claims, fisheries and the legal status of Korean residents in Japan” (Kim 2009, 93). Although the ROK and Japan were able to officially agree on the Treaty on Basic Relations, the treaty and the long talks had failed to substantially “narrow their differences on the nature of the colonial rule” due to “a tremendous gap in the perception of each other’s historical, political, and international status” (Kim 2009, 93).

There are a few reasons as to why the status dilemma has been so pronounced and prolonged in postwar ROK-Japan relations. First, as many scholars have noted, “Japan has not made a clean and decisive break with its past in the way that Germany did following the conclusion of World War II” (Kim 2006, 159). With the Soviet communist threat looming large in the immediate aftermath of the war, the U.S. military government in Japan sought to create a government there with the help of the political establishment. As a result, contrary to Germany’s case, many of the Japanese Class A war criminals were exonerated, such as Kishi Nobusuke “who was the former head of the Manchurian railroad, a Minister of Munitions in the Tojo government, and a signatory of the 1941 declaration of war against the United States” (Kim 2006, 172). Although Japan was effectively disarmed and many of its “top military and civilian leaders arrested and purged, the bulk of bureaucrats stayed on their jobs—including officials of the central government, policemen, and public-school teachers” (Iriye 1974, 125). Inevitably, it has led to the development of nationalist political factions, setting the stage for the spiral of nationalist conflicts between the ROK and Japan thereafter.

Another reason has to do with the apparent gap between Japan’s economic power and its political influence around the world. Whether it is due to the burdens of geography, history, or national identity, Japan in contemporary international politics has not been able to exert the level of influence commensurate with its national power. In this regard, Kim (2006, 158) writes:

By most conventional measures, Japan is one of the world’s great powers: its

economy is the second largest in the world on the basis of conventional GDP if not PPP, its defense budget of \$42.8 billion is the world's fifth largest, and its technological capabilities are exceeded only by those of the United States. Japan's armed forces are among the largest and most well equipped in the world, replete with the latest state-of-the-art weapons systems, and there is little doubt that Japan could develop a formidable nuclear arsenal on short notice. Japan is also the world's second largest foreign aid donor in absolute terms and the second largest contributor to the UN budget. Yet, neither on the world stage nor in East Asia has contemporary Japan been able to seize a place such that it is recognized and regarded as a global great power.

Japan's peace constitution, in this regard, has been a double-edged sword in terms of its foreign policy and national interests. For instance, during the first Gulf War in 1990, Japan was the second-largest financial contributor to Operation Desert Storm, although it made no troop contributions to the coalition efforts (Bennet et al. 1994, 42-44). In this regard, for much of the postwar era, the Japanese government has consistently faced a glass ceiling in terms of maximizing its international status and influence.

The ROK's emergence as a strong economy embracing liberal market principles has helped to foster a strong bilateral trade relationship with Japan. In 2006, Japan was the third-largest export partner for the ROK, reaching \$26.5 billion USD, and it was the largest importing country for the ROK, recording \$51.9 billion USD in that same year (Park 2008, 14). Gradually, but increasingly, cultural engagement and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries also prospered. Until recently, the Japanese have been "the most numerous foreign travelers to Korea since 1977, reaching almost 40 percent every year on average" (Park 2008, 14). However, Japan's continuing economic downturn in the 21st century, coupled with its domestic conservatism, has complicated the prospects for a meaningful convergence of status perceptions between the ROK and Japan.

Similar to postwar Sino-Japanese relations, the ROK-Japan relationship has been riddled with occasional history textbook controversies, Dokdo/Takeshima territory disputes, and the wartime "comfort women" issue. These have been the main sources of conflict observed in a status dilemma between the two countries in the postwar period. Despite divergent perceptions on status, however, the ROK-Japan dyad has not experienced a significant level of security dilemma due to their quasi-alliance relationship. Victor Cha (2000, 261) developed the term "quasi alliance" to describe the relationship between "two states that remain non-allied but share a third power as a common ally." According to the quasi-

alliance model, the inversely constituted abandonment/entrapment fears in alliance arrangements caused conflictual or cooperative behaviors between the ROK and Japan, with significant implications for their bilateral reconciliation prospects (Cha 2000, 265-266).

