

The Rise and Fall of Status-Seekers:

Commitment, Strategy, and International Political Change in East Asia

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Abstract

Why do some status-seeking states rise while others fail to do so? Who rises or falls when the established international order undergoes a transition? Status-seeking has emerged as a flourishing avenue of research in international relations (IR) in the past decade. Despite the remarkable growth of scholarship on status, however, a general theory of status ascent to explain and compare the rise and fall of status-seeking states remains underdeveloped. IR scholars have investigated various strategies available to status-seeking states and the logics behind their strategic choices. However, the rise and fall of status-seekers cannot be explained without taking into account the international social structure surrounding them, as status is a social construct defined and distributed when there are a set of shared norms, rules, and practices that stratify states and legitimize such stratification. Therefore, I propose a theory of status ascent that considers both the strategies of status-seeking states and the international social structure where they are embedded. Specifically, I focus on status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between international social structure and states becomes salient as structural constraints weaken and the room for agency expands. To examine the validity of my theory, I compare the status-seeking strategies of Korea and Japan and their outcomes during the Ming-Qing transition (1583-1683), the Westphalian transition (1839-1912), and the Détente (1969-1979). These case studies will be followed by an analytical overview of the current crisis of the liberal international order, the strategies of South Korea and Japan, and the challenges they are now faced with. This thesis makes three contributions by proposing a general theory of status ascent, providing analytical tools to elucidate the current crisis of the liberal international order and assess state behaviors, and paving the way for the cross-fertilization among IR, history, and area studies, thereby advancing scholarship on global IR and historical IR.

Résumé

Pourquoi certains États en quête de statut s'élèvent-ils alors que d'autres n'y parviennent pas ? Qui s'élève ou s'effondre lorsque l'ordre international établi subit une transition ? Au cours de la dernière décennie, la recherche du statut a émergé comme une voie de recherche florissante dans le domaine des relations internationales (IR). Malgré l'essor remarquable de la recherche sur le statut, une théorie générale de l'ascension du statut permettant d'expliquer et de comparer l'ascension et la chute des États à la recherche d'un statut reste sous-développée. Les spécialistes des relations internationales ont étudié les diverses stratégies dont disposent les États en quête de statut et les logiques qui sous-tendent leurs choix stratégiques. Cependant, l'essor et le déclin des États en quête de statut ne peuvent s'expliquer sans prendre en compte la structure sociale internationale qui les entoure, car le statut est une construction sociale définie et distribuée lorsqu'il existe un ensemble de normes, de règles et de pratiques partagées qui stratifient les États et légitiment cette stratification. Je propose donc une théorie de l'ascension sociale qui tient compte à la fois des stratégies des États en quête de statut et de la structure sociale internationale dans laquelle ils s'inscrivent. Plus précisément, je me concentre sur la recherche du statut pendant les périodes de changement politique international, lorsque l'interaction entre la structure sociale internationale et les États devient saillante à mesure que les contraintes structurelles s'affaiblissent et que la marge d'action s'élargit. Pour examiner la validité de ma théorie, je compare les stratégies de recherche de statut de la Corée et du Japon et leurs résultats pendant la transition Ming-Qing (1583-1683), la transition Westphalienne (1839-1912) et la Détente (1969-1979). Ces études de cas seront suivies d'un aperçu analytique de la crise actuelle de l'ordre international libéral, des stratégies de la Corée du Sud et du Japon, et des défis auxquels ils sont maintenant confrontés. Cette thèse apporte trois contributions en proposant une théorie générale de l'ascension du statut, en fournissant des outils analytiques pour élucider la crise actuelle de l'ordre international libéral et évaluer les comportements des États, et en ouvrant la voie à une fertilisation croisée entre la IR, l'histoire et les études régionales, faisant ainsi progresser la recherche sur la «global IR» et la «historical IR».

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List of Abbreviations

AAPRA	Afro-Asian Problems Research Association
ACL	Anti-Communist Law
APRA	Asian Problems Research Association
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CLB	Cabinet Legislation Bureau
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COCOM	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
COMECON	see CMEA
CPKI	Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRP	Democratic Republican Party
FOIP	Free and Open Indo-Pacific
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
G-7	Groups of 7
G-20	Groups of 20
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
IST	Institutional Status Theory
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
JSDF	Japanese Self-Defense Force
JSP	Japanese Socialist Party
KCIA	Korean Central Intelligence Agency
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KMA	Korean Military Academy
KPR	Korean People's Republic
KRP	Korean Republican Party
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MIKTA	Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia
MRC	Military Revolutionary Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDP	New Democratic Party
NDRP	New Democratic Republican Party
NSL	National Security Law
NUDP	New United Democratic Party
PPD	Party for Peace and Democracy
PRC	People's Republic of China
RDP	Reunification Democratic Party
ROK	Republic of Korea

SIT	Social Identity Theory
SCNR	Supreme Council for National Reconstruction
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWDA	Woodrow Wilson Digital Archive

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Why do some status-seeking states rise while others fail to do so? Who rises or falls when the established international order undergoes a transition? While there is a growing concern about the crisis of the post-Cold War liberal international order, the pursuit of status is emerging as a key driving force in world politics. US grand strategy is now aimed at defending its global hegemonic status. Despite domestic polarization between the Republicans and the Democrats, both Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" and Joe Biden's "America is Back" show that the United States is by no means willing to abandon its supremacy over other states.¹ Chinese grand strategy is also heavily driven by its status aspiration. China's military modernization, "Belt and Road Initiative," and pursuit of "national rejuvenation" under Xi Jinping cannot be explained without considering its status aspirations inspired by the century of humiliation and the more glorious past preceding it.² Russia is a status-seeker as well. By urging support for his decision to invade Ukraine, Putin is attempting to reclaim Russia's privileged position and influence in Eastern Europe.³ While China's assertiveness reflects a rising power's confidence and status aspiration, Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted from its decline and status anxiety.⁴

The quest for status is not an exclusive feature of great power politics given that weaker and smaller states are no less eager than great powers in status-seeking. Since the end of World War II, Canada and Australia have long engaged in the so-called middle-power diplomacy to enlarge their role and influence in international society. The establishment of the Group of 20

¹ Donald Trump, "The Inaugural Address" (January 20, 2017); Joseph Biden, "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World" (February 4, 2021).

² Xi Jinping, "Speech at First session of 14th NPC" (March 14, 2023).

³ Vladimir Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation" (February 21, 2022).

⁴ Andrej Krickovic and Chang Zhang, "Fears of Falling Short versus Anxieties of Decline: Explaining Russia and China's Approach to Status-Seeking," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 2 (2020): 219–51.

(G-20) Summit granted more agency to emerging economies that did not belong to the Group of 7 (G-7), which has served as a closed elite club for advanced economies. ASEAN members have developed the norms, rules, and practices of cooperation and coordination to exercise collective leadership in Asia and avoid being dominated by great powers. Small states in Scandinavia try to improve their status by enhancing their moral authority or becoming crucial partners to powerful states. The crisis of the liberal international order is posing both challenges and opportunities for these weaker and smaller states that have struggled to be recognized as significant players in global and regional affairs.

The quest for status is one of the basic needs of human beings. A higher and more privileged status is both an end in itself and a means to achieve other goals.⁵ On the one hand, status has intrinsic value because obtaining a higher status can be a source of self-esteem. On the other hand, status has instrumental value because a higher status can be translated into other tangible and intangible benefits, such as power, privileges, social influence, respect and deference from other actors, and even wealth. As long as states continue to serve as the principal collective units organizing the political life of individuals and they continue to identify themselves more or less with the state to which they belong, status-seeking will remain a key driving force in world politics and the study of status will provide useful analytical lenses to understand it.

Status-seeking has emerged as a flourishing avenue of research in international relations (IR) in the past decade. Despite the remarkable growth of scholarship on status,

⁵ Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, "Status and World Order," in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17-19; Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 47-49; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, Jens Ringsmose, and Håkon Lunde Saxi, "Prestige-Seeking Small States: Danish and Norwegian Military Contributions to US-Led Operations," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2 (2018), 262-63; Elias Götz, "Status Matters in World Politics," *International Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2021), 3-10.

however, a general theory of status ascent to explain and compare the rise and fall of status-seeking states remains underdeveloped. IR scholars have investigated various strategies available to status-seeking states and the logics behind their strategic choices. However, the rise and fall of status-seekers cannot be explained without taking into account the international social structure surrounding them, as status is a social construct defined and distributed when there are a set of shared norms, rules, and practices that stratify states and legitimize such stratification. Therefore, I propose a theory of status ascent that considers both the strategies of status-seeking states and the international social structure where they are embedded. Specifically, I focus on status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between international social structure and states becomes salient as structural constraints weaken and the room for agency expands.

In this chapter, I discuss what is missing in the existing literature on status, propose a theory of status ascent, and provide an overview of the research design and the following chapters. I begin with a literature review, identifying three obstacles that have hindered the development of a general theory of status ascent. Against this backdrop, I lay out my theoretical argument: when the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on the type of strategies they choose and the type of international political change. If their strategies align with changes in the social structure where they are embedded, status-seekers are likely to improve their status. Otherwise, they will fail. In the next section, I discuss my case selection and methods. To examine the validity of my theory, I compare the status-seeking strategies of Korea and Japan and their outcomes during the Ming-Qing transition, the Westphalian transition, and the Détente, each representing different types of international political change in East Asian history. I wrap up this chapter with an overview of the following chapters.

1. Literature Review

In this section, I review the existing literature on status-seeking in IR and identify three obstacles to developing a general theory of status ascent. In the past decade, status-seeking has emerged as a flourishing avenue of research. Despite the remarkable growth of status scholarship, however, a general theory of status ascent to explain and compare the rise and fall of status-seeking states remains underdeveloped. The development of such a theory has been hindered by three obstacles, each related to structure, strategies, and states: (1) the mischaracterization of international social structure, (2) the dominance of the bellicist paradigm and Social Identity Theory (SIT), and (3) the practice of state categorization.

1) The Mischaracterization of International Social Structure

First, the existing literature on status-seeking has not fully appreciated the significance of international social structure. Status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum because status can be defined when there are a set of shared norms, rules, and practices regarding who deserves a particular position or not. Put differently, the concept of status implies and presumes the existence of international order and a broader social structure that emerges out of it, which differentiate and stratify states. While the international social structure influences states by constraining their behaviors or constructing their identities and interests, states not only reproduce but also reshape the structure. Therefore, a general theory of status ascent should consider both the strategies of status-seekers and the international social structure surrounding them.

However, the existing literature on status has mischaracterized the international social structure. First, although IR scholars acknowledge that status-seeking is a social phenomenon, they often reduce international social structure underlying it to interactions between states, and

even more narrowly, to a status-seeker's belief, perception, and evaluation of external conditions it faces. For instance, Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko argue that the strategic choices of status-seekers are influenced by the permeability of elite clubs and the similarity of values pursued by the status-seekers and the established powers in a position to assess the former's status claims.⁶ Larson and Shevchenko acknowledge the social nature of status politics, but their primary focus is on interactions between low-status aspirants and high-status respondents, which are part of but do not capture the totality of international social structure. In their recent book, Larson and Shevchenko take a narrower perspective by shifting their focus to the status-seeker's *beliefs* about "the permeability of the elite club and the security (stability and/or legitimacy) of the status hierarchy."⁷

Similarly, Steven Ward does not give full consideration to the international social structure where status-seeking states are embedded. Ward examines why and how rising powers turn to revisionist strategies, arguing that "obstructed status ambitions unleash social psychological and domestic political forces within rising states that push them to reject and challenge the status quo order."⁸ He acknowledges that status-seeking is a social process in which states advance their status claims and pursue recognition from other states. However, his approach to the social aspect of status politics is not without limitations. Instead of providing a full picture of how international social structure shapes the identities and behaviors of states and the ground for status-seeking, Ward narrows his focus down to "status immobility," that is, the status-seeker's *belief* or *perception* that it is faced with a "glass ceiling" in pursuing its status ambitions.

⁶ Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010), 71.

⁷ Deborah Welch Larson and Aleksei Shevchenko, *Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 5.

⁸ Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers: Obstructed Ambitions* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3-4, 42-43.

Drawing upon Larson and Shevchenko, Rohan Mukherjee proposes Institutional Status Theory (IST) that the strategic choices of status-seekers can be explained by the extent to which the core international institutions comprising international order are open to newcomers and guarantee the fairness of internal decision-making processes. By shedding light on the role of international institutions in shaping the strategic choices of status-seekers, Mukherjee brings international social structure into his analysis. However, his IST has limitations for two reasons. First, international institutions are important but they are not the exclusive elements of international order. His IST leaves unaddressed such “basic institutions” or more fundamental elements of international order as the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, great power management, and war, which underlie and operate through international institutions.⁹ Second, Mukherjee’s IST is primarily concerned with how the openness and procedural fairness of international institutions influence the behaviors of status-seekers. However, such behavioral effects of international institutions are only one part of the complex interplay between international social structure and states.

To build a theory of status ascent, the presence and influence of the international social structure surrounding and lurking behind status-seekers should be taken more seriously. Status scholars agree that status is a social construct.¹⁰ In defining status, many scholars focus on the possession of certain attributes, the values of which are agreed upon by relevant actors in specific contexts. For instance, Deborah Welch Larson and her colleagues define status as “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes,” such as “wealth, coercive

⁹ Rohan Mukherjee, *Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 45.

¹⁰ Larson et al. 2014; Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, “Reputation and Status as Motives for War,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 371–93; Ward 2017b; Renshon 2017; Marina G. Duque, “Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach,” *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2018): 577–92; Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019); Larson and Shevchenko 2019; Mukherjee 2022.

capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout.”¹¹ Some scholars offer an alternative definition of status that centers more on the processes of mutual recognition between states, rather than their attributes. For instance, drawing upon Max Weber, Marina G. Duque conceptualizes status as “an effective claim to social esteem,” which emerges from “identification processes in which an actor gains admission into a club once members deem that the actor follows the rules of membership.”¹² Despite the disagreement regarding whether status should be defined in terms of state attributes or social interactions, both sides agree that status can neither be reduced to nor decided by the size of material resources and capabilities possessed by states.

The social nature of status is confirmed by the fact that status markers or the token of respect and deference for an actor’s standing vary across cultural contexts and historical eras.¹³ Status markers maintain or lose their relevance or newly emerge as historical conditions underlying the arena of status politics alter. For instance, in the modern international system, status markers have often taken the form of membership in such exclusive and prestigious clubs in the international society as the Concert of Europe, the UN Security Council, and the Groups of 7, 8, and 20. In contrast, the possession of overseas colonies no longer serves as a key marker of great-power status with the demise of colonialism.

In other words, the concept of status presumes the existence of international order that differentiates and stratifies states because status can be defined and distributed only when there are norms, rules, and practices implicitly or explicitly shared among states. These social constraints govern human interactions within and across state boundaries by homogenizing and

¹¹ Larson et al. 2014, 7.

¹² Duque 2018, 580.

¹³ Larson et al. 2014. 10-11, 20; Duque 2018, 581; Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 16-18.

stratifying states that accept those constraints. For instance, Ann E. Towns argues that international norms serve as social standards that prescribe the proper behaviors of states on the one hand, and compare and rank them on the other hand.¹⁴ Similarly, David L. Lake emphasizes that norms and rules generate social hierarchies that differentiate “good” actors who comply with them and “bad” ones who violate or deny them.¹⁵ According to Vincent Pouliot, practices, defined as socially meaningful and organized patterns of activities, can be another source of stratification because they result in the competition for practical mastery and competence between states and their representatives that share and coalesce around common practices.¹⁶

Once established, international order gives rise to a broader social structure organized around it. International order is a product of human agency designed and established to govern human interactions within and across state boundaries. International norms, rules, and practices that perform this function are the key building blocks of international order. International social structure is a broader concept.¹⁷ It encompasses both international order and other contingent and spontaneous dynamics that emerge out of it without deliberate design. In this thesis, international order and international social structure are used interchangeably.

Second, some status scholars mischaracterize the international social structure by overemphasizing the structural dimension of status politics while neglecting the agency of status-seekers, which is no less significant in shaping the outcomes of status-seeking. For instance, Duque argues that status emerges from “systematic social processes... that cannot be

¹⁴ Ann E. Towns, *Women and States: Norms and Hierarchies in International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 44-47.

¹⁵ David A. Lake, “Laws and Norms in the Making of International Hierarchies,” in *Hierarchies in World Politics*, ed. Ayşe Zarakol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 21-22.

¹⁶ Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 48-55.

¹⁷ For the distinction between “order” and “structure,” see Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 222-23.

reduced to state attributes” and that status politics is structured by self-reinforcing dynamics.¹⁸ Once a status-seeker obtains a high status, it will easily draw recognition from other actors due to its privileged position and will develop dense relations among them, but relatively sparse ones with the rest. Although Duque unpacks social and relational processes that reproduce international social structure surrounding status-seekers, she pays little attention to their agency.

The relationship between international social structure and states is a two-way process.¹⁹ On the one hand, international social structure “constrains” and “constructs” states.²⁰ It has constraint effects on states by rewarding behaviors that respect the existing order and its norms, rules, and practices while punishing others that violate them. Moreover, international social structure can exert construction effects on states by shaping their identities and interests. Construction effects are more profound than constraint effects because the former can entail the latter but not always vice versa. That is, when the content of national identity and interests alters, state behaviors change accordingly. Conversely, behavioral changes often end up in tactical adjustments without corresponding changes in national identity and interests. On the other hand, it should be noted that states are not always dictated by international social structure because they can develop and enact their own agency. Although their behaviors, interests, and even identities are heavily influenced by international social structure, states can revise, challenge, and even overthrow the structure when certain conditions are fulfilled.

¹⁸ Duque 2018, 578-81.

¹⁹ For the problems of structure and agency (or agent) in international relations, see Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Walter Carlsnaes, “The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis,” *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1992): 245–70; Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander E. Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 33–75; Wendt 1999, 26-27.

2) The Dominance of the Bellicist Paradigm and SIT

Second, the existing literature dominated by the bellicist paradigm and SIT has examined various strategies available to status-seekers without fully explicating their structural consequences or impact on the established international order. IR scholars engaged in the study of status heavily rely on the bellicist paradigm, which assumes that international conflict is inevitable and indispensable in status politics, or borrow from SIT that investigates where individuals find the source of self-identification and how their perceptions of in-group and out-group shape inter-group relations. However, both approaches have limitations because the bellicist paradigm is primarily concerned with the specific means of status-seeking, that is, the use of military force and coercion, while the SIT-based research is not clear about when and how the strategies employed by status-seekers lead to the reinforcement, partial revision, or replacement of the existing order.

Traditionally, the study of status has featured the bellicist paradigm, which assumes that status-seeking is inseparable from war and international conflict. IR scholars have posited that the obstructed ambitions of status-seekers generate a sense of humiliation, anger, or anxiety and drive them to engage in assertive and aggressive actions. In his seminal article, Johan Galtung laid the groundwork for the research tradition that advocates a strong connection between status inconsistency and international conflict.²¹ Status inconsistency occurs when there is a discrepancy between one state's "achieved" status based on its economic and military power and its "ascribed" status recognized by other states in the international system. If a state believes that it deserves a higher and more privileged standing but other states do not

²¹ For status inconsistency and international conflict, see Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Aggression," *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2 (1964): 95–119. Some scholars use such terms as "status discrepancy" and "status dissonance" in place of status inconsistency, but the basic idea remains the same.

acknowledge and attribute such status, it will lead to international conflicts. Subsequent research provided empirical support for Galtung's theory of status inconsistency.²²

In the recently renewed research on status, the bellicist paradigm remains enduring. As their predecessors did, the new generation of status scholars focuses on the use of military force as the principal means of status-seeking. They investigate the role of status aspirations in the mechanisms of war and conflict proposed in the existing literature. For instance, Andrew Q. Greve and Jack S. Levy argue that status dissatisfaction is a crucial factor in the rising power's dissatisfaction, which remains understudied in the power transition research program.²³ According to power transition theory, the risk of hegemonic war significantly increases when the rising power archives power parity with the dominant power, and becomes dissatisfied with the existing order established under the latter's dominance. While the concept of power parity is relatively easily operationalized and measured, power transition theorists have failed to conceptualize satisfaction. To fill this gap, Greve and Levy argue that status dissatisfaction is a key driver that motivates the rising power to initiate a war against the dominant power and challenge the established order.

Steven Ward is another scholar who follows the bellicist paradigm.²⁴ By bringing status ambitions into the study of revisionism, he examines why and how rising powers turn into "radical revisionists."²⁵ Ward argues that status immobility or the rising power's belief that its status ambition cannot be fulfilled due to an international "glass ceiling" motivates the rising power to pursue radical revisionism, which is aimed at status ascent through the

²² Michael D. Wallace, "Power, Status, and International War," *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 1 (1971): 23–35; Michael D. Wallace, *War and Rank Among Nations*. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1973).

²³ Andrew Q. Greve and Jack S. Levy, "Power Transitions, Status Dissatisfaction, and War: The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895," *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 148–78.

²⁴ Ward 2017b.

²⁵ For the concept of revisionism and its origin and evolution, see also Steve Chan et al., *Contesting Revisionism: China, the United States, and the Transformation of International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

overthrow of the established order. Status immobility generates social psychological and political forces that push the rising powers toward radical revisionism. On the social psychological side, status immobility produces “preferences among individuals for policies that reject the status quo order.” In domestic politics, it sets the political and discursive landscape skewed in favor of hardliners who argue for policies that challenge the existing order.

Recent works on status-seeking propose alternative, albeit still bellicist, explanations that connect status-seeking to international conflict and the use of military force. For instance, Jonathan Renshon advances a theory of status dissatisfaction that challenges the “frustration-aggression” assumption prevalent in the study of status-seeking.²⁶ He argues that the initiation of military conflicts is not a status-seeker’s ex-post irrational response to frustration arising from the denial of its status claim as often presumed in the existing literature. From a rationalist perspective, Renshon says, the initiation of conflicts should be conceptualized as the status-seeker’s policy instrument to enhance its status by “altering the beliefs of other members of the international community.” He notes that military conflicts, due to their public, dramatic, and salient nature, provide an opportunity for the international community to evaluate or update a given state’s status claim.

William C. Wohlforth proposes another bellicist model, the key mechanism of which is analogous to that of a security dilemma.²⁷ While the existing literature posits that interstate conflict is caused by status inconsistency, he focuses on “status dilemma” that occurs “when two states would be satisfied with their status if they had perfect information about each other’s

²⁶ Jonathan Renshon, “Status Deficits and War,” *International Organization* 70, no. 3 (2016): 513–50; Renshon 2017.

²⁷ William C. Wohlforth, “Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,” in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 116–19; For security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214; Shiping Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 587–623; Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

beliefs.” As uncertainty arising from international anarchy generates security dilemma wherein the defensive actions taken by security-seeking states paradoxically lead to endless arms races between them, “mixed signals, botched communications, or misinterpretations of the meanings underlying action may generate misplaced status dissonance.”

However, the bellicist paradigm obscures the fact that the quest for status does not necessarily lead to competition, conflict, or war between states.²⁸ First, the scarcity of status should not be taken for granted because status can be created in a way that facilitates mutual accommodation between status-seekers. Second, status-seeking is not always a zero-sum competition because status is a “club good,” which can be shared by multiple actors without losing its value as long as they are all eligible for it. Third, states are not maximalists in pursuing their status. Their status ambitions can be mitigated when the costs of over-recognition outweigh the benefits of high status. Finally, status can be obtained through non-military and non-violent means, such as the provision of public goods and the implementation of humane and moral foreign policies.

While the bellicist paradigm is preoccupied with the role of war and conflict in status-seeking, SIT helps status scholars explore various status-seeking strategies other than the use of military force and the logics behind strategic choices. For instance, Deborah Welch Larson and Aleksei Shevchenko propose a SIT-based typology of status-seeking strategies, arguing that the strategic choice of status-seekers depends on the permeability of elite groups and the stability and legitimacy of the international status hierarchy.²⁹ If the elite group boundary is permeable to new members, status-seekers will pursue the strategy of *social mobility* to elevate status by emulating the values and practices of the dominant powers in the elite group. If its

²⁸ Xiaoyu Pu, “Status Quest and Peaceful Change,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations*, ed. T. V. Paul et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 374-80.

²⁹ Larson and Shevchenko 2010, 71-75; Larson and Shevchenko 2019, 5-13.

boundary is impermeable and the international status hierarchy is unstable and illegitimate, status-seekers will adopt the strategy of *social competition* to enhance status by outdoing the dominant powers in the areas where they have claimed superiority. Social competition is often accompanied by geopolitical rivalry, arms racing, and military demonstrations. If the elite group is impermeable but the international status hierarchy is stable and legitimate, status-seekers will engage in the strategy of *social creativity*. They will attempt to reevaluate the meaning of their characteristics that have been considered negative or identify a new dimension on which they can prove their superiority.

Drawing upon Larson and Shevchenko, Mukherjee argues that status-seeking rising powers choose different strategies depending on the extent to which the core international institutions that comprise international order are open to newcomers and guarantee the fairness of internal decision-making process.³⁰ An open and fair institution will encourage rising powers to cooperate with the existing rules. Conversely, a closed and unfair institution will cause rising powers to challenge it. If an institution is open but procedurally unfair, rising power will try to reframe institutional rules to make them fairer. Rising powers faced with a procedurally fair but closed institution will attempt to expand its leadership ranks.

Ward proposes an alternative typology of status-seeking strategies, which is still grounded in SIT but reflects it more accurately. He stresses that IR scholars have misread SIT.³¹ First, they have misinterpreted the key insights of SIT, especially the distinction between individualistic and collective strategies. In the original version of SIT, social mobility is a strategy for individuals to improve their own positions by disidentifying from a low-status group and obtaining membership in a high-status one, whereas social competition and social

³⁰ Mukherjee 2022, 18-19, 56-57, 64-72.

³¹ Steven Ward, "Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2017): 821-34.

creativity are collective strategies pursued for the entire group. Second and relatedly, group impermeability does not cause intergroup conflict as presumed by IR scholars because it is an obstacle to individual status-seekers, not to collective ones. Finally, the proponents of SIT in IR make a distinction between social mobility and social competition, which has no roots in the original formulation of SIT. In fact, Ward says, social mobility and social competition describe the same phenomenon, that is, status ascent through the attainment of consensually valued attributes.

Against this backdrop, Ward shifts the level of analysis from a status-seeking state to individuals who identify themselves with it or not and discerns four logics of strategic choice based on the individualistic-collective distinction.³² On the one hand, individuals address dissatisfaction that results from their country's inferior status by searching for an alternative source of identification at the sub- or supra-national groups. On the other hand, individuals concerned with their country's status choose collective strategies such as emulation, transformation, or rejection. Emulation is aimed at improving the state's position along with the existing international status hierarchy. Transformation involves altering collective understandings regarding what constitutes the valued dimension of the international status hierarchy or downward adjustment of the state's status expectations. Rejection is the assault on the validity and legitimacy of the incumbent international status hierarchy.

The bellicist paradigm and SIT have contributed to the study of status by helping IR scholars frame their research and providing them with analytical tools to explain status politics. However, given that status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum, they are unclear about

³² Steven Ward, "Logics of Stratified Identity Management in World Politics." *International Theory* 11, no. 2 (2019): 211–38.

how the status-seeking strategies they proposed influence the established international order and the social structure that emerges out of it.

First, the bellicist paradigm obscures the possibility of non-violent status-seeking and confuses the strategies of status-seeking with their social meanings and consequences. As noted earlier, its proponents are primarily concerned with the specific means of status-seeking, that is, the use of military force and coercion, treating it as the indicator of a status-seeking state's revisionist intention. However, the use of force is not the only means of status-seeking because status can be obtained through non-violent and non-military ones as well. Moreover, such an assumption that revisionist actors rely on force and coercion whereas status quo ones turn to non-military and non-violent strategies is misleading. While military force employed in accordance with the established norms, rules, and practices can reinforce the existing international order, non-military means such as rhetoric and ideological campaigns can be more subversive if they deny the legitimacy of the existing order.

The proponents of SIT investigate a variety of status-seeking strategies, ranging from military to non-military ones, and the logics behind strategic choices. However, the relationship between those strategies and the international order remains unclear in the SIT-based research as well. The purpose of social mobility and social competition is to catch up with, and if possible, to outperform the high-status states, but it is uncertain whether the status-seekers will stop at supplanting those established powers or move further to overthrow the existing order as a whole. Although the SIT proponents acknowledge that the competition between the status-seeker and the dominant power can escalate into a hegemonic war, they do not clarify when and how it leads to the collapse of the entire international order. Similarly, social creativity involves the creation of new dimensions where status-seekers can claim their superiority, but it is uncertain whether this strategy will result in the partial reform of norms and rules within

the existing order or its normative and ideological subversion, laying the foundations of a new international order.

3) The Practice of State Categorization

Finally, the practice of state categorization is another obstacle to developing a general theory of status ascent. Although this habit of categorization originated from a political and diplomatic practice, it gradually evolved into a scholarly one. IR scholars are now accustomed to categorizing states into “great powers,” “middle powers,” and “small states,” while assigning each group a particular set of behavioral characteristics. However, by obscuring the fact that states do not necessarily behave as presumed in this categorization scheme, such a habit generates essentialism that hinders the development of a theory that applies to status-seeking states in general, whether they are great powers, middle powers, or small states.

The practice of state categorization has a long history.³³ One of the earlier attempts was made by Italian political theorist Giovanni Botero. In *The Reason of State* published in 1589, he grouped states into small, middle, and large ones.³⁴ The grading of states continued to be a major subject in diplomatic debates. At the peace settlements after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and France established themselves as great powers or the “powers of the first order” endowed with special rights and responsibilities to maintain peace and order in Europe. Some states that did not belong to the rank of great powers

³³ For earlier attempts to categorize states, see Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (Holmes & Meier, 1978), 295-301.

³⁴ Giovanni Botero, *Botero: The Reason of State*, ed. Robert Bireley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 5. According to Botero, “... some dominions [or states] are small, others large, some middle-sized, and of these some are not absolutely such but in comparison to and with respect to those bordering them; so that a *small dominion* [or state] is such that it cannot exist by itself but needs the protection and support of another, as is the case with the Republic of Ragusa or Lucca; *middle-sized* [state] is that which has the forces and sufficient authority to maintain itself without needing the support of another, as is the case with the dominion of the Venetian lords, the kingdom of Bohemia, the duchy of Milan, and the county of Flanders. We call those states *large* which have a notable advantage over their neighbors, such as the Turkish Empire and the Catholic King...”

but were allowed partial access to certain meetings along with them formed the category of middle powers. The rest deemed too inconsequential came to be known as small states.³⁵

The habit of state categorization is still influencing IR scholars and their discourses. In this categorization, *great powers* are often portrayed as powerful stakeholders with special rights and responsibilities that can act unilaterally and aggressively to maximize their interests. For instance, Hedley Bull argues that great powers are in “the front rank in terms of military strength,” and “recognized by other states... to have... special rights and duties” related to the management of international order.³⁶ Great powers seek to preserve “the general balance of power,” “avoid or control crises in their relations with one another,” “limit or contain wars among one another,” “unilaterally exploit[ing] their local preponderance,” “respect one another’s spheres of influence,” and engage in “joint action, as is implied by the idea of a great power concert or condominium.”³⁷

Other scholars share a similar view regarding the behavioral characteristics of great powers. Jack S. Levy defines great power as “a state that plays a major role... with respect to security-related issues.”³⁸ They can “project military power beyond their borders to conduct offensive as well as defensive military operations,” “think of their interests as continental or global rather than local or regional,” and “defend their interests more aggressively and with a wider range of instrumentalities, including the frequent threat or use of military force.” John J. Mearsheimer maintains that great powers seek to “maximize its share of world power... at the expense of other states.” Because their ultimate goal is to become “the hegemon—that is, the

³⁵ Wight 1978, 63-64; Jennifer Mitzen, *Power in Concert: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Global Governance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 88-91; Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstohl, “Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” in *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 3–36.

³⁶ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 194-96.

³⁷ Bull 1977, 200-1.

³⁸ Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 16-18.

only great power in the system,” they are “rarely content with the current distribution of power” and will “use force to alter the balance of power if they think it can be done at a reasonable price.” The anarchical structure of the international system forces them to “act aggressively toward each other.”³⁹ Barry Buzan adds another category of “superpowers.”⁴⁰ Superpowers possess and exercise “first-class military-political capabilities” with a global reach, which are supported by their economies. They are “active players in processes of securitization and desecuritization in all, or nearly all, of the regions in the system, whether as threats, guarantors, allies or interveners,” and “fountainheads of ‘universal’ values of the type necessary to underpin international society.”

It is assumed that middle powers and small states exhibit different behavioral traits, which are often attributed to their limited resources and capabilities. The concept of *middle power* gained prominence as a policy discourse first after the end of World War II, and then as an analytical category.⁴¹ Initially, it was advanced and promoted by Canada and Australia, two secondary states that sought to enlarge their role and influence in the postwar international society.⁴² Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King urged that middle powers, which were less selfish than great powers and more responsible than small states, should cooperate with each other and play a central role. Australia was another champion of the middle-power concept. It opposed great-power domination, making the case for the rights of weaker and smaller states. In the next few decades, middle power developed into an overarching term that encompasses

³⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 1-5.

⁴⁰ Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), 69-70.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Robertson, “Middle-Power Definitions: Confusion Reigns Supreme,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (2017), 357-58; David Walton and Thomas S. Wilkins, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Middle Powers in the Asian Century: New Theories, New Cases*, ed. Tanguy Struye de Swielande et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), 4-8.

⁴² Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 57-67; Carl Ungerer, “The ‘Middle Power’ Concept in Australian Foreign Policy,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 53, no. 4 (2007): 538-51.

those states that are not strong enough to be great powers but are able and willing to play a meaningful role in international society. *Small states* constitute another category of lesser states with far more limited political, economic, and administrative capacities, which locate them on the weaker side of relations with other states.⁴³ From a systemic perspective, their individual behaviors cannot alter the international system in a meaningful way. Their proliferation and extinction also have little relevance to the system unless they take place on a large scale.⁴⁴

In terms of status-seeking, middle powers and small states are portrayed as status quo or passive actors that rely on non-military and non-coercive means in pursuing their limited goals. IR scholars often assume that middle powers are internationalists, multilateralists, and “good citizens.” To enlarge and exercise influence, they act together within formal organizations and search for a positive and constructive role in international society. These tendencies are evident in their pursuit of mediating roles in international disputes and conflicts, niche diplomacy, intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership, and coalition-building among themselves.⁴⁵ Similarly, small states try to complement the lack of material capabilities by aligning with a stronger partner, joining international and regional organizations, or building a coalition with other weak actors.⁴⁶ Unable to fully defend themselves, they can instead choose to hide and opt out of international relations.⁴⁷ The goal of middle powers and small states is not to be a great power but to be a good power, which is recognized by great powers as a useful

⁴³ Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel, “Small States: Concepts and Theories,” in *Handbook on the Politics of Small States*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel (Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2020), 7.

⁴⁴ Matthias Maass, “Small Enough to Fail: The Structural Irrelevance of the Small State as Cause of Its Elimination and Proliferation Since Westphalia,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 4 (2016), 1312-18.

⁴⁵ Charalampos Efstathiopoulos, “Middle Powers and the Behavioural Model,” *Global Society* 32, no. 1 (2018), 54-60.

⁴⁶ Tom Long, “Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence Through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power,” *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2017), 196-200.

⁴⁷ Anders Wivel, “The Grand Strategies of Small States,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, ed. Thierry Balzacq and Ronald R. Krebs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 493-96.

and reliable partner, impartial arbiter, or contributor to international peace and security.⁴⁸ Do-gooder status-seeking does not require a zero-sum competition with other states.

However, the practice of state categorization is problematic as it causes misleading essentialism. It is worth noting that great powers, middle powers, and small states do not always behave as described in the traditional categorization scheme. For instance, Abbondanza and Wilkins propose the term “awkward power” to conceptualize those states whose behaviors defy “neat categorizations onto the conventional power hierarchies” because of their “contested, neglected, or ambivalent international status.”⁴⁹

Contrary to the conventional wisdom that great power politics is a zero-sum conflict, great powers can choose to peacefully accommodate each other and exercise self-restraint in pursuing their status ambitions.⁵⁰ As noted earlier, status politics is not always zero-sum. Status competition can be mitigated and turn into a non-zero-sum game if status is conceptualized as a club good, not a positional good.⁵¹ Club good, like membership in an elite club, is not available to everyone but its value does not diminish even if it is shared by more than one actor as long as they are qualified for it. Moreover, status as a club good can promote cooperation, not conflict and competition, among status-seekers. For instance, the

⁴⁸ Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Introduction: Small States and Status,” in *Small States and Status Seeking: Norway’s Quest for International Standing*, ed. Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 10-12; Wohlforth et al. 2018, 529-36, 543-44; Jakobsen et al. 2018.

⁴⁹ Gabriele Abbondanza and Thomas Stow Wilkins, “The Case for Awkward Powers,” in *Awkward Powers: Escaping Traditional Great and Middle Power Theory*, ed. Gabriele Abbondanza and Thomas Stow Wilkins, 3rd–39th ed. (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2022), 24; Thomas Stow Wilkins and Gabriele Abbondanza, “What Makes an Awkward Power? Recurrent Patterns and Defining Characteristics,” in *Awkward Powers: Escaping Traditional Great and Middle Power Theory*, ed. Gabriele Abbondanza and Thomas Stow Wilkins (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2022), 380-95.

⁵⁰ For peaceful accommodation and self-restraint in great power politics, see T. V. Paul, ed., *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Miller 2021; Mukherjee 2022.