Despite occasional setbacks, however, the alignment of security policy by proxy has proven to be relatively strong. For instance, when the U.S. security commitment to the ROK was growing weak in the midst of the Cold War, Japan “was quick to dispatch emissaries to Washington to sustain U.S. support for a military presence on the Korean peninsula, most notably in the wake of president-elect Jimmy Carter’s pledge in 1976 that he would pull all U.S. troops out of South Korea” (Green 2014, 206). Also, in 1999, led by U.S. special envoy for North Korea William Perry’s efforts, the U.S.-Japan-ROK Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) was created, which helped cement ROK-Japan agreement on North Korea policy (Green 2014, 208). At the dawn of the 21st century, the presence of growing security threats from North Korea’s military provocations and its nuclear weapons testing presented a stronger impetus for closer security cooperation between the ROK and Japan.

The two countries began to hold working-level military talks from 2011 and signed a tentative agreement on military intelligence exchange (Sheen and Kim 2012). In June 2012, Seoul and Tokyo made the latest attempts to institutionalize security cooperation through the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Military Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), although domestic backlash in the ROK prevented them from moving forward (Hess and Warden 2014). According to a recent study, despite its strategic necessity, South Korean politicians have generally perceived open relations with Japan to be very risky mostly due to domestic political considerations (Hess and Warden 2014). Nevertheless, the fact that such negotiations for closer security cooperation have been taking place between the ROK and Japan in the postwar era indicates that—whether willingly or not—the two former enemy states have not faced a significant level of security dilemma due to their mutual alliance arrangements with the United States.

In the post-Cold War era, both the ROK and Japan have shifted their foreign policy strategy from bilateralism to multilateralism. While maintaining traditional bilateral diplomatic approaches, both countries have been active in engaging in multilateral diplomacy often in the form of regional summit meetings and networks (Fukushima 1999, 109). Both the ROK and Japan have been active in promoting peace and cooperation in East Asia because they both understand that they cannot afford growing uncertainty and instability in the region.

The question remains, however, as to which state will play a more effective

leadership role in the region, and whether the two former enemy states can ultimately reach a convergence of status perceptions about each other in their joint efforts to promote security and peace in Northeast Asia. An incremental approach to historical reconciliation has taken place in this regard, and the structural conditions examined in the ROK-Japan dyad—the combined effects of a low-level security dilemma and high-level status dilemma—have created an environment ripe for shallow reconciliation to take place between them.

POSTWAR ROK-CHINA RELATIONS: A CASE OF LATENT RECONCILIATION

Similar to the case of postwar Sino-Japanese relations, the resumption of diplomatic relations between the ROK and China was also heavily influenced by external factors and changes taking place at the structural level. Official diplomatic relations between the two countries began in 1992. As a part of South Korean President Roh Tae-woo's *nordpolitik*, or "northern policy," in the late 1980s, the ROK government sought to restore diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union, both of which were traditional allies of North Korea. Since the early 1990s, ROK-China bilateral relations have experienced no major episodes of conflict. The trend in the bilateral relationship has been shown to be increasingly vibrant in the area of economic cooperation, with progressively warming diplomatic relations. In many ways, nonetheless, postwar ROK-China relations have been conditioned by their third-party relationships—the nature of each country's relations with other neighbors and stakeholders in the region, especially North Korea and the United States.

In both theory and practice, therefore, it is crucial to examine the ROK and China's third-party relationships in order to understand the strategic logic for reconciliation between the two in the context of the security and status dilemmas. The strained relationship between the ROK and China began with Chinese intervention in the Korean War (1950-1953), which resulted in about thirty-six thousand American casualties, a quarter million Chinese, and half a million or more Koreans (Farley 2014). Since the rise of the Communist Party of China, and for most of the Cold War era, ROK-China relations have been determined by China's friendly ties with North Korea and the ROK's alliance with the United States. However, in more recent years, the transformation of the bilateral economic relationship has "contributed to improved bilateral political relations, while North Korea has simultaneously become both economically dependent on and politically alienated from China" (Snyder 2009, 4). On the other hand, Beijing has begun to perceive the U.S. relationship with China's regional neighbors, including the ROK, as "aimed at bolstering U.S. competition with China to maintain its regional dominance," which also has been reinforced

by Washington's pivot and rebalancing strategy towards Asia (Harris 2014, 144).

In this regard, the ROK-U.S.-China tripartite relationship in recent years has grown increasingly ambivalent as a result of China's rise and its historically cordial relations with Korea from the time of the Sino-centric tribute system. With respect to the warming relationship between Seoul and Beijing in recent years, a number of scholars have expressed concerns for the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance against the backdrop of growing trade volumes between the ROK and China. On this issue, Snyder (2009, 5) writes:

There are few examples of countries that have successfully maintained a security alliance with one party (i.e., South Korea's alliance with the United States) while relying on a third party for economic prosperity. Since the end of the Cold War, the previous tight relationship between security and economic partnerships has broken down The situation today is the opposite of the situation that existed during the Cold War, when South Korea depended on the United States for both security benefits and market access as a precondition for export-led industrialization. South Korea's increasing dependence on China for trade while relying on security guarantees from the United States has had little apparent effect to date, but it is not clear whether such a situation is sustainable or whether there may be future circumstances that would eventually require South Korea to make a choice between the economic benefits that flow from China and the security benefits that flow from the United States.

Thus far, postwar ROK-China relations have experienced a somewhat high level of security dilemma by proxy, which has become more intensified in recent years as a result of China's rise. The U.S. policy of extended deterrence includes its missile defense system in the region. The issue of deploying a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system on the Korean Peninsula has been discussed between Washington and Seoul. Although the ROK-U.S. alliance has assured the region that the purpose of THAAD in Korea will be to protect against North Korea's growing nuclear threats, Beijing still has expressed its concern that "THAAD's radar might be able to offer early tracking data to other parts of the U.S. ballistic missile defense system—in particular to the Ground Based Interceptors responsible for defending the U.S. homeland—thus degrading China's ability to target the United States" (Lyon 2016). Therefore, from Beijing's perspective, the THAAD deployment issue in Korea clearly demonstrates a classic case of a security dilemma where defensively motivated measures are perceived as an offensive threat (Christensen 1999, 49-50).

In effect, a public opinion survey conducted in Korea only a few years after the

restoration of official diplomatic relations between the ROK and China revealed that, “Military power is the area in which Koreans give China its highest score, followed by culture” (Choi 1997, 172-173). The results from this survey indicated a couple of important things about the ROK’s perception of China in the postwar era. First, it showed that the wartime memories of China’s military capabilities and its efficient operational tactics still affected Koreans’ present-day thinking about China. Second, the fact that Koreans still appreciated and highly regarded China’s cultural achievements indicated that the remnants of past relations from the Sino-centric tribute system have been incorporated into modern-day bilateral relations. These two findings suggest that the past bilateral relationship matters a great deal in terms of contemporary ROK-China relations and their reconciliation prospects.

On the surface, however, contemporary ROK-China relations appear to have moved past the point where there is an urgent need to pore over the issue of historical reconciliation. Yet, within the context of Northeast Asia’s security environment, it is worth noting where the current ROK-China relationship has positioned itself on the interstate reconciliation spectrum. In this regard, Schaap (2005, 4) writes about political reconciliation as follows:

[I]f reconciliation is to be political, it cannot be conceived in terms of an ahistorical ideal of harmony or consensus according to which discord and antagonism would be stilled once and for all. Rather, it must be understood as a striving for a sense of commonness that might be disclosed from the clash of perspectives we bring to bear on the world in our historical relation to each other. As such, reconciliation would not be about transcending the conflicts of the past by striving for social harmony. Rather, reconciliation would condition the possibility of politics by framing a potentially agonistic clash of world views within the context of a community that is ‘not yet’ That is, not how to restore community between alienated co-members, but how to transform a relation of enmity into one of civic friendship.

Measured against the reconciliation yardstick provided by Schaap, postwar ROK-China relations show no signs of deep reconciliation. One of the most important factors in this regard has been North Korea and the divergent interests and strategic priorities concerning Beijing and Seoul’s relations with Pyongyang.

From the ROK’s perspective, its ultimate goal of unification of the Korean Peninsula has necessarily affected the tone and character of its diplomatic relations with China. Despite its “concerns about the ramifications of China’s power and the possibility that China could prevent Korean unification, South

Koreans also recognize that cooperation with China is necessary if Korean reunification is to be achieved” (Snyder 2013, 37). For China, the North Korea factor has long been a strategic advantage but at times a significant headache. Samuel Kim (2006, 89) describes the cross-border movement of people between the three countries to illustrate the complexity of tripartite relations:

One of the overlapping sets of Pyongyang-Beijing-Seoul relations is a triangle of human movement, involving in 2004 flows of hundreds of thousands of refugees (or “illegal immigrants” in Chinese eyes) from North Korea to northeast China, about half a million Chinese middle-class tourists to South Korea, about 135,000 Chinese-Korean (Chosonjok) illegal migrant workers from China to South Korea, and more than 2.3 million South Korean tourists to China.