⁵¹ For the concept of club good and its usage in IR, James M. Buchanan, “An Economic Theory of Clubs,” *Economica* 32, no. 125 (1965): 1-14; Todd Sandler, *Collective Action: Theory and Applications* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 64; David A. Lake, “Status, Authority, and the End of the American Century,” in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 247; Pu 2021.

establishment of the BRICS provides opportunities for its members—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—to rise together and cooperate with each other.⁵²

T. V. Paul argues that non-violent accommodation between great powers is rare but possible.⁵³ The bellicist paradigm prevalent in the study of status assumes that the rising power seeks to attain a higher status through war and the established power turns to preventive war or containment against it. Even though structural conditions promote conflict, Paul emphasizes, the synchronization of strategies between the established and rising powers can help them avoid violent conflicts. Britain's accommodation of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, US accommodation of China in the 1970s, and the invitation of post-Napoleonic France to the Concert of Europe show that the possibility of peaceful accommodation between great powers should not be ruled out.

While the established powers can choose to accommodate the status claims of the rising powers, the latter themselves can exercise self-restraint in pursuing their status. They can abandon their status claims when they believe that the costs of status competition and the burdens of higher status outweigh its benefits.⁵⁴ Manjari Chatterjee Miller challenges the assumption that treats the rising powers as revisionist challengers.⁵⁵ According to Miller, not all rising powers seek or achieve great-power status: some of them are active in pursuing global authority and obtaining external recognition to be a great power, whereas others remain reticent without engaging in such behaviors. Only “active rising powers” that develop “idea advocacy” or a set of narratives regarding how they would reconcile their goals and purposes with the

⁵² Oliver Stuenkel, “The BRICS: Seeking Privileges by Constructing and Running Multilateral Institutions,” *Global Summitry* 2, no. 1 (2016): 38–53.

⁵³ T. V. Paul, “The Accommodation of Rising Powers in World Politics,” in *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. T. V. Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3–32.

⁵⁴ Pu 2021; Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, “The Status of Status in World Politics,” *World Politics* 73, no. 2 (2021): 358–91.

⁵⁵ Miller 2021, 8–14.

current international order can become great powers. In contrast, “reticent powers” without such narratives neither seek nor achieve great-power status.

The fallacy of essentialism is also evident in the case of lesser states. Not all middle powers act as “good international citizens” that rely on multilateralism and perform the role of mediators, catalysts, facilitators, or stabilizers of the international system. For instance, Tanguy Struye de Swielande differentiates Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian middle powers.⁵⁶ While Lockean and Kantian middle powers fit with the image of middle powers as good international citizens, Hobbesian ones are more driven by power politics, pessimism, and a narrower interpretation of national interests. Eduard Jordaan distinguishes “traditional middle powers” that exhibit an ambivalent regional orientation and try to appease pressures for the reform of global economy, and “emerging middle powers” that show a strong regional orientation and pursue global reform.⁵⁷ He pushes this distinction further, emphasizing that newer middle powers exhibit a counter-hegemonic tendency and a preference for multipolarity, both of which are at odds with the traditional conception of middle powers as good international citizens.⁵⁸ Naomi Egel and Steven Ward identify the conditions under which weaker states turn into revisionists.⁵⁹ According to Egel and Ward, weak states frustrated with other less radical approaches turn to “subversive revisionism” to challenge ideas and discourses underlying the incumbent international status hierarchy.

⁵⁶ Tanguy Struye de Swielande, “Middle Powers: A Comprehensive Definition and Typology,” in *Rethinking Middle Powers in the Asian Century: New Theories, New Cases*, ed. Tanguy Struye de Swielande et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), 26-27.

⁵⁷ Eduard Jordaan, “The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers,” *Politikon* 30, no. 1 (2003): 165–81.

⁵⁸ Eduard Jordaan, “The Emerging Middle Power Concept: Time to Say Goodbye?,” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 24, no. 3 (2017), 397-405.

⁵⁹ Naomi Egel and Steven Ward, “Hierarchy, Revisionism, and Subordinate Actors: The TPNW and the Subversion of the Nuclear Order,” *European Journal of International Relations* 28, no. 4 (2022), 757-60.

The literature discussed thus far shows that status-seeking has emerged as a promising avenue of research in the past decade. It helps IR scholars unpack state behaviors that cannot be solely reduced to physical security or wealth, and provides them with an analytical lens to understand key events and trends in world politics. Despite its remarkable growth and potential, the study of status still has a long way to go because a general theory of status ascent remains underdeveloped. IR scholars have explored various strategies available to status-seekers and the logic behind their choices without developing a theory to explain and compare the outcomes of status-seeking strategies. To fill this gap, the three obstacles I discussed above should be addressed.

2. Argument in Brief

In this section, I lay out my theoretical argument as well as key concepts and assumptions. When the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on (1) the type of *strategies* they choose and (2) the type of *international political change* they encounter. If their strategies align with changes in the social structure where they are embedded, status-seekers are likely to improve their status. Otherwise, they will fail—they should risk status descent at worst. When two or more status-seekers employ the proper type of strategy, the one that maintains *strategic consistency* or consistently implements that strategy will have a greater chance of status ascent.

1) Status and International Order

IR scholars have proposed various definitions of status. While some scholars connect status to the possession of consensually valued attributes, others focus more on the process of mutual recognition between states. However, there is an overall consensus that status is a social

construct that can neither be determined by nor reduced to the size of material resources and capabilities possessed by states. Status finds concrete expressions through status markers, the symbols of respect and deference for an actor's position that vary across cultural contexts and historical eras.

In this study, I define *status* as “one state's socially recognized position in relation to other actors within and outside of the international order.” Status has two distinct, but interrelated dimensions.⁶⁰ On the one hand, one actor's status has an ontological dimension related to legitimate actorhood, that is, membership as a legitimate actor in the established order. On the other hand, status has a distributive dimension related to one actor's standing or ranking defined by the relative size of privileges within that order. Status-seeking encompasses activities by a state or its ruling elites who represent it to obtain legitimate actorhood or a larger share of privileges and to secure them in the established international order.

Such a definition captures not only the ontological and distributive dimensions of status but also other features of it. First, status is *relative*. We can differentiate between status holders and non-holders. Second, status is *social* because it depends on the recognition by other actors. What matters is the recognition from specific actors that the status-seeker considers significant in pursuing its status. Finally, status is *cultural* and *historical* because it finds concrete expressions through status markers that vary across cultural contexts and historical eras.

Status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum because status presumes the existence of the established international order, and more broadly, international social structure organized around it. *International order* is a complex of institutional arrangements built upon

⁶⁰ Renshon 2017, 4, 33-35; Murray 2019, 11-13.

a particular distribution of material capabilities among states, which define the basic structure of international politics and govern their interactions. Institutions that compose an international order can be categorized into two groups depending on their functions: *constitutive institutions* that decide the basic structure of international order, and *regulative institutions* that guide regular interactions among states or actors recognized as legitimate. International order gives rise to a broader international social structure around it, which encompasses dynamics and processes that emerge without deliberate design.

International order influences status politics by shaping the arena of status-seeking and status-seekers. First, international order generates two avenues of status-seeking by setting a boundary between its members and outsiders on the one hand, and stratifying its members through the unequal distribution of privileges among them on the other hand. Second, international order and the social structure that emerges out of it shape status-seekers themselves by rewarding or punishing their behaviors, and by constructing their identities and interests.

2) Strategic Choice and Commitment

Since status-seeking takes place against the backdrop of the established international order, there are two types of strategies available to status-seeking states depending on their commitment to it. If the ruling elites are strongly committed to the established order, they are likely to choose *conformist* strategies, which are aimed at improving their country's status by defending and adhering to the existing order. In contrast, if the ruling elites are weakly committed to the established order, they are likely to choose *defiant* strategies, which are aimed at improving their country's status by challenging and defecting from the established order, and if possible, enacting an alternative one. Each type of strategy can produce different, even opposing outcomes depending on the conditions under which it is selected and implemented.

Therefore, in practice, status-seekers often develop a complex portfolio that encompasses both types of strategies but in different proportions.

As international order becomes entrenched, each state or its ruling elite group develops a differential level of commitment to it, which comes from cost-benefit calculations, legitimacy concerns, or both. First, the larger the portion of benefits a country has enjoyed within the existing order, the stronger the commitment its ruling elite group develops to that order. Second, if the ruling elites have faith in the legitimacy of the existing order and its constitutive and regulative institutions, their country will develop a stronger commitment to that order. The logics of cost-benefit calculations and legitimacy concerns are not mutually exclusive because they can develop in tandem with each other. Even if the incumbent order was initially built upon the member states' cost-benefit calculations and the distribution of benefits between them, their ruling elites will come to believe it is legitimate if they are satisfied with the share of benefits allocated to their countries.

The level of commitment is a variable, not a constant. It can change as (1) the ruling elites renew their attitude toward the existing international order, (2) the incumbent ruling elite group is replaced by another one, or (3) a new ruling coalition that consists of elites who once belonged to different groups comes to power. When the level of commitment alters, it does not necessarily lead to a reorientation from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies or vice versa. For instance, one ruling elite group with a strong commitment can renew their attitude in a way that reinforces their commitment or be replaced by another group with a stronger commitment. Similarly, a weakly committed elite group can decide to further weaken their commitment or give way to another group with little or no commitment to the established order.

3) The Rise and Fall of Status-Seekers

International order cannot be permanent because change, whether endogenous or exogenous in its origin, becomes inevitable at some point. Since international order is a complex of power and institutions, there can be three different types of change depending on which dimension of the incumbent order is altered—the distribution of material capabilities (power transition), institutional arrangements (order reform), or both (order transition). In *power transition*, the rising power supplants the established hegemonic state but the constitutive and regulative institutions remain unchanged. *Order transition* is the most fundamental type of international political change in which the established international order is completely replaced by an alternative one. The replacement of the hegemonic state takes place simultaneously or in tandem with the transformation of constitutive and regulative institutions. *Order reform* is the most frequent and limited form of international political change that entails the rearrangement of regular institutions within the existing order. It involves neither power transition nor the transformation of constitutive institutions. Instead, the rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions will change.

Each type of change lays an uneven ground that favors some status-seekers but not others. Therefore, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on whether their strategies align with the structural conditions surrounding them. Power transition is the replacement of the hegemonic state without institutional transformation. While the leadership of the existing order is transferred from one state to another, its institutional arrangements, including the norms, rules, and practices of status attribution, do not alter. It is a favorable setting for conformist states that seek to improve their status by defending and adhering to the incumbent order and its institutions. Defiant strategies that challenge the established institutions will backfire.

Order transition entails both power transition and institutional transformation. The hegemonic state loses its position, and the established institutions cease to function and fall apart. These changes lead to the rise of a new order, which is reigned by a new hegemon and consists of its own constitutive and regulative institutions. In this circumstance, there is a greater chance of status ascent for defiant status-seekers that attempt to challenge and defect from the established order and its institutions as well as enact alternative ones. In contrast, conformist states that fail to adapt to the new setting will fall behind. Defiant status-seeking in times of order transition requires not only behavioral adjustments but also the transformation of status-seekers themselves into an alternative type of political entities that fulfill the new requirement of legitimate actorhood.

Order reform is the most limited form of change, marked by the rearrangement of regulative institutions without power transition and the transformation of constitutive institutions. The rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions will be rewritten. Since order reform still involves institutional changes, it is more favorable for defiant status-seekers that learn and embody these new rules of conduct in regular interactions than conformist states that refuse to do so. Defiant status-seekers faced with order reform only need to adjust their behaviors.

If two or more status-seeking states choose the proper type of strategy that aligns with changes in the international social structure, which one has a greater chance of status ascent? Even if they all choose the proper strategy, whether it is conformist or defiant, they can still be differentiated depending on the level of *strategic consistency*, that is, whether the ruling elite group can implement the selected strategy without halt, retreat, or conversion. Strategic consistency is influenced by state-society relations and external support. If the ruling elites effectively elicit and mobilize support from domestic society and foreign actors to consistently

implement the strategies they adopted, their country will outperform other competitors that fail to achieve such strategic consistency.

3. Cases and Methods

The objective of this study is to build a general theory of status ascent that explains and compares the rise and fall of status-seeking states. As laid out in the previous section, it considers the strategies of status-seekers, the structural conditions surrounding them, and the interplay between the two. Specifically, it identifies different types of strategies available to status-seekers, the logics behind their strategic choices, and the conditions that help or prevent their status ascent during periods of international political change. I argue that when the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on whether their strategies align with changes in the social structure where they are embedded. If so, status-seekers can improve their status.

To examine the validity of my theory, I conduct a “structured, focused comparison” based on process tracing.⁶¹ The method of structured and focused comparison is a strategy for controlled comparison, which is *structured* in that case studies are guided by a general question reflecting the research objective, and *focused* in that only certain aspects of historical cases are dealt with. In light of such a definition, this study is a structured and focused comparison as it is guided by a research question, namely, why some status-seekers rise but others fail to do so, and focused as it addresses certain aspects of selected cases, such as the type of strategies

⁶¹ Alexander L. George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” in *Alexander L. George: A Pioneer in Political and Social Sciences*, ed. Dan Caldwell (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 213; Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 68-69.

adopted by status-seekers, their commitment to the established order, the type of international political change upon them, and their strategic consistency.

To conduct a controlled comparison and supplement it, I use process tracing. The complexity of social reality and the limited number of cases pose serious obstacles to using the method of controlled comparison that emulates the logic of scientific experiments in social inquiry.⁶² Although process tracing cannot replicate such an experimental logic, it can still help researchers carry out comparative research by providing the tools to analyze “evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case” for theory testing or development.⁶³

For a structured and focused comparison, I compare the status-seeking strategies of Korea and Japan and their outcomes during the Ming-Qing transition (1583-1683), the Westphalian transition (1839-1912), and the Détente (1969-1979), each representing power transition, order transition, and order reform in East Asian history (Table 1-1). East Asia is a promising ground to examine the validity of my theory. For many centuries, this region has developed a distinct regional order and undergone different types of change. Korea and Japan form an ideal pair for comparative analysis. These two neighboring countries had existed as independent political entities since ancient times, engaged in political, economic, and sociocultural interactions, undergone the same historical transitions, and most importantly,

⁶² George and Bennett 2005, 153; Charles Tilly, *Explaining Social Processes* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 83-84; George 2019, 198-99, 212-13.

⁶³ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7-8; For the earlier conceptualization of process tracing, see George and Bennett 2005, 6-7, 206. In his co-authored book with George, process tracing is a method to examine the links between independent and dependent variables, emphasizing the role of intervening variables or intervening causal processes. It is defined as a method that relies on “histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case.” However, in his more recent book with Checkel, Bennett dropped the term intervening variable because it remains controversial whether intervening variable should be treated as a variable or just constitute “diagnostic evidence.” See Bennett and Checkel 2015, 6-7.

exhibited significant variations in the modes and outcomes of status-seeking during international political change. These case studies will be followed by an analytical overview of the current crisis of the liberal international order, the strategies of South Korea and Japan, and the challenges they are now faced with.

	The Ming-Qing Transition (1583-1683)	The Westphalian Transition (1839-1912)	The Détente (1969-1979)
Type of Change	power transition	order transition	order reform
(South) Korea	advanced secondary state, loyal tributary state	infringed sovereignty, colonization by Japan	diplomatic non-recognition from socialist states
Japan	Japanese Pirates (<i>Wakō</i>), barbarous outcast	sovereign state, non-Western great power	diplomatic normalization with socialist states

Table 1-1. Case Selection: Korea, Japan, and International Political Change in East Asia

For process tracing, I use both primary and secondary sources. While there is a growth of scholarly interest in international relations and regional orders in contemporary and historical East Asia, government agencies and research institutes in this region are expanding in-person and online access to archives. The volume of public and private documents translated into modern languages for publication is increasing as well. The analysis of historical documents by contemporaries can help us examine the extent to which Korean and Japanese ruling elites were committed to the established international order, how they defined their country's position and viewed international political change they encountered, and which type of status-seeking strategies they preferred over others.

However, this research design is not without limitations. The primary challenge is related to the generalizability of my theory. Even if the theory I propose can effectively explain the status-seeking strategies of Korea and Japan and their outcomes, a question can still arise regarding its generalizability beyond East Asia. Put differently, while Korea and Japan during the Ming-Qing transition, the Westphalian transition, and the Détente provide six cases in three pairs for structured and focused comparisons, it remains uncertain whether they can represent the universe or the entire population of status-seeking and status-seekers.

I have two responses to such a criticism. First, from a macro-historical perspective, my theory of status ascent that considers the strategies of status-seekers and the type of international political change can have generalizability beyond East Asia. The recent literature on regional orders, global IR, and historical IR shows that many regions, including East Asia, historically developed a hierarchical order inhabited by various types of political entities and underwent the rise and fall of hegemonic polities.⁶⁴ As the Westphalian international order expanded beyond Europe and sovereign states that constituted it emerged as the principal unit of world politics, those regions experienced power shift and institutional transformation of unprecedented scale. Even the Westphalian order, which is often mistaken as an anarchical system of sovereign equals, was actually a hierarchical order marked by the inequalities between sovereign states and the rest, and between great powers and non-great powers. Given

⁶⁴ Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya, *Re-Imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 17-23; Amitav Acharya, “Before the Nation-State: Civilizations, World Orders, and the Origins of Global International Relations,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 16, no. 3 (2023): 263–88; Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Colin Chia, “Social Positioning and International Order Contestation in Early Modern Southeast Asia,” *International Organization* 76, no. 2 (2022): 305–36; Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Manjeet S. Pardesi, “Region, System, and Order: The Mughal Empire in Islamicate Asia,” *Security Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017): 249–78; Manjeet S. Pardesi, “Mughal Hegemony and the Emergence of South Asia as a ‘Region’ for Regional Order-Building,” *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 1 (2019): 276–301; Ali Balci and Tuncay Kardaş, “The Ottoman International System: Power Projection, Interconnectedness, and the Autonomy of Frontier Politics,” *Millennium* 51, no. 3 (2023): 866–91.

these historical trajectories, a theory of status ascent examined in the context of East Asia can still be applicable beyond this region.

Second, even if my theory of status ascent has limited generalizability, it can still be a general theory with “analytical generality.”⁶⁵ The notion of generalizability is based on the sample-to-population logic that researchers can generalize findings from a small number of cases to a larger population of cases if the former are randomly selected and represent the entire population. The challenge here is to ensure that the cases being studied form a proper sample of the population and to strike a balance between the depth of contextual insights from case studies and the number of cases being studied.

In contrast, analytic generality or analytical generalization is based on a different reasoning. A theory with analytical generality is an analytical narrative with heuristic usefulness in explaining social phenomena across different cases, not a law-like empirical generalization that applies to a larger population of cases. The purpose of analytical generalization is to craft an analytical model or narrative that comprises an abstract level of ideas extracted from case study findings, which can travel to new cases other than the case(s) in the original study. The value of such a model or narrative depends on whether it can help researchers explain and understand the social phenomenon in question in an organized way across different contexts, not whether it holds true across as many cases as possible.

⁶⁵ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011), 166-70; Robert K. Yin, “Validity and Generalization in Future Case Study Evaluations,” *Evaluation* 19, no. 3 (2013): 325-26; Vincent Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, ed. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Strategies for Social Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 250-53.

4. Plan of the Study

This study seeks the following objectives. First, it proposes a general theory to explain the rise and fall of status-seekers, thereby enriching and filling a gap in the existing literature on status in IR. In doing so, it provides analytical tools such as the typologies of international political change and status-seeking strategies, which can help us elucidate the current crisis of the liberal international order, assess state behaviors, and if possible, estimate their outcomes.

Second, this study engages in global IR. Over the last decade, IR scholars have advanced and pursued the vision of global IR to overcome Western- or Eurocentrism in IR and make it a more global, pluralistic, and inclusive discipline.⁶⁶ By bringing in East Asian history, I demonstrate that non-Western regions and societies should be taken more seriously in theory building. In doing so, I focus on the agency of non-hegemonic actors such as Korea and Japan and thus avoid “exchanging Eurocentrism for Sinocentrism,” both of which represent “cultural exceptionalism and parochialism” often used to justify the dominance of the big powers.⁶⁷

Finally, and relatedly, this study contributes to the historical turn in IR that has promoted the rise of historical IR.⁶⁸ To foster historical sensibility within the discipline, IR scholars have learned and borrowed extensively from historical sociologists who investigate temporality and the emergence of modernity. However, their approaches have suffered from

⁶⁶ Amitav Acharya, “Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies Amitav Acharya,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59; Amitav Acharya, “Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions,” *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 4–15; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at Its Centenary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁶⁷ Victoria Tin-bor Hui, “‘Getting Asia Right’: De-Essentializing China’s Hegemony in Historical Asia,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023), 481; Acharya and Buzan 2019, 302-3, 306-7.

⁶⁸ For the rise of historical IR, see Benjamin de Carvalho, Julia Costa Lopez, and Halvard Leira, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2021). For the relationship between global IR, global history, and global historical sociology, see Michael Barnett and George Lawson, “Three Visions of the Global: Global International Relations, Global History, Global Historical Sociology,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023): 499–515.

statism and the thin conceptualization of the international as an enduring anarchy between nation-states.⁶⁹ I tackle these problems by shedding light on the rise and fall of international orders and different types of politics and building up a general theory based on discontinuity in the international realm.

This study will proceed as follows. In Chapter 2, I lay out my theoretical argument as well as key concepts and assumptions. I propose a theory of status ascent that considers the strategic choice of status-seeking states, international social structure, and the interplay between them. Status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum because status itself is a social construct that can be defined only when there are shared norms, rules, and practices among states about how to stratify them and legitimize such stratification. Therefore, a theory to explain the rise and fall of status-seekers should take into account both their strategies of status-seekers and the social structure where they are embedded. In particular, I focus on status politics during periods of international political change, when the interplay between status-seekers and international social structure becomes salient as the structural constraints loosen up and the space for agency expands.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I compare the status-seeking strategies of (South) Korea and Japan and their outcomes during the Ming-Qing transition, the Westphalian transition, and the Détente, each representing a distinct type of international political change. In Chapter 3, I compare Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan during the Ming-Qing transition. Since the Ming-Qing transition was a power transition that entailed the replacement of the hegemonic state without institutional transformation, it was a favorable setting for conformist status-

⁶⁹ Julian Go, George Lawson, and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Historical Sociology in International Relations: The Challenge of the Global,” in *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, ed. Benjamin de Carvalho, Julia Costa Lopez, and Halvard Leira (London: Routledge, 2021), 17–26.

seekers. Although Korea's conformist strategies caused military and diplomatic conflicts that inflicted massive damage on Korean people and territories, those strategies enabled Korea to secure its status within the established East Asian world order. In contrast, Japan's defiant strategies aimed at challenging and deviating from the existing order failed to improve Japan's status, rather undermining its image and reputation.

Chapter 4 compares the rise and fall of Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan during the Westphalian transition. It was an order transition that entailed both power transition and institutional transformation, where defiant status-seekers had a greater chance of status ascent. In this period, Korea pursued a strategic reorientation from conformist toward defiant strategies, but it was delayed, interrupted, and inconsistent. In contrast, Japan's status-seeking strategies were defiant as well as consistent. While Korea's failure in strategic shift led to its loss of sovereignty and colonization by Japan, Meiji Japan's defiant and consistent strategy led to its entry into the Westphalian order and the rank of great power within it.

In Chapter 5, I compare the status-seeking strategies of South Korea and Japan during the Détente. It was an order reform that entailed the rearrangement of regulative institutions without power transition and the transformation of constitutive institutions. During the Détente, both South Korea and Japan attempted a strategic reorientation from conformist toward defiant strategies, which were aimed at enhancing their positions by obtaining diplomatic recognition from the Socialist Camp. While South Korea's limited strategic shift did not lead to reconciliation with North Korea and its socialist patrons, Japan's consistent and defiant strategies paved the way for diplomatic normalization with China and expanded cooperation with other socialist states.

In Chapter 6, I trace the evolution of the liberal international order and analyze the status-seeking strategies of South Korea and Japan in the post-Cold War era. The end of the

global Cold War led to the global expansion of the US-led liberal order. In the post-Cold War era, both South Korea and Japan have adopted conformist strategies to elevate their positions within the established liberal order. However, these conformist status-seekers will likely be prompted to explore alternative strategies as they are confronted with the complex crisis of the liberal order, which cannot solely be reduced to the US-China strategic competition.

In Chapter 7, I summarize my theoretical argument and case studies in each chapter, discuss my findings and their implications, some of which were not addressed in depth in the previous chapters, and examine the contributions of this study. I begin with my contribution to the study of status, which is followed by a separate discussion about my findings. Then, I delve into how this study can contribute to the discipline of IR more in general, especially in the study of the current crisis of the liberal international order along with global IR, historical IR, and regional orders.

Chapter 2. Theory

The Rise and Fall of Status-Seekers

Status-seeking has emerged as a flourishing avenue of research in the past decade, but a general theory to explain and compare the rise and fall of status-seekers remains underdeveloped. In this chapter, I propose a theory of status ascent to fill this gap. Status-seeking does not take place in a social vacuum, so such a theory should consider both the strategies of status-seekers and the social structure where they are embedded. To show that the outcome of status-seeking is shaped by the strategies adopted by status-seeking states and the international social structure surrounding them, I focus on status politics during periods of international political change, when the interplay between actor and structure becomes salient as the structural constraints loosen up and the space for agency expands.

I argue that when the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on the type of strategies they choose and the type of international political change they encounter. Status is a social construct, which can be defined only when there are shared norms, rules, and practices that stratify states and distribute positions and privileges among them. Put differently, status-seeking takes place against the backdrop of the established international order, which is a complex of power and institutional arrangements including the norms, rules, and practices of status attribution. However, international order is not permanent and change becomes inevitable at some point. International political change can take different forms depending on which dimension of the existing order alters, with each type of change laying an uneven ground where some status-seekers have a greater chance of status ascent than others.

One status-seeking strategy that proves effective in one social context can be ineffective, even counterproductive in another one. Therefore, status ascent occurs when the strategies of status-seekers align with changes in the international social structure where they are embedded. If their strategies do not align with the changes, they will fail—they should risk status descent at worst. If two or more status-seekers employ the proper type of strategy, the one that maintains strategic consistency or consistently implements that strategy will outperform the others that fail to do so.

In this chapter, I lay out my theoretical argument as well as key concepts and assumptions. I begin with a discussion of status and international order, which are the two principal concepts of this study. Then, I advance a theory of status ascent that considers the interplay between international social structure and status-seekers. To do so, I propose the typologies of status-seeking strategy and international political change. I explain what drives a status-seeker's strategic choice, how international political change structures the arena of status-seeking, and why some status-seekers rise but others fail to do so during periods of international political change. As noted in the previous chapter, this study is aimed to develop a general theory of status ascent. In other words, I am pursuing to build a theory that can apply to a larger population of status-seekers, or provide an analytical model or narrative with heuristic usefulness in explaining the strategies and outcomes of status-seeking across different cases or contexts.¹

By proposing a theory of status ascent that considers the interplay between status-seekers and the social structure surrounding them, I address three obstacles that have hindered the development of a general theory to explain the rise and fall of status-seekers. First, while the existing literature on status has neglected or overemphasized the significance of

¹ For the different logics and purposes of “generalizability” and “analytical generality,” see Ch. 1.

international social structure, I build up a theory that explains how the outcomes of status-seeking are influenced by the interplay between status-seekers and the international social structure where they are embedded. Second, I develop a comprehensive framework that examines not only various types of status-seeking strategies but also their social meaning and consequences, which remain unaddressed or unclear in the bellicist paradigm and the SIT-based research that have dominated the study of status. Finally, rather than adhering to the practice of state categorization, I focus on the extent to which status-seeking states, be they great powers, middle powers, or small states, are committed to the established order and whether they elicit support from domestic society and foreign actors.

1. Status and International Order

1) Status

Status-seeking is a key motivation of human activities because status has both intrinsic and instrumental values.² On the one hand, a higher and more privileged status has intrinsic values as an end in itself. Status-seekers pursue status for its own sake because it is a source of self-esteem for the actors who possess it. To elevate their status, some status-seekers even engage in costly or risky behaviors. On the other hand, status also extrinsic or instrumental values as a means to achieve other goals. That is, status can be translated into other tangible and intangible

² Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, "Status and World Order," in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17-19; Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 47-49; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, Jens Ringsmose, and Håkon Lunde Saxi, "Prestige-Seeking Small States: Danish and Norwegian Military Contributions to US-Led Operations," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2 (2018), 262-63; Elias Götz, "Status Matters in World Politics," *International Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2021), 3-10.

benefits. Status-seekers attempt to improve and enhance their status in order to expand their access to power and resources or elicit behavioral deference from other lower-status actors.

While the study of status politics has gained prominence over the past decade, IR scholars have proposed various definitions of status.³ Scholars who take the attribute-centered approach define status in terms of the possession of consensually valued attributes. For instance, Deborah Welch Larson and her colleagues define status as “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes,” such as “wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout.”⁴ Conversely, scholars who take the relational approach focus more on the process of mutual recognition between states than their attributes. For instance, Marina G. Duque conceptualizes status as “an effective claim to social esteem” that emerges from “identification processes in which an actor gains admission into a club once members deem that the actor follows the rules of membership.”⁵ Despite these varying conceptualizations, IR scholars engaged in the study of status agree that it is a social construct that can neither be determined by nor reduced to the size of material resources and capabilities possessed by states. They are now increasingly paying attention to the non-material determinants of status such as symbolic assets, norm compliance, moral authority, and even circumstantial conditions.⁶

³ Larson et al. 2014; Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, “Reputation and Status as Motives for War,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 371–93; Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers: Obstructed Ambitions* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Renshon 2017; Marina G. Duque, “Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach,” *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2018): 577–92; Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019); Deborah Welch Larson and Aleksei Shevchenko, *Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Rohan Mukherjee, *Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁴ Larson et al. 2014, 7.

⁵ Duque 2018, 580.

⁶ Duque 2018; Jennifer L. Miller et al., “Norms, Behavioral Compliance, and Status Attribution in International Politics,” *International Interactions* 41, no. 5 (2015): 779–804; William C. Wohlforth et al., “Moral Authority and Status in International Relations: Good States and the Social Dimension of Status Seeking,” *Review of*

In this study, I define *status* as “one state’s socially recognized position in relation to other actors within and outside of the established international order.” Status-seeking is the pursuit of such a position by a state or its ruling elites on behalf of their country. Status has two distinct, but interrelated dimensions.⁷ On the one hand, one actor’s status has an ontological dimension related to legitimate actorhood, that is, membership as a legitimate actor in the established order. On the other hand, status has a distributive dimension related to one actor’s standing or ranking defined by the relative size of privileges within that order. Therefore, status-seeking encompasses activities by a state or its ruling elites who represent it to obtain legitimate actorhood or a larger share of privileges and to secure them in the established international order.

The purpose of status-seeking varies depending on the current position of status-seekers. For the insiders who have already obtained legitimate membership in the incumbent order, status-seeking is more about the pursuit of a larger share of privileges and influence compared to other members. For the outsiders excluded from the existing order, it is basically the pursuit of legitimate membership in that order. However, status-seeking in each dimension is not mutually exclusive. Outsiders can simultaneously seek the maximum share of privileges within the existing order while claiming membership in it. Meanwhile, some insiders, especially those at the periphery of the established order, can attempt to consolidate their position as legitimate actors by obtaining more privileges. -

My definition captures not only the ontological and distributive dimensions of status but also other features of it. First, status is *relative*. We can differentiate between status holders and non-holders. If one state holds a particular position, be it membership in the existing

International Studies 44, no. 3 (2018): 526–46; Gadi Heimann, “What Does It Take to Be a Great Power? The Story of France Joining the Big Five,” *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 185–206.

⁷ Renshon 2017, 4, 33-35; Murray 2019, 11-13.

international order or a more privileged standing within it, there exist other states that do not hold or have failed to obtain that position. In the modern international system, only sovereign states are recognized as legitimate members of international society and distinguished from those without such recognition. The existence of unrecognized actors, whether they are labeled as contested states, unrecognized states, or de facto states, evinces the distinction between sovereign states and the rest, the latter of which experience “categorical inequalities” that systematically exclude them from the society of sovereign states. Even though these unrecognized actors are well-functioning and able to exercise substantial control over their territories, they are denied the rights allowed to sovereign states.

Simultaneously, there is another distinction among status holders themselves depending on the relative size of privileges. Even after one actor obtains legitimate membership within the society of sovereign states, it might fall victim to “gradated inequality” that restricts its rights.⁸ The differential scope of sovereignty each state can exercise exemplifies such an unequal distribution of privileges. Despite the principle of sovereign equality, weaker and smaller states often have to put self-restraint on their sovereignty or cede it to more powerful ones.⁹ The distribution of privileges is inseparable from that of responsibilities and roles. States are expected to play the role(s) believed to be commensurate with the status they claim. States that perform such roles more effectively can be paid more deference and make themselves more visible than their peers or competitors. Put differently, status is a master role sustained through the enactment of specific, functional, and auxiliary roles.¹⁰

⁸ Lora Anne Viola, *The Closure of the International System: How Institutions Create Political Equalities and Hierarchies* (Cambridge; NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 73.

⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Leslie E. Wehner, “Role Expectations As Foreign Policy: South American Secondary Powers’ Expectations of Brazil As A Regional Power,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11, no. 4 (2015): 435–55; Richard Ned Lebow, *National Identities and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 83–86; Reinhard Wolf, “Taking Interaction Seriously: Asymmetrical Roles and the Behavioral Foundations of Status,” *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 4 (2019): 1186–1211.

Second, status is *social* because it depends on the recognition by other actors. The ideal case for a status-seeking state would be that its status claim is recognized by all states in international society. In practice, however, what matters is the recognition from specific actors that the status-seeker considers significant in pursuing its status. For instance, Michelle Murray argues that power transition is a struggle for recognition in which a rising power advances its status claim directed toward the “established powers” and seeks to be accepted by them as having a major power status.¹¹ Jonathan Renshon highlights that “status is local” because status is defined within the boundary of “status community,” that is, “the group of actors that a state perceives itself as being in competition with.”¹² In the recognition process underlying status politics, I focus on the role of “significant others.” They are usually in a more legitimate or privileged position to decide whether or not to accommodate the status-seeker’s status claim. However, who are the significant others cannot be predetermined but can be identified under specific historical conditions.

Given that the outcome of status-seeking relies on recognition or non-recognition from others, status claims should be irrefutable. IR scholars highlight that status is obtained through voluntary deference by others.¹³ However, even if a status-seeker is granted the position it claims, it does not necessarily mean that all significant others voluntarily accepted the former’s status claim. Rather, they might have only grudgingly decided to accommodate the status-seeker’s claim because it is hard to refute in light of the established standards for status attribution. In some cases, the status-seeker can even force or coerce other actors to recognize its claim against their will. In other words, status recognition depends on whether a status claim is irrefutable, not just on whether it is legitimate.

¹¹ Murray 2019, 54-57.

¹² Renshon 2017, 22, 32-33.

¹³ Larson et al. 2014, 10.

Finally, status is *cultural* and *historical* because it finds concrete expressions through status markers, that is, the symbols of respect and deference for an actor's position that vary across cultural contexts and historical eras.¹⁴ Some status markers lost their relevance as historical conditions that rendered them significant altered or disappeared. For instance, the marriages between prestigious royal houses no longer serve as status markers as nation-states became the principal unit of world politics in place of monarchies. The possession of overseas colonies ceased to function as a marker of great-power status with the demise of colonialism and the proliferation of new international norms such as national self-determination and territorial integrity. Some markers remain relevant or have newly emerged. In the modern international system, status marker has often taken the form of membership in such exclusive and prestigious clubs as the Concert of Europe, the UN Security Council, and the Groups of 7, 8, and 20. The political empowerment of women through the establishment of women's suffrage, public bureau responsible for women's issues, and legislature sex quotas emerged as a marker to distinguish superior and inferior states.

2) International Order

Status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum because status presumes the existence of the established international order, and more broadly, international social structure organized around it. The quest for status reveals that international politics is not only social but also hierarchical.¹⁵ It is a domain where states compete and cooperate with each other to obtain and maintain a higher, more privileged, and more central position than others. However, as noted earlier, international status hierarchy is neither determined by nor reduced to the unequal

¹⁴ Larson et al. 2014, 10-11, 20; Duque 2018, 581; Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 16-18; Ann E. Towns, *Women and States: Norms and Hierarchies in International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009); Ayşe Zarakol, ed., *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Renshon 2017; Viola 2020; Towns 2010.

distribution of material resources and capabilities. Status can be defined and distributed only when there is a set of shared norms, rules, and practices that stratify states and legitimize such stratification.

The emergence and evolution of international norms, rules, and practices lay the foundation of international order by homogenizing and stratifying states. On the one hand, these social constraints homogenize states by shaping state identities, interests, and behaviors in a way that aligns with them. On the other hand, international norms, rules, and practices stratify states by distinguishing the states that successfully embody and enact them and others that do not or fail to do so. States refer to these social constraints in making their status claims and evaluating the claims advanced by other states.

However, despite its wide currency, international order remains an elusive and contested concept in IR.¹⁶ In defining international order, some scholars take a narrow perspective, which links international order to the establishment of institutions, norms, and rules that inform and guide interactions among states.¹⁷ Other scholars adopt a sparser definition, which equates international order with a pattern of regular, stable, and predictable behaviors and relations among states.¹⁸ They make the case that such a conceptualization has

¹⁶ Bull 1977, 8-21; G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise, Character, and Evolution of International Order," in *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*, ed. Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falletti, and Adam Sheingate (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 539–52; Schweller, Randall L. "The Problem of International Order Revisited: A Review Essay." *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 161–86; Kyle M. Lascurettes and Michael Poznansky, "International Order in Theory and Practice," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (August 31, 2021).

¹⁷ Ikenberry 2001, 23; Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Alastair Iain Johnston, "China in a World of Orders: Rethinking Compliance and Challenge in Beijing's International Relations," *International Security* 44, no. 2 (2019), 13; Stephen A. Kocs, *International Order: A Political History* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2019), 5; Huiyun Feng and Kai He, "Rethinking China and International Order: A Conceptual Analysis," in *China's Challenges and International Order Transition: Beyond "Thucydides's Trap,"* ed. Huiyun Feng and Kai He (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 12.

¹⁸ Shiping Tang, "Order: A Conceptual Analysis," *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (2016), 34; Bentley B. Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 5; Kyle M. Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 16.

more merits because the regularity, stability, and predictability of state interactions can emerge without institutions, norms, and rules.

Against this backdrop, I define *international order* as a complex of institutional arrangements built upon a particular distribution of material capabilities among states, which define the structure of international politics and govern their interactions. Drawing upon Douglas North, I use the term institution broadly to encompass norms, rules, and practices that bring stability and predictability to the actor's behaviors and relations with others. North argues that institutions are "the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction," which include both "informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct) and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)... devised by human beings to create order and reduce uncertainty in exchange."¹⁹

International order gives rise to a broader structure around it, which I label as international social structure. While international order that consists of various institutions is a product of human agency, international social structure that develops around international order cannot be solely reduced to human agency as it encompasses dynamics and processes that emerge without deliberate design.²⁰ International order and its institutions set the basic contours of international relations, but human interactions generate contingent or unexpected dynamics and processes beyond them. International social structure is a broader concept that embraces both international order and those emergent elements.

Institutions that comprise an international order are reflective of, and often designed to maintain and legitimize, the distribution of material capabilities and privileges among states

¹⁹ Douglass C. North, "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (1991), 97; See also Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Ch. 1.

²⁰ For the distinction between "order" and "structure," see Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 222-23.

at the moment of foundation. Once established, however, institutions develop and operate on their own logic. IR scholars have attempted to categorize different types of institutions. In particular, the English School scholars have differentiated “primary institutions” and “secondary institutions.”²¹ Primary institutions are “durable and recognised patterns of shared practices” rooted in common values in international society, whereas secondary institutions are international regimes that shape the rules of conduct in specific issue areas. Similarly, Kalevi J. Holsti distinguishes “foundational institutions” and “procedural institutions.”²² Foundational institutions define legitimate actors, the fundamental principles on which they are based, and the major norms, assumptions, and rules guiding their mutual relations. Procedural institutions refer to those repetitive practices, ideas, and norms that underlie and regulate interactions and transactions between separate actors. Christian Reus-Smit proposes a more refined typology. He argues that international order consists of “constitutional structures” that define legitimate statehood and rightful state action, “fundamental institutions” that set the elementary rules of practice to solve the problems of coordination and collaboration, and “issue-specific regimes” that enact basic institutional practices in particular realms of interstate relations.²³

²¹ Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society?: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181.

²² Kalevi J. Holsti, *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24-27.

²³ Reus-Smit 1999, 14-15.

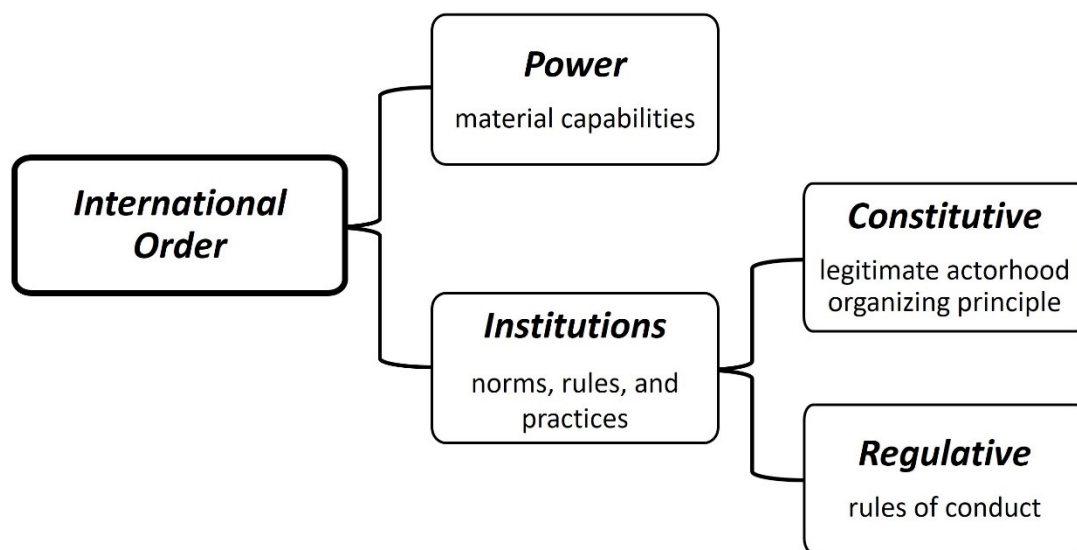


Figure 2-1. International Order: Power and Institutions

Institutions that compose an international order can be categorized into two groups depending on their functions (Figure 2-1). *Constitutive institutions* mainly denote legitimate actorhood and the organizing principle, which jointly decide the basic structure of international order. *Legitimate actorhood* is a set of requirements that an actor should fulfill to be granted full membership in the existing international order. The *organizing principle* prescribes how those legitimate actors should be arranged in relation to each other and other actors that do not or have failed to be recognized as such. For instance, the conventional wisdom is that the Westphalian international order has been structured by the principle of sovereign equality that all political entities recognized as sovereign states are equal and there is no higher authority above them. Simultaneously, it categorically distinguishes sovereign states from other actors that are not considered sovereign. Once established, constitutive institutions are hard to change and the transformation of those institutions is always accompanied by the replacement or revision of regulative institutions.

While constitutive institutions set the basic structure of international order, *regulative institutions* decide the rules of conduct in regular interactions among legitimate actors. They guide diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic relations within and across the boundaries of the established order. They provide behavioral scripts as to how legitimate actors should treat and communicate with one another diplomatically, when and how military force or coercion should be used as a means of dispute resolution, and what legitimate actors should expect from each other in social and economic interactions. Regulative institutions are far more susceptible to change than constitutive ones. They can be revised or replaced while constitutive institutions remain intact.

As noted earlier, constitutive and regulative institutions that comprise international order reflect and consolidate the distribution of material capabilities and privileges among states at the moment of foundation. Powerful states try to build up institutions that would continuously serve their material and symbolic interests. However, the legitimacy and sustainability of international order depend on whether those leading players can elicit support from weaker and smaller ones.²⁴ Therefore, international order is not necessarily designed as powerful states intend because they should take into account the interests and needs of lesser ones. Moreover, once established, international order and its institutions can put constraints on powerful states themselves even though they played a crucial role in creating them. Rather, constitutive and regulative institutions can serve as the bulwark for weaker and smaller states to offset the pressure of powerful ones and navigate between them. By taking advantage of

²⁴ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 29-32.

those institutions, lesser states lacking military and economic capabilities comparable to great powers can achieve moral authority that would help them punch above their weight.²⁵

As a complex of constitutive and regulative institutions, international order influences status politics by shaping the arena of status-seeking and status-seekers. First, international order generates two avenues of status-seeking. On the one hand, the establishment of international order stratifies its members and outsiders by setting a boundary between them. The outsiders who failed but still aspire to be legitimate members will engage in ontological status-seeking to obtain membership within the established order. On the other hand, international order stratifies its members through the unequal distribution of privileges among them. Even after obtaining legitimate membership in the established order, states engage in distributive status-seeking to secure a larger share of privileges and influence than other members.

Second, international order and the social structure that emerges out of it shape status-seekers themselves. International social structure can “constrain” and “construct” status-seeking states.²⁶ It has constraint effects because states will be rewarded with a higher and more privileged status if they behave in a way that aligns with the established international norms, rules, and practices. In contrast, those states that violate them will be disadvantaged, even punished in terms of status-seeking. International social structure also has construction effects by shaping the way in which status-seeking states define their identities and interests.

²⁵ Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Introduction: Small States and Status,” in *Small States and Status Seeking: Norway’s Quest for International Standing*, ed. Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 9-11; Jakobsen et al. 2018; Wohlforth et al. 2018, 529-36.

²⁶ Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander E. Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 33–75; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 26-27.

The construction of identities and interests can produce behavioral outcomes by delimiting the range of strategies and policies that they can imagine or accept.

2. A Theory of Status Ascent

Why do some status-seeking states rise while others fail to do so? Who rises or falls when the established international order undergoes a transition? In this section, I propose a theory of status ascent that considers both the strategies of status-seekers and the structural conditions surrounding them. In particular, I focus on status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between international social structure and states becomes salient as structural constraints loosen up and the room for agency expands. When the established order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seeking states depend on (1) the type of *strategies* they choose and (2) the type of *international political change* they encounter. If their strategies align with changes in the international social structure where they are embedded, status-seekers can improve their status. Otherwise, they will fail—they should risk status descent at worst. When two status-seekers employ the proper type of strategy, the one that maintains *strategic consistency* or consistently implements that strategy will have a greater chance of status ascent.

1) Strategies, Commitment, and Consistency

Since status-seeking takes place against the backdrop of the established international order and the social structure emerging out of it, there are at least two types of strategies. First, status-seekers can choose *conformist* strategies, which are aimed at improving one's status by defending and adhering to the existing order and the rules, norms, and practices that comprise it. For status-seekers that select conformist strategies, policies and behaviors that are at odds

with the incumbent order and its institutions will be ruled out either from the beginning or later in decision-making process. Second, status-seekers can choose *defiant* strategies, which are aimed at improving one's status by challenging and defecting from the established order and its institutions, and if possible, enacting alternative ones. Status-seekers that adopt defiant strategies will take seriously, even prefer, those policies and behaviors that are unthinkable or unacceptable within the institutional and normative parameters of the established order. In practice, status-seekers can develop a complex portfolio that encompasses both types of strategies but in different proportions.

It is worth noting that the specific means of status-seeking should not be confused with the type of status-seeking strategies. In particular, whether a status-seeker turns to the use of military force and coercion or other non-military and non-coercive means does not determine whether its strategy is conformist or defiant. Given that status-seeking does not take place in a social vacuum, what matters is not the means of status-seeking but its social meanings and consequences. If military force is employed in accordance with the established norms, rules, and practices, it can be a conformist status-seeking strategy that reproduces and reinforces the existing order. In contrast, the use of rhetoric or an ideological campaign is non-violent but defiant if it denies the legitimacy of the incumbent order and puts forth the vision of an alternative order.

What makes the difference between conformist and defiant status-seekers? Why do some status-seeking states choose conformist strategies over defiant ones or vice versa? The variations in strategic choices depend on the differential levels of commitment that status-seeking states have developed vis-à-vis the established international order (Figure 2-2). The level of commitment delimits the range of strategies available and imaginable to status-seekers. If status-seeking states are strongly committed to the established order, they are more likely to

be adopt conformist strategies because the range of policies and behaviors they can conceive is limited. In contrast, if status-seekers are weakly committed to that order, they have a greater chance to choose defiant strategies as they are open to a wider range of policies and behaviors, which are unacceptable or unthinkable to those with a strong commitment.

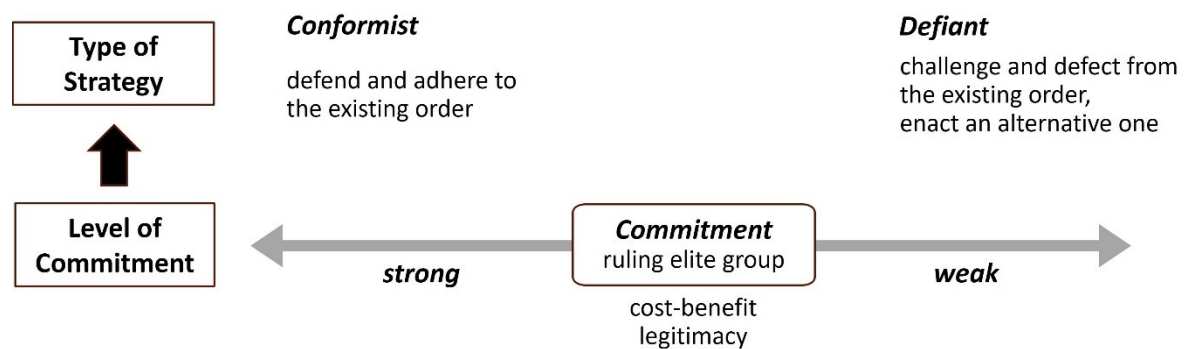


Figure 2-2. Commitment and Strategic Choice

To examine the extent to which status-seeking states are committed to the established order, three issues should be addressed. First, which level of analysis should we investigate? In this study, I focus on the ruling elite group. In developing and implementing foreign policy, the role and significance of ruling elites cannot be overstated.²⁷ Located at the intersection between international and domestic politics, they are granted power and authority to make decisions and act on behalf of their country.²⁸ Although ruling elites are not completely free from or immune to bottom-up pressures from domestic society, they still retain material and

²⁷ William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 1-41.

²⁸ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427-60.

symbolic resources that enable them to mobilize and claim autonomy vis-à-vis other social actors. In the study of status-seeking strategies, Steven Ward proposes a new, SIT-based analytical framework that centers on individuals who identify themselves with a social group including the state.²⁹ Drawing upon these insights, I focus on the extent to which the ruling elite group is committed to the established order.

Second, where does commitment come from? IR scholars have investigated various logics of human actions, most of which are subsumed into or derived from two overarching logics: the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness.³⁰ According to the logic of consequence, one actor's behaviors are driven by rational calculations about the costs and benefits that would follow their behaviors. Conversely, in the logic of appropriateness, actors are treated as social beings that decide the course of action in light of the norms and rules they are expected to follow in a given social context. These two logics can be extended to explain the commitment of a status-seeking state or its ruling elite group to the international order.

As international order becomes entrenched, each state or its ruling elite group develops a differential level of commitment to it, which comes from cost-benefit calculations, legitimacy concerns, or both.³¹ First, international order decides how material and symbolic resources should be distributed among the participant states, so the level of commitment is contingent upon the relative size of benefits guaranteed to them. The larger the portion of benefits a

²⁹ Steven Ward, "Logics of Stratified Identity Management in World Politics," *International Theory* 11, no. 2 (2019), 215-17.

³⁰ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 943-69; Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 1-39; Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union," *International Organization* 55, no. 1 (2001): 47-80; Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, "Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007): 35-66; Vincent Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities," *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008): 257-88.

³¹ March and Olsen 1998.

country has enjoyed within the existing order, the stronger the commitment its ruling elite group develops to that order. Second, the constitutive and regulative institutions that comprise the established international order decide its structure and set the rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions. The level of commitment depends on how much legitimacy a member state or its ruling elite group attaches to those institutions. If the ruling elites have faith in the legitimacy of the existing order and its institutions, their country will develop a stronger commitment to that order. As the legitimacy of the established order comes to be taken for granted, the participant states will develop a routinized pattern of interaction and a stable understanding of the “self,” which is the source of agency.³²

One caveat should be given here: my purpose is to examine how the strategic choices of status-seeking states are influenced by the extent to which their ruling elite groups are committed to the established international order, not to distinguish whether those ruling elites are driven by cost-benefit calculations or legitimacy concerns. In fact, the cost-benefit calculations and legitimacy concerns are not mutually exclusive.³³ Rather, they can reinforce and develop in tandem with each other. The entanglement between these two logics becomes salient as the existing international order endures. Even if the incumbent order was initially built upon the member states’ cost-benefit calculations and the distribution of benefits between them, their ruling elites will come to believe it is legitimate if they are satisfied with the share of benefits allocated to their countries.

Finally, the level of commitment to the established order is not a constant but a variable, which is comparable across states and over time. There are at least three paths of commitment

³² Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 341–70; Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge, 2008); Trine Flockhart, “The Problem of Change in Constructivist Theory: Ontological Security Seeking and Agent Motivation,” *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 5 (2016): 799–820.

³³ March and Olsen 1998, 952–54.

change. First, the level of commitment changes as the ruling elites renew their attitude toward the existing international order. This renewal of attitudes often accompanies a learning process among the elites themselves.³⁴ Second, the level of commitment can change as a result of political turnover in which the incumbent ruling elite group is replaced by another one. The impact of political turnover is most salient when the new ruling elites hold a strategic vision opposed to that of their predecessors. Finally, the level of commitment can alter with the rise of a new ruling coalition that consists of elites who once belonged to different groups but abandoned their initial group affiliations.

It is worth noting that when the level of commitment alters, it does not necessarily lead to a reorientation from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies or vice versa. For instance, one ruling elite group with a strong commitment can renew their attitude in a way that reinforces their commitment or be replaced by another group with a stronger commitment. Similarly, a weakly committed elite group can decide to further weaken their commitment or give way to another group with little or no commitment to the established order.

Even if two or more states choose the same type of status-seeking strategy, be it conformist or defiant, they can still be differentiated depending on the level of *strategic consistency*, that is, whether the ruling elite group can implement the selected strategy without halt, retreat, or conversion (Table 2-1). The significance of strategic consistency becomes more salient when multiple status-seeking states select the same and proper type of status-seeking strategy.

³⁴ Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994), 299-300; Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr., *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 103-4.

Type of Strategy	Level of Strategic Consistency		Strategic Choice
	<i>state-society relations</i>	<i>external support</i>	
<i>elite commitment</i>			
strong	cooperative	strong	conformist, strongly consistent
	conflictual	strong	conformist, moderately consistent
	cooperative	weak	conformist, moderately consistent
	conflictual	weak	conformist, weakly consistent
weak	conflictual	weak	defiant, weakly consistent
	cooperative	weak	defiant, moderately consistent
	conflictual	strong	defiant, moderately consistent
	cooperative	strong	defiant, strongly consistent

Table 2-1. Paths of Strategic Choice

Strategic consistency is influenced by state-society relations and external support. *State-society relations* refer to whether the ruling elites can mobilize support for the strategy they selected from other actors in domestic society. Social support is a crucial element of state capability and autonomy.³⁵ Grand strategy and foreign policy are no exception.³⁶ If state-society relations are cooperative, the ruling elites can consistently implement the strategies they

³⁵ Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Peter B. Evans, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3–38; Joel S. Migdal, "The State-in-Society Approach: A New Definition of the State and Transcending the Narrowly Constructed World of Rigor," in *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3–38.

³⁶ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006): 464–95; Mark R. Brawley, "Neoclassical Realism and Strategic Calculations: Explaining Divergent British, French, and Soviet Strategies toward Germany between the World Wars (1919–1939)," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75–98; Norrin M. Ripsman, "Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Interest Groups," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 170–93; Randall L. Schweller, "Neoclassical Realism and State Mobilization: Expansionist Ideology in the Age of Mass Politics," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 227–50.

chose to improve their country's status. In contrast, if state-society relations are conflictual, it will be difficult for the ruling elites to maintain their strategic consistency.

External support also influences the consistency of status-seeking strategies. If the ruling elite group can draw support from foreign actors for their status-seeking strategies, they can reinforce strategic consistency. Foreign actors can encompass non-state actors who act regardless of their nationality or independent of their governments. Securing external support matters to all status-seekers because status is a social construct that requires recognition from other states. However, the significance of external support can be more salient in the case of weaker or smaller states, which are generally more vulnerable to changes in external conditions.

2) International Political Change: A Typology

The rise and fall of status-seekers cannot be explained without considering both their strategies and the structural conditions surrounding them. As noted earlier, status is a social construct and status-seeking cannot take place in a social vacuum. On the one hand, international order, more broadly, international social structure in which status-seekers are embedded shapes their identities, interests, and behaviors. It constructs status-seekers and delimits the range of strategies thinkable and available to them. On the other hand, international social structure influences the outcomes of status-seeking by rewarding some behaviors while punishing others. One strategy that proved effective in elevating one's status in one social context might be counterproductive in another one, leading to status descent at worst. Therefore, a theory of status ascent should take into account the strategies of status-seekers, the international social structure, and the interplay between them.

In particular, I focus on status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between international social structure and status-seeking states becomes

salient as structural constraints loosen up and the room for agency expands.³⁷ International political change is related to the sustainability of the existing international order. Once created, like any other social order, international order undergoes a lifecycle that leads to its demise in the end, which is followed by the rise of a new order. International order cannot be permanent because change becomes inevitable at some point. The sustainability of international order is often put to the test by endogenous changes, such as the growing ineffectiveness in managing the distribution of material and symbolic privileges and governing interactions between the participants. The demise of the established order can accelerate when unexpected exogenous shocks such as natural disasters are intertwined with endogenous changes.³⁸

IR scholars have proposed various typologies to unpack the nature, mechanisms, and outcomes of international political change.³⁹ Among many scholars engaged in the study of change, Robert Gilpin stands out for presenting a comprehensive typology, which not only demonstrates that international order is a complex of power and institutions but also has inspired subsequent generations of scholars. In *War and Change in World Politics*, he distinguishes three types of change, which he labels as “systemic change,” “systems change,” and “interaction change.”⁴⁰ Systems change is the “most fundamental type of change” that alters “the nature of the actors or diverse entities that compose an international system.” It

³⁷ The literature on critical juncture provides theoretical insights and analytical devices to explore and conceptualize the relationship between structure and actors during periods of international political change. However, it is controversial whether international political change can be treated as a “juncture” because the former can last more than decades. For critical juncture, see Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, “The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism,” *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007): 341–69.

³⁸ Zarakol 2022.

³⁹ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Ch. 1; Holsti, 2004, Ch. 1; Andrew Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire: The Transformation of International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Allan 2018; Feng and He 2020; Zarakol 2022.

⁴⁰ Gilpin 1981, 39-43. Drawing upon Gilpin’s insights, Kai He and Huiyun Feng distinguish “systems transition” that pertains to the organizing principle and the nature of political units, “systemic transition” led by dramatic shifts of the power distribution, and “institutional transition” related to regimes, international organizations, and international laws. For their typology of international political change, see He and Feng 2020, 15-18.

entails a major shift in “the character of the international system itself,” which is identified by its “most prominent entities.” Systemic change is a change in “the form of control or governance of an international system.” It is a change “within the system” that involves “the rise and decline of the dominant states ... that govern the particular international system.” Interaction change refers to a change in “the form of interactions and processes among the entities in an ongoing international system.” It means “modifications in the political, economic, and other interactions or processes among the actors” within the system.

Similarly, the literature on revisionism suggests that international order is a complex of power and institutions and thus international political change can take different forms. It distinguishes different types of revisionism depending on the objective of revisionist powers, that is, whether they seek to displace the incumbent hegemon by force within the existing order, rewrite some norms and rules in their favor, or build an alternative order.⁴¹ Although this strand of literature is primarily concerned with the strategies of revisionist powers, it shows that there can be various types of international political change because international order is a complex of power and institutions.

Like any other social order, international order has a life cycle. International political change begins with the disruption of the existing order. It can take different forms depending on which dimension of the established order alters—the distribution of material capabilities, institutional arrangements, or both. There can be at least three types of international political change (Figure 2-3).

⁴¹ Ward 2017b, 18-21; Alexander Cooley, Daniel Nexon, and Steven Ward, “Revising Order or Challenging the Balance of Military Power? An Alternative Typology of Revisionist and Status-Quo States,” *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2019), 695–701; Feng and He 2020, 15–18.

		Hegemonic State	
		replaced	not replaced
Institutions	changed	<i>Order Transition</i>	<i>Order Reform</i>
	unchanged	<i>Power Transition</i>	<i>Status Quo</i>

Figure 2-3. International Political Change

First, *power transition* is the most familiar form of international political change whereby the rising power supplants the established hegemonic state but the constitutive and regulative institutions remain unchanged. Power transition can take place either through a war between the established power and the rising power or the former's voluntary retreat, accommodation, or concession to the latter.⁴² The conventional wisdom is that power transition is accompanied by a hegemonic war. While the hegemonic state's economic growth slows down, the rising power overtakes or catches up with it. The risk of hegemonic war increases if the rising power is dissatisfied with the hegemonic state, and more broadly, the existing order under its reign. It is worth noting that a hegemonic war can be initiated by either side. If the hegemonic state is overwhelmed by the fear or anxiety that it will soon be overtaken by the rising power, it can launch a preventive war to frustrate the rising contender before it is too late. However, power transition does not necessarily entail a hegemonic war. If the

⁴² Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); T. V. Paul, "The Study of Peaceful Change in World Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations*, ed. T. V. Paul et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 3–26; Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): 7–44.

hegemonic state and the rising power can manage mutual distrust and antagonism effectively, they can avoid a military showdown.

Second, *order transition* is the most fundamental type of international political change in which the established international order is completely replaced by an alternative one. It entails both power transition and institutional transformation. While the incumbent hegemonic state loses its privileged status and gives way to the rising power, the constitutive and regulative institutions that comprise the existing order are delegitimized and substituted by alternative ones. The new order, reigned by a new hegemon, consists of its own constitutive and regulative institutions. In this order, a new type of political entities is treated as a legitimate actor, and their arrangement is structured by a new organizing principle. Diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions between them will be governed by the new rules of conduct.

Finally, *order reform* is the most frequent and limited form of international political change that entails the rearrangement of regular institutions within the existing order. It involves neither power transition nor the transformation of constitutive institutions.⁴³ In other words, while the incumbent hegemonic state maintains its dominant position and the constitutive institutions that have shaped the basic structure of international politics remain unchanged, the rules of conduct that guide diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions will change. Although order reform constitutes a distinct category, it is part of order transition both by definition and in practice.

3) Who Rises, Who Falls

Why do some status-seeking states rise while others fail to do so? Who rises or falls when the established international order undergoes a transition? The rise and fall of status-

⁴³ Order reform is close to Gilpin's "interaction change," but he does not elaborate this concept because his primary focus lies in "systemic change" and "systems change." For interaction change, see Gilpin 1981.

seeking states depend on (1) the type of *strategies* they choose and (2) the type of *international political change* they encounter. In response to international political change, the ruling elites adopt strategies to improve or secure their country's status. Their strategic choice is contingent on their relative commitment to the established order. While the ruling elite group with a strong commitment is likely to choose conformist strategies, the one with a weak commitment is likely to select defiant strategies.

However, the outcome of status-seeking can be neither decided nor explained by the ruling elite group's strategic choice because each type of international political change lays an uneven ground that favors some status-seeking states but not others (Figure 2-4). Put differently, international political change is no less significant than the strategic choice of status-seeking states as it rewards conformist status-seekers while punishing defiant ones, or vice versa. If the strategies of status-seekers align with changes in the international social structure where they are embedded, they can improve their status. If not, they will fail. At worst, they should risk status descent or status loss.

		Hegemonic State	
		replaced	not replaced
Institutions	changed	<i>Order Transition</i> (favorable for defiant status-seekers)	<i>Order Reform</i> (favorable for defiant status-seekers)
	unchanged	<i>Power Transition</i> (favorable for conformist status-seekers)	<i>Status Quo</i>

Figure 2-4. The Rise and Fall of Status-Seekers

Power transition is a type of change in which the rising power supplants the established hegemonic state but the constitutive and regulative institutions that comprise the existing order remain unchanged. While the leadership of the existing order is transferred from one state to another, its institutional arrangements, including the norms, rules, and practices of status attribution, do not alter. It is a favorable setting for conformist states that seek to improve their status by defending and adhering to the incumbent order and its institutions. Defiant strategies that challenge the established institutions will backfire, undermining the image and reputation of status-seeking states that act as rule-breakers.

Order transition is the most fundamental type of change in which the existing order is completely replaced by an alternative one. It entails both power transition and institutional transformation. The hegemonic state loses its position, and the established constitutive and regulative institutions cease to function and fall apart. These changes lead to the rise of a new order, which is reigned by a new hegemon and consists of its own constitutive and regulative institutions. While the incumbent hegemon gives way to a rising power, a new type of political entities emerges as a legitimate actor. Their arrangement and interactions are governed by new institutions. As the existing norms, rules, and practices become ineffective and illegitimate, there is a greater chance of status ascent for defiant status-seekers that challenge and defect from the established order and its institutions as well as enact alternative ones. In contrast, conformist states that fail to adapt to the new setting will fall behind.

Order reform is the most limited form of change, marked by the rearrangement of regulative institutions without power transition and the transformation of constitutive institutions. While the organizing principle and the requirements to be granted legitimate actorhood remain unchanged, the rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions will be rewritten. Since order reform still involves institutional changes, it is more

favorable for defiant status-seekers that learn and embody these new rules of conduct in regular interactions than conformist states that refuse to do so.

There are two questions to be addressed. First, what makes the difference between defiant strategies for status ascent during times of order transition and order reform? Both order transition and order reform involve institutional changes and thus favor defiant status-seekers. Order reform entails only the rearrangement of regulative institutions, that is, the revision of rules of conduct in regular interactions. Therefore, defiant status-seekers faced with order reform only need to adjust their behaviors. In contrast, order transition entails the transformation of both constitutive and regulative institutions, ranging from the legitimate actorhood and the organizing principle to the rules of conduct in regular interactions. Therefore, defiant status-seeking in times of order transition requires not only behavioral adjustments but also the transformation of status-seekers themselves into an alternative type of political entities that fulfill the new requirement of legitimate actorhood.

Second, what if two or more status-seeking states choose the proper type of strategy that aligns with changes in the international social structure, which one has a greater chance of status ascent? It depends on the relative level of strategic consistency. As noted earlier, even if status-seekers choose the same type of strategy, they can still be differentiated depending on whether they can consistently implement the strategy they selected. A status-seeking state with its ruling elite group able to elicit support from both domestic society and foreign actors will exhibit a higher level of strategic consistency. When multiple status-seekers adopt the proper type of strategy, the one that maintains or enhances strategic consistency will outperform the competitors that fail to do so.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I proposed a theory of ascent to explain and compare the outcomes of status-seeking. Since status-seeking is a social phenomenon that takes place against the backdrop of the established international order, such a theory should consider both the strategies of status-seeking states and the social structure where they are embedded. In particular, I focus on the outcomes of status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between status-seekers and structure becomes salient as the structural constraints loosen up and the space for agency expands.

When the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on whether their strategies align with changes in the social structure surrounding them. In response to international political change, a status-seeker can choose either conformist strategies to defend and adhere to the existing order, or defiant ones to challenge it, and if possible, enact an alternative one. The strategic choice of a status-seeking state depends on the level of commitment to the established order. If its ruling elites are strongly committed to the incumbent order, they are likely to choose conformist strategies for their country. In contrast, the ruling elites with a weak commitment to the established order are likely to adopt defiant strategies for their country.

However, one strategy can produce different outcomes because international political change lays an uneven ground for status-seekers. In power transition, the rising power supplants the established hegemonic state but the constitutive and regulative institutions that comprise the existing order remain unchanged. It is a favorable setting for conformist states that seek to improve their status by enacting and adhering to the incumbent order and its institutions. In order transition, the hegemonic state loses its position and the established constitutive and regulative institutions fall apart, leading to the rise of a new order, which is

reigned by a new hegemon and consists of its own constitutive and regulative institutions. There will be a greater chance of status ascent for defiant status-seekers than conformist ones. In order reform, there will be the rearrangement of regulative institutions without the replacement of the hegemonic state and the transformation of constitutive institutions. As the rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions will be rewritten, defiant status-seekers that embody the new rules of conduct are more likely to improve their status.

If two or more status-seeking states choose the proper type of strategy, the one whose ruling elites enhance or maintain their strategic consistency will outperform the others that fail to do so. The level of strategic consistency is influenced by state-society relations and external support. In other words, a status-seeking state or its ruling elites can more consistently implement the selected strategy, whether it is conformist or defiant, if they can effectively elicit and mobilize support from domestic society and foreign actors.

Chapter 3. Status-Seeking in Power Transition

Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan During the Ming-Qing Transition

In this chapter, I compare the status-seeking strategies of Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan and their outcomes during the Ming-Qing transition (1583-1683). Beginning with the ascent of Nurhachi, a young and competent Jurchen chieftain, to power in 1583, it lasted until the Qing empire founded by his successors completed the conquest of the Chinese mainland in 1683. It was not only the last dynastic replacement in China proper but also one of the most pivotal geopolitical changes in historical East Asia before the arrival of the West. The Ming-Qing transition was a power transition, that is, an international political change that entailed hegemonic replacement without institutional transformation. The Manchu ascendancy and the downfall of the Ming empire resulted in the replacement of the hegemonic state but the constitutive and regulative institutions comprising the East Asian world order remained largely intact. Although the Manchu people who had been despised as barbarians for many centuries added new elements reflecting their customs and traditions to the incumbent order, they inherited most of its institutions established under Ming hegemony.

The rise and fall of Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan in the East Asian world order in this period demonstrates that whether a status-seeker can achieve the position it claims depends on not only its strategic choice but also the structural conditions surrounding it. While the Manchu-Qing took the dominant position in place of the declining Ming, Korea and Japan adopted opposing types of status-seeking strategies. Chosŏn Korea, governed by the ruling elites strongly committed to the norms, rules, and practices of the East Asian world order, sought conformist strategies to secure and improve its status by defending the established order and its institutions. In contrast, the Toyotomi and Tokugawa regimes without such a strong

commitment chose defiant strategies to elevate Japan's status by defying and overthrowing the existing order. Since the Ming-Qing transition was a power transition that provided a favorable setting for conformist status-seekers, Chosŏn Korea could maintain its privileged status as a highly advanced secondary state, whereas Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan failed to fulfill its status claim and remained an outcast.

1. The Ming-Qing Transition: Power Transition in East Asia

1) The East Asian World Order

The growing significance of East Asia in world politics, the rise of China in particular, has reinvigorated scholarly interest in the history of order-making in this region.¹ While distinctive regional orders rose and fell in different corners of Asia, East Asia developed its own.² The existing literature on historical East Asia has developed the image of a Sinocentric international order, highlighting the centrality of China and the hierarchical relationship between China and its neighbors. For instance, John K. Fairbank labeled the regional order in historical East Asia

¹ John K. Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1–19; David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (London: Routledge, 2009); Feng Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History* (Palo Alto, United States: Stanford University Press, 2015); Ji-Young Lee, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Seo-Hyun Park, *Sovereignty and Status in East Asian International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

² In this vein, Hui argues that "East Asia should be 'yoked' back with the rest of Asia." See Victoria Tin-bor Hui, "Getting Asia Right": De-Essentializing China's Hegemony in Historical Asia," *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023), 492. For different regional orders that emerged in Asia, see Spruyt 2020; Zarakol 2022; Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Region, System, and Order: The Mughal Empire in Islamicate Asia," *Security Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017): 249–78; Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Mughal Hegemony and the Emergence of South Asia as a 'Region' for Regional Order-Building," *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 1 (2019): 276–301; Ali Balci and Tuncay Kardaş, "The Ottoman International System: Power Projection, Interconnectedness, and the Autonomy of Frontier Politics," *Millennium* 51, no. 3 (2023): 866–91.

as the Chinese world order.³ It was a hierarchical order where Chinese ideas and practices, most of which were rooted in Confucianism, governed relations between polities that were categorized into the Sinic, Inner Asia, and Outer Zones and granted differential status depending on the level of assimilation to Chinese culture. David C. Kang defined the East Asian regional order as the tributary system where China's superiority vis-à-vis other secondary states was institutionalized through the exchange of the former's "investiture" and the latter's payment of "tribute."⁴ In this Sinocentric hierarchy, the status of secondary states was decided by the level of Sinicization or Confucianization.

Although these terms help researchers capture significant features of the regional order in historical East Asia, this study uses the term the "East Asian world order" instead because it was neither international, Sinocentric, nor reduced to the tributary system. First, the idea of "international" is grounded in Western history and ideas of nation, sovereignty, and sovereign equality between nation-states, which did not exist in historical East Asia.⁵ Second, such modifiers as Chinese or Sinocentric are misleading.⁶ They often obscure the fact that China, in the historical context, was not always equated with a single unified state as it is today but more of a political construct with its meaning open to contestation. Moreover, those adjectives inadvertently neglect the agency of non-Chinese actors in regional order-making. Finally, the significance of the tributary system should not be underrated but it does not capture the totality and complexity of the East Asian world order.⁷

³ Fairbank 1968, 2.

⁴ Kang 2010, 8, 55-59.

⁵ Fairbank 1968, 5.

⁶ Suzuki 2009, 35; David C. Kang, "International Order in Historical East Asia: Tribute and Hierarchy Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism," *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (2020), 67-68; Lee 2016, 3-5; Inho Choi, "'Chinese' Hegemony from a Korean *Shi* Perspective: Aretocracy in the Early Modern East Asia," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 22, no. 3 (2022): 347-74.

⁷ Feng Zhang, "International Societies in Pre-Modern East Asia: A Preliminary Framework," in *Contesting International Society in East Asia*, ed. Barry Buzan and Yongjin Zhang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31; Zhang 2015, 154.

In terms of the organizing principle, the East Asian world order was a *patchworked* hierarchy in which various types of polities and different sets of regulative institutions coexisted and interacted with each other. The East Asian world order was basically a hierarchical system where the state that ruled the Chinese mainland with affluent resources and advanced culture often claimed superiority over other polities. When the state that had once unified the Chinese mainland was in decline and divided into competing dynasties, it often fell prey to alien invaders who mostly came from the north.⁸ In some cases, those invaders who seized the Chinese mainland claimed themselves as the legitimate rulers that succeeded the previous dynasty.

To legitimize the hierarchical order and their superiority, the Chinese states and their ruling elites mobilized various ideologies. In particular, the significance of Confucianism cannot be overstated because the East Asian world order and its constitutive and regulative institutions were heavily influenced by Confucianism.⁹ In the Confucian worldview, the Chinese emperor called the “Son of Heaven” (*Tianzi*) stood at the center and apex of the world or all-under-heaven. As the bearer of the “Mandate of Heaven” (*Tianming*) endowed with the patriarchal authority to edify people and build a world of peace and harmony, he was required to embody Confucian virtues.¹⁰ Every corner of the world, at least in theory, belonged to the Chinese emperor, and elites and intellectuals committed to Confucianism formed the ruling elite group.¹¹

Simultaneously, the East Asian world order was a patchwork that encompassed various types of polities, such as Confucian and non-Confucian states, feudal societies, and nomadic

⁸ Morris Rossabi, “Introduction,” in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 4-11.

⁹ Fairbank 1968; Spruyt 2020.

¹⁰ Suzuki 2009, 34-35; Zhang 2015, Ch. 6.

¹¹ Fairbank 1968, 8.

and semi-nomadic tribes. In this setting, legitimate actorhood was not determined by the attributes of polities such as regime type and the degree of Sinicization or Confucianization, but recognized through particularistic interactions between polities. The Chinese state seized the upper hand in these interactions with its neighbors because the former retained symbolic authority based on advanced culture of the Chinese mainland. The rulers of neighboring polities paid tributes to show their symbolic deference or subordination to the Chinese emperor, and the latter expressed his recognition by accepting those tributes or granting titles and posts in the Chinese courts to the former. The size and frequency of tributary missions and the rank of titles and posts were indicators of the relative status that each foreign ruler or polity occupied within the East Asian world order.

The participants of the East Asian world order developed differential levels and foundations of commitment to it. While some actors cultivated a strong commitment in deference to Chinese civilization, others were only weakly committed and driven chiefly by the costs and benefits expected in their relations with the Chinese state.¹² Korea and Vietnam developed a strong commitment based on both civilizational deference and the cost-benefit calculations. Except for Vietnam, however, other Southeast Asian polities participated in the East Asian world order to maximize trade benefits from the Chinese mainland.¹³ Nomadic and semi-nomadic societies in the north were also part of the East Asian world order.¹⁴ Despite their frequent conflicts with sedentary peoples including the Chinese states, these nomadic and semi-nomadic societies maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with them. Japan was

¹² Fairbank 1968; Kang 2010; Alan Shiu Cheung Kwan, "Hierarchy, Status and International Society: China and the Steppe Nomads," *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 2 (2016): 362–83; Colin Chia, "Social Positioning and International Order Contestation in Early Modern Southeast Asia," *International Organization* 76, no. 2 (2022): 305–36.

¹³ Chia 2022.

¹⁴ Kang 2010; Zhang 2014; Kwan 2016.

an in-between case that once developed a strong commitment but underwent a gradual weakening.

It is worth noting that even the Chinese state, the central player in the East Asian world order, was a patchwork as well.¹⁵ In historical East Asia, the term China was not necessarily equated with a specific state or dynasty. Rather, it was a historical construct with new geographical, political, ethnic, and cultural connotations added with the lapse of time, which evolved to denote the civilization that arose in the Yellow River basin.¹⁶ Although the concept of China as a civilization presupposed the civilized-barbarian dichotomy, in practice, it was continuously redefined through hybridization between the Chinese mainland and nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples that invaded it.¹⁷

In this patchworked order, diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions were governed by different sets of regulative institutions that coexisted with one another. Feng Zhang argues that historical East Asia was marked by its “layered” and “nested” structure. On the one hand, two primary international societies, that is, the “fanshu” society based on Chinese hegemony and the “diguo” society with powerful polities in rivalry on an equal footing, operated together. On the other hand, non-Chinese polities replicated the fanshu-style

¹⁵ Similarly, Barnett and Lawson (2023) argue that “China has had several periods in which it was more like a patchwork of provinces than a functioning central state... [A]t times, this patchwork had been ruled by peoples, including the Manchu and Mongol dynasties, who did not speak Chinese.” See Michael Barnett and George Lawson, “Three Visions of the Global: Global International Relations, Global History, Global Historical Sociology,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023), 504-5.

¹⁶ Arif Dirlik, “Born in Translation: ‘China’ in the Making of ‘Zhongguo,’” *Boundary 2* 46, no. 3 (2019): 121–52; Bill Hayton, *The Invention of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Inho Choi, “On Being Chinese and Being Complexified: Chinese IR as a Transcultural Project,” *Review of International Studies* 49, no. 3 (2023): 471–90; Yongchun Zhao and Anran Chi, “The Earliest ‘China’: The Concept of Zhongguo during the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou Dynasties,” *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 8, no. 3 (2022): 303–21; Hui 2023.

¹⁷ Ping-Ti Ho, “In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski’s ‘Reenvisioning the Qing,’” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998): 123–55; Kwan 2016; Joseph MacKay, “The Nomadic Other: Ontological Security and the Inner Asian Steppe in Historical East Asian International Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 471–91; Nianqun Yang, “Moving Beyond ‘Sinicization’ and ‘Manchu Characteristics’: Can Research on Qing History Take a Third Path?,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 47, no. 1 (2016): 44–58; David M. Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire: Ming China and Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Spruyt 2020; Zarakol 2022.

hegemonic societies in their relations with weaker neighbors.¹⁸ The interactions among the Chinese state and neighboring polities gave rise to different sets of regulative institutions that reflected their power parity or disparity, cultural intimacy, and mutual expectation.

In diplomatic relations in historical East Asia, the significance of the tributary system should not be underrated. By sending tributary missions to the Chinese court, foreign rulers expressed their deference or subordination, even if it was nominal, to the Chinese emperor. The conventional wisdom is that the other side of tribute was investiture, that is, the Chinese emperor's conferral of noble titles or high offices in his court on the rulers of tributary states as a sign of his recognition of their legitimacy. However, the institution of tribute was not always accompanied by investiture, which was allowed far more discriminately.¹⁹ Other polities often emulated the practices of tribute and investiture in their relations with weaker neighbors.²⁰ When the Chinese state could not afford to claim its hegemonic status, other diplomatic institutions played a more crucial role.²¹ In their relations with hostile and formidable neighbors, most of which were nomadic or semi-nomadic societies, the Chinese states relied on treaties whereby the Chinese side promised a variety of gifts in exchange for peace and military cooperation.

Warfare was also subject to institutional constraints. Some scholars compare the absence of military conflicts between Confucian polities and the prevalence of violence between Confucian and non-Confucian ones, attributing this divergent pattern to Confucian

¹⁸ Zhang 2014, 32-36.

¹⁹ Zhang 2014, 43; Zhang 2015, 163.

²⁰ Zhang 2014, 36; Kenneth R. Robinson, "Centering the King of Chosŏn: Aspects of Korean Maritime Diplomacy, 1392–1592," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2000): 109–25; Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

²¹ Kang 2010; Zhang 2014; Kwan 2016.

culture that averted the use of military force.²² However, this Confucian Peace thesis does not fully capture the military dimension of historical East Asia. First, Confucianism was not incompatible with the use of force because it endorsed a righteous war to rectify the violation of Confucian norms.²³ Although military conflicts were less frequent between Confucian states, some of them were no less significant in their scale, intensity, duration, and long-term effects. Second, Confucian pacifism in Confucian polity's decision-making was often challenged, even overridden by other factors such as offensive culture and strategic calculations.²⁴ Finally, the higher frequency of violence between Confucian and non-Confucian polities did not preclude the development of institutions that guided their relationship.²⁵ Their interactions were regulated through pseudo-familial kinship and the shared notions of common interests, rulership, and status, which helped them avoid violent conflicts.

Economic relations in the East Asian world order were guided by various types of trade.²⁶ Trade between Chinese and non-Chinese polities occurred in both official and private routes. The visit of foreign tributary envoys provided opportunities for both sides by serving as the channel for official exchange of foreign tributes and Chinese gifts, the Chinese court's purchase of foreign goods imported by merchants accompanying the tributary missions, and direct contact between foreign envoys and Chinese merchants. Special markets for private trade were installed on border and coastal areas. Illicit trade was conducted through the activities of

²² Kang 2010; Robert E. Kelly, "A 'Confucian Long Peace' in Pre-Western East Asia?" *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 3 (2012): 407–30.

²³ Lien-sheng Yang, "Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 24–31; Yuan-kang Wang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 15–19; Zhang 2015, 41, 165.

²⁴ Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Wang 2010, 4–5, 19–20.

²⁵ Kang 2010, 145–49; Zhang 2014, 44–45; Kwan 2016, 362–73.

²⁶ Kang 2010, 109; Zhang 2014, 48; Zhang 2015, 165.

unauthorized actors including pirates. Trade flourished not only between Chinese and non-Chinese polities but also between non-Chinese polities themselves.²⁷ Their commercial activities were indispensable to the development of trade networks that linked the participants of the East Asian world order.

2) Hegemonic Replacement without Institutional Transformation

The Ming-Qing transition was not only the last dynastic replacement in the Chinese mainland but also one of the most pivotal geopolitical changes in historical East Asia before the arrival of the West. Ranging from Nurhachi's ascent to power in 1583 to the surrender of the last Ming loyalists in 1683, it was a power transition that entailed the replacement of the hegemonic state without the replacement of existing institutions.²⁸ The Ming empire lost its hegemonic status to the Manchu-Qing, a conquest dynasty whose founders came from semi-nomadic societies in the northeastern frontier of the Chinese mainland. The Manchu ascendancy added new elements but did not replace or transform the institutions of the East Asian world order, which was a patchworked hierarchy where various types of polities and different sets of regulative institutions coexisted with each other.

The Ming-Qing transition was a nearly century-long process through which the Manchu rulers conquered Ming territories that had already been in fragmentation from the late sixteenth century.²⁹ The Manchu ascendancy began with Nurhachi's ascent to power.³⁰ He

²⁷ Kang 2010, 121-30.

²⁸ Yuan-kang Wang, "International Order and Change in East Asian History," in *China's Challenges and International Order Transition: Beyond "Thucydides's Trap,"* ed. Huiyun Feng and Kai He (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 150-52.

²⁹ Frederic E. Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 18; Pamela Kyle Crossley, "The Qing Unification, 1618-1683," in *East Asia in the World: Twelve Events That Shaped the Modern International Order*, ed. Stephan Haggard and David C. Kang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 129-46.

³⁰ Wakeman 1985, 51-65; Pei Huang, *Reorienting the Manchus: A Study of Sinicization, 1583-1795* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 69-79; Yuanchong Wang, *Remaking the Chinese Empire: Manchu-Korean Relations, 1616-1911* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 21-25.

was a young, competent Jurchen chieftain who lost his father and grandfather in a battle they fought on the side of the Ming empire. After subjugating other Jurchen chieftains and their tribes, Nurhachi founded a unified Jurchen frontier state named the Jin in 1616 and commenced a military campaign to capture Ming territories. Nurhachi died in 1626 but his eighth son, Hong Taiji, continued the war his father started. In 1635, Hong Taiji adopted the new name Manchu for his multiethnic kingdom that consisted of Chinese, Koreans, and Mongolians, and the next year he declared the establishment of the Great Qing and enthroned himself as its emperor endowed with the Mandate of Heaven. In 1644, the Qing forces entered Beijing and repelled the peasant rebels who seized it after the last Ming emperor committed suicide.

However, it took four more decades until the Qing completed the conquest of Ming territories.³¹ Above all, the Ming loyalists who fled to southern China continued to resist until 1662. These refugee regimes failed to secure enough territories and revenues to maintain a sizable army and suffered from corrupted leadership.³² Another challenge was the revolt of Chinese collaborators. To conquer the Chinese mainland, Qing rulers heavily relied on these collaborators, some of whom were granted the title of king and feudatories. Emperor Kangxi's decision to rescind their privileges sparked a rebellion that lasted until 1681. Finally, there was the last Ming loyalist regime in Taiwan. The Ming-Qing transition was completed in 1683 as its leader, Zheng Keshuang, surrendered to Emperor Kangxi.

The Ming-Qing transition can be attributed as much to the Ming's decline as to the Manchu ascendancy. Even before the Manchu invasion, the Ming empire had suffered from economic depression and worsening inflation, the disintegration of the governance system, and

³¹ Richard J. Smith, *The Qing Dynasty and Traditional Chinese Culture* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 64-70.

³² Wakeman 1985, 393-96.

factional corruption and strife within the court.³³ The entanglement between internal crises and external threats inhibited the Ming from preemptively and effectively countering the Manchu's rise. Peasant rebellions and external wars precipitated the Ming-Qing transition by exhausting the Ming empire's financial and military capabilities.³⁴ In particular, the military expedition to save Korea from the Japanese invasion in the 1590s drained the Ming's material and military resources that could have been used to deter the Manchus.³⁵ The worsening of environmental and ecological conditions also inflicted critical damages on the declining Ming.³⁶

The Qing's rise from a semi-nomadic frontier state into a multiethnic empire that governed the Chinese mainland has spurred a debate among historians, which remains unsettled since Ping-ti Ho's rebuttal of Evelyn S. Rawski's 1996 presidential address to the Association for Asia Studies.³⁷ The advocates of the traditional Sinicization thesis argue that Qing rulers, despite their non-Chinese origin, were assimilated into Chinese culture and attribute their success to Sinicization. In contrast, the so-called New Qing History scholars highlight that the Qing was a multiethnic empire that included but extended beyond the Chinese mainland and that Qing rulers, despite their efforts to adopt Chinese culture, did not abandon their Manchu identity and special ties with Inner Asia, especially Mongols and Tibetans. More recently, Nianqun Yang proposed the concept of "Hua-ization," which emphasizes the two-way

³³ Wakeman 1985, 1-15.

³⁴ Wang 2010, 177-79.

³⁵ According to Kenneth Swope, the fact that the Ming could carry out multiple military campaigns simultaneously demonstrates the Ming's military strength, not its decline. See Kenneth Swope, *A Dragon's Head and A Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

³⁶ Qian Liu et al., "Climate, Disasters, Wars and the Collapse of the Ming Dynasty," *Environmental Earth Sciences* 77, no. 2 (2018): 44; Timothy Brook, *The Price of Collapse: The Little Ice Age and the Fall of Ming China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2023).

³⁷ Evelyn S. Rawski, "Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 829-50; Ho 1998; Ruth W. Dunnell and James A. Millward, "Introduction," in *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*, ed. Ruth W. Dunnell et al. (London: Routledge, 2004), 3-4; Joanna Waley-Cohen, "The New Qing History," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 88 (2004), 194-96; Huang 2011.

exchanges between Han Chinese and non-Chinese peoples, as a third path to avoid both the Sinicization theory's neglect of multiethnicity and the New Qing History's marginalization of China.³⁸

In either case, however, the Ming-Qing transition was a power transition in which the Qing empire replaced the Ming within the contours of the established East Asian world order. Put differently, the Manchu ascendancy was a hegemonic replacement without institutional transformation. The Sinicization-New Qing History debate remains unsettled because both sides are telling the truth: there were both continuities and discontinuities between the Qing and its predecessor, the Ming.³⁹ However, it is worth noting that hybridization between the Chinese mainland and non-Chinese peoples was already part of the East Asian world order. The Manchu ascendancy added new, non-Chinese elements to the existing East Asian world order but did not alter its basic structure, which had evolved as a patchworked hierarchy encompassing various types of political entities and different sets of regulative institutions.

The founders of the Qing inherited the East Asian world order and its constitutive and regulative institutions rather than erased them. First, the Jurchen tribes had already been part of the East Asian world order long before the Ming-Qing transition. Although the Jurchens were treated as non-sedentary "barbarians," they had been in close interaction with the Chinese mainland and even once conquered northern China in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To tame and constrain this potential threat, the Ming court conferred a few selected Jurchen chieftains with military titles, tributary status, and privileges to trade.⁴⁰ Nurhachi was one of

³⁸ Yang 2016.

³⁹ Willard J. Peterson, "Introduction: New Order for the Old Order," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Willard J. Peterson, vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3-7.

⁴⁰ Wakeman 1985, 49-50; Andrew Phillips, *How the East Was Won: Barbarian Conquerors, Universal Conquest and the Making of Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 109-11.

those favored chieftains. He exploited his economic, military, and cultural capital to unify the Jurchen tribes under his banner.

Second, the Manchu, the nucleus of the Qing empire, was a political construct that contained Chinese elements from its inception. As Nurhachi's Jurchen frontier state developed into a multiethnic empire embracing Chinese, Mongolians, and Koreans, Hong Taiji declared in 1635 that he would adopt the new name "Manchu" for his subjects while prohibiting the use of "Jurchens." In particular, Chinese collaborators, frontiersmen, and captives made critical contributions to the Manchu's conquest of China proper and transformation into a multiethnic empire.⁴¹ Qing rulers put great efforts to draw support from Chinese elites and intellectuals to consolidate their newly founded dynasty. They incorporated Chinese collaborators and captives into the Eight Banners, the basic units constituting the Manchu society, encouraged former Ming bureaucrats to serve the Qing, and reinstalled the civil service examination to recruit Chinese intellectuals.⁴²

Finally, Qing rulers did not erase but inherited the East Asian world order and its institutions that had developed under Ming hegemony. The Manchu ascendancy enriched the East Asian world order by articulating and reinforcing non-Chinese elements to it.⁴³ As the Qing grew into a multiethnic empire, its rulers developed a diversity regime to embrace both Chinese and non-Chinese elements. While learning and adopting Chinese culture and institutions, Qing conquerors implemented a range of political, social, and economic measures to secure their Manchu identity. They also tried to strengthen their political and military ties with the Mongols and Tibetans. To do so, they developed different images of the emperor that

⁴¹ Wakeman 1985, 19; Huang 2011, 49-50, 54.

⁴² Phillips 2021, 113-16; Smith 2015, 64-70; Macabe Keliher, *The Board of Rites and the Making of Qing China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 38.

⁴³ Rawski 1996, 832-38; Haung 2011, 43-47, 86-87; Smith 2015, 56-58, 90-94; Phillips 2021, 117-18, 192-97.

resonated with different populations, and established the Board of Colonial Affairs (*Lifan Yuan*) to manage their relationship with non-Sinicized peoples in Inner Asia.

The reinforcement of non-Chinese elements during the Qing empire did not alter the basic structure of the East Asian world order. Rather, it remained intact as Qing rulers inherited its institutions with some modifications. Moreover, in light of the history of the East Asian world order as a patchworked hierarchy, such hybridization between the Chinese mainland and non-Chinese peoples such as the Manchu was already part of it. To build its own political system, the Qing borrowed emperorship, bureaucracy, and administrative rules and regulations from the Ming and other previous Chinese states.⁴⁴ Qing rulers also adopted Confucianism embodied in those institutions.⁴⁵ They encouraged the reverence of Confucian sages and the publication of Confucian texts, and mobilized Confucianism as an ideological underpinning of their rule. In foreign relations, the Qing appropriated the Confucian logics that the civilization-barbarian divide can be overcome through edification and that the virtuous one deserves the Mandate of Heaven to legitimize Qing hegemony.⁴⁶

2. Chosŏn Korea

1) The Dominance of Neo-Confucian Scholar-Bureaucrats

Although Korea had never been the hegemonic state in the East Asian world order, it consistently held a special position as a highly advanced secondary state. John K. Fairbank categorized Korea as one of the few states in the Sinic Zone that consisted of those that eagerly

⁴⁴ Huang 2011, 80-86, 178-91; Smith 2015, 99; Keliher 2019, 171-72, 179-90.

⁴⁵ Huang 2011, 279-83; Gao Xiang, "Expounding Neo-Confucianism: Choice of Tradition at a Time of Dynastic Change—Cultural Conflict and the Social Reconstruction of Early Qing," *Social Sciences in China* 34, no. 2 (2013), 114-15.

⁴⁶ Wang 2018, 29-34, 38-39; Phillips 2021, 42-43, 73-76.

adopted advanced culture that originated in the Chinese mainland, especially Confucian ones.⁴⁷ Similarly, David C. Kang emphasizes that Korea, which was far more advanced than others in the level of Sinicization and Confucianization, was ranked first among the secondary states that paid tributes to the Chinese court.⁴⁸ Of all tributary states, Chosŏn Korea was an exceptional case that displayed such an outstanding level of understanding of Chinese rites and practices. Even Chinese rulers acknowledged that Korea was the most civilized of all “barbarians,” granting special treatment to the Chosŏn court and its envoys.⁴⁹ Koreans accepted that they were “eastern barbarians” (*Dong-I*) but used such modified terms as “east of the sea” (*Hae-dong*) and “eastern country” (*Dong-guk*) to articulate their individuality vis-à-vis the Chinese mainland.

Since ancient times, Korean rulers put great efforts into building a centralized state modeled on advanced culture and institutions of Chinese origin, and adopted Confucianism as their ruling ideology.⁵⁰ Their efforts were driven by both the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness.⁵¹ On the one hand, Korean ruling elites adopted norms, rules, and practices that originated in the Chinese mainland that they believed would help them enhance their power and legitimacy vis-à-vis domestic rivals. On the other hand, Korean rulers were attracted to the civilization that flourished in the Chinese land. They sought to emulate and learn from it, constituting their identities in the long term.

⁴⁷ Fairbank 1968, 2.

⁴⁸ Kang 2010, 57-59.

⁴⁹ Hyewon Cha, “Was Joseon a Model or an Exception? Reconsidering the Tributary Relations during Ming China,” *Korea Journal* 51, no. 4 (2011), 43-46; Evelyn S. Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 198-200.

⁵⁰ JaHyun Kim Haboush, “The Confucianization of Korean Society,” in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), 86; Chin-Hao Huang and David C. Kang, *State Formation through Emulation: The East Asian Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 96.

⁵¹ Huang and Kang 2022, 114-15.

The commitment of Korean ruling elites to the East Asian world order was reinforced through political transition. By the fourteenth century, Korea was a diverse society both ideologically and politically.⁵² Although the Koryo dynasty (918-1392) that ruled medieval Korea adopted Confucianism to build state apparatuses and governance structure, the ideological dominance of Confucianism was yet established because Buddhism was still prevalent in social and religious life and flourished under the auspices of aristocrats. Politically, the rise of warrior rulers in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries prevented the growth of scholars and intellectuals who embraced Confucianism as the ruling ideology.

The century of the Mongolian domination (1258-1356) was a turning point. Although the Mongol invasion damaged Koryo Korea's political autonomy, it facilitated sociocultural exchanges between the continent and the Korean Peninsula, which in turn helped Korean scholars and bureaucrats introduce Neo-Confucianism from the Chinese mainland and launch a series of reforms to rebuild Korea into a Confucian state.⁵³ Neo-Confucianism now served as an ideological tool for reformist elites who aspired to reinvigorate Korean society.⁵⁴ These reformists armed with Neo-Confucian idealism pursued the abolition of privileges centralized in the hands of a small number of civil and religious aristocrats and challenged the ideological dominance of Buddhism. Finally, a group of Neo-Confucian reformists who concluded that the Koryo dynasty was no longer sustainable formed a political alliance with military elites led by General Yi Seong-gye, and established a new dynasty called Chosŏn in 1392.

⁵² Haboush 2014, 34, 87-89; Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Asia Center, 1992), 15-16.

⁵³ Key P. Yang and Gregory Henderson, "An Outline History of Korean Confucianism: Part I: The Early Period and Yi Factionalism," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 18, no. 1 (1958), 85-87; Deuchler 1992, 16; Haboush 2014, 89-90.

⁵⁴ Deuchler 1992, 23-24, 103-6; James B. Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwŏn and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 25-26; Etsuko Hae-jin Kang, *Diplomacy and Ideology in Japanese-Korean Relations: From the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1997), 53.

The founding of the Chosŏn dynasty provided an opportunity for Korean ruling elites to build a new state pursuing the ideals of Neo-Confucianism. As Chosŏn Korea developed into a Neo-Confucian state as designed by its founders, Korean ruling elites came to perceive their country as an indispensable member of the East Asian world order ideologically grounded in Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism took root as the supreme ruling ideology in Chosŏn Korea, and the education and recruitment of scholars versed in Confucian classics and willing to realize Confucian values were the cornerstone of the political system. Since the hereditary aristocracy, at least officially, was abolished, Korean elites had to maintain their political legitimacy by proving their ideological purity.

The commitment of Korean ruling elites was directed to the East Asian world order itself, rather than a specific Chinese state or its emperor. Although Korean elites were eager to learn and emulate the Confucian institutions of Chinese origin and respected the Ming empire's status as the center of Confucian civilization, they believed that Confucianism was not exclusively Chinese and that Chosŏn Korea could surpass the Ming in embodying and enacting Confucian values.⁵⁵

Paradoxically, factionalism among Korean elites was evidence of their strong and collective commitment to the East Asian world order.⁵⁶ Politically, factionalism resulted from the competition for power and influence. As the disparity between the number of eligible candidates and the number of bureaucratic posts available to them increased, Neo-Confucian elites now had to vie for scarce political resources. However, factionalism grew more intense as it was intertwined with legitimacy competition. Each faction claimed itself as the true bearer of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy while accusing the others of heterodoxy. Private academies

⁵⁵ Haboush 2014, 85, 90-91.

⁵⁶ Yang and Henderson 1958, 91-93; Kang 1997, 131.

established for Neo-Confucian education now served as a community of scholars and bureaucrats affiliated with the same faction.⁵⁷ Factional divides turned into insurmountable barriers as each faction enhanced the unity among its members through marital ties and master-disciple relations.⁵⁸

It was during King Seonjo's reign (r. 1567-1608) that political and ideological factionalism came to the fore in Korean politics.⁵⁹ The first divide emerged between the Easterners and the Westerners, each labeled as such due to the location of their residence in the capital.⁶⁰ While the Easterners consisted of the disciples of Yi Hwang (1501-1570) and Cho Sik (1501-1572), the Westerners were the followers of Yi I (1536-1584) and Seong Hon (1535-1598). Each faction claimed itself as the party of Confucian gentlemen and blamed the other as the party of petty scoundrels. Although the Easterners seized the upper hand at first, they were soon split into the Northerners who took a hardline stance against the Westerners, and the moderate Southerners.

It was the Northerners who dominated the court and officialdom in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁶¹ They seized and maintained power through a political alliance with Prince Kwanghae (r. 1608-1623), whose royal authority was challenged by the Westerners. However, the Manchu ascendancy damaged their alliance because the Northerners pressured Prince Kwanghae, who did not want Korea to be deeply involved in the Ming-Manchu war, to side with the declining Ming and take a hostile stance against the Manchu.⁶² The discord between them enabled the Westerners, with the Southerners' acquiescence, to

⁵⁷ Haboush 2014, 97.

⁵⁸ Mark Setton, "Factional Politics and Philosophical Development in the Late Chosŏn," *Journal of Korean Studies* 8, no. 1 (1992), 45-46.

⁵⁹ Palais 1996, 63.

⁶⁰ Yang and Henderson 1958, 96-97.

⁶¹ Yang and Henderson 1958, 97.

⁶² Myung-Gi Han, *The Study of the Relations between Korea and China from Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592 to Manchu Invasion of Korean in 1636* (Goyang: Yuksa Bipyongsa, 1999), 292-98.

launch a military coup in 1623 that supplanted Prince Kwanghae and the Northerners. The Westerners legitimized their coup on the grounds that Prince Kwanghae violated Neo-Confucian norms by imprisoning his stepmother, Queen Dowager Inmok, murdering her son, exploiting the people, and betraying the Ming emperor.⁶³

The 1623 coup was successful, and the Westerners enthroned King Injo, Prince Kwanghae's nephew. Since King Injo's enthronement, the Westerners, especially the so-called Senior Westerners, seized political hegemony.⁶⁴ Some Southerners were allowed to participate in politics and play a secondary role as the opposition party. In this setting, the debates over the rituals to mourn the deaths of King Hyojong (1659) and his queen (1674) quickly turned into political and ideological struggles.⁶⁵ The Westerners claimed that the rituals to mourn the royal family should be the same as those for other Confucian elites because the king was merely a *primus inter pares* among them. In contrast, the Southerners maintained that the king and his family were distinguished from other Confucian elite houses and thus should be given special treatment.

Although factionalism was a key driving force of Korean politics during the Chosŏn period, it unfolded exclusively among Neo-Confucians of different schools, all of whom were strongly committed to the East Asian world order. It was a competition between antagonistic factions not only to obtain more power and privileges than rival factions but also to prove their ideological orthodoxy. After the downfall of the Ming empire, Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats even competed with the royal house for the superior heirship of Confucian

⁶³ Kang 1997, 176-77.

⁶⁴ Palais 1996, 93; Yang and Henderson 1958, 97.

⁶⁵ JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea," in *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, ed. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 52-62, 81-86.

civilization.⁶⁶ In other words, factionalism was evidence of not only the divide among Neo-Confucian ruling elites but also of their collective commitment to the established East Asian world order.

2) From “Eastern Country” to “Little China”

The commitment of Korean ruling elites to the East Asian world order delimited the range of status-seeking strategies imaginable and available to them. Since they were strongly committed to the established order and Confucianism underlying it, Korean rulers conceived and implemented conformist strategies to elevate their country’s status by defending and adhering to the existing order. In response to the Ming-Qing transition, Korean rulers sought to secure their country’s position by waging war against foreign enemies that attempted to challenge the established order, especially the Japanese invasion or the Imjin War (1592-1598) and the Manchu invasions (1627, 1636-1637). In doing so, they claimed that Korea was the heir to the fallen Ming empire and the last bastion of civilization it had represented.

Korean ruling elites had developed pride that their country was more civilized than any other polity in historical East Asia, sometimes even more than the Chinese state. Even Chinese elites acknowledged that Korea was a land of rites and the most civilized of all non-Chinese polities.⁶⁷ Korea’s special status as a highly advanced secondary state was confirmed by the fact that the Chinese court allowed Korea to send tributary missions of larger size far more frequently than any other tributary state.⁶⁸ Every year, Korea could send three regular

⁶⁶ JaHyun Kim Haboush, “Contesting Chinese Time, Nationalizing Temporal Space: Temporal Inscription in Late Chosŏn Korea,” in *Time, Temporality, and Imperial Transition: East Asia from Ming to Qing*, ed. Lynn A. Struve (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 122-26.

⁶⁷ Cha 2011, 43; Rawski 2015, 198-99.

⁶⁸ John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Têng, “On The Ch’ing Tributary System,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6, no. 2 (1941), 149-52; Hae-jong Chun, “Sino-Korea Tributary Relations during the Ch’ing Period,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 90-91; Donald N. Clark, “Sino-Korean Tributary Relations Under the Ming,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 279-82; Kang 2010, 59.

embassies, along with occasional ones for specific purposes, the frequency of which far surpassed other tributary states. Given that legitimate actorhood in historical East Asia was recognized through particularistic interactions, the special treatment that the Chinese court granted to Korea was evidence of its privileged position.

It is not the case that Chosŏn Korea was a loyal tributary state to the Chinese emperor from the beginning.⁶⁹ In response to the Ming's territorial expansion in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula in the late fourteenth century, Koryŏ Korea launched a preemptive military campaign to capture Ming territories in the Liaodong. General Yi Seong-gye, the expeditionary commander who opposed the campaign, in collaboration with Neo-Confucian reformists, staged a coup against the Koryŏ court and founded the Chosŏn dynasty in 1392. After seizing power, however, Yi Seong-gye and his principal advisor Chung To-jeon planned another military campaign against the Ming, which provoked opposition from moderates such as Cho Chun.⁷⁰ The Chosŏn-Ming relations remained hostile until Chung To-jeon and his followers were ousted and Yi Seong-gye was forced to abdicate in 1398.

It was since the reign of King Taejong (r. 1400-1418), Yi Seong-gye's fifth son who came to power by ousting his father, that Chosŏn Korea turned into a conformist status-seeking state. In his reign, the Korean king was formally invested as the Ming emperor's vassal and granted the status of a first-degree prince, a rank typically bestowed upon the emperor's brothers.⁷¹ Moreover, the Korean court was permitted to send three regular tributary missions to the Chinese emperor annually, which was far more frequent than any other tributary state.

⁶⁹ Clark 1998, 274-78; Lee 2016, 86-93.

⁷⁰ Won-Ho Park, "The Liaotung Peninsula Invasion Controversy during the Early Years of the Yi Dynasty," *Social Science Journal* 6 (1979), 157-75.

⁷¹ Wang 2018, 5.

The challenge was to strike a balance between Chosŏn Korea's status as a loyal tributary state to the Ming emperor and its independence. The use of such terms as "east of the sea" and "eastern country" reflected the dual self-perception of Koreans that they were "eastern barbarians" but still independent from the Chinese empire.⁷² To this end, some Korean elites argued for the independent performance of rites to Heaven, the preservation of local customs, and a continued interest in their own history.⁷³ Emulating the Chinese empire, the Korean court even attempted to build a sub-regional order that placed Korea above its smaller neighbors.⁷⁴

As the Chosŏn-Ming relations stabilized and Neo-Confucianism was established as the ruling ideology, Korean rulers' commitment to the East Asian world order was reinforced and conformist strategies became the dominant mode of status-seeking. Their strong commitment to the established order and adherence to conformist strategies became salient during the Ming-Qing transition. In response to a series of Japanese and Manchu challenges to overthrow Ming hegemony, Korean ruling elites mobilized military and ideological means to defend the established order and Korea's status within it. Although their intransigence caused foreign invasions and massive damage to Korean people and territories, they did not waver in maintaining their commitment to the incumbent order.

First, confronted with the Japanese invasion initiated to build a new Japan-centered world order, Korean ruling elites pursued conformist strategies aimed at the defense of the established order and Korea's special status within it. As discussed in the next section in detail, this seven-year war known as the Imjin War was launched by Japanese hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), who aspired to overthrow the existing order under Ming hegemony

⁷² Rawsky 2015, 199-200.

⁷³ Deuchler 1992, 122-23.

⁷⁴ Kenneth R. Robinson, "Centering the King of Chosŏn: Aspects of Korean Maritime Diplomacy, 1392-1592," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2000), 110-12.

and replace it with a Japan-centered world order. In this war, Chosŏn Korea was severely damaged as its territories turned into battlefields for Korea, Japan, and the Ming. However, Korean ruling elites firmly resisted joining Hideyoshi's plan to invade the Chinese mainland, surrendering to the Japanese invaders, and negotiating a peace treaty with Japan. The intransigence of Korean rulers demonstrated their strong commitment to the existing order. To them, the use of military force to overthrow the extant order and Ming hegemony was unimaginable and unacceptable.

Korean King Seonjo's letter to Hideyoshi before the outbreak of the Imjin War well represents Korean elites' strong commitment to the East Asian world order and their perception of Korea's status. Dated in 1591, it was a reply to Hideyoshi's demand that the Korean king surrender to him and join his campaign to invade the Ming empire. King Seonjo replied:

“... You [Hideyoshi] stated in your letter that you were planning to invade the supreme nation [the Ming] and requested that our kingdom join in your military undertaking. This demand was most unexpected. We cannot even understand how you have dared to plan such an undertaking and to make such a request of us... For thousands, from the time of your when Chi-Tsu, the founder of the kingdom of Korea, received the investiture from the Chow dynasty [of China], up to our own time, our kingdom has always been known as a nation of righteousness... The relation of ruler and subject has been strictly observed between the supreme nation and our kingdom. In former generations, your nation likewise sent tribute-bearing envoys time and again to the imperial capital [of China]. As for our kingdom, generation after generation, we have reverently adhered to and attended to all duties and

obligations due from a tributary state of Chung-Chao [the Ming]... Our two nations have acted as a single family, maintaining the relationship of father and son as well as that of ruler and subject. This inseparable and amiable relationship between Chung-Chao and our kingdom is well known throughout the world... We shall certainly not desert 'our lord and father nation' [the Ming] and join with a neighboring nation in her unjust and unwise military undertaking. Moreover, to invade another nation is an act of which men of culture and intellectual attainments should feel ashamed. We shall certainly not take up arms against the supreme nation... your proposed undertaking is the most reckless, imprudent, and daring of any of which we have ever heard..."⁷⁵

Chosŏn Korea's strong commitment to the established order looms large given that Korean ruling elites, well aware of their country's flawed military system, decided to stand up against Japan and refused to make peace with it. By the late sixteenth century, the practice of avoiding military service was so prevalent in Korean society.⁷⁶ Since military service was followed by neither reward nor compensation, those subject to conscription tried to avoid it. Moreover, the Korean government that had suffered from shrinking revenues and fiscal deficits allowed eligible recruits to pay taxes instead of fulfilling military service.

⁷⁵ This paragraph was cited with some modifications from Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent: A Study in the History of Japan with Special Reference to Her International Relations with China, Korea, and Russia*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937), 303-4. For the full text of this letter translated in Korean, see Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics, "King Sonjo 7" in *Gukjobogam*, vol. 30 (1591).

⁷⁶ Nam-lin Hur, "National Defense in Shambles: Wartime Military Buildup in Chosŏn Korea, 1592-98," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 22, no. 2 (2009), 117-18.

Paradoxically, the Imjin War reinforced Chosŏn Korea's commitment to the East Asian world order and the declining Ming. Although the Ming soldiers stationed in Korea caused many troubles by abusing Korean people, Korean rulers believed that their loyalty to the established order was properly answered by the Ming emperor who dispatched a large army to save Korea. Moreover, King Seonjo intentionally praised the Ming emperor as well as his generals, and promoted the notion of the Ming empire's "grace of resurrecting the country [Chosŏn Korea]" (*Jaejo-ji-eun*). By doing so, King Seonjo stressed that the Chosŏn-Ming wartime alliance was his own diplomatic accomplishment, thereby restoring his authority in bankruptcy due to his failure to prevent the Japanese invasion.⁷⁷

Second, Korean ruling elites adhered to conformist strategies in the Chosŏn-Manchu war in the early seventeenth century. Driven by their loyalty and commitment to the established order, Korean rulers sided with the declining Ming empire and supported its military campaign against the rising Manchu. Such pro-Ming policies backfired as they invited the Manchu invasions in 1627 and 1636, the latter of which ended with King Injo's submission to Hong Taiji who enthroned himself as Emperor Chongde of the Great Qing.

The Chosŏn-Manchu relationship turned into open hostility with the 1619 Battle of Sarhu. In response to the Ming's call for military aid, the Korean court dispatched 13,000 soldiers to support its campaign against the Manchu in the Liaodong region.⁷⁸ Although Prince Kwanghae, the ruler of Chosŏn Korea, was reluctant to send reinforcements, the Northerners, his allies, urged him to do so. However, Prince Kwanghae's reluctance did not mean that he intended to betray the Ming empire and defect from the established order.⁷⁹ His goal was to appease the Manch "barbarians" on the one hand, and maintain tributary relations with the

⁷⁷ Lee 2016, 125-31.

⁷⁸ Palais 1996, 93; Kang 2010, 103-4.

⁷⁹ Han 1999, 311, 329-31, 370.

Ming emperor on the other hand. The Ming court appreciated Prince Kwanghae's decision to send the Korean army to Sarhu and still regarded him as a loyal vassal.

While the balance of power on the continent tilted from the Ming to the Qing, the Chosŏn-Ming alliance's defeat in Sarhu caused discord between Prince Kwanghae and the Northerners. The Westerners, Prince Kwanghae's opponent faction, seized this opportunity and overthrew his rule in 1623. The Westerners and King Injo, who subverted the Kwanghae regime on the grounds that he was not loyal enough to the Ming emperor, decided to strengthen political and military ties with the declining Ming empire and took a hawkish stance against the Manchu.⁸⁰ The Westerners' pro-Ming policies caused the first Manchu invasion in 1627. The Manchu leaders demanded that the Korean court cut ties with the Ming and establish a new relationship where Korea as the younger brother would serve the Manchu.⁸¹ Since the Manchu were not prepared for a protracted war, both sides signed a temporary peace treaty.⁸²

Despite the 1627 peace treaty, the Chosŏn-Manchu relationship remained volatile. Korean rulers still believed that the Chosŏn-Ming father-son relations and the Chosŏn-Manchu brotherly relations were separate and compatible.⁸³ The tension between Korea and the Manchu erupted again in 1636 as Hong Taiji enthroned himself as the Great Qing emperor.⁸⁴ In response to the Qing's demand that Korea recognize Hong Taiji's emperorship, Korean ruling elites rejected it and declared national mobilization for another war. In his royal decree, King Injo declared:

⁸⁰ For Queen Dowager Inmok's edict that declared Prince Kwanghae's dethronement, see *Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty (VRCD)*, "Records of King Injo" (March 14, 1623).

⁸¹ For Hong Taiji's letter to King Injo, see *VRCD*, "Records of King Injo" (February 2, 1627).

⁸² Myung-Gi Han, *Studies of Manchu's Invasions of Chosun Korea in 1627 and 1636 with East Asian Perspectives* (Seoul: Purun Yuksa, 2009), 71-77.

⁸³ Han 2009, 89-94; For the Korean rulers' perception of the Chosŏn-Ming and Chosŏn-Manchu relations after 1626, see *VRCD*, "Records of King Injo" (April 1, 1627).

⁸⁴ Palais 1996, 98-100; Kang 1997, 177-80; Han 2009, 140-52; Wang 2018, 37-38.

“... Our country... reluctantly permitted temporary submission [to the Manchu] due to unavoidable circumstances [1627], but the [Manchu] barbarians’ desires know no bounds, leading to an increasingly severe oppression. This is truly a shame unprecedented in our history... Lately, these barbarians have become even more rampant, daring to present a document with an imperial title... How can we tolerate it? Without considering the balance of strength and weakness, and the fate of the nation, we made a just decision to reject and not accept their document... Let loyal scholars do their best to develop strategies, and let the brave join the military to overcome this crisis and repay the country’s grace...”⁸⁵

The Qing army invaded Korea once again in December 1636, and this time King Injo surrendered and swore his loyalty to Hong Taiji. In 1637, the Korean court agreed to sever tributary relations with the Ming, adopt the Qing calendar, and send a royal prince and the sons of high lords as hostages.⁸⁶ By subordinating Chosŏn Korea, the Ming empire’s most loyal tributary state, Qing rulers could have propagated that the Mandate of Heaven was now upon them and their rule was legitimate.⁸⁷

Finally, Korean ruling elites’ conformist strategies relied on ideological campaigns as well. The Manchu conquest of the Chinese mainland disrupted the civilized-barbarian dichotomy, prompting other members in the East Asian world order to rethink, and even

⁸⁵ *VRCD*, “Records of King Injo” (March 1, 1636).

⁸⁶ For Hong Taijin’s letter to King Injo, see *VRCD*, “Records of King Injo” (January 28, 1637).

⁸⁷ Han 2009, 165-83; Wang 2018, 44.

redefine the meaning of China. In this circumstance, Korean rulers tried to defend their country's special status as a highly advanced secondary state by promoting the "Little China" discourse that Korea now succeeded the fallen Ming empire and became the last bastion of civilization. As the legitimate heir to the Ming empire, they said, Korea should bore the responsibility of preserving Confucian civilization and its legacies.⁸⁸

The dominance of the Little China discourse encouraged Korean rulers, King Hyojong (r. 1649-1659) and the hardline Westerners in particular, to plan the so-called Northern Expedition to revenge on the Qing invaders and restore the Ming. After King Hyojong's enthronement, the king and the Westerners rebuilt fortresses secretly and launched military reforms. However, it remains controversial whether Korean ruling elites in this period really wanted to fight a war against the Qing or just wanted to exploit the anti-Qing sentiment to consolidate their rule.⁸⁹ Unlike his anti-Qing rhetoric and vision, King Hyojong exhibited his loyalty to the Qing emperor by sending Korean soldiers to join the Qing's military campaigns against Russia in 1654 and 1658.⁹⁰ While the Hyojong regime's Northern Expedition remained a mere slogan, the consolidation of Qing hegemony extinguished any hope of restoring the Ming by force.⁹¹ It made Korean rulers further occupied with the idea that Korea was now the last guardian of Confucian civilization.

However, there was a disagreement between the dominant Westerners and the opposition Southerners in defining Korea's position within the East Asian world order under

⁸⁸ Tae-Yong Huh, "Succession and Variation of Sinocentrism in the Latter Half of the Choson Dynasty," in *Sino-Centrism without China*, ed. Inha University Center for Korean Studies (Incheon: Inha University Press, 2009), 286-88.

⁸⁹ Kang 1997, 189-90; Seung Bum Kye, "The Manchu-Korean Expeditions to the Amur: A New Historical Setting in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Northeast Asia," *The Review of Korean History*, no. 110 (2013), 238.

⁹⁰ Kye 2013, 214-18; Sung-ku Hong, "Establishment of the Ch'ing Order and the Stabilization of Chosŏn-Ch'ing Relations: 1644-1700," *Journal of Asian Historical Studies* 140 (2017), 163-64.

⁹¹ Huh 2009, 293-95; Hong 2017, 167.

Qing hegemony.⁹² The Westerners granted absolute authority to Zhu Xi's interpretation of the Confucian texts and the Ming empire in the history of Confucian civilization. Therefore, they maintained that Korea could secure its civilized status only by adhering to Zhu Xi's philosophy and inheriting the Ming's legacies. In contrast, the Southerners paid respect to Zhu Xi and the Ming but did not vest such supreme authority in them. They valued the Confucian classics themselves more than Zhu Xi's interpretation and viewed that the Ming dynasty, like its predecessors, failed to fulfill the ideals of Confucianism. Therefore, they argued, Korea could claim its civilized status without turning to its historical ties to the fallen Ming. Since the Westerners were the dominant faction, however, Chosŏn Korea's Little China discourse was grounded more in their narrative.

In terms of status-seeking, Korea's conformist strategies, which sometimes risked military conflicts with stronger neighbors in defense of the East Asian world order, proved successful. The Ming-Qing transition was a power transition in which the rising Qing supplanted the declining Ming but left the established institutional arrangements intact. It provided a favorable setting for such conformists as Korean rulers who pursued to secure and improve their country's status by defending and adhering to the existing order. Korean ruling elites' intransigence invited the Japanese and Manchu invasions and incurred damage to their people. In the long term, however, their adherence to the incumbent order helped them maintain and enhance their country's special status as a highly civilized secondary state.

Throughout the Ming-Qing transition, the Ming court did not cease to view Chosŏn Korea as a highly loyal tributary state and relied on its political and military support. More importantly, Qing rulers gradually improved their treatment of Korea since King Injo's forced subordination in 1637, restoring its special status in the East Asian world order. As long as the

⁹² Haboush 1999, 74-76; Haboush 2005, 121-22.

Qing empire inherited the existing order established under Ming hegemony, its relations with Korea had huge strategic and ideological values in legitimizing Qing hegemony as Korea had traditionally been the most loyal tributary state to the Chinese emperor. Therefore, Qing rulers allowed Korea to restore its special status within the East Asian world order.⁹³ For instance, they repealed punitive measures on Korea by ceasing interference in the latter's domestic affairs and reducing financial burdens imposed on it. The Chosŏn king was now given preferential treatment equal to Qing princely ministers. Korea was allowed again to dispatch tributary missions of larger size and with more latitude far more frequently than other tributary states.

3. Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan

1) The Rise of Warrior Rulers

Although Japan was a key participant in the East Asian world order, its status was liminal, even controversial. While categorizing the participants of the East Asian world order into the Sinic Zone, the Inner Asian Zone, and the Outer Zone, John K. Fairbank treated Japan in an ambiguous way.⁹⁴ According to him, Japan once belonged to the Sinic Zone briefly along with Korea, Vietnam, and Ryukyu, but eventually moved to the Outer Zone that consisted of “outer barbarians” from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Europe. Similarly, David C. Kang treats Japan as a liminal and boundary case.⁹⁵ Japan, sitting “at the edge of the society of Sinicized states,” derived “many of their domestic ideas, innovations, system of writing, and cultural

⁹³ Hong 2017, 158-61; Wang 2018, 41-42, 60-65.

⁹⁴ Fairbank 1968, 2.

⁹⁵ Kang 2010, 9.

knowledge from China” but always remained “interested in finding alternative means of situating itself in relation to the other states” and “skeptical of China’s central position.”

However, Japan’s ambiguous and outcast position was not predetermined but resulted from its historical trajectory. In ancient times, Japanese ruling elites, the civil aristocrats called the *kuge*, were no less committed than their foreign counterparts to learning and embodying the norms, rules, and practices of the East Asian world order, most of which originated in the Chinese mainland. Their efforts culminated between the seventh and tenth centuries, especially in state-building modeled on the Chinese dynasties.⁹⁶ The Japanese elites’ commitment to the established order was based on both the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequence.⁹⁷ Japanese rulers overwhelmed by advanced Chinese culture and institutions wanted their country to be recognized as a legitimate actor by its neighbors, especially the Chinese state. Simultaneously, they adopted the norms, rules, and practices of Chinese origin to enhance their power, authority, and legitimacy in domestic politics.

Since the late ninth century, however, the Japanese rulers’ commitment to the East Asian world order continuously weakened, making a stark contrast with their Korean counterparts. The geographical distance between Japan and the Chinese mainland cannot explain their weakening commitment alone. Rather, it resulted from Japan’s historical conditions.⁹⁸ Externally, the geopolitical turmoil on the Chinese mainland discouraged Japanese rulers from sending tributary missions across the sea and prompted them to pursue an independent path. Internally, the squabbling between the imperial house, court nobles, and religious establishments weakened their authority, leading to the rise of a new ruling class that

⁹⁶ Wai Lau, *On the Process of Civilisation in Japan: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), Ch. 7; Kang and Huang 2022, Ch. 5.

⁹⁷ Huang and Kang 2022, 114-15.

⁹⁸ Lau 2022, 100-1, 302-303; Jeffrey P. Mass, “The Kamakura Bakufu,” in *Warrior Rule in Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2-4; Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 11-12.

consisted of military governors and local warriors. Unlike the civil and religious aristocrats, they lacked knowledge of, respect for, and commitment to the East Asian world order.

The new ruling elites were organized around the bakufu or shogunate, a military government led by warrior lords and their leader called *sei-i tai shogun* or *shogun*, which meant “Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force against the Barbarians.” Under the warrior rule, Japan turned into a dyarchy in which the imperial court retained symbolic authority while the bakufu exercised actual power and control.⁹⁹ The first military government was the Kamakura bakufu (1185-1333) founded by House Minamoto, which rose as the supreme military clan after defeating its rivals. However, the Kamakura bakufu did not last long due to the Mongol invasion, the struggle between prominent warrior clans, the defection of military governors, land stewards, and local warriors, and disputes with the imperial court.¹⁰⁰ The downfall of the Kamakura bakufu sparked a civil war but did not lead to the downfall of the warrior class as a whole.

The Muromachi bakufu (1336-1573), the second military government, was founded by House Ashikaga, a branch of House Minamoto, that put an end to the civil war and unified Japan. The bakufu attempted to strengthen its power and authority by absorbing functions that the imperial government had performed and forging alliances with other prominent warrior clans.¹⁰¹ However, the Muromachi shoguns failed to establish complete control over provinces. The bakufu assigned the warrior clan leaders to the post of provincial military governor (*shugo*) and allowed them to act as feudal lords (*daimyo*). However, their authority in provinces was

⁹⁹ Lau 2022, 317-18.

¹⁰⁰ Berry 1982, 12-13; Ishii Susumu, “The Decline of the Kamakura Bakufu,” in *Warrior Rule in Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 45-47; Lau 2022, 323-24.

¹⁰¹ John Whitney Hall, “The Muromachi Bakufu,” in *Warrior Rule in Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105-8; Lau 2022, 329-30.

limited because in practice they were obliged to take up residence in the capital and preoccupied with the power struggle there.¹⁰²

The Onin War (1467-1477), a decade-long civil war between shugo daimyo entangled with the succession struggle within House Ashikaga, led to the Muromachi bakufu's demise. While the disputes within the warrior ruling class itself dismantled the Muromachi rule from above, the growth of provincial and local forces did so from below.¹⁰³ On the one hand, provincial figures called *kokujin*, who had served as local deputies of absentee proprietors in the capital, claimed autonomy. On the other hand, the growth of agricultural productivity enabled peasants to form village-level leagues and compacts to secure their collective autonomy. A few select peasants who had been responsible for overseeing other peasants grew into independent landlords. Shugo deputies, military proprietors, and village leaders in provincial and local societies gradually displaced shugo daimyo and grew into daimyo themselves, later called *senkoku daimyo*.¹⁰⁴

The decline of the Muromachi bakufu and the emergence of a new daimyo class with *kokujin* background led to the Warring States (*Senkoku*) Era (1467-1568).¹⁰⁵ These *senkoku* daimyo, who held distinct notions of power and authority grounded in their martial customs and traditions that developed during the civil war, were far more weakly committed to the East Asian world order than their Muromachi predecessors and Korean counterparts. The civil war

¹⁰² Kawai Masaharu and Kenneth A. Grossberg, "Shogun and Shugo: The Provincial Aspects of Muromachi Politics," in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, ed. John Whitney Hall and Toyoda Takeshi (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 66-75.

¹⁰³ Hall 1995b, 142-43; Miyagawa Mitsuru and Cornelius J. Kiley, "From Shōen to Chigyō: Proprietary Lordship and the Structure of Local Power," in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, ed. John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 93-100; Nagahara Keiji and Kozo Yamamura, "The Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System," in *Japan Before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500-1650*, ed. John Whitney Hall, Nagahara Keiji, and Kozo Yamamura (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 31-34.

¹⁰⁴ Berry 1982, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Huang and Kang 2022, 125.

lasted until Toyotomi Hideyoshi finally unified Japan and claimed national hegemony in 1583. Although Hideyoshi himself was a charismatic leader who put an end to the century of national division, he still had to guarantee the autonomy of feudal warrior lords in exchange for their support for his hegemony.¹⁰⁶

It was during the Tokugawa bakufu (1603-1868), founded by Tokugawa Ieyasu, that a centralized warrior polity finally took deep root. The Tokugawa bakufu enacted regulations to enhance control over both civil aristocrats and feudal warrior lords.¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, the bakufu strictly excluded the emperor and court nobles from politics. On the other hand, House Tokugawa deployed tight control and surveillance mechanisms to keep warrior lords in line. Each lord was granted hereditary privileges in the feudal domain assigned to him, and in return, he had to fulfill a set of obligations toward the shogun.¹⁰⁸ While serving as the single authority in the distribution of feudal domains, the Tokugawa bakufu granted differential privileges to feudal warrior lords depending on their intimacy and ties to House Tokugawa, and required warrior lords to leave their families in Edo as hostages.

Although Japan was unified politically under the Tokugawa rule, Japanese society was still marked by ideological diversity that developed in tandem with the political dominance of the warrior class. As noted earlier, at least in the early phase of state formation, Japan was heavily influenced by the norms, rules, and practices that originated from the Chinese mainland. Confucianism, a key ideological building block of the East Asian world order, was also imported in this period. Until the renaissance of Confucianism in the late Tokugawa rule, however, its ideological dominance was not consolidated. Confucianism was studied only by

¹⁰⁶ Berry 1982, 100-1; John Whitney Hall, "The Bakuhan System," in *Warrior Rule in Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148.

¹⁰⁷ Asao Naohiro and Marius B. Jansen, "Shogun and Tennō," in *Japan Before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500-1650*, ed. John Whitney Hall, Nagahara Keiji, and Kozo Yamamura (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 260-64; Hall 1995a, 167-77.

¹⁰⁸ Hall 1995a, 167; Lau 2022, 331-32.

a few intellectuals, most of whom came from the margins of the ruling class.¹⁰⁹ The delayed dominance of Confucianism can be attributed to various factors.¹¹⁰ In particular, the early severance of diplomatic relations with the Chinese states and the rise of the bakufu system governed by the warrior class who were not indoctrinated with Confucianism provided a setting in which it had to compete, coexist, and even intermingle with other ideologies.

Buddhism and the native ideology were the principal rivals.¹¹¹ Civil aristocrats accepted Buddhism because it provided not only emotional and spiritual relief but also ideological tools for national pacification. Even the introduction of Confucianism occurred through the mediation of Buddhist temples and monks. It was Buddhist monks, a few minorities versed in Chinese texts, that played an indispensable role in introducing Confucianism to Japan. State-sponsored institutions for Confucian education included Buddhism in their curriculum. The ideology of divine land that emerged out of Japanese native religions was another contender. It described Japan as *Shinkoku*, the Land of Gods, and the Japanese emperor as a descendant of Amaterasu, Sun Goddess. This native ideology influenced warrior rulers as well. In particular, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, in his private and official letters, often claimed himself as a descendant of the Sun.

2) The Quest for the Japan-Centered World Order

The Japanese ruling elite groups' weak commitment to the East Asian world order enabled them to adopt and implement defiant status-seeking strategies. During the Ming-Qing

¹⁰⁹ Kate Wildman Nakai, "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sinocentrism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 1 (1980), 158.

¹¹⁰ Martin Collcutt, "The Legacy of Confucianism in Japan," in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹¹¹ Collcutt 1990, 119-26; Lau 2022, 297-98; Huang and Kang 2022, 156; John Whitney Hall, "Hideyoshi's Domestic Policies," in *Japan Before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500-1650*, ed. John Whitney Hall, Nagahara Keiji, and Kozo Yamamura (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 198-99; Herman. Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 45-47.

transition, unlike Korean Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats who sought to secure their country's status by defending the existing order, the Toyotomi regime and the Tokugawa bakufu pursued to elevate Japan's status by challenging it and putting forth the vision of an alternative, Japan-centered world order. Japan's defiant strategies in this period resulted in the invasions of Korea and Ryukyu, both of which were the loyal tributary states to the Ming emperor, and diplomatic and ideological campaigns to deny the Chinese emperor's superiority and legitimize Japan's central position in East Asia.

Although Japan was a participant of the East Asian world order and influenced by its norms, rules, and practices, the Japanese ruling elites' commitment to it was weak and uncertain. The warrior class that had ruled Japan since the twelfth century exhibited little respect for the institutions of East Asia. It marked a striking contrast with Korea's Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats. Japan's weak commitment influenced its low status in the East Asian world order.¹¹² For instance, the Ming empire stipulated that Japan could send a tributary mission only once every ten years. Prior to the Ming-Qing transition, the number of Japanese tributary missions to the Ming court did not exceed twenty, varying in their purpose, size, and intervals. Moreover, the Ming court often used the derogatory term "Wo-nu" when referring to Japan.

While domestic political turbulence combined with geographical isolation gradually weakened Japan's ties and commitment to the existing order, the activities of the so-called Japanese Pirates (*Wakō*) further damaged Japan's national image and reputation in East Asia.¹¹³

¹¹² Fairbank and Têng 1941, 149-52, 225. For Japanese embassies to the Chinese court prior to the Ming-Qing transition, see Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge, United States: Harvard University Press, 2009), 109-13.

¹¹³ Joshua A. Fogel, "Introduction: Placing Japan in Late Imperial China," in *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002), 6; Yong Wang, "Realistic and Fantastic Images of 'Dwarf Pirates,'" in *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel, trans. Laura E Hess (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002), , 21-24; Xinsheng Wang, "The East Asian International Order and China-Japan Relations in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *The History of China-Japan Relations: From Ancient World to Modern International Order*, ed. Ping Bu and Shinichi Kitaoka (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), 110-11.

Despite their multiethnic and multinational composition, these pirate groups were labeled as Japanese as they were mainly based in Japan, where a centralized government remained weak and underdeveloped. Their engagement in illegal trade, raids, and pillage along the coastlines generated the perception among its neighbors that Japan was a threatening, barbarous country.

During the reign of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (r. 1368-1408), the third shogun of the Muromachi bakufu, Japan temporarily pursued conformist status-seeking strategies to be fully integrated into the established order.¹¹⁴ To enhance Japan's status within East Asia, Yoshimitsu repeatedly sent tributary missions to the Ming court. His efforts finally bore fruits in 1402, as the Ming emperor invested Yoshimitsu as his vassal and King of Japan, and the shogun gladly accepted those subordinate positions. In the next few years, the Ming emperor granted Yoshimitsu the golden seal bearing the inscription of "King of Japan" and the privilege to send trade ships to the Chinese mainland.

However, Yoshimitsu was an exceptional case and his conformist strategies were not fully inherited by his successors.¹¹⁵ Yoshimitsu's subordination to the Ming emperor rather generated domestic backlash, especially from those who advocated the myth that Japan was the land of divinity. In this setting, Ashikaga Yoshimochi, Yoshimitsu's son and heir, repealed his father's policy and denied the Ming envoy's entry to Japan.¹¹⁶ Although Japan's tributary relations were restored by Ashikaga Yoshinori (r. 1428-1441) and continued until 1547, the Japanese tributary missions were dispatched without observing regular intervals designated by the Ming court and driven primarily by short-term pragmatism.

¹¹⁴ Wang 2023, 101; Tanaka Takeo and Robert Sakai, "Japan's Relations with Overseas Countries," in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, ed. John W Hall and Toyoda Takeshi (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 159-65.

¹¹⁵ Takeo and Sakai 1977, 168; Kang 1997, 38-39; Lee 2016, 68.

¹¹⁶ Kuno 1937, 278-91.

Such fluctuations in Muromachi Japan's tributary relations with the Ming empire demonstrate that Japanese rulers in this period, except Yoshimitsu, were only weakly and partially committed to the East Asian world order. Despite the replacement of ruling elite groups following the demise of the Muromachi bakufu, Japan remained a weakly committed country that was able and willing to adopt defiant status-seeking strategies. Against this backdrop, the Toyotomi regime launched military campaigns to build a new Japan-centered world order in East Asia. Although Hideyoshi's military adventurism failed, it proved that Japan was a defiant status-seeker. House Tokugawa, which seized power and built its own bakufu by overthrowing House Toyotomi, chose defiant strategies as well. The Tokugawa bakufu relied on not only military but also diplomatic and ideological means to enhance Japan's status by challenging the existing order.

First, the Toyotomi regime's defiant strategies, the ultimate objective of which was the conquest of the Chinese mainland, resulted in the Imjin War. It began with the invasion of Korea, the Ming empire's closest neighbor and most loyal tributary state. To unpack Hideyoshi's war motive, scholars raised various hypotheses, which revolve around Hideyoshi's personal desire for glory and status, his pursuit of economic gains, or diversionary war and the rally-around-the-flag effect to consolidate his domestic hegemony.¹¹⁷ This debate remains unsettled, but two things are evident. First, Hideyoshi's letters before the Imjin War reveal that he was planning to build a new, Japan-centered world order. Second and more importantly, given the authority of the Chinese empires in historical East Asia, the use of military force to overthrow Ming hegemony would have been unimaginable if the Toyotomi regime had a strong commitment to the incumbent order.

¹¹⁷ Kenneth Swope, *A Dragon's Head and A Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); Kang 2010, 93-96.

Hideyoshi's letters, especially those written in the late 1580s and early 1590s, repeated several themes: Hideyoshi's self-identification as a descendant of the Sun, confidence in the capabilities of Japan and his own, and ambition to establish a Japan-centered world order.¹¹⁸ Hideyoshi shared his plan of conquest with his family and aides and threatened foreign lords such as King of Ryukyu, Portuguese Viceroy of India, Spanish Viceroy of the Philippines, and the lords of Formosa (Taiwan) to pay tributes to Japan and join his campaign. All these letters demonstrate the defiant nature of the Toyotomi regime's status-seeking strategy. Hideyoshi's ambition was well articulated in his 1591 letter to Korean King Seonjo. In this letter, Hideyoshi declared:

“... Every district [of Japan], whether near or far, including even small and distant islands, is now under complete control. Although I was born to a family of low rank, my mother conceived me immediately after she had dreamed that the Sun had entered into her bosom. A physiognomist interpreted this dream and predicted that I was destined to extend my authority to all parts of the world wherever the sun shines... I am not willing to spend the remaining years of my life in the land of my birth. According to my idea, the nation that I would create should not be separated by mountains and seas, but should include them all. In starting my conquest, I planned that our forces should proceed to Tai-Min Koku [the Great Ming] and compel the people there to adopt our customs and manners. Then that vast country, consisting of more than four hundred provinces, would enjoy our imperial

¹¹⁸ Kuno 1937, 300-20; Hideyoshi Toyotomi, *101 Letters of Hideyoshi: The Private Correspondence of Toyotomi Hideyoshi*, trans. Adriana Boscaro (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1975), see Letters 26, 39, and 50; Wang 2023, 114.

protection and benevolence for millions of years to come... You, King of Korea, are hereby instructed to join us when we proceed to Tai-Min at the head of all your fighting men... Our sole desire is to have our glorious name revered in the three nations [China, Korea, and Japan]...¹¹⁹

Hideyoshi's terms of peace and diplomatic intransigence also show the Toyotomi regime's defiant ambition to overthrow the established order.¹²⁰ During his peace negotiation with the Ming court, Hideyoshi proposed seven conditions: (1) a Ming princess to be presented as the Japanese emperor's concubine, (2) the resumption of the Ming-Japanese trade, (3) the exchange of statements of amity by Ming and Japanese ministers, (4) Japan's annexation of four provinces of Korea, (5) high-ranking Korean hostages to be sent to Japan, (6) the release of Korean royal princess captured by Japan, and (7) Korea's promise not to betray Japan. Simultaneously, Hideyoshi rejected the Ming's proposal to invest him as King of Japan and a vassal to the Ming emperor because he accepted it as an insult. Konishi Yukinaga, the Japanese representative who was well aware of Hideyoshi's terms being unacceptable to the Ming court, even attempted to fabricate his master's letter.

Second, Japan's defiant status-seeking strategies continued even after the Tokugawa bakufu supplanted the Toyotomi regime. The Imjin War ended with Hideyoshi's death, which led to a civil war between House Toyotomi and House Tokugawa. Exploiting the power vacuum created by Hideyoshi's death, his rival, Tokugawa Ieyasu, defeated House Toyotomi and its supporters and established the Tokugawa bakufu that came to rule Japan until 1868. Despite

¹¹⁹ This paragraph was cited from Kuno 1937, 302-3, with the author's modifications. For the full text of this letter translated in Korean, see Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics, "King Sonjo 7" in *Gukjobogam*, vol. 30 (1591).

¹²⁰ Kuno 1937, 328-29; Kenneth Swope, "Deceit, Disguise, and Dependence: China, Japan, and the Future of the Tributary System, 1592-1596," *The International History Review* 24, no. 4 (2002), 766-67; Lee 2016, 110-11.

this political turnover, however, Japanese ruling elites were still weakly committed to the East Asian world order and sought to enhance Japan's status by challenging it. The 1609 Tokugawa invasion of Ryukyu was clear evidence that the Tokugawa rulers were no less willing to use military force for their defiant ambitions than the Toyotomi regime.

Ryukyu was a small island kingdom but a key tributary state to the Ming emperor.¹²¹ The Ming court allowed Ryukyu lords to send regular tributary missions that entailed opportunities for trade, and in return, granted gifts, titles, and imperial calendars to them. Under Ming hegemony, Ryukyu not only flourished as a center of entrepot trade but also served as an outpost to gather information about Japan and guard against pirates, and as a supplier of sulfur and horses, which were crucial to the Ming's defense system.¹²² Foreign trade that once made Ryukyu prosper, however, gradually turned into a source of vulnerability.¹²³ While the Ming's trade restrictions in the late fifteenth century forced Ryukyu to depend more on Japan, the rise of Chinese, Japanese, and European competitors weakened Ryukyu's position in the trade network.

The Tokugawa invasion of Ryukyu resulted from the interplay between central and local interests. For the Tokugawa bakufu, it was a punitive expedition against Ryukyu that refused to support Japan's postwar diplomacy.¹²⁴ Like Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Tokugawa shoguns were not willing to accept Japan's subordinate, tributary status to the Ming empire. However, they wanted the restoration of diplomatic relations with the Ming and other neighboring countries to escape isolation caused by Hideyoshi's military adventurism, resume

¹²¹ Wang 2023, 95.

¹²² Mamoru Akamine, *The Ryukyu Kingdom: Cornerstone of East Asia*, ed. Robert Huey, trans. Lina Terrell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 31.

¹²³ Takeo and Sakai 1977, 172-73.

¹²⁴ Akamine 2016, 61-62; Jiadong Yuan, "Satsuma's Invasion of the Ryukyu Kingdom and Changes in the Geopolitical Structure of East Asia," *Social Sciences in China* 34, no. 4 (2013), 120-22.

and expand foreign trade, and enhance House Tokugawa's domestic political legitimacy. The Ryukyu Kingdom refused to play the mediating role expected by the bakufu.

The lords of House Shimazu in southern Kyushu, who had long regarded Ryukyu as their backyard, stood in the vanguard of the bakufu's campaign. They believed that the conquest of Ryukyu, a trade center in historical East Asia, could help them enhance their political influence and escape economic crisis in their domain. After obtaining the shogun's approval, House Shimazu moved swiftly to invade the island kingdom.¹²⁵ The Shimazu army that landed on the Ryukyu Island in March 1609 took over its capital and sent Ryukyuan King Shō Nei and his ministers they captured to the shogun in Edo. The Ryukyuan nobles were released in 1611, only after they swore loyalty to the bakufu and accepted House Shimazu's surveillance over their domestic and foreign affairs.¹²⁶

Given that the Ryukyu Kingdom was a loyal vassal and tributary state to the Chinese emperor, the Tokugawa bakufu's invasion and subordination of Ryukyu demonstrate that the new ruling elites, no less than the Toyotomi regime, were weakly committed to the East Asian world order and willing to choose defiant status-seeking strategies. As a result of the Japanese invasion, Ryukyu went into tributary relations with both the Chinese emperor and the Tokugawa shogun. The bakufu placed Ryukyu under House Shimazu's supervision but allowed the island kingdom to pay tributes to the Chinese emperor as it had done for centuries.¹²⁷ By doing so, the Tokugawa rulers used Ryukyu as a means to enhance their domestic political

¹²⁵ Robert K. Sakai, "The Ryukyu (Liu-Chiu) Islands as a Fief of Satsuma," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 116-18; Mark Ravina, "Japan in the Chinese Tribute System," in *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700*, ed. Tonio Andrade et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 356-57.

¹²⁶ Yuan 2013, 124-26.

¹²⁷ Mizuno Norihito, "China in Tokugawa Foreign Relations: The Tokugawa Bakufu's Perception of and Attitudes toward Ming-Qing China," *Sino-Japanese Studies* 15 (2003), 138-39.

legitimacy, and as an indirect channel to trade with the Chinese empire that refused to open diplomatic relations with Japan after the Imjin War.

Finally, the Tokugawa bakufu's defiant status-seeking strategy relied on diplomatic and ideological campaigns as well. The Tokugawa shoguns did not want Japan to be a tributary state to the Chinese empire within the incumbent order. Instead, they put forth an alternative vision of the East Asian world order with Japan at its center.¹²⁸ In this worldview, all foreigners were treated as tributaries to Japan.¹²⁹ To enhance and propagate its domestic political legitimacy, the Tokugawa bakufu presented the Korean and Ryukyuan envoys as tributary missions to its shoguns. Ming and Qing China were ranked even lower because they were trading partners without official diplomatic relations. Moreover, the Tokugawa shoguns began to use the unprecedented title of "Great Prince" (*Taikun*) to restore diplomatic relations with neighboring countries without submission to the Chinese emperor.

Tokugawa Japan's relations with the Chinese mainland were confined to trade. The early Tokugawa rulers sent several letters to the Ming, the style and content of which reflected their intention to resume the Sino-Japanese trade without recognizing the Chinese emperor's superiority.¹³⁰ In terms of style, these letters were not state letters that Japanese rulers in the previous generations had delivered to the Ming emperor as his vassals. The Tokugawa letters, albeit drafted by the order of the shoguns themselves, were addressed by Japanese daimyo or magistrate to Ming provincial governors.

¹²⁸ Arano Yasunori, "The Formation of a Japanocentric World Order," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005), 206-8; Ravina 2016, 353-60.

¹²⁹ Tashiro Kazui and Susan Downing Videen, "Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982), 289-91; Robert I. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640-1868* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 43-44; Toby 1984, 35, 45-46, 73, 85-89.

¹³⁰ Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent: A Study in the History of Japan with Special Reference to Her International Relations with China, Korea, and Russia*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1940), 283-92; Toby 1984, 113-16, 120-22, 132-33; Norihito 2003.

In light of diplomatic practices in historical East Asia, their contents were also unconventional. In these letters, the bakufu demanded the resumption of trade, which should have followed, not preceded, the initiation of official relations if they recognized Ming hegemony. In particular, the 1613 letter entrusted to Ryukyu even threatened that Japan would use military force if the Ming continued to reject the reopening of the Sino-Japanese trade. The Tokugawa bakufu's trade-without-submission policy was successful because trade through Nagasaki resumed and flourished by the Manchu invasion in the 1640s.¹³¹

The Ming-Qing transition precipitated Tokugawa Japan's defection from the East Asian world order. The Tokugawa rulers, alarmed by the rise of the Manchu "barbarians" that reminded them of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, kept vigilant eyes on power shift on the continent.¹³² They even considered military alliances with the anti-Manchu forces, especially the Ming exile regimes. Although these alliances did not materialize, the bakufu maintained commercial ties with the Ming loyalists and provided aid for them. The Manchu ascendancy did not alter the Tokugawa policy that sought trade with the continent but denied the Chinese emperor's superiority. Rather, the Japanese view of the Manchus as barbarians provided a further excuse for the bakufu's trade without submission. The Sino-Japanese trade rebounded after the Qing completed the conquest of Ming territories.¹³³

The Tokugawa bakufu's denial of Ming-Qing hegemony and vision of a Japan-centered East Asian world order reflected the political and ideological landscape of Japan in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Politically, given that Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's conformist strategies generated domestic backlash, compliance with Ming or Qing hegemony

¹³¹ Marius B. Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 25-29; Hellyer 2009, 154; Patrizia Carloti, "The Zheng Regime and the Tokugawa Bakufu: Asking for Japanese Intervention," in *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700*, ed. Tonio Andrade et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 159-60.

¹³² Lee 2016, 143-44; Toby 1984, 139, 158-59; Norihito 2003, 137-138.

¹³³ Jansen 1992, 29.

was too risky for a fledgling warrior regime.¹³⁴ The Tokugawa bakufu's defiant strategies had ideological underpinnings as well. The traditional idea that Japan was the land of divinity and its emperor was equal to the Chinese one was lasting.¹³⁵ The nativization of Neo-Confucianism also helped the Tokugawa rulers legitimize their strategies.¹³⁶ Early Tokugawa Confucian intellectuals developed a relativist view that civilization was a function of cultural achievement, not ethnicity. They asserted that the barbarian conquest of the Chinese mainland was evidence of Japan's superiority and in fact Japan had been the true bearer of Confucian civilization since ancient times. It was a far more subversive claim than Korea's Little China discourse that Korea became the center of Confucian civilization as the successor to the fallen Ming empire.

Overall, however, Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan's defiant status-seeking failed to elevate Japan's status in the East Asian world order. The Ming-Qing transition was a power transition that entailed the replacement of a hegemonic state without institutional transformation. In this setting, the Japanese rulers' military, diplomatic, and ideological initiatives to enhance their country's position by challenging and overthrowing the established norms, rules, and practices proved counterproductive. While the Ming gradually lost its hegemonic status, Japan's invasions of Korea and Ryukyu reinforced the Ming perception that Japan was a formidable threat from the sea.¹³⁷ It decided the basic contours of the post-Hideyoshi Sino-Japanese relations—trade without mutual recognition. Even after the Qing supplanted the Ming, the Qing emperors were so preoccupied with consolidating their rule that they acquiesced to this

¹³⁴ Toby 1984, 123; Lee 2016, 158.

¹³⁵ Toby 1984, 124-26.

¹³⁶ Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan: The "New Theses" of 1825* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1986), 22-23, 24-29, 30-34; Norihito 2003, 137; Benjamin A. Elman, "Cultural Transfers Between Tokugawa Japan and Ch'ing China to 1800," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Willard J. Peterson, vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 236-38; Harry D. Harootunian, "The Functions of China in Tokugawa Thought," in *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions*, ed. Akira Iriye (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 12-16.

¹³⁷ Toby 1984, 58-59; Yuan 2013, 127-28.

state of affairs.¹³⁸ The Qing did not even register Japan on the list of tributary states, treating it as a trading country.¹³⁹ Despite its military strength, economic growth, and post-war diplomatic engagement with neighbors, Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan's defiant strategies failed and it had to remain an outcast in the East Asian world order.

4. Conclusion

The East Asian world order was a patchworked hierarchy. It was hierarchical because the state that controlled the Chinese mainland and its affluent material and symbolic resources could claim superiority over other actors. Simultaneously, it was a patchwork that encompassed various types of actors and different sets of norms, rules, and practices that governed their diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions. The Ming-Qing transition was a power transition within the established order, which entailed the replacement of the hegemonic state without institutional transformation. Although the rising Manchu founded the Qing empire and supplanted the declining Ming dynasty, they preserved and inherited the East Asian world order and its institutions established under Ming hegemony. The Manchu ascendancy who conquered the Chinese mainland seemed to add non-Chinese elements to the incumbent order, but such a hybridization between the Chinese mainland and non-Chinese peoples had already been part of it.

In response to the Ming-Qing transition, Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan selected opposing types of status-seeking strategies. Korea's Neo-Confucian ruling elites who had been strongly committed to the East Asian world order adopted conformist strategies

¹³⁸ Akamine 2016, 97-98; Elman 2016, 238-39; Angela Schottenhammer, "Empire and Periphery? The Qing Empire's Relations with Japan and the Ryūkyūs (1644–c. 1800), a Comparison," *The Medieval History Journal* 16, no. 1 (2013), 182-84.

¹³⁹ Fairbank and Têng 1941, 185.

to secure their country's status by defending and adhering to the incumbent order. To this end, they took the risk of war with such stronger enemies as Japan and the Manchu that disrupted the East Asian world order, and advanced a discourse that Korea now became the last bastion of Confucian civilization in places of the fallen Ming empire. In contrast, Japan's warrior rulers who had not developed such a strong commitment opted for defiant strategies to elevate Japan's status by challenging and overthrowing the established order. They launched military campaigns to invade the Ming empire and its tributary states such as Korea and Ryukyu, and engaged in diplomatic and ideological campaigns to promote an alternative vision of the Japan-centered world order.

Since the Ming-Qing transition was a power transition that left the existing institutions intact, it set an uneven ground that favored conformist status-seekers but not defiant ones. The Koreng ruling elites' conformist strategies caused military and diplomatic conflicts with stronger enemies such as Toyotomi Japan and the Manchu-Qing in the short term, but they proved effective in the end. While the declining Ming appreciated Korea's support, the rising Qing that inherited the East Asian world order tried to draw Korea into its orbit by restoring the privileges and special treatment Korea had enjoyed under Ming hegemony. In contrast, Japanese rulers' defiant strategies to build a Japan-centered world order did not bring the intended outcomes. Although the Toyotomi and Tokugawa regimes tried to prove Japan's military capabilities and symbolic supremacy, their claim to Japan's elevated status failed to obtain recognition from its key neighbors, especially the Chinese empire. While the Ming refused to reopen commercial and diplomatic relations with Japan severed as a result of the Imjin War, the Qing was satisfied with the Sino-Japanese trade without diplomatic recognition.

Chapter 4. Status-Seeking in Order Transition

Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan During the Westphalian Transition

In this chapter, I compare the rise and fall of Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan during the Westphalian transition (1839-1912). Beginning with the First Opium War (1839-1842), East Asia was gradually integrated into the Westphalian international order that was expanding on a global scale. By the demise of the Qing empire in 1912, Japan seized regional hegemony in place of the Qing and East Asia fell prey to Western imperialist powers. The Westphalian transition was an order transition in which the East Asian world order was replaced by the Westphalian international order that originated in Europe. It entailed not only power redistribution but also institutional transformation, which jointly led to the demise of the established order as a whole. The constitutive and regulative institutions that comprised the East Asian world order gave way to those of Westphalia. To be recognized as a legitimate actor and obtain a larger share of privileges in this new order, East Asian polities had to modernize themselves as a sovereign state modeled on the West and learn new rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions.

The Westphalian transition was an order transition that laid favorable ground for defiant status-seekers. Since it was accompanied by both the rearrangement of regulative institutions and the replacement of constitutive institutions, defiant strategies in this period required not only behavioral adjustment but also the transformation of status-seekers themselves into an alternative type of political entity eligible for legitimate actorhood. In response to the Westphalian transition, Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan adopted defiant status-seeking strategies to deviate from the old East Asian order and be recognized as sovereign states in the new Westphalian order. The rise and fall of Korea and Japan in this period

demonstrate that the outcomes of status-seeking depend on the interplay among the strategic choices of status-seekers, the structural conditions surrounding them, and their strategic consistency, which is contingent on state-society relations and external support.

As reformist elites replaced conservative ones, Chosŏn Korea that had adhered to the East Asian world order launched reforms for modernization and introduced the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia. However, Korea's shift toward defiant strategies was delayed, interrupted, and inconsistent. Although reformists who newly seized power adopted defiant strategies, they were soon split into several antagonistic factions and conservatives with a strong commitment to the East Asian world order continued to resist. Moreover, Korean reformists could not maintain strategic consistency because they failed to elicit support from domestic society and foreign actors. Korean ruling elites' delayed strategic reorientation and strategic inconsistency led to Korea's status descent as it was denied legitimate membership in the Westphalian order and colonized by Japan.

In contrast, Meiji Japan not only adopted defiant strategies but also implemented them consistently. Japan's new ruling elite group, the Meiji oligarchy, was united in their aspiration to turn Japan into a modern sovereign state modeled on the West. They embarked on a series of reforms to completely break off from the East Asian world order on the one hand, and obtain legitimate membership in the Westphalian international order on the other hand. In pursuing defiant strategies, Japanese leaders could maintain strategic consistency because they obtained support from both domestic society and foreign actors. The Meiji oligarchs' defiant and consistent strategies proved successful as Japan not only obtained legitimate membership in the Westphalian order but also joined the rank of great powers along with other Western countries.

1. The Westphalian Transition: Order Transition in East Asia

As discussed in the previous chapter, even long before the arrival of the West, East Asia had developed a distinct regional order, which can be called the East Asian world order. The organizing principle of this order was a patchworked hierarchy. On the one hand, it was hierarchical because the state that controlled the Chinese mainland as well as its affluent material and symbolic resources had a greater chance of claiming superiority over other actors. This hierarchical structure was legitimized by various ideologies, including Confucianism that portrayed the Chinese emperor as the Son of Heaven endowed with the Mandate of Heaven. On the other hand, the East Asian world order was a patchwork that consisted of various types of actors and different sets of regulative institutions. In this order, legitimate actorhood was recognized through particularistic interactions between actors in which the Chinese state often had the upper hand. The Chinese state itself was also a patchwork as it was a historical construct continuously redefined through hybridization between the Chinese mainland and non-Chinese actors, especially nomadic invaders from the north.

Since the East Asian world order encompassed various types of actors ranging from Confucian and non-Confucian states to feudal societies as well as nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, it developed different sets of regulative institutions, that is, rules of conduct to govern diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions between them. The existing literature on historical East Asia has focused on tributary relations between Confucianized states. However, the tributary system does not capture the totality of the East Asian world order because it coexisted with other regulative institutions, such as official and private trade, the signing of treaties, marital ties and alliances, and the exchange of gifts. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the interactions between Confucian states and non-Confucian actors were also subject to

regulation as they developed the shared notions of common interest, legitimacy, and even pseudo-familial relations.

During the Westphalian transition, the East Asian world order was completely replaced by the Westphalian international order that originated in and expanded beyond Europe. While the Qing empire's hegemony fell apart as it was economically and militarily overtaken by Western imperialist powers and Meiji Japan, the constitutive and regulative institutions that had structured the East Asian world order and governed interactions between actors within it gave way to the institutions of Westphalia. To obtain the status of legitimate actors in this new order, East Asian peoples and polities were now required, even forced to transform themselves into modern sovereign states modeled on the West, and embody the rules, norms, and practices that governed interactions between Western countries. It was a contested process that often entailed the use of violence and coercion.

1) Power Transition

The Great Divergence Debate among historians provides a fresh look at power redistribution in East Asia before and during the Westphalian transition.¹ It reveals that the redistribution of material capabilities at the global scale had already been well underway before the Western imperialist march into East Asia in the nineteenth century. Against the conventional view that attributes Europe's sustained economic growth and takeover of the Chinese empire to structural determinants, Kenneth Pomeranz and other scholars in the California School put forth a revisionist narrative that Europe's economic growth resulted from a set of contingent factors. Moreover, they argue that the living standards in Western Europe and Jiangnan, the most developed areas in each region, were still comparable by the eighteenth century. Although

¹ Prasannan Parthasarathi and Kenneth Pomeranz, "The Great Divergence Debate," in *Global Economic History*, ed. Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 20-21; Penelope Francks, *Japan and the Great Divergence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2-10.

many controversies remain unsettled, there is little disagreement regarding the fact that the Great Divergence began to emerge circa or before the nineteenth century.² Building upon this debate, some scholars are now investigating the Little Divergence between China and Japan in Asia.³

The Great Divergence between East Asia and Europe took place in military realms as well.⁴ While the Ming empire enjoyed peace and engaged in fewer and less intense wars, Europe achieved remarkable progress in gunpowder weapons and military technologies. The military parity between East Asia and Europe was restored between 1550 and 1700 as the frequency and intensity of violence increased in East Asia, but this trend was quickly reversed again. The military divergence accelerated and became irreversible due to military innovations and the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the long peace in East Asia under Qing hegemony. Beginning with the First Opium War, the Qing empire experienced repeated defeats in military disputes with Western imperialist powers, making it evident that its power dominance in East Asia was no longer sustainable.⁵

The First Opium War was a key turning point that confirmed the economic and military divergence between the Qing and the West and accelerated it. This war resulted from trade disputes between the Qing and Britain, the leading force of Western imperialism. The rise of transformative liberalism aimed to spread the Anglo-Saxon civilization abroad and the need to

² Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), x-xix; Parthasarathi and Pomeranz 2019, 22-25; Victor Court, "A Reassessment of the Great Divergence Debate: Towards a Reconciliation of Apparently Distinct Determinants," *European Review of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (2019): 633-74; Jack A. Goldstone, "Dating the Great Divergence," *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 2 (2021): 266-85; Francks 2016, 18-27.

³ Francks 2016, Ch. 4; Jean-Pascal Bassino et al., "Japan and the Great Divergence, 730-1874," *Explorations in Economic History* 72 (2019): 1-22; Tuan-Hwee Sng and Chiaki Moriguchi, "Asia's Little Divergence: State Capacity in China and Japan before 1850," *Journal of Economic Growth* 19, no. 4 (2014): 439-70.

⁴ Tonio Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History*, *The Gunpowder Age* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 5.

⁵ Andrade 2016, 239-52.

handle massive deficits in trade with the Qing prompted Britain to aggressively pursue commercial interests in the Chinese mainland.⁶ To this end, Britain increasingly turned to the export of opium, which disrupted Qing society by causing addiction, systemic corruption, and the outflow of silver. The Qing government's decision to ban opium spurred trade disputes with Britain, which led to the outbreak of the First Opium War.⁷ Taking advantage of the Qing empire's defeat in this war, Britain and other Western countries that joined it obtained more opportunities for trade and religious proselytization and opened diplomatic relations with the Qing, in line with the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia.⁸

However, power redistribution during the Westphalian transition cannot be attributed to the invasion of Western imperialist powers alone. Long before the outbreak of the First Opium War, the Qing empire had already suffered from internal crises that eroded its power base from within.⁹ While climate change and the increase of human activities deteriorated ecological conditions for economic activities, population growth without technological innovations destroyed the land-population ratio. The economic depression during the reign of Emperor Daoguang (r. 1820-1850) entailed the deflation in commodity prices, the massive outflows and ensuing price rise of silver, and the dramatic decline of treasury reserves. Peasant rebellions and popular revolts became destructive as they were entangled with the invasion of Western imperialist powers. The interplay between internal and external challenges culminated

⁶ Andrew Phillips, *How the East Was Won: Barbarian Conquerors, Universal Conquest and the Making of Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 257-62.

⁷ Frederic E Wakeman, "The Canton Trade and the Opium War," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 172-73, 178-80; Richard S. Horowitz, "The Opium Wars of 1839-1860," in *East Asia in the World: Twelve Events That Shaped the Modern International Order*, ed. David C. Kang and Stephan Haggard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 168-70; William T. Rowe, "Economic Transition in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Economic History of China*, ed. Devin Ma and Richard von Glahn, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 72-73.

⁸ John K. Fairbank, "The Creation of the Treaty System," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 244-49.

⁹ Rowe 2022; Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, "Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 109-10.

in the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), which was led by Hong Xiuquan who claimed himself as Jesus Christ's younger brother and aspired to build a Christian theocracy.¹⁰

Qing rulers did not sit idly while Qing hegemony fell apart. To address internal and external challenges, the Qing government embarked on a series of reforms, which are dubbed the Self-Strengthening Movement. It began shortly after the First Opium War, and then gained further momentum after the Qing empire experienced another humiliating defeat in the Second Opium War (1856-1860).¹¹ The awareness among reform-minded leaders that they should adopt advanced technologies and institutions of the West was a key driving force behind this movement. However, their reform programs achieved far less than expected.¹² From the beginning, they were inhibited by factionalism, the lukewarm support from senior officials, the shortage of technologies and devices, the lack of dedicated funding, the frequent personnel turnover, and the failure to create a unified military command and a fiscal state.

However, the Qing empire failed to arrest the demise of its own and the East Asian world order built upon Qing hegemony. Despite the Self-Strengthening Movement, the Qing failed to stop Western imperialist powers from encroaching into its territories and sphere of influence. The Qing's defeats in the Sino-French War (1884-1885) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) put an end to the Self-Strengthening Movement, making it evident that the Qing was neither able to secure its hegemonic status in East Asia nor eligible for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian order.¹³ In particular, Meiji Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War demonstrated that the East Asian world order and Qing hegemony underlying it were no longer sustainable.

¹⁰ Phillips 2021, 281-84.

¹¹ Kuo and Liu 1978; Andrade 2016, Ch. 18.

¹² Andrade 2016, 270-72, 282-94.

¹³ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, "Late Ch'ing Foreign Relations, 1866-1905," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, vol. 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 70.

The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) was the final blow to the Qing empire. The Sino-Japanese War made it clear that Qing China's decline was now irreversible, boosting the scramble of imperialist powers to partition Qing territories and maximize geopolitical and commercial interests.¹⁴ The popular resentment against imperialist powers finally erupted in the chauvinist uprising led by an anti-foreign religious society known as the Boxers, and the Qing court bandwagoned with them to repel foreign invaders. However, the imperialist coalition army defeated the Boxers and forced a protocol that demanded the Qing to punish the Boxer leaders, pay a huge amount of indemnities, suspend armament and bureaucratic recruitment, and endorse the presence of foreign troops in Qing territories. By signing the Boxer protocol, the Qing was demoted to a de facto colonial status.¹⁵

2) Institutional Transformation

The Westphalian transition was an order transition that entailed not only power transition but also institutional transformation. The Western imperialist march that led to the demise of Qing hegemony was accompanied by the introduction of Westphalian constitutive and regulative institutions into East Asia. While the Qing was economically and militarily overtaken by Western imperialist powers and Meiji Japan that emulated them, the norms, rules, and practices of East Asia were replaced by those of Westphalia. However, institutional transformation was a contested process.¹⁶ It mostly took place in tandem with, and as a result of military conflicts between East Asian polities and Western imperialist powers, most of which ended with the former's defeats. Even when East Asian polities chose to adopt the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia, their acceptance was often selective and reluctant. In such cases,

¹⁴ S. C. M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 303-9.

¹⁵ Hsu 1980, 126-30; Paine 2003, 312-13.

¹⁶ Phillips 2018, 277-78; Seo-Hyun Park, "Reordering East Asian International Relations after 1860," in *The Two Worlds of Nineteenth Century International Relations: The Bifurcated Century*, ed. Daniel M. Green (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 160-61.

the newly introduced Westphalian institutions clashed with the existing East Asian institutions, sometimes fueling diplomatic and military disputes with the West.

In terms of constitutive institutions, the patchworked hierarchy of East Asia that had encompassed various types of actors gave way to the *punctuated* hierarchy of Westphalia in which legitimate actorhood was granted exclusively to those actors recognized as sovereign states. The Westphalian transition is often portrayed as a process through which the Sino-centric hierarchy was replaced by the principle of sovereign equality. In practice, however, the Westphalian international order, despite the façade of sovereign equality, was no less hierarchical than the East Asian world order.¹⁷ It was a punctuated hierarchy, which made a distinction between sovereign states and others that failed to be recognized as such on the one hand, and another distinction between great powers and the rest within the society of sovereign states on the other hand.

First, the principle of sovereign equality that political entities recognized as sovereign states should be treated on an equal footing implied the exclusion of those polities or peoples that failed to obtain such recognition and enter the society of sovereign states.¹⁸ During the global expansion of the Westphalian international order, the distinction between sovereign states and the rest took root with the entrenchment of the “standard of civilization.” In the Westphalian order, complete legitimate actorhood, that is, the status of sovereign state was granted only to those that fulfilled this standard or were recognized to do so. It defined the boundary of the society of “civilized” states eligible for sovereign rights, differentiating them from “semi-civilized” or “uncivilized” others. The standard of civilization was based on the

¹⁷ Seo-Hyun Park, *Sovereignty and Status in East Asian International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Ch. 3; Lora Anne Viola, *The Closure of the International System: How Institutions Create Political Equalities and Hierarchies* (Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2020), Ch. 4.

¹⁸ Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 54-63; Viola 2020, 66-67.

traditions of European Christendom, so it was inherently discriminatory against non-European peoples.

Second, there was a distinction within the society of sovereign states themselves. Although sovereign states formed their own society, there was a discrepancy between the principle of sovereign equality and its unequal practice. To paraphrase George Orwell, “all sovereign states are equal, but some sovereign states are more equal than others.” In fact, the notion of sovereign equality, which is considered the organizing principle of the Westphalian order, was an “organized hypocrisy” because not all states were equally sovereign and the violation of sovereign equality was not so uncommon.¹⁹ While weaker and smaller states often made a compromise and put self-restraint in exercising their sovereignty, great powers were able to force them to do so. They claimed and were endowed with a larger share of privileges and special responsibilities in managing international order.

The transition from the patchworked hierarchy of East Asia to the punctuated hierarchy of Westphalia took place in tandem with the transition in legitimate actorhood. As noted earlier, legitimate actorhood in the East Asian order was not determined by whether a polity retained specific characteristics but recognized through particularistic interactions between actors in which the state that controlled the Chinese mainland retained more material and symbolic resources and thus often had the upper hand. In contrast, in the Westphalian order, legitimate actorhood was granted only to those polities recognized as sovereign states, the notion of which stemmed from the analogy that equated state control over a demarcated territory with the property of individuals.²⁰ They had to fulfill a set of requirements that originated in the political, economic, and sociocultural contexts of Europe.

¹⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.

²⁰ Viola 2020, 137-53.

Sovereignty, the essential element of the Westphalian legitimate actorhood, has both external and internal dimensions.²¹ Externally, sovereignty presumes the exchange of recognition in which political entities with their own territories and juridical independence treat each other as legitimate equals, and the exclusion of another entity's intervention in one's own internal affairs. Internally, sovereignty requires the existence of political authority to enact effective control within a demarcated territory and over the flow of men and resources across territorial boundaries between sovereign entities. Although sovereign states were the same in the sense that they pursued recognition and autonomy from each other, there was a variation in the mode in which they organized and enacted political authority within their territories.²²

The transformation of constitutive institutions could not be separated from that of regulative institutions to govern diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions between actors within and across the boundaries of the international order. To address and communicate with Western imperialist powers with unparalleled military and economic capabilities, East Asian peoples and states now had to learn and embody their norms, rules, and practices. Although there was a variation across the region in the pace and scope of introducing the institutions of Westphalia, new rules of conduct gradually took root and came to govern interactions between East Asia and the West, and even those between East Asian polities themselves.

The Qing empire's defeats in military conflicts with the West accelerated the introduction of Westphalian regulative institutions. The First Opium War came to an end with the Treaty of Nanjing between the Qing and Britain. By signing this unequal treaty, East Asia under Qing hegemony began to be integrated into the expanding Westphalian order, marked by

²¹ Krasner 2001, 3-4.

²² Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Ch. 1.

its punctuated and hierarchical structure.²³ On the surface, it seemed that the Treaty of Nanjing applied the principle of sovereign equality to the Qing and Britain by placing their monarchs, high- and low-ranking officials, and provincial governors on an equal footing. On the other hand, however, this treaty revealed the hierarchical and discriminatory nature of the Westphalian order by allowing the “civilized” Britain to impose its demands on the “barbarous” Qing, such as the cession of Hong Kong, the payment of massive indemnities, the opening of additional trade ports, and the rights of residence for British merchants and their families in those ports.

The Second Opium War further accelerated the introduction of Westphalian regulative institutions. In addition to the payment of war indemnities and the opening of additional trade ports, Britain joined by other Western imperialist powers forced the Qing to permit the access of their nationals to the Chinese interior, and more importantly, the opening of foreign legations in the imperial capital.²⁴ In the Westphalian international order, sovereign states exchanged ambassadors, ministers, and consuls who were authorized to reside in another state’s capital or major cities and serve as official channels for diplomacy. As the representatives of their own country, resident diplomats were granted special rights and privileges including immunity. The Qing court only grudgingly accepted this Westphalian mode of diplomacy out of the concern that the presence of aliens in the imperial capital would undermine the empire’s authority in the existing East Asian world order and that they would serve as spies and conduits of foreign interference.²⁵

²³ Wakeman 1978, 211-12; Horowitz 2020, 179.

²⁴ Fairbank 1978, 251-58. The English text of the Treaty of Nanjing is available at: <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-nanjing-nanking-1842>.

²⁵ Horowitz 2020, 185.

The significance of Westphalian regulative institutions continued to grow in East Asia.²⁶ In 1861, the Qing established the Zongli Yamen as a new agency responsible for foreign affairs and diplomacy with the West. In 1873, after years of wrangling with regard to proper diplomatic protocols in the imperial audience, the ritual of kowtow by which foreign dignitaries exhibited their respect for the Chinese emperor's superiority was replaced with the act of bowing that symbolized the equality between the Qing empire and Western imperialist powers. Beginning in the late 1870s, the Qing opened its permanent legations in Europe and the United States as Western countries did in its capital. Moreover, from the 1860s, international laws that governed the relations between sovereign states in the West were introduced to East Asia.²⁷ *The Public Law of All States (Wanguo Gongfa)*, William Martin's Chinese translation of *Elements of International Law* by Henry Wheaton, played a crucial role in this process.

The establishment of new rules of conduct in diplomacy such as the exchange of resident diplomats and the protocols to express mutual respect for sovereign equality took place along with the introduction of Westphalian regulative institutions that governed socioeconomic and military relations.²⁸ As legitimate members of the Westphalian order, sovereign states were required to guarantee the basic rights of their own nationals and foreigners alike, such as the rights of life and property, travel, religious freedom, and so on. To this end, they had to establish legal institutions such as courts, codes, and published laws designed to deliver justice for all people within their territories. Sociocultural customs considered "uncivilized" in light

²⁶ Gong 1984, 149-52; Hsu 1980, 81-84; Phillips 2018, 288-89; David Banks, "Rejecting Westphalia: Maintaining the Sinocentric System, to the End," in *The Two Worlds of Nineteenth Century International Relations: The Bifurcated Century*, ed. Daniel M. Green (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 81-83.

²⁷ Gong 1984, 155; Rune Svarverud, *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 87-93, 112-16.

²⁸ Gong 1984, 14-15; Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (London: Routledge, 2009), 35-39.

of the standards of civilization had to be discarded. The use of military force was subject to regulation as well.²⁹ Foreign military observers and attachés reported whether the warring parties conducted military operations and treated wartime prisoners in accordance with the laws of war, and their reports played a significant role in shaping the image and reputation of the warring parties in international society.

2. Chosŏn Korea

1) Commitment and Strategic Choice

A. The Rise and Divide of Reformist Elites

The encounter with Western imperialist powers and the expanding Westphalian international order posed a great shock for Chosŏn Korea and its ruling elites. For many centuries before the arrival of the West, Korean ruling elites had developed and maintained a strong commitment to the East Asian world order, which was rewarded with Korea's special status as a highly advanced secondary state that even Chinese rulers paid respect for.³⁰ In response to the Westphalian transition, reformist elites who newly seized power in Korea attempted a strategic reorientation from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies to introduce and embody the constitutive and regulative institutions of Westphalia. However, Korea's strategic reorientation was continuously delayed and interrupted. While the conservative elites ousted

²⁹ Douglas Howland, *International Law and Japanese Sovereignty: The Emerging Global Order in the 19th Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Ch. 5; Kiran Banerjee and Joseph MacKay, "Communities of Practice, Impression Management, and Great Power Status: Military Observers in the Russo-Japanese War," *European Journal of International Security* 5, no. 3 (2020): 274–93.

³⁰ David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute*, Contemporary Asia in the World (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 57; Hyewon Cha, "Was Joseon a Model or an Exception? Reconsidering the Tributary Relations during Ming China," *Korea Journal* 51, no. 4 (2011): 33–58, 43–46. John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Têng, "On The Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6, no. 2 (1941): 135–246.

from power continued to resist, the reformists themselves were split into several antagonistic factions, damaging the momentum of Korea's strategic shift.

When East Asia's entry into the Westphalian international order began, Chosŏn Korea was under the rule of a conservative coalition with a strong commitment to the East Asian world order. It was led by Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung (*Taewongun*, 1821-1898), the father of King Gojong (r. 1864-1907). His regency was supported by a few privileged clans aligned with the royal house by marriage and senior bureaucrats.³¹ Prince Yi took drastic measures to revitalize the declining Chosŏn dynasty and restore the royal authority.³² In particular, he abolished private Confucian academies and their socioeconomic privileges, leaving only 47 of them nationwide.³³ Since Neo-Confucianism was the ruling ideology in Chosŏn Korea, these academies were granted many privileges such as extensive autonomy in local societies and exemption from taxation, military service, and corvée, which diminished state revenues and undermined the central government's authority.

Yi Ha-eung's regency came to an end in 1873 as King Gojong and other elites withdrew their political support.³⁴ King Gojong, joined by other dissident members of the royal family, betrayed his father as the young monarch now reached adulthood and wanted to rule the country by himself. Senior bureaucrats and Confucian intellectuals also turned against the regent. Senior bureaucrats opposed Prince Yi's self-righteousness in domestic reforms and intransigence in foreign affairs that might provoke Western imperialist powers and invite their invasion. Although Confucian intellectuals agreed with the regent's conservative vision aimed

³¹ Bo Ram Han, "A Study on the Contemporary Affair Reform Force in the Early Years of Gojong's Reign" (Seoul, Seoul National University, 2019).

³² Ching Young Choe, *The Rule of the Taewŏn'gun, 1864–1873: Restoration in Yi Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 24-28; James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center Publications Program, 1975), 3-5.

³³ Choe 1972, 70-76; Palais 1975, 113-14, 119-24; Chae-sik Chŏng, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hang-No and the West* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1995), 68-71.

³⁴ Choe 1972, 166; Palais 1975, 130-31, 199.

at the restoration of the traditional social order, they opposed his drastic measures to enhance the royal authority by abolishing private Confucian academies and their privileges.

The displacement of Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung led to the rise of the Gojong regime, a new ruling coalition that was more flexible and weakly committed to the established East Asian world order. It was a political alliance between King Gojong, the royalists, and junior reformist bureaucrats. King Gojong, heavily influenced by reformists, shared their view that Korea should not remain self-isolated and learn and introduce the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia to address Western countries. His flexible attitude largely stemmed from his kingly privileges to access information about the external world.³⁵ King Gojong's principal partner was his wife, Queen Min.³⁶ Their marriage turned into a political alliance between the king and the queen's relatives, the Min clan. Reform-minded junior bureaucrats were another pillar of the Gojong regime. The king assigned them to key posts in the government and encouraged them to participate in decision-making process. While some of them came from privileged clans, others without such backgrounds obtained their position by proving their competence and loyalty to the king.³⁷

However, the rise of reformist elites was a contested process. Although Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung was forced to resign, he still exercised substantial influence through his followers in the court and officialdom, and they continued to resist the Gojong regime's reforms. Senior bureaucrats who stood behind King Gojong in ousting Prince Yi were still reluctant to completely defect from the East Asian order. More importantly, reformist elites themselves

³⁵ Yur-Bok Lee, *West Goes East: Paul Georg von Möllendorf and Great Power Imperialism in Late Yi Korea*, *West Goes East* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 18.

³⁶ Palais 1975, 44-45.

³⁷ Han 2019, 215-20.

were split into several antagonistic factions that contended over the pace, scope, and content of reforms, which in turn hindered Korea's strategic reorientation.

The dominance of reformist elites was not consolidated until Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung was abducted by the Qing army that intervened in Korea to quell the 1882 Imo Mutiny. While the Gojong regime's modernization reforms and opening of diplomatic relations with the West and Japan generated grievance in domestic society, a group of soldiers and their families rose to protest against their unfair treatment and delayed payment. This military mutiny soon escalated into a massive uprising joined by the populace, who attributed social unrest and economic predicament to the corrupt ruling elites aligned with foreigners.³⁸ Prince Yi and his followers encouraged the mob to exploit this revolt as an opportunity to retake power from King Gojong and the reformists. However, this mutiny was quickly subdued by the Qing army, which intervened upon the request of King Gojong and Queen Min.

The demise of conservatives helped the reformist elites who were willing and ready to introduce the institutions of Westphalia seize the upper hand in Korean politics. The majority of memorials submitted to the court after the Imo Mutiny called for pragmatism and flexibility in diplomatic relations with the West.³⁹ King Gojong's edict issued in September 1882 stressed that reforms were now inevitable. In this edict, the king said:

“We, the Eastern Country, located at the edge of the world, have been self-isolated without interacting with foreign countries. In recent years, the global trend has changed significantly from the past. Western countries such as

³⁸ Yong-gu Kim, *Imo Kullan kwa Kapsin Chŏngbyŏn: Sadae Chilsŏ ŭi Pyŏnhyŏng kwa Han'guk Oegyosa* (Incheon: Won, 2004), 10.

³⁹ Martina Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys: The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 150-51.

England, France, the United States, and Russia are doing their best to produce sophisticated and beneficial machinery and make their nations strong ... While China, considered solely prestigious in the world, is signing treaties [with the West] on an equal footing, Japan, which was strict in its exclusion of foreigners, has eventually established friendly relations [with the West], engaging in trade. This is all due to unavoidable circumstances. We signed the Treaty of Ganghwa with Japan in the spring of 1876, and recently, and also entered into new treaties with several countries such as the United States, England, and Germany. However, given that our diplomacy [with the West] is based on the principle of equality and their purpose of stationing troops [on our territories] is to protect [their citizens'] commercial activities, there is no need to worry... their evil religion should be banned but their machinery is beneficial, and there is no reason to fear or avoid manufacturing tools such as agricultural implements, medicines, weapons, ships, and carts by learning from them [the West]... Since we already established diplomatic relations with the West, all Anti-Appeasement Steles [established during Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung's regency] in the capital and provinces should be removed."⁴⁰

Although reformists shared the view that Korea should embark on reforms to introduce the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia formed the mainstream in Korean politics, they were soon split into several antagonistic factions. They contended over the pace, scope, and content of reforms, and more importantly, which foreign country Korea should align with to carry out reforms required for Korea's modernization and entry into the Westphalian order.

⁴⁰ See *Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty (VRCD)*, "Records of King Gojong" (August 5, 1882).

From the 1880s onward, the Gojong regime continuously suffered from factionalism that was intertwined with domestic legitimacy politics.⁴¹ The factional strife among reformists was often accompanied by blood-shedding purges and foreign intervention, which seriously damaged Korea's autonomy in reforms and strategic reorientation.

It was the pro-Qing faction or the *Sadae* Party that initially seized the upper hand in factional strife. The traditional Chosŏn-Qing tributary relations and the royal house's deepening dependence on the Qing since the Imo Mutiny provided a favorable setting for the pro-Qing faction, which mainly consisted of Queen Min's relatives and their political allies. Their main opponent was the pro-Japan faction or the *Gaehwa* (Enlightenment) Party, which comprised junior reformist bureaucrats inspired by Meiji Japan's modernization modeled on the West.⁴² Some of them were political radicals who were willing to risk and invite foreign intervention to achieve their goals. Driven into a corner by the pro-Qing faction, the pro-Japan radicals staged the Gapshin Coup, on December 4, 1884.⁴³ Although the pro-Japan radicals seized the royal palace with the aid of the Japanese army stationed in the capital, their coup regime lasted only for three days because the Qing army swiftly intervened as they did in the 1882 Imo Mutiny. While the pro-Qing faction retook power, the pro-Japan bureaucrats scattered with their leaders executed or fleeing to Japan.⁴⁴

It was not until Meiji Japan initiated the Sino-Japanese War and seized Korea's royal palace in July 1894 that the pro-Japan reformists returned to Korean politics. Shortly after putting Korea's capital under its control, Japan coerced King Gojong to form a new, pro-Japan

⁴¹ Deuchler 1977, 152-58; Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center Publications Program, 2008), 99-105; Kim 2004, 146-51; Park 2017, 90-92.

⁴² Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "The Kapsin Coup of 1884: A Reassessment," *Korean Studies* 6, no. 1 (1982), 105; Jong-Hak Kim, "The Origin of Gaehwa-dang and its Backdoor Diplomacy, 1879-1884" (Seoul, Seoul National University, 2015), 44.

⁴³ Deuchler 1977, 203-11; Larsen 2008, 124-27.

⁴⁴ Ch'oe 1982, 118.

cabinet to carry out a series of reforms in domestic and foreign affairs, which is known as the Gabo Reform (1894-1896). The Gabo cabinet was a coalition that encompassed pro-Japan bureaucrats, some of whom survived after the 1884 Gapshin Coup, as well as the royalists and even Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung's followers.⁴⁵ Although the Gabo cabinet was established under Japanese supervision, the inclusion of varying factions ranging from reformist to conservative ones caused factionalism within the cabinet. Even the reformists themselves were divided over whether the king should step aside while bureaucrats lead the reform or the king's authority should be respected.⁴⁶

The dominance of the pro-Japan reformists did not last long as they elicited backlash from the anti-Japanese factions, especially the royalists. King Gojong, threatened by Queen Min's assassination in October 1895 by Japanese vagabonds and their Korean collaborators, fled to the Russian legation in February 1896.⁴⁷ The Gabo cabinet collapsed as the king ordered the arrest and execution of the pro-Japan cabinet members who attempted to curtail royal authority. In place of the pro-Japan bureaucrats, the royalists and the newly rising pro-Russia faction now seized power in the court and officialdom.

After King Gojong's return to the royal palace in February 1897, however, factional strife resumed in tandem with the escalating rivalry among imperialist powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula. King Gojong's efforts to reinforce his despotic power spurred the struggle between the royalists and other reformists regarding whether and how the royal authority should be restricted. The political landscape in this period was further complicated as the pro-

⁴⁵ Hyun-jong Wang, *The Formation of Korean Modern State and the Gabo Reforms* (Seoul: Yuksa Bipyungsa, 2003), 223-24; Young I. Lew, "Korean-Japanese Politics behind the Gabo-Ŭlmi Reform Movement, 1894 to 1896," *Journal of Korean Studies* 3, no. 1 (1981), 46-51.

⁴⁶ Wang 2003, 244-45.

⁴⁷ Huajeong Seok, "International Rivalry in Korea and Russia's East Asian Policy in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Korea Journal* 50, no. 3 (2010), 191-94; Dong Taek Kim, "Political Cleavage in State Formation of the late 19th Century: Focusing on Gabo and Kwangmu Reform," *Korean Political Science Review* 34, no. 4 (2001), 49.

Japan, pro-Russia, and royalist factions competed over power and influence, especially with regard to which country Korea should align with to secure its survival as a sovereign state in the Westphalian order. King Gojong, threatened by Japan's attempt to turn Korea into its protectorate and disillusioned by Russia's predatory policies in East Asia, pursued the neutralization of Korea. Once again, the Gojong regime failed to achieve internal unity and consensus, and the political divide among the ruling elites continued until Korea was colonized by Japan in 1910.

B. Delayed Strategic Reorientation

During the Westphalian transition, Chosŏn Korea underwent a strategic reorientation from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies as the conservative elites with a strong commitment to the East Asian world order were replaced by the reformist ones who believed that adapting to the new Westphalian international order was inevitable and crucial to Korea's survival in the coming decades. While the former aspired for the revitalization of Chosŏn Korea to secure traditional values and defend itself from Western "barbarians," the latter envisioned more fundamental reforms in both domestic and foreign affairs to transform Korea into a modern sovereign state eligible for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian international order. However, Korea's strategic reorientation was continuously interrupted due to the resistance of conservatives and the split among reformists themselves.

During Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung's regency, Korean ruling elites adhered to conformist strategies aimed to secure their country's status within the existing East Asian order. In light of the Confucian political ideology that had structured the East Asian world order and guided Korean ruling elites for centuries, Yi Ha-eung's regency included some unorthodox elements such as the aggrandizement of royal authority. Overall, however, his rule was still conservative

because it sought to revitalize the declining Chosŏn dynasty, not to subvert it or the East Asian world order to which it had belonged.

The Yi Ha-eung regime's conformist strategies were manifested in his rejection of diplomatic and commercial relations with foreign powers. The Qing empire's defeats in the Opium Wars and the march of Western imperialist powers into East Asia heightened the Yi regime's anxiety. In this circumstance, the regent prohibited any contact with the West and Japan, and even risked the use of military force to repel foreign countries that approached Korea to establish diplomatic and commercial relations. The regent's attitude grew more hostile through a series of incidents such as the diplomatic disputes with France, the military skirmish with a US merchant ship General Sherman that demanded trade with Korea, and German merchant Ernst Oppert's attempt to excavate the tomb of Yi Ha-eung's father, Prince Yi Gu.⁴⁸

The diplomatic and military disputes with foreign countries pushed further the Yi Ha-eung regime to reinforce its commitment to the East Asian world order. In particular, the execution of French missionaries who refused to cooperate with Yi Ha-eung's diplomacy targeting France and the General Sherman incident invited the invasions of the French and US fleets in 1866 and 1871 respectively. Given that the Qing and Tokugawa Japan already submitted to the coercion of Western imperialist powers, the Korean army's fierce resistance and the retreat of Western fleets emboldened the regent.⁴⁹ To propagate Korea's determination, Yi Ha-eung ordered the erection of the Anti-Appeasement Steles nationwide, inscribed with the warning that "[F]aced with the invasion of Western barbarians, should we not fight, it is to

⁴⁸ Choe 1972, 95-96. 112-14.

⁴⁹ Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 63-65; Lee 1988, 14-17.

appease them. To appease them is to betray the country.”⁵⁰ These steles, two hundred in total, demonstrated the Yi regime’s commitment to the East Asian world order.

The regent’s non-recognition of Meiji Japan was another element of Korea’s conformist strategies in this period. While Japanese leaders who were Westphalianizing Japan’s diplomacy wanted to recast the Korean-Japanese relationship into one between sovereign states, the Yi regime adhered to the diplomatic practices of East Asia.⁵¹ In 1868, Grand Prince Yi refused to accept the Meiji government’s official letter on the grounds that it violated the traditional protocols that had regulated the Korean-Japanese relationship.⁵² Prince Yi problematized that the Meiji government used terms such as “emperor” and “imperial edict,” which had been reserved exclusively for the Chinese emperor, in reference to the Japanese monarch.

Beginning in the mid-1860s, however, Korea underwent a shift from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies as King Gojong and reformist elites seized power in place of Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung and conservatives. By introducing and embodying the constitutive and regulative institutions of Westphalia, the Gojong regime sought recognition for Korea as a legitimate actor in the Westphalian order. These defiant strategies had both internal and external dimensions.

Externally, the Gojong regime opened diplomatic and commercial relations with foreign countries based on the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia. This shift began with the reconciliation with Meiji Japan.⁵³ While the end of Yi Ha-eung’s regency enabled Korean

⁵⁰ *VRCD*, “Records of King Gojong” (April 25, 1871).

⁵¹ Choe 1972, 136-37.

⁵² Choe 1972, 146; Kim 1980, 118-23.

⁵³ Palais 1975, 253; Kim 1980, 213; Lee 1988, 18-29; Koketsu Satoko, “Japanese Diplomacy and the Sino-Korean Suzerain-Vassal Relationship Before and After the First Sino-Japanese War,” in *A World History of Suzerainty: A Modern History of East and West Asia and Translated Concepts*, ed. Okamoto Takashi, trans. Thomas P Barrett (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 2019), 154.

reformists to come to the forefront, Meiji Japan's aggressive foreign policies, such as the annexation of Ryukyu (1872), the invasion of Taiwan (1874), and the gunboat diplomacy targeting Korea known as the Unyo Incident (1875), put additional pressure on the Gojong regime to sign the Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876, which recast the Korean-Japanese relationship into one between sovereign states. In the next few years, Chosŏn Korea concluded similar treaties with Western imperialist powers.

Internally, the opening of diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan and the West was followed by a series of domestic reforms to rebuild Korea as a modern sovereign state.⁵⁴ They began with the establishment of new government agencies responsible for Westphalian diplomacy with foreign countries. They were soon assigned additional missions, especially the introduction of Western institutions and technologies to modernize Korea as a legitimate member of the Westphalian order, that is, as a sovereign state with a prosperous economy and a strong army.⁵⁵ Domestic reforms and institutional reshuffling were accompanied by the dispatch of young elites abroad. From the late 1870s, the Gojong regime sent junior bureaucrats and students to the Qing and Meiji Japan to learn from their modernization programs.⁵⁶

However, the Gojong regime's strategic reorientation was interrupted, delayed, and incomplete. King Gojong and reformists, albeit far more flexible and willing to accept the Westphalian institutions than their conservative predecessors, failed to thoroughly break off from the East Asian world order.⁵⁷ For instance, while negotiating the terms of diplomacy and trade with Japan and Western imperialist powers, the Gojong regime continuously requested

⁵⁴ Deuchler 1977; Kim 2001, 41–55; Han 2019.

⁵⁵ Deuchler 1977, 92–94; Young-sook Jang, "King Gojong's Management of the Government, and the Political Role of the Min House Members," *The Academy of Korean Studies* 31, no. 3 (2008), 190–93.

⁵⁶ Deuchler 1977, 101–2.

⁵⁷ Kim 1980, 316; Larsen 2008, 76–78; 177–85.

the Qing empire to offer counsel and intervene for Korea, its most loyal tributary state. In some cases, the Gojong regime even entrusted the negotiation itself to Qing diplomats.

While the Gojong regime did not perfectly depart from the East Asian world order, Korean elites had to struggle to legitimize their country's subtle and volatile position between the old order and the new Westphalian order. They stressed that Chosŏn Korea's traditional tributary relations with the Qing did not undermine its claim to sovereign equality to other countries in the Westphalian international order. For instance, Yu Kil-Chun, a reformist elite who later played a crucial role in the Gabo Reform, wrote:

“Sometimes, a powerful state, neglecting international law, wields its power recklessly. In such cases, a weaker state seeks protection from another state to protect itself, which makes it a “protectorate state.” To avoid potential future invasions... some states send tributes to another state, which make them “tributary states”... If they [protectorate or tributary states] exercise the rights enjoyed by independent sovereign states and sign the treaties of friendship, navigation, and commerce on their own, their sovereignty or independence is not compromised due to the fact that they receive protection from or pay tributes to other states... Dependencies do not have the right to sign treaties, whereas tributary states can negotiate or conclude the treaties of friendship, navigation, and commerce with other independent sovereign states on equal footing... Unless the tributary state betrays the duty of paying tributes, the tribute-receiving state cannot deprive the former of its rights... the tributary relationship discerns their relative strength and weakness but

does not determine the extent of rights. If the tributary state uses a humble title toward the tributary-receiving state, it is to express its goodwill...”⁵⁸

Similarly, Owen N. Denny, an American who served as King Gojong’s advisor for diplomacy, claimed that Chosŏn Korea’s status as a tributary state to the Qing was compatible with its status as a sovereign state equal to other countries. He said,

“The only vassal or dependent relations recognised by the law of nations are those resulting from conquest, international agreement or convention of some kind... Korea, however, is a tributary state of China: relations which have been sustained in the past with the utmost good faith, and which Korea desires in all sincerity to continue so long as China's treatment is generous, friendly and just. But the tributary relations one state may hold to another do not and cannot in any degree affect its sovereign and independent rights. For this reason, the tribute annually paid by Korea to China does not impair her sovereignty or independence anymore than the tribute now paid by the British Government to China on account of Burmah impairs the sovereign and independent rights of the British Empire, or the tribute formerly paid by the principal maritime powers of Europe to the Barbary states affected the sovereign rights and independence of those European powers...”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Yu Kil-Chun, *Seoyugyonmun*, trans. Kyung-Jin Huh (Seoul: Seohae Munjip, 2004), 108-18. Translated in English by the author.

⁵⁹ Owen N. Denny, *China and Korea* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, limited, printers, 1888), 8-9.

The incompleteness of Chosŏn Korea's strategic shift is manifested in domestic reforms as well. Although the Gojong regime established new agencies responsible for introducing the institutions of Westphalia in foreign and domestic affairs, the traditional government structure embodying Neo-Confucian political ideology remained unabolished, generating the overlap and clash between the old and new state apparatuses.⁶⁰ It shows that Korean reformist elites were not thorough enough to sever Korea completely from the East Asian world order.

It was not until 1894 that Chosŏn Korea's defiant strategies to break off from the East Asian world order became irreversible. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War on the Korean Peninsula and Meiji Japan's unexpected victory brought an end to Qing hegemony as well as the Chosŏn-Qing tributary relations. It was no longer feasible to secure Korea's status within the traditional East Asian world order. The Gabo cabinet sponsored by Japan signed an alliance treaty with Japan, declaring the termination of the Chosŏn-Qing tributary relations.⁶¹ Domestically, the governance structure was modernized to approximate other sovereign states.⁶² In this process, the pro-Japan reformists attempted to institutionalize constraints on the monarch's power and authority, entrusting state affairs to the prime and other ministers.

Although the pro-Japan Gabo cabinet collapsed due to King Gojong's flee to the Russian legation in 1895, Korea's defiant status-seeking strategies continued.⁶³ To claim

⁶⁰ Wang 2003, 62-63; Young-sook Jang, "Naemubu Jonsoknyeongan (1885-1894 nyeon) Gojong ūi Yeokhal gwa Jeonggukdonghyang," *Sangmyongsahak* 8 (2003), 348-49, 352; Jang 2008, 186-90.

⁶¹ *VRCD*, "Records of King Gojong" (December 12, 1894); Larsen 2008, 235; Wang 2003, 245-26.

⁶² Wang 2003, 210-23, 227-44; Kim 2001, 48-49; Hyun Kim, "National Reformers' Attempts to Restrict Monarchical Power (1894-1898): Focusing on Their Distrust of the King's Leadership and Their Efforts to Compromise with Him," *Korean Political Science Review* 53, no. 5 (2019), 14.

⁶³ Dong Taek Kim, "Three Conceptions of Modern State Formation in Taehan Empire," *21st Century Political Science Review* 20, no. 1 (2010), 103.

Korea's status as a sovereign state and legitimate member of the new Westphalian order, King Gojong enthroned himself as the emperor of Great Korea (*Daehan*) in October 1897. Two years later, he promulgated the State System of the Great Korean Empire, equivalent to the constitutions of other sovereign states.⁶⁴ It stipulated that Korea's independence was based on the recognition of other states and the international law of Westphalia. The Gojong regime's departure from the East Asian world order was completed in 1899 with the signing of the Treaty of Seoul, which established Westphalian diplomatic relations with the Qing on an equal footing.⁶⁵

However, the Gojong regime's quest for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian international order ended with a total failure as Korea lost its sovereignty and was colonized by Meiji Japan in 1910. Although Western imperialist powers recognized in rhetoric the Gojong regime's claim to Korea's independence and equality as a sovereign state, they were by no means willing to respect it.⁶⁶ While Meiji Japan gradually deprived Korea of its sovereign rights, Western imperialist powers stayed aloof as they were skeptical of Korea's eligibility for legitimate membership in the Westphalian order.⁶⁷ For instance, Britain turned a blind eye to Japan's colonization of Korea because it was in alliance with Japan to counter Russia in East Asia.⁶⁸ Britain dismissed the Korean government's request to intervene in the Russo-Japanese peace negotiation in which they agreed to put Korea under the control of Japan. Rather, after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Britain allowed Japan to turn Korea into its protectorate.

⁶⁴ Andre Schmid, "Decentering the 'Middle Kingdom': The Problem of China in Korean Nationalist Thought, 1895-1910," in *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities*, ed. Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 95-96.

⁶⁵ Larsen 2008, 250-51.

⁶⁶ Daeyeol Ku, "A Damocles Sword? Korean Hopes Betrayed," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, ed. David Wolff et al., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 439.

⁶⁷ Ku 2007, 445-47; Euysuk Kwon, "Ascending to the Imperial Throne: Kojong's Elevation from King to Emperor and British Responses, 1895-1898," *International Journal of Korean History* 26, no. 1 (2021), 227-28, 238-41.

⁶⁸ Euysuk Kwon, "An Unfulfilled Expectation: Britain's Response to the Question of Korean Independence, 1903-1905," *International Journal of Korean History* 23, no. 1 (2018), 39-48.

The United States was no different.⁶⁹ Since Russia's expansionism in Manchuria threatened its commercial interests, the United States aligned with Britain and Japan and acquiesced in Japan's seizure of Korea. The US government, which was deeply skeptical about Korea's eligibility as a civilized member of international society, signed the Taft-Katsura Agreement (1905) that approved Japanese control over Korea.

2) Strategic Inconsistency

During the Westphalian transition, the Gojong regime pursued a shift from conformist to defiant status-seeking strategies to defect from the existing East Asian world order and join the Westphalian order. However, it could not implement defiant strategies consistently because reformist elites failed to elicit support from domestic society and foreign actors. Domestically, Confucian intellectuals and the populace resisted the top-down reforms required to transform Korea into a modern sovereign state eligible for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian order. Externally, the Gojong regime failed to secure a reliable patron that would support its defiant strategies. Rather, foreign powers with strategic interests in East Asia exploited factionalism within the Gojong regime and the instability of state-society relations, undermining Korea's strategic consistency.

A. State-Society Relations

Since Neo-Confucianism was Chosŏn Korea's state ideology, Confucian intellectuals had enjoyed both moral authority and socioeconomic privileges in Korean society. Even after the Gojong regime began modernization reforms to obtain legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian international order, the influence of Confucian intellectuals remained robust, especially in the public sphere. In response to the demands of foreign powers for diplomatic

⁶⁹ Ki-Jung Kim, "The War and US-Korean Relations," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, ed. David Wolff et al., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 467–89.

and commercial relations and the Gojong regime's Western-style modernization, Confucian intellectuals who regarded Japan and the West as barbarians or beasts organized nationwide protests, calling for the defense of Confucian orthodoxy and the expulsion of foreigners.⁷⁰ They firmly believed that Korea could be revitalized by the sage-like elites embodying Confucian virtues.

The relationship between Confucian intellectuals and the Gojong regime gradually turned hostile. These anti-foreign reactionaries played a crucial role in ousting Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung. Although they supported the regent's isolationist foreign policy, they staunchly opposed his domestic reforms, especially the abolition of private Confucian academies and their socioeconomic privileges. Their opposition seriously damaged the Yi Ha-eung regime's legitimacy, leading to the regent's resignation.⁷¹ However, the support of Confucian intellectuals for King Gojong did not last long as the young monarch betrayed their expectations by opening diplomatic relations with foreigners and introducing the institutions of Westphalia. Confucian reactionaries with a strong commitment to the East Asian world order could not tolerate any deviation from it.⁷²

The Gojong regime's decision to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with Meiji Japan and the West enraged Confucian intellectuals. Therefore, they organized protests and submitted a series of joint petitions to criticize and reverse the government's decision.⁷³ Moreover, these reactionaries pursued even an alignment with Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung whom they impeached a few years ago. Some hardliners participated in the 1881 coup to enthrone Yi Chae-sun, Grand Prince Yi's bastard, in place of King Gojong.⁷⁴ As the dominance of reformist

⁷⁰ Chŏng 1995, 139.

⁷¹ Palais 1975, 179-81; Chŏng 1995, 74-80.

⁷² Palais 1975, 252-53; Deuchler 1977, 104-6; Chŏng 1995, 221-24.

⁷³ Deuchler 1977, 104-6.

⁷⁴ Palais 1975, 252-53; Larsen 2008, 80.

elites in the court and officialdom was consolidated after the 1882 Imo Mutiny, the influence of reactionary intellectuals diminished. However, they remained a social force that continuously interrupted the Gojong regime's defiant status-seeking strategies.⁷⁵

The conflict between the Gojong regime and reformists outside of the ruling coalition also undermined the consistency of Korea's defiant strategies. As Korea's entry into the Westphalian international order became inevitable, a growing number of intellectuals outside the court and officialdom demanded fundamental reforms to rebuild Korea as a modern sovereign state modeled on the West. However, these reformist intellectuals cooperated with the Gojong regime limitedly and selectively. While reformist intellectuals, many of whom were former bureaucrats, believed that reforms should be dictated by bureaucrats and the parliament or its equivalent be installed, King Gojong and the royalists asserted that the monarch was the sole and absolute sovereign with despotic power. In the late 1890s, their priority was to secure and aggrandize the emperor's despotic power, rather than to modernize Korea into a sovereign state.⁷⁶

The rise and fall of the Independence Club well represented the conflict between the Gojong regime and reformist intellectuals. The Independence Club was an association launched by reformist intellectuals and activists such as Seo Jae-pil, a former member of the pro-Japan faction who returned from his exile in the United States, and Yun Chi-ho, another former reform-minded bureaucrat. They were soon joined by reformist bureaucrats in the court who supported Western-style modernization.⁷⁷ Beginning in 1896, Seo Jae-pil and Yun Chi-

⁷⁵ Ku 2007, 453-54.

⁷⁶ Kim 2001, 49-50; Jang 2008, 196-201; Jaegon Cho, *Emperor Gojong and the Great Han Empire* (Seoul: Yuxsa Gonggan, 2020), 304-6; Kim 2001, 51; Ku 2007, 458-59.

⁷⁷ Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Center for Korean Studies, 1988), 85.

ho, published *The Independent*, a modern newspaper for public enlightenment.⁷⁸ Encouraged by the success of their newspaper, reformist intellectuals organized the Independence Club in June 1896, which soon grew into a national organization.⁷⁹

The relationship between the Gojong regime and the Independence Club was cooperative in the first place because both sides shared the goal of transforming Korea into a modern sovereign state. However, their cooperative relationship quickly turned sour as it became evident that they held different, even antagonistic visions with regard to where sovereignty came from and how it should be exercised. Emperor Gojong and the royalists envisioned a despotic monarchy where the emperor was the sole and absolute sovereign with little constraint upon him. In contrast, the Independence Club called for a constitutional monarchy led by elite bureaucrats, the institutionalization of political parties and elections, and the opening of the national assembly.⁸⁰

Yielding to this bottom-up pressure, Emperor Gojong and the royalists agreed to reorganize the privy council that had served as an imperial advisory body into the national assembly and allowed the Independence Club to elect half of the council members. However, their compromise quickly fell apart because the royalists were by no means willing to respect it.⁸¹ They spread the rumor that the Independence Club was plotting to dethrone the emperor and establish a republic, and mobilized the peddlers who had been sponsored by the court to attack the Club and its members. Finally, in December 1898, Emperor Gojong illegalized the Independence Club.

⁷⁸ Chandra 1988, 107.

⁷⁹ Vipin Chandra, "The Independence Club and Korea's First Proposal for a National Legislative Assembly," *Occasional Papers on Korea*, no. 4 (1975), 21; Chandra 1988, 110-13.

⁸⁰ Kim 2010, 107; Chandra 1975, 22-23; Chandra 1988, 184-89.

⁸¹ Chandra 1975, 28-30; Chandra 1988, 200-8.

It is challenging to assess the role of the general populace in Chosŏn Korea's status-seeking strategies during the Westphalian transition. Overall, however, the popular response to the Gojong regime's reorientation toward defiant status-seeking strategies was passive, negative, and even hostile, rather than vice versa. While the conflict with Confucian and reformist intellectuals undermined the Gojong regime's consistency in pursuing defiant strategies, the popular resistance that resulted from the negative externalities of diplomatic and commercial relations with foreign countries posed another challenge.

During the Westphalian transition, the populace often attributed their worsening living conditions to the corrupt ruling elites who colluded with alien invaders and decided to introduce the evil culture of the West. The main targets of popular resentment were Japan, Queen Min and her relatives, and their collaborators in the court and officialdom.⁸² The popular revolts in the early 1880s demonstrated the strength of anti-foreign sentiments prevalent in Korean society.⁸³ For instance, the 1882 Imo Mutiny launched by a group of soldiers of the old garrisons quickly escalated into a large-scale uprising as they were joined by the populace who blamed the Japanese and the corrupt bureaucrats, especially the Min clan, for their deteriorating living conditions. The 1884 Gapshin Coup staged by the pro-Japan faction also led to a surge of popular resentment targeting reformists and foreigners.

The 1894 Tonghak Movement was the most dramatic explosion of anti-government, anti-foreign popular resentment. It was a nationwide peasant uprising that called for the punishment of corrupt bureaucrats and the repulsion of foreign invaders. The peasant revolt that started in the southeastern provinces spread to others, and the Tonghak peasant army

⁸² Kim 2004, 9-10; Eunsook Park "The Minjung's Perception of Japan During the Period of Immediately Following the Kanghwa Treaty (1877-1884) and Their Response to Japan," *International Journal of Korean History* 5, no. 1 (2003), 67-70.

⁸³ Park 2003, 72-75.

commanded by Chun Bong-jun defeated the government forces in a series of battles.⁸⁴ The movement entered a brief lull in May as the Gojong regime endorsed the Tonghak leaders' reform proposal, but the peasant army soon reassembled to repel the Japanese army that seized Korea's capital and royal palace in July. The Tonghak Movement came to an end as the Korea-Japan coalition force defeated the peasant army and arrested its leaders in late 1894.

Although the Tonghak Movement called for political, social, and economic reforms, it was at odds with the Gojong regime's defiant strategies that pursued modernization modeled on the West. Tonghak, which meant Eastern Learning, was a religion founded in 1860 as a spiritual bulwark against Western culture.⁸⁵ In particular, the manifesto and reform proposals of peasant leaders were couched in the concepts and values of Confucianism, showing the conservative nature of the Tonghak Movement.⁸⁶ Additionally, there is a strong suspicion that Chun Bong-jun, the peasant army leader, closely collaborated with Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung, a conservative leader who represented anti-foreignism in Korean politics.⁸⁷ Most importantly, the armed clash between the Gojong regime and peasants invited the military intervention of the Qing and Meiji Japan into Korea, which led to the Sino-Japanese War that deprived the Gojong regime of its capability to independently implement defiant status-seeking strategies.

B. External Support

As the Yi Ha-eung regime and conservatives who had adopted conformist strategies were replaced by the Gojong regime and reformists, Chosŏn Korea shifted toward defiant

⁸⁴ Carl Young, "The 1894 Tonghak Rebellion," in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History*, ed. Michael J. Seth (London: Routledge, 2016), 98-99.

⁸⁵ Young 2016, 95-96.

⁸⁶ Young Ick Lew, "The Conservative Character of the 1894 Tonghak Peasant Uprising: A Reappraisal with Emphasis on Chŏn Pong-Jun's Background and Motivation," *Journal of Korean Studies* 7, no. 1 (1990): 149-80; Hang-seob Bae, "Foundations for the Legitimation of the Tonghak Peasant Army and Awareness of a New Political Order," *Acta Koreana* 16, no. 2 (2013): 399-430; National Institute of Korean History, "The Tonghak Peasant Army's Proclamation" (January 10, 1894); National Institute of Korean History, "The Tonghak Peasant Army's 12-Point Reform Proposal" (June 1894).

⁸⁷ Lew 1990, 161-64.

status-seeking strategies. However, Korean reformists failed to secure a reliable foreign patron that would help them consistently carry out modernization reforms, which were required for Korea to attain the status of a legitimate actor in the Westphalian order. Although foreign powers promised their support, it was either only cheap talk or a means to expand their strategic and commercial interests in East Asia. The Qing, Meiji Japan, and Czarist Russia, the principal contenders with special stakes in Korea, tried to steer the Gojong regime's strategic reorientation in a way that served their own national interests. While the imperialist rivalry surrounding Korea was growing intense, these foreign powers exploited factionalism within the Gojong regime and the instability in state-society relations to intervene in Korean politics, undermining the Gojong regime's strategic consistency.

The Qing empire was a principal stakeholder in the Korean Peninsula. Historically, Korea was not only an indispensable participant in the East Asian world order but also an exemplary tributary state to the Chinese emperor. The Chosŏn-Qing tributary relationship was often couched in the familial terms of Confucianism.⁸⁸ By the early 1880s, however, the Qing found itself in a strategic predicament as it was neither willing to abandon its tributary relations with Chosŏn Korea nor capable of securing this loyal tributary state from other imperialist powers.⁸⁹ Therefore, Qing leaders allowed, even encouraged the Gojong regime to open diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan and Western countries based on Westphalian terms.⁹⁰ By doing so, the Qing attempted to keep imperialist powers in check and balance against each other until the Qing became strong enough to secure Korea by itself. It provided a permissive setting for Korean reformists to pursue defiant status-seeking strategies by adopting the institutions of Westphalia.

⁸⁸ Larsen 2008, 31-33.

⁸⁹ Kim 1980, 69.

⁹⁰ Kim 1980, 316; Larsen 2008, 57-62.

However, the Qing empire was never willing to allow Chosŏn Korea to deviate from its orbit. Beginning in the mid-1880s, the Qing, which now grew confident in its accomplishments in the Self-Strengthening Movement, attempted to recast Korea from a loyal but independent tributary state in the East Asian world order into a colonial dependency in the Westphalian international order.⁹¹ The Qing army's intervention to quell the Imo Mutiny and the Gapshin Coup upon the request of the Gojong regime paved the way for Qing imperialism in Korea until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. In response to Qing imperialism and the clash between the East Asian order and the Westphalian order, Korean reformist elites struggled to demonstrate that Chosŏn Korea's dual positions as a tributary state to the Qing empire and as a sovereign equal to other foreign countries were not mutually incompatible. They stressed that the Chosŏn-Qing tributary relations in the East Asian world order did not undermine Korea's sovereign equality to other states in the Westphalian international order.⁹²

Although the Qing reduced its army stationed in Korea by 1885, it could still effectively intervene in Korean politics by exploiting nationwide telegraph networks to monitor and promptly respond to emergencies there.⁹³ The Qing intervention, albeit made in the name of aiding Korea's reform, seriously damaged the Gojong regime's capability to consistently implement defiant status-seeking strategies. Politically, Yuan Shikai, the Qing supervisor charged with Korean affairs, purged the anti-Qing bureaucrats in the Korean court and even threatened to dethrone King Gojong who attempted to align with Russia to curtail the Qing's influence.⁹⁴ Economically, the Qing forced the Gojong regime to sign trade regulations that granted privileges to Chinese merchants, employ foreign advisors recommended by the Qing,

⁹¹ Kim 1980, 349-50.

⁹² Okamoto Takashi, "Suzerainty, International Law, and Translation: From the Eastern Question to the Korean Question," in *A World History of Suzerainty: A Modern History of East and West Asia and Translated Concepts*, ed. Okamoto Takashi, trans. Thomas P Barrett (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 2019), 90-92; Yu 2004; Denny 1888.

⁹³ Larsen 2008, 136-40.

⁹⁴ Larsen 2008, 168-69.

and forego loans from other foreign countries.⁹⁵ Diplomatically, the Qing enforced a set of protocols to demonstrate abroad that Korea was subordinate to the Qing.⁹⁶

Meiji Japan was another principal protagonist in the geopolitical competition surrounding the Korean Peninsula. As the Qing did, Japan attempted to expand its influence on Korea, which in turn undermined the Gojong regime's strategic consistency in defiant strategies to break off from the East Asian world order. Meiji Japan's ambition for Korea was already presaged in the 1873 debate among the Meiji oligarchs regarding a military campaign to punish the Yi Ha-eung regime.⁹⁷ Beginning with the 1875 gunboat diplomacy, Japan gradually took a more assertive stance in Korean affairs. Because the Qing empire still claimed its supremacy over Chosŏn Korea, Japanese leaders' primary goal was to separate Korea from the Qing's orbit. The 1876 Treaty of Ganghwa, the first article of which declared that Korea was an independent state with the same sovereign rights as Japan, reflected the latter's intention to erode the Qing's claim to Korea.⁹⁸

While the Qing reinforced its intervention in Korean politics in the 1880s, Japan was driven into a corner due to the Imo Mutiny and the Gapshin Coup that caused the demise of the pro-Japan faction and the surge of anti-Japanese sentiment.⁹⁹ It was not until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War that Meiji Japan seized the upper hand in Korea by defeating the Qing and launching the pro-Japan Gabo cabinet. However, Japan's march to Manchuria and aggressive interference in Korean politics invited Russia's intervention. To secure its dominance, Japan murdered Queen Min, who played a crucial role in Korea's alignment with Russia, but such a drastic move backfired as King Gojong fled to the Russian legation and

⁹⁵ Larsen 2008, 88-90, 141, 147-57.

⁹⁶ Larsen 2008, 180-81.

⁹⁷ Kim 1980, 169-85.

⁹⁸ For the Treaty of Ganghwa, see *VRCD*, "Records of King Gojong" (February 3, 1876).

⁹⁹ Ch'oe 1982, 116; Kim 2004, 281-82.

ordered the arrest and execution of pro-Japan bureaucrats. To avoid the showdown, Japan signed with Russia a series of agreements that they would share an influence on Korea, and later proposed a deal that Russia would acknowledge Japan's special and exclusive privileges in Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of Russian privileges in Manchuria.¹⁰⁰ The tension between Japan and Russia finally erupted in the Russo-Japanese War.

Czarist Russia was another major contender in the imperialist rivalry in the Korean Peninsula. Russia's intervention in East Asia not only increased regional instability but also undermined the Gojong regime's defiant strategies to establish Korea's independent and sovereign status in the new international order. By the mid-1880s, Russia maintained a passive, wait-and-see stance toward Korea because Russia's action was constrained by the Russophobia prevalent in East Asia and the logistical networks to project its military force in this region remained underdeveloped.¹⁰¹ Russia's influence on Korea loomed large as the Gojong regime called for its aid to keep the Qing and Meiji Japan in check. To counter the Qing's attempt in the late 1880s to turn Korea into a colonial dependency, the Gojong regime approached Russia. As Japan strengthened its grip on Korea after the Sino-Japanese War, King Gojong once again turned to Russia. He fled to the Russian legation and stayed there until February 1897, while carrying out the purge of pro-Japan reformists.¹⁰²

However, Russia was neither a reliable patron for Korea's defiant status-seeking nor less predatory than the Qing and Meiji Japan.¹⁰³ The image of Russia as the benevolent

¹⁰⁰ Huajeong Seok, "International Rivalry in Korea and Russia's East Asian Policy in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Korea Journal* 50, no. 3 (2010), 195-97.

¹⁰¹ Taewoo Kim, "The Intensification of Russophobia in Korea from Late Chosŏn to the Colonial Period: Focusing on the Role of Japan," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 31, no. 1 (2018): 21-46; Seok 2010, 182-83; Kim 2015, 141-42.

¹⁰² Seok 2010, 191-94.

¹⁰³ Chandra 1988, 151-53; Kwang Ho Hyun, "Understanding of the Situation of Northeast Asia by the Ruling Class during the Great Han Empire Period," *The Review of Korean History*, no. 63 (2001), 162-64; Euysuk Kwon, "An Unfulfilled Expectation: Britain's Response to the Question of Korean Independence, 1903-1905," *International Journal of Korean History* 23, no. 1 (2018), 242-43.

protector of Korea quickly eroded as Russia advanced excessive demands to maximize its political and commercial privileges. Moreover, Japan disclosed its secret agreement with Russia, wherein they exchanged their special and exclusive interests in Korea and Manchuria. In response to the growth of anti-Russian sentiment in Korean society, the Gojong regime began to distance itself from Russia. Disillusioned by Russia's aggressive and predatory policies, the Gojong regime decided to dismiss Russian advisors and military officers it invited to counter Japan and accelerate modernization reforms for state building.¹⁰⁴ After the Russo-Japanese War, Russia withdrew from the Korean peninsula, leaving it in the hands of Japan.

3. Meiji Japan

1) Commitment and Strategic Choice

A. The Rise of the Meiji Oligarchy

The Westphalian transition was a great challenge to Japan as well. In response to this challenge, however, Japanese ruling elites who were more weakly committed to the East Asian world order than their Korean counterparts exhibited more flexibility. In fact, the Tokugawa bakufu was anticipating the arrival of the West through its contact with the Netherlands, one of the few diplomatic channels between East Asia and Europe that had developed before the Westphalian transition.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, when the Tokugawa bakufu was confronted with Western imperialist powers that demanded the establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations, the bakufu quickly accepted their demands. Although anti-Tokugawa dissidents initially opposed the bakufu's decision, they altered their stance after their anti-foreign campaign was crushed by

¹⁰⁴ Chandra 1988, 154-68.

¹⁰⁵ William G. Beasley, "The Foreign Threat and the Opening of the Ports," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 263; Suzuki 2009, 62-63.

Western imperialist powers. Therefore, both sides reached a consensus that Japan's entry into the Westphalian international order was now inevitable. After the new ruling elite group known as the Meiji oligarchy seized power in 1868, Japan's defiant status-seeking to break off from East Asia and join the Westphalian order accelerated.

Japan's exit from East Asia began with the arrival of US fleets at Tokyo Bay in 1854 and the Tokugawa bakufu's decision to open diplomatic relations with the West.¹⁰⁶ The 1854 Treaty of Kanagawa allowed the entry of US ships to Shimoda and Hakodate and the establishment of the US consulate in the former. By concluding the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, Japan promised the exchange of resident ministers, the opening of additional treaty ports and the residence of US citizens there, and the granting of extraterritoriality to the United States. This unequal treaty, followed by similar ones with other Western countries, deprived Japan of its tariff autonomy and jurisdiction over foreigners on its soil.

In response to the arrival of Western imperialist powers, the bakufu sought opinions from principal feudal lords (*daimyo*). Ii Naosuke, who was later appointed as the bakufu's regent, claimed:

"... it is impossible in the crisis we now face to ensure the safety and tranquility of our country merely by an insistence on the seclusion laws as we did in former times... Although there is a national prohibition of it [trade], conditions are not the same as they were. The exchange of goods is a universal practice. This we should explain to the spirits of our ancestors. And

¹⁰⁶ Gong 1984, 169; Alexis Dudden, "Matthew Perry in Japan, 1852–1854," in *East Asia in the World: Twelve Events That Shaped the Modern International Order*, ed. David C. Kang and Stephan Haggard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 198-199.

we should then tell the foreigners that we mean in the future to send trading vessels to the Dutch company's factory at Batavia to engage in trade; that we will allocate some of our trading goods to America, some to Russia, and so on... We must construct new steamships, especially powerful warships, and these we will load with goods not needed in Japan... Openly these will be called merchant vessels, but they will in fact have the secret purpose of training a navy... Moreover, we must shake off the panic and apprehensions that have beset us and abandon our habits of luxury and wasteful spending. Our defenses thus strengthened, and all being arranged at home, we can act so as to make our courage and prestige resound beyond the seas.”¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Hotta Masayoshi, another prominent daimyo who also served as the regent before Ii Naosuke, argued:

“I am therefore convinced that our policy should be to stake everything on the present opportunity, to conclude friendly alliances, to send ships to foreign countries everywhere and conduct trade, to copy the foreigners where they are at their best and so repair our own shortcomings, to foster our national strength and complete our armaments, and so gradually subject the foreigners to our influence until in the end all the countries of the world know the blessings of perfect tranquility and our hegemony is acknowledged throughout the globe. If, on the other hand, ignoring the realities of the

¹⁰⁷ “Document 7: Ii Naosuke to Bakufu (Oct 1, 1853),” in *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, ed. William G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 117-18.

situation, we argue about trifles and show hatred for the foreigners, we will without reason make enemies of countries which from the beginning have been part of the same world as ourselves and which might all, by proper action, be made to serve and assist us. That would be unwise in terms of both divine law and human sense. It would be a failure to understand conditions and might put us in some danger of going astray in national affairs.”¹⁰⁸

By the late 1850s, feudal lords who called for the opening of diplomatic and commercial relations with the West led the decision-making process. Under the supervision of Ii Naosuke, now appointed as the bakufu’s regent, Japan signed treaties for trade and diplomacy with Western countries. However, the bakufu’s unilateral move elicited a backlash from chauvinistic reactionaries, prompting them to form an anti-foreign and anti-Tokugawa coalition. They opposed the bakufu’s decision on the grounds that it was made without imperial approval and would destroy Japan’s traditional order and culture.

The political tension continued to escalate, forming a cleavage among the reigning bakufu, the imperial loyalists, and the unionists.¹⁰⁹ While the bakufu envisioned reforms to restore and extend its leadership, imperial loyalists consisted of court nobles, anti-Tokugawa feudal lords, and the chauvinistic warrior class who argued that the bakufu proved no longer able to rule and defend the country on behalf of the emperor. The loyalists led the so-called *Sonno-Joi* (Revere Emperor, Repel Barbarians) activism, which was aimed at the restoration

¹⁰⁸ “Document 20: Hotta Masayoshi’s memorandum on foreign policy [probably late December 1857],” in Beasley 1955, 166-67.

¹⁰⁹ Hillsborough 2014, 93-94, 139-40; Conrad D. Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu: 1862-1868* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 461-43; Marius B. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryoma and the Meiji Restoration* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 191.

of imperial rule and the expulsion of foreign invaders. The unionists urged cooperation between the imperial court and the bakufu to address the national crisis.

However, the political divide initially drawn among the bakufu, the loyalists, and the unionists came to be redrawn between the Tokugawa bakufu and the anti-Tokugawa coalition as there emerged a national consensus that Japan's entry into the Westphalian order was inevitable. The Tokugawa bakufu already acknowledged in the 1850s that Japan could no longer keep itself insulated from the West, and embarked on a set of reforms, including the dispatch of students abroad and the introduction of Western technologies.¹¹⁰ Strikingly, the imperial loyalists who once urged the repulsion of foreigners by force converted to reformism as well. Their anti-foreign campaign subsided as they were awakened by the Battles of Kagoshima (1863) and Shimonoseki (1864), in which Satsuma and Chosŏn, two southwestern domains that played a leading role in the Sonno-Joi activism, experienced crushing defeats by the Western coalition fleet armed with advanced weapons.¹¹¹

With the conversion of imperial loyalists and the emergence of a national consensus on the inevitability of strategic reorientation, the political struggle between the Tokugawa bakufu and the anti-Tokugawa coalition entered a new phase. Although both sides now agreed that Japan should adopt and embody the institutions of Westphalia, they contended over who should lead reforms to achieve those goals. Their conflict led to a civil war as the bakufu launched military campaigns in 1864 and 1866 to punish the anti-Tokugawa imperial loyalists in Choshu who now abandoned their anti-foreign slogan.¹¹² The victory of Choshu, joined by the imperial loyalists in Satsuma who agreed that Japan needed a new leadership, rendered the

¹¹⁰ Totman 1980, 32-33; Inoue Takutoshi, "Japanese Students in England and the Meiji Government's Foreign Employees (Oyatoi): The People Who Supported Modernisation in the Bakumatsu-Early Meiji Period," *Discussion Paper Series* 40 (2008): 1-30.

¹¹¹ Hillsborough 2014, 249-50, 292-93.

¹¹² Totman 1980, 128-38, 152-56.

Tokugawa bakufu's collapse irreversible.¹¹³ In February 1868, the anti-bakufu coalition led by Choshu and Satsuma put an end to the Tokugawa rule and declared the return to imperial rule.¹¹⁴

When the anti-Tokugawa alliance seized power in 1868, Japan was in the middle of an unprecedented challenge that resulted from the Westphalian transition in East Asia.¹¹⁵ The new elite group known as the Meiji oligarchy, with its key members coming from the low-ranking warrior class in the domains of Choshu, Satsuma, Tosa, and Hizen, played a leading role in the anti-Tokugawa coalition.¹¹⁶ These new ruling elites had a weak commitment to the Tokugawa bakufu, which had discriminated against them and had been part of the East Asian world order despite its marginal position.¹¹⁷ As it became evident that the bakufu was too weak and incompetent to protect Japan from Western imperialist powers, these young dissident warriors stood at the vanguard of anti-foreignism, urging the repulsion of foreigners and the restoration of imperial authority. However, awakened by their defeats in Kagoshima and Shimonoseki, these warriors turned into the advocates of Western-style modernization.

From the beginning, the Meiji oligarchs revealed their weak commitment to the East Asian world order. The joint memorial submitted by principal feudal lords to the imperial court in February 1868 demonstrated the new ruling elite group's willingness to learn and embody the institutions of Westphalia.¹¹⁸ They argued:

“... perhaps we may be following the bad example of the Chinese, who
fancying themselves alone to be great and worthy of respect, and despising

¹¹³ Jansen 1961, 220-21.

¹¹⁴ Totman 1980, 380-81, 452-57.

¹¹⁵ Totman 1980, 480.

¹¹⁶ William G. Beasley, “Councillors of Samurai Origin in the Early Meiji Government, 1868–9,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1957), 88-91.

¹¹⁷ Suzuki 2009, 138.

¹¹⁸ Beasley 1989, 303.

foreigners as little better than beasts, have come to suffer defeat at their hands and to have it lorded over themselves by those very foreigners... By traveling to foreign countries and observing what good there is in them, by comparing their daily progress, the universality of enlightened government, of a sufficiency of military defences, and of abundant food for the people amongst them with our present condition, the causes of prosperity and degeneracy may be plainly traced... in order to restore the fallen fortunes of the Empire and to make the Imperial dignity respected abroad, it is necessary to make a firm resolution, and to get rid of the narrow-minded ideas which have prevailed hitherto. We pray that [...] our deficiencies being supplied with what foreigners are superior in... let the foolish argument which has hitherto styled foreigners dogs and goats and barbarians be abandoned; let the Court ceremonies, hitherto imitated from the Chinese be reformed, and the Foreign Representatives be bidden to Court in the manner prescribed by the rules current amongst all nations...”¹¹⁹

Against this backdrop, the Charter Oath, issued in the name of Emperor Meiji (r. 1867-1912) two months later, declared that “evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature” and that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ John Reddie Black, *Young Japan, Yokohama and Yedo: A Narrative of the Settlement and the City from the Signing of the Treaties in 1858 to the Close of the Year 1879, with a Glance at the Progress of Japan During a Period of Twenty One Years*, vol. 2 (New York: Baker, Pratt, 1883), 178-81.

¹²⁰ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 337.

To rebuild Japan from a decentralized feudal society into a modern sovereign state modeled on the West, the Meiji oligarchs equipped themselves with expertise in Western technologies and languages. They also embarked on a package of top-down reforms dubbed together the Meiji Restoration.¹²¹ In 1871, the Meiji government dispatched the Iwakura Embassy comprising young elites to the United States and Europe. Although the embassy failed to accomplish its original mission, that is, the revision of unequal treaties with Western countries, the embassy members took advantage of their travel as an opportunity to observe and investigate why and how the West came to dominate East Asia.¹²² Their reports helped the Meiji oligarchs envision and carry out reform programs to transform Japan into a modern sovereign state.¹²³

Although the Meiji oligarchs were united in their aspirations for rebuilding Japan, they often engaged in fierce competition for power and influence among themselves.¹²⁴ In the first decade of the Meiji Restoration, the most significant political divide was between Okubo Toshimichi and Saigō Takamori, the two leading oligarchs who held different visions for Meiji Japan. While Okubo envisioned a thorough reform to modernize Japan as a sovereign state, Saigō was more cautious and called for a selective adoption of Western institutions.¹²⁵ Their conflict exploded in the 1873 Korea debate over the military campaign to punish Korea's rejection of receiving the Meiji government's official letter.¹²⁶ It ended with the victory of

¹²¹ Beasley 1957, 101-3; Jansen 1989, 308; Dudden 2020, 197.

¹²² Jansen 2002, 358; Tomoko T. Okagaki, *The Logic of Conformity: Japan's Entry into International Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 66.

¹²³ Kim 1980, 188-89; Jansen 2002, 358-59; Suzuki 2009, 84-85; Okagaki 2013, 66-68.

¹²⁴ J. Mark Ramseyer and Frances McCall Rosenbluth, *The Politics of Oligarchy: Institutional Choice in Imperial Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15.

¹²⁵ Charles L. Yates, *Saigō Takamori: The Man Behind the Myth* (London: Routledge, 2010), 123-28.

¹²⁶ David J. Lu, ed. "Okubo Toshimichi's Opinion Against Korean Expedition, October 1873." In *Japan: A Documentary History*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 325-26; Kim 1980, 178-85; Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, United States: Cornell University Press, 2003), 83.

Okubo and moderate councilors who claimed that domestic reforms were far more urgent than the Korean expedition.

The next round of intra-oligarchy competition resulted from their disagreement regarding the national assembly and constitution. From the mid-1870s, the Meiji oligarchy was faced with a growing demand for political participation, which evolved into the Freedom and Civil Rights (*Jiyū Minken*) Movement. It was former oligarchs expelled from the government, such as Itagaki Taisuke, Goto Shojoro, and Okuma Shigenobu, who played a crucial role in this parliamentary movement.¹²⁷ For instance, Itagaki and Goto, who left the government after the pro-Okubo councilors' victory in the 1873 Korea debate, submitted a petition that called for the establishment of a deliberative body as promised in the Charter Oath. Okuma was another former oligarch who joined the Civil Rights Movement. He was ousted from the government in 1881 due to the suspicion that he was allied with the anti-government parliamentarians.

In the long term, however, the defection of pro-parliamentarian oligarchs enhanced the Meiji oligarchy's cohesiveness. The oligarchs continued to strengthen their grip on power even after the Meiji Constitution was promulgated in 1889 and the national assembly opened accordingly. While the oligarchs filled the major posts in the cabinet, the Privy Council established in April 1888 to discuss constitutional drafts functioned as a channel for senior oligarchs to continuously intervene in decision-making.¹²⁸ The Meiji oligarchy's cohesiveness was further strengthened by the emerging consensus that Japan was on the path of enlightenment and thus deserved equal status as a sovereign state to other Western imperialist

¹²⁷ Jansen 2002, 377-82; Samuels 2003, 52; Kyu Hyun Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments: Parliamentarianism and the National Public Sphere in Early Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2020), 318.

¹²⁸ Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1995, 32-34; Jansen 2002, 392-94; Samuels 2003, 55-56.

powers. Japanese leaders shared the belief that Japan no longer belonged to East Asia but was a part of the new Western civilization.¹²⁹

B. Departing Asia, Entering Europe

When the Meiji oligarchs seized power in 1868, they already shared the consensus that Japan should adopt defiant strategies to exit from East Asia and enter the Westphalian order. They soon launched the Meiji Restoration, that is, a series of reforms to transform Japan into a sovereign state that fulfilled the Westphalian standards and thus to establish its status as a legitimate actor in the new international order. The Meiji oligarchs' defiant status-seeking strategies had both internal and external dimensions. It was aimed to build a centralized government, a strong army, and an industrialized economy on the one hand, and to prove Japan's military strength and revise the unequal treaties that limited Japan's tariff autonomy and granted extraterritoriality to Western imperialist powers on the other hand. To this end, Japan had to learn and embody the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia.

Domestically, the Meiji oligarchy's defiant strategies pursued the modernization of Japan as a sovereign state modeled on the West, which was required to attain the status of legitimate actor in the Westphalian order. To this end, the central government was now reorganized as a body to exercise centralized control and authority.¹³⁰ Below the Grand Council of the State (*Daijō-kan*), six ministries were created to address different sectors. The restructuring of central-local relations followed.¹³¹ In 1869, the central government declared the return of registers, appointed feudal lords as imperial governors, and abolished their

¹²⁹ Munemitsu Mutsu, *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95*, trans. Gordon Mark Berger (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 28; Jansen 2002, 434. For the evolution of discourses among Japanese elites that dissociated Japan from the rest of Asia and associated it with Europe, see Sushila Narsimhan, *Japanese Perceptions of China in the Nineteenth Century: Influence of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (New Delhi: Phoenix Publishing House, 1999).

¹³⁰ Hillsborough 2014, 534-37; Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1995, 21-22.

¹³¹ Gong 1984, 176; Jansen 2002, 345-48; Suzuki 2009, 125-26.

hereditary privileges. Two years later, the central government decided to replace the feudal domain system with the prefecture system under the central government's jurisdiction.

The centralization of political power took place in tandem with military and economic modernization. The Meiji oligarchs started military reforms to build a strong modern army.¹³² With the inauguration of Yamagata Aritomo, a leading oligarch who represented the Choshu clique, as the Minister of Military in 1870, the Meiji government accelerated military reforms by instituting a conscription system, the Imperial Guard and military districts charged with national defense, and military training and education programs. These reforms generated resistance from the lingering warrior class. They were angered by the fact that the national conscription system would deprive them of the monopoly over violence, which was the source of their pride and privileges. To assuage their grievance, Yamagata promised that the posts of officers in the modern army would be preserved for the warrior class.¹³³

The Meiji oligarchs also laid the foundation for economic modernization. They created a land tax system to increase state revenues, established a modern financial system, and enhanced state autonomy in budget making.¹³⁴ However, Meiji Japan's economic modernization was not accomplished immediately. Okubo's initial reforms in the 1870s generated many problems such as the inefficiency of government-run factories, inflation, and the deficit of foreign reserves. Moreover, Japan could not implement protectionist policies to nurture its fledgling industries due to the unequal treaties that restricted Japan's tariff economy. In this unfavorable setting, Matsukata Masayoshi appointed as the Minister of Finance in 1881

¹³² Suzuki 2009, 134; Samuels 2003, 50-51; Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 22-24.

¹³³ Drea 2009, 29-30; Hillsborough 2014, 536.

¹³⁴ Masaki Nakabayashi, "The Rise of a Japanese Fiscal State," in *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History, 1500-1914*, ed. Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O'Brien (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 388-91.

chose austere and deflationary fiscal policies. These measures did not bring economic prosperity immediately but paved the road for Japan's economic growth.¹³⁵

The Meiji oligarchy also engaged in legal reforms to build a new legal system that would codify political and socioeconomic changes, and more importantly, to establish a modern constitution.¹³⁶ The constitutional drafting was inseparable from the opening of the national assembly, another marker of civilized states in the Westphalian international order. Since the return of the Iwakura Embassy, there was a growing demand for a representative body to produce a national consensus on Japan's grand strategy and mobilize national resources accordingly. Therefore, the 1881 imperial edict declared that the national assembly would be established by 1890, and Ito Hirobumi, a leading oligarch from Choshu, embarked on the constitutional drafting. During his travel to investigate the constitutions of Western countries, Ito was so deeply impressed with the rise of Germany that he consulted with German jurists such as Rudolph von Gneist, Lorenz von Stein, and Herman Roesler.

The Meiji Constitution was finally promulgated in February 1889, but it helped the oligarchs enhance their power.¹³⁷ The constitution placed the cabinet beyond the national assembly's supervision, and denied the concept of popular sovereignty by declaring that the emperor was the only sovereign and that the constitution itself was an imperial gift to his subjects. Some oligarchs stressed that the national assembly should play only an auxiliary role in supporting the government. Yamagata Aritomo wrote to Ito that "[E]very day we wait the evil poison will spread more and more over the provinces, penetrate the minds of the young,

¹³⁵ Jansen 2002, 372-77; Samuels 2003, 84-85.

¹³⁶ Gong 1984, 176-81; Jansen 2002, 359, 390-91; Samuels 2003, 54-55. For the history of Meiji Japan's constitutional drafting, see George M. Beckmann, *The Making of the Meiji Constitution: The Oligarchs and the Constitutional Development of Japan, 1868-1891* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1975).

¹³⁷ Samuels 2003, 50-58; Gong 1984, 176; Suzuki 2009, 132-36; Jansen 2002, 394; Kim 2020, 433-34.

and inevitably produce unfathomable evils.”¹³⁸ Although Ito took a more flexible stance than Yamagata, he was not willing to cede power to the national assembly either.¹³⁹

The Meiji oligarchy’s defiant status-seeking strategy had external dimensions as well. Meiji Japan’s domestic reforms were synchronized with its foreign policy to exit from East Asia and obtain recognition from the West that Japan was eligible for full and legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian order. Meiji Japan’s defiant strategy included three distinct, but interrelated components: diplomatic assault on the East Asian world order and Qing hegemony, the revision of unequal treaties with Western imperialist powers, and military campaigns to prove Japan’s capability and eligibility for full membership in the Westphalian order.

First, the Meiji oligarchs used the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia that they learned recently to undermine Qing hegemony. In 1871, Japan agreed with the Qing to open diplomatic relations based on the Westphalian notion of sovereign equality.¹⁴⁰ The Qing government accepted Japan’s call for sovereign equality because Japan, unlike other East Asian states such as Korea and Vietnam, had not been a formal tributary state of the Qing emperor. However, this decision eroded the Qing’s hegemonic status by providing a diplomatic ground that Japan, based on its equality to the Qing, could claim superiority over the latter’s tributary states.

Meiji Japan’s defiant strategy to subvert the old order and Qing hegemony grew bolder as it intervened in the Qing’s relations with its tributaries.¹⁴¹ In 1874, Meiji Japan launched a military expedition against Taiwan, which had been a part of Qing territories, on the ground that the Taiwanese murdered Ryukyuan sailors under the rule of the Japanese government. In

¹³⁸ Jansen 2002, 420-22; Vlastos 1989, 411; Samuels 2003, 52.

¹³⁹ William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1990), 73; Samuels 2003, 54.

¹⁴⁰ Kim 1980, 145-51.

¹⁴¹ Kim 1980, 199-200; Suzuki 2009, 146-54; Okagaki 2013, 70-73.

1875, the Meiji oligarchs undertook gunboat diplomacy targeting Korea to redefine the Korean-Japanese relationship on the Westphalian terms of sovereign equality. The 1876 Treaty of Ganghwa, which declared that “Korea is an independent state enjoying the same sovereign rights as does Japan,” was a diplomatic assault on Qing hegemony as it questioned that Chosŏn Korea was subordinate to the Qing. In 1879, Japan annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom as the Prefecture of Okinawa. Given that Ryukyu had been in tributary relations with both the Qing and Japan, the latter’s unilateral move was another challenge to Qing hegemony.

Second, the Meiji oligarchs incessantly attempted to revise unequal treaties with Western imperialist powers, which were the markers of Japan’s incomplete actorhood in the Westphalian international order.¹⁴² These treaties, which deprived Japan of its tariff autonomy and granted extraterritoriality to the Western treaty powers, reproduced the notion that Japan was still an uncivilized, or semi-civilized at best, country that did not fulfill the standards of membership in the Westphalian order. They prevented Japan from fully exercising its sovereignty as an independent state. Therefore, the treaty revision became the top priority that guided Meiji Japan’s diplomacy.

Although there was a national consensus in Japan that the humiliating treaties with Western imperialist powers should be revised, the negotiation was a contested process that often spurred domestic backlash.¹⁴³ With the aid of foreign advisors, Inoue Kaoru, a Meiji oligarch who served as foreign minister from 1879 to 1888, tried to complete the treaty revision negotiation out of the concern that the government would be seriously constrained after the inauguration of the national assembly. However, Inoue’s haste backfired because his proposal to establish a court with a majority of foreign judges enraged the public. After Inoue’s

¹⁴² Gong 1984, 170; Okagaki 2013, 53.

¹⁴³ Okagaki 2013, 80-82.

resignation, Okuma Shigenobu was appointed as foreign minister and led the negotiation. However, Okuma failed to make progress as well because the public regarded his proposal, like his predecessor's, as making too many concessions to the West.

It was Mutsu Munemitsu, appointed as foreign minister in 1892, who finally achieved the treaty revision.¹⁴⁴ Mutsu relied on secret and bilateral negotiations to insulate the negotiation process from domestic politics and public opinion. He also played the rivalry between Western powers and anti-foreign sentiment in Japanese society to enhance Japan's leverage in the negotiation. Right before the onset of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan finally signed the Aoki-Kimberly Treaty with Britain that abolished British extraterritoriality in Japan, which was followed by similar treaties with other treaty powers. The restoration of Japan's tariff autonomy had to wait a few more years, the termination of extraterritoriality demonstrated that Japan was now granted an equal status, at least nominally, to other Western countries.

Finally, the Meiji oligarchs carried out military campaigns to prove Japan's eligibility for both legitimate actorhood and great-power status within the Westphalian order. Until Emperor Meiji's death in 1912, it seemed that Japan finished the quest for status by defeating the Qing and Czarist Russia and colonizing Chosŏn Korea. While the treaty revision enabled Japan to claim equality with Western imperialist powers, the victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars and the colonization of Korea helped Japan join the rank of great powers in the Westphalian order.

The year 1894 was a critical juncture when Meiji Japan's efforts to revise unequal treaties with the West and overthrow Qing hegemony intersected, demonstrating order transition in East Asia was now irreversible. Japan initiated the Sino-Japanese War by

¹⁴⁴ Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 764; Gong 1984, 194-95; Okagaki 2013, 83-85.

ambushing the Qing fleet in Korea, where the Qing's determination to secure its last tributary state clashed with Meiji Japan's aspiration for status and territorial expansion.¹⁴⁵ Japan's decision to go to war against the Qing, which would have been unthinkable to those strongly committed to the East Asian world order, proved its weak commitment to it. By winning this war, Meiji Japan put an end to Qing hegemony and the East Asian world order built upon it. The 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, in which the Qing agreed to terminate its tributary relationship with Chosŏn Korea and cede the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, demonstrated that the East Asian world order was so no longer sustainable.

However, Japan's victory backfired because it invited the Triple Intervention by Germany, France, and most importantly, Czarist Russia that already had a strong strategic and economic interest in Manchuria.¹⁴⁶ The competition between Meiji Japan and Czarist Russia to build their own spheres of influence in East Asia continued to escalate, leading to the Russo-Japanese War. By defeating Russia in this war, Japan came to be recognized as not only a newcomer but also an exceptional non-Western rising power in the Westphalian international order.¹⁴⁷ The 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth paved the way for Japan's territorial aggrandizement in East Asia in the coming decades.¹⁴⁸

Meiji Japan's quest for status culminated in 1910 with the colonization of Korea. Given that the possession of overseas colonies was a key marker of great-power status in the Westphalian order, it consolidated Japan's legitimate actorhood and newly acquired great-power status.¹⁴⁹ Since Japan already defeated its principal competitors in East Asia, the Qing

¹⁴⁵ Suzuki 2009, 173-74; S. C. M. Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 16-19.

¹⁴⁶ M. N. Pak and Wayne Patterson, "Russian Policy toward Korea before and during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95," *Journal of Korean Studies* 5, no. 1 (1984), 119; Paine 2017, 40.

¹⁴⁷ Iriye 1989, 777.

¹⁴⁸ Paine 2017, 71; Jansen 2002, 440.

¹⁴⁹ Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 16-17, 74-76.

empire and Czarist Russia, the remaining issue was to decide how it would rule Korea. While the hardliners preferred the immediate annexation of Korea, the moderates were concerned about another backlash from other imperialist powers.¹⁵⁰ After Ito Hirobumi who supported a gradual approach was murdered in 1909, Japan discarded the policy of indirect rule and annexed Korea in 1910.

2) Strategic Consistency

During the Westphalian transition, the Meiji oligarchs could consistently implement defiant status-seeking strategies to break off from the East Asian world order and attain legitimate membership in the Westphalian international order. They could maintain strategic consistency by effectively mobilizing domestic society and drawing support from foreign actors. Domestically, the Meiji oligarchs subdued the reactionary warrior class, co-opted the parliamentarians, and took advantage of popular nationalism. Externally, the Meiji government actively used foreign advisors for Western-style modernization and its accomplishments impressed Western imperialist powers at the top of the Westphalian international order.

A. State-Society Relations

In the earlier phase of the Meiji Restoration, Japanese leaders had to address the resistance of peasants and the reactionary warrior class who still adhered to traditional norms and values of Japanese society, which had been part of the East Asian world order. One challenge to the Meiji oligarchy's defiant status-seeking strategy was the peasant uprising caused by the worsening livelihood in local societies.¹⁵¹ Social instability and popular protests that began in the last days of the Tokugawa rule continued even after the inauguration of the Meiji government. Rather, the Meiji oligarchs' top-down reforms to build a modern sovereign

¹⁵⁰ Jansen 2002, 443.

¹⁵¹ Totman 1980, 216-18.

state often backfired, spurring violent peasant uprisings.¹⁵² For instance, the new conscription system, which exempted those who could afford to pay a substantial amount of money from military service, enraged poor peasants who perceived it as a “blood tax.” The Meiji government’s land ordinances were another source of popular resentment because the land tax imposed on landowners was far heavier than the government promised. To address the peasant uprisings, the Meiji oligarchy not only mobilized the modernized army, but also adjusted its policies in a way that accommodated their demands.

Far more threatening to the Meiji oligarchy’s defiant status-seeking strategies was the resistance of the reactionary warrior class, which led to the Satsuma Rebellion or the Seinan War in 1877. The proximate cause of this rebellion was the Korean debate, which came to an end as Saigo Takamori and his followers resigned from the government.¹⁵³ After returning to his home, Satsuma, Saigo and his followers established private academies to train young students, many of whom later joined the rebellion. However, the Satsuma Rebellion had a deeper structural cause, that is, the status anxiety of the warrior class that resulted from the Meiji oligarchy’s military reforms.¹⁵⁴ In the 1870s, the Meiji government established the national conscription system, prohibited the carrying of swords by those without affiliation with the military or police, and the replacement of stipends promised to the warrior class with interest-bearing government bonds. All these measures not only damaged their lingering pride but also endangered their livelihood.

The fury of the warrior class finally exploded in Satsuma. The rebel forces joined by Saigo and his followers marched toward Tokyo.¹⁵⁵ However, the warrior class failed to achieve

¹⁵² Jansen 2002, 365-67; Drea 2009, 29-30; Nakabayashi 2012, 388.

¹⁵³ Kim 1980, 178; Hillsborough 2014, 541.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Vlastos, “Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868–1885,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 383; Jansen 2002, 367-69; Hillsborough 2014, 548.

¹⁵⁵ Vlastos 1989, 400-1.

their goals. Although the grievance and antipathy toward the Meiji government and its modernization reform programs were prevalent, the rebel forces that relied exclusively on the reactionary warriors in Satsuma failed to form a united front with other dissidents in Japanese society. The Meiji government seized the upper hand by isolating these reactionary warriors, and their rebellion came to an end in September 1877 as the government forces defeated them and Saigo committed suicide.

While the reactionary resistance subsided, the Meiji oligarchs were confronted with other domestic challenges, especially the Freedom and Civil Rights Movement and the rise of popular nationalism. Paradoxically, however, these challenges helped the Meiji oligarchy consistently implement defiant strategies for Japan's entry into the Westphalian order. On the one hand, the Civil Rights Movement pushed the oligarchs to establish the constitution and national assembly, both of which were key markers of a modern sovereign state modeled on the West. On the other hand, the rise of popular nationalism pressured the Meiji oligarchs to engage in assertive diplomacy to obtain legitimate membership in the Westphalian international order. The oligarchs could maintain their strategic consistency by co-opting these domestic challenges.

The Freedom and Civil Rights Movement was led by former oligarchs ousted from the government. Itagaki Taisuke and Goto Shojiro, who sided with Saigo Takamori in the 1873 Korean debate, spearheaded this parliamentary movement.¹⁵⁶ In 1874, parliamentarians including Itagaki and Goto submitted a joint memorial, urging that "a representative assembly elected by the people" should be established because "the degree of progress among the people

¹⁵⁶ Jansen 2002, 377-78; Samuels 2003, 52; Vlastos 1989, 402-3.

of our country is sufficient for the establishment of such an assembly.”¹⁵⁷ They founded the Liberal Party in 1881, which played the vanguard role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Okuma Shigenobu was another former oligarch who joined the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁵⁸ In the early 1880s, Okuma was isolated within the Meiji oligarchy because of his liberal stance toward political reforms. While his peers were highly skeptical of or hostile against parliamentary politics, Okuma advocated a British model based on the majority rule and called for the opening of a national assembly. His was further isolated due to the growing suspicion within the oligarchy that Okuma was aligned with anti-government parliamentarians. Expelled from the government in late 1881, Okuma joined the Civil Rights Movement as the leader of the Constitutional Progressive Party. He also submitted a memorial that called for the establishment of a deliberative assembly, a constitutional government, and political parties.¹⁵⁹

However, the Meiji oligarchs could co-opt the parliamentary movement and its leaders, which in turn enhanced their strategic consistency in the long term. Although Itagaki, Goto, and Okuma joined the parliamentary movement, they did not oppose the basic objective of the Meiji Restoration, that is, rebuilding Japan as a modern sovereign state. Therefore, they occasionally returned to the government for modernization reforms in domestic and foreign affairs.¹⁶⁰ For instance, Itagaki returned to the government in 1875 on the condition that the Council of Elders would function as a quasi-legislative body until the opening of the national assembly. Okuma also served as foreign minister (1888-1889) and prime minister (1898) in the Meiji government.

¹⁵⁷ David J. Lu, ed., “Memorial on the Establishment of a Representative Assembly, 1874,” in *Japan: A Documentary History*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 327–29.

¹⁵⁸ Jansen 2002, Ch. 12.

¹⁵⁹ David J. Lu, ed., “Okuma Shigenobu’s Memorial on a National Deliberative Assembly, 1881,” in *Japan: A Documentary History*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 329–30.

¹⁶⁰ Gong 1984, 176; Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1995, 23; Kim 2020, 121.

As the Meiji Constitution and the national assembly were established, the parliamentary movement achieved its goal. It also contributed to the Meiji oligarchy's defiant strategy by helping Japan enhance its eligibility for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian order. However, the national assembly's power was severely restricted.¹⁶¹ It could be dissolved upon the imperial order, and the cabinet was not accountable to the national assembly. Moreover, the parliamentarians failed to form a united front. There was a discord between the Liberal Party inspired by the French Revolution and the Constitutional Progressive Party influenced by the tradition of British constitutionalism.¹⁶² There was another split between former oligarchs, landlords, and businessmen who initiated the Civil Rights Movement, and the populace who joined the movement later.¹⁶³

Like the parliamentary movement, the rise of popular nationalism seemed to threaten the Meiji oligarchs but in fact helped them consistently implement defiant strategies. The power of nationalistic sentiments was salient in diplomacy because it had a great influence on the Meiji government's bargaining position. For instance, the surge of nationalism shaped the size of the win-set available to Japanese diplomats in the treaty revision negotiations with the West. As noted earlier, the proposals by Inoue Kaoru and Okuma Shigenobu, which were both perceived as yielding too much, even humiliating, sparked domestic protests that forced them to resign.¹⁶⁴ The power of popular nationalism increased with the opening of the national assembly. To insulate the negotiation process from public opinion, Foreign Minister Mutsu Munimitsu and Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi dissolved the national assembly.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Vlastos 1989, 424; Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1995, 34-36.

¹⁶² Jansen 2002, 382; Kim 2020, 383-98, 402-11.

¹⁶³ Samuels 2003, 53.

¹⁶⁴ Okagaki 2013, 81-82; Jansen 2002, 427-28; Kim 2020, 419-22, 430.

¹⁶⁵ Jansen 2002, 429.

Popular nationalism influenced Meiji Japan's wartime and post-war diplomacy as well. During the Sino-Japanese War, patriotism soared in Japanese society, spurring movements to organize volunteer troops and solicit contributions for veteran charities.¹⁶⁶ However, when the Japanese government yielded to the Triple Intervention led by Russia, patriotism that supported the government's wartime mobilization turned into antipathy against it.¹⁶⁷ A similar pattern repeated during the negotiations following the Russo-Japanese War. Popular nationalism escalated beyond the Meiji government's control and pushed it to show more intransigence than needed. When it became public that the Treaty of Portsmouth did not include any clause of Russian indemnity, the angered public launched violent protests in major cities.¹⁶⁸

B. External Support

In pursuing defiant status-seeking strategies, the Meiji oligarchs could maintain their strategic consistency by securing external support. Western imperialist powers initially treated Japan as a barbarous country ineligible for legitimate actorhood in the Westphalian international order. However, their evaluation of Japan altered due to the Meiji government's successful reforms to rebuild Japan as a sovereign state modeled on the West and Meiji Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. Japan was no longer a small island nation in East Asia, but an exceptional non-Western country eligible for both legitimate actorhood and great-power status in the Westphalian order.

Since the last few years of the Tokugawa bakufu, the relationship between Japan and Western imperialist powers contained both conflictual and cooperative elements. The primary source of conflict was the unequal treaties that Western imperialist powers imposed on the

¹⁶⁶ Makito Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism*, trans. David Noble (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2011), 96-101.

¹⁶⁷ Saya 2011, 157; Mutsu 1982, 248-49.

¹⁶⁸ Jansen 2002, 448-49; Naoko Shimazu, "Patriotic and Despondent: Japanese Society at War, 1904-5," *The Russian Review* 67, no. 1 (2008), 44-47.

Tokugawa bakufu to obtain tariff benefits and extraterritoriality. In the negotiation process, they did not hesitate to show off their military prowess to threaten Japan.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the revision of unequal treaties with the West was a significant part of Meiji Japan's defiant status-seeking strategies.

The cooperation between Japan and the West mainly resulted from Japanese leaders' efforts to rebuild Japan as a modern sovereign state. In fact, their cooperation was already underway well before the Meiji Restoration. While the bakufu relied on France for military and fiscal support to restore its authority, the anti-Tokugawa coalition turned to Britain to overthrow the reigning bakufu.¹⁷⁰ The bakufu dispatched six overseas missions in total before its collapse in 1868, and the anti-Tokugawa domains such as Choshu and Satsuma sent their students abroad as well.¹⁷¹ Japan's cooperation with the West accelerated with the rise of the Meiji oligarchs. They sought models to be learned and emulated from the West, and dispatched diplomatic missions and students abroad to introduce Western knowledge and institutions.

Among Western imperialist powers, France, Germany, and Britain had a great influence on Meiji Japan's defiant status-seeking strategies. French influence on Japan can be traced back to the Tokugawa bakufu's cooperation with France in the 1860s. Upon the bakufu's request, France dispatched technicians and military instructors for its armament and military reforms.¹⁷² French influence persisted in the Meiji era as the Meiji oligarchs relied on French experts in military, legal, and administrative modernization.¹⁷³ The French drill system had already been popular in many feudal domains, and French instructors and Japanese officers trained by them played a crucial role in the military. French jurists and lawyers hired by the

¹⁶⁹ Hillsborough 2014, 99.

¹⁷⁰ Totman 1980, 209-13.

¹⁷¹ Takutoshi 2008.

¹⁷² Richard Sims, *French Policy towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1998), 52-54.

¹⁷³ Sims 1998, 96-98, 236-43, 256-68; Drea 2009, 20; Jansen 2002, 402-3.

Meiji government provided advice for the Meiji government's legal reforms and diplomacy. The establishment of modern police, local administration, and education was another area wherein the Meiji oligarchs turned to the French model.

The significance of Germany in Meiji Japan's defiant status-seeking strategies could not be overstated. As German Minister Theodore von Holleben said, "Japan is far more germanized internally than the other powers or the Japanese themselves realize."¹⁷⁴ The German model also had a great influence on Meiji Japan's modernization. Okubo's economic reforms were greatly inspired by Germany's centralized bureaucracy and the "thrifty, hardworking, and unpretentious" German people.¹⁷⁵ German influence was also salient in military reforms. In the 1880s, the Meiji oligarchs who had modeled the Japanese army on France in the previous decade turned their eyes to Germany.¹⁷⁶ Military leaders inspired by the rise and unification of Germany led this change. Upon the Meiji government's request, Germany dispatched military officers, who played an indispensable role in reorganizing the Japanese army.

Constitutional drafting was another domain where the Meiji oligarchs were heavily influenced by Germany.¹⁷⁷ During his visit to Europe in the 1880s, Ito Hirobumi, the leading oligarch charged with constitutional drafting, consulted prominent German jurists such as Rudolph von Gneist, Lorenz von Stein, and Albert Mosse. After returning to Japan, Ito invited Herman Roesler, a German expert whom he asked for advice, as a senior legal advisor to the

¹⁷⁴ Bernd Martin, "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan: The Pitfall of Blind Acculturation," trans. Peter Wetzler, *Oriens Extremus* 33, no. 1 (1990), 85.

¹⁷⁵ Samuels 2003, 81-82.

¹⁷⁶ Martin 1990, 81-83; Masaki Miyake, "Japan's Encounter with Germany, 1860-1914: An Assessment of the German Legacy in Japan," *The European Legacy* 1, no. 1 (1996), 246; Sven Saaler, "The Imperial Japanese Army and Germany," in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895-1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, ed. Rolf-Harald Wippich and Christian W. Spang (London: Routledge, 2006), 23-25; Drea 2009, 57-61.

¹⁷⁷ Martin 1990, 79-80; Miyake 1996, 246; Jansen 2002, 390-94.

Meiji government. The constitutional draft prepared under Ito's supervision was submitted to the Privy Council for review, and then finally promulgated in February 1889.

To the Meiji oligarchs, Britain was not only a model to emulate but also a strategic partner whose support was crucial to Japan's entry into the Westphalian international order. To modernize the Japanese navy, the Meiji oligarchs referred to Britain, as the dominant naval power in the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁸ The Meiji government invited British officers and encouraged Japanese officers to study in Britain and serve in the British fleet. In designing, building, and repairing warships, the Japanese navy heavily relied on British technicians and shipyards. Politically, Britain was a model of constitutional monarchy that Meiji Japan should learn and emulate. While Itagaki Taisuke and his Liberal Party were greatly inspired by the French Revolution, Okuma Shigenobu and the Constitutional Progressive Party turned to British-style constitutionalism.¹⁷⁹

The Meiji government's cooperation with Britain helped Japan join not only the Westphalian order but also the rank of great powers within it.¹⁸⁰ Britain was the first Western imperialist power that agreed to abandon its extraterritoriality and tariff benefits in Japan, recognizing the latter's eligibility for legitimate membership in the Westphalian order. The Anglo-Japanese alliance formed in 1902 and renewed in 1905 and 1911 further enhanced Japan's position by bringing military, economic, and diplomatic advantages to it. In particular, the Anglo-Japanese alliance helped Britain and Japan hold in check Russia, their common enemy in East Asia.

¹⁷⁸ Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868–1912* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 58–62; Jansen 2002, 397.

¹⁷⁹ Jansen 2002, 381–82.

¹⁸⁰ Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*, 2nd ed. (London: Athlone Press, 1985), 35–36, 95; Antony Best, *British Engagement with Japan, 1854–1922: The Origins and Course of an Unlikely Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2020), 77–80.

Japan also took advantage of military campaigns as opportunities to build up its reputation as a civilized country fully committed to the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia.¹⁸¹ During the Sino-Japanese War, Japan demonstrated that it was fighting a civilized war in accordance with Westphalian international law.¹⁸² The Japanese army's discipline and prowess during the Boxer Rebellion also impressed the Western imperialist powers, inducing them to invite Japan as a full-fledged member to the peace conference after the rebellion.¹⁸³ In the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese army once again impressed foreign military attachés with its disciplined battlefield conduct.¹⁸⁴ The reports by military attachés, which praised Japan's civility and conformity to Westphalian norms and rules, improved Japan's reputation among Western imperialist powers.

4. Conclusion

The Westphalian transition was an order transition that entailed both power transition and institutional transformation. In terms of power distribution, the Qing empire lost its hegemonic status as it was overtaken militarily and economically by Western imperialist powers and Meiji Japan. The demise of Qing hegemony took place in tandem with institutional transformation. In terms of constitutive institutions, the patchworked