China’s economic ties with North Korea have been mostly in the form of economic aid from Beijing, which is “designed to keep the Pyongyang regime afloat so China has a strategic buffer and so the number of refugees will be limited” (Kim 2006, 89). There are many external variables that Beijing certainly will consider for the future design and direction of trilateral relations. Needless to say, however, considering North Korea, and lacking diplomatic leverage over China, Seoul for the most part has assumed a subordinate status in its relations with Beijing.

Accordingly, U.S. and North Korean factors have become very much endogenous to contemporary ROK-China relations. The prospects for bilateral reconciliation have become critically dependent upon these external factors. Considering this, postwar ROK-China relations fit the latent reconciliation scenario in which the dyadic relationship between former enemy states largely shows the character of friendly interaction and normal diplomatic relations although there continue to be sporadic political constraints and other external and structural factors hindering the process of deep reconciliation. A brief examination provided in this section demonstrated that the interplay of a high-level security dilemma and a low-level status dilemma presented the structural conditions conducive to the emergence of a latent reconciliation between the two countries. The future prospects of ROK-China reconciliation, therefore, requires a more political measure, as opposed to the social-psychological resolution needed for improving the ROK-Japan reconciliation case.

CONCLUSION

With the end of WWII, a new phase of political order began in Northeast Asia. At the turn of the 20th century, the tradition of the Sino-centric tribute system that had governed the regional order for centuries abruptly ended with the power projection of the West and Japanese imperialist ambitions. The newly established states in Northeast Asia, with shifting geopolitical fault lines, experienced significant levels of uncertainty and instability. The three major Sinicized states that emerged out of the war—the ROK, Japan, and China—were able to achieve significant levels of economic development and interdependence while taking advantage of the postwar liberal international order created by the United States. Together, these four countries now make up the core stakeholders in the region. The interaction of strategic interests and power plays among these four states has created a security environment particular to the region.

Against this backdrop, this article has sought to answer the question of why some dyads of former adversary states are more successful at achieving historical reconciliation than others. Focusing on the region of Northeast Asia in the post-WWII period, this study has emphasized the role of systemic factors in influencing different reconciliation dynamics. Previous studies have focused on the effects of first- and second-level variables, such as the role of domestic agents and states' remembrance effects on interstate reconciliation. While their validity remains unchallenged, this paper has shown that the existing explanations have limits in their explanatory power and breadth. By introducing an alternative hypothesis based on the interaction of security and status dilemmas, this study has attempted to fill the gap in the existing literature and offer a parsimonious and complementary theory.

Traditionally an understudied concept in IR, historical reconciliation has been an ongoing challenge particularly in Northeast Asia. A lack of genuine interstate reconciliation in the postwar ROK-Japanese and Sino-Japanese relations has been cited as a major source of regional security tension. The findings from this research suggest that the root cause for the lack of deep reconciliation in each dyad has been different. The postwar ROK-Japan reconciliation case shows the characteristics of shallow reconciliation, and, the reciprocal threat perception between the two countries originated from a status dilemma but not necessarily from a security dilemma. On the contrary, the postwar China-Japan dyad experienced heightened levels of both security and status dilemmas, creating structural conditions not favorable for reconciliation. Successful management and resolution of both the security and status dilemmas in the postwar U.S.-Japan dyad proved to be important for the former enemy states to move towards

deep reconciliation. Furthermore, postwar ROK-China relations have shown signs of latent reconciliation caused by the presence of a high-level security dilemma by proxy but no significant level of status dilemma. In this case, their third-party relationships with North Korea and the United States consistently proved to be a major obstacle for deep reconciliation.

The findings in this article also suggest that there are other observable implications in both theory and practice. First, the “Asian paradox” can be perceived as a byproduct of the divergent reconciliation dynamics observed in the four different former enemy dyads in the region. Neither traditional IR theories on security nor the regional integration scholarship has offered sufficient theoretical understanding or effective policy recipes to address this problem. The reconciliation dynamics hypothesis offers a systematic and parsimonious explanation for the ongoing problem of the “Asian paradox.” Second, by applying a two-by-two model of the security-status dilemmas, this research has identified that a status dilemma is inherently more difficult to resolve for the former enemy states with past super-subordinate power structures arising from colonial experiences (i.e., the ROK-Japan and China-Japan dyads). On the contrary, a status dilemma appears to be negligible for the former enemy states that fought a war against each other as politically equal and sovereign entities (i.e., U.S.-Japan and ROK-China dyads). Examining the concept of reconciliation within the framework of international security studies, this article has focused on intra-regional reconciliation dynamics. More research should be conducted on the concept of reconciliation across different regions and on a larger number of cases in order to shed more light on the still unknown fields and unexplored areas between war and peace in international politics.

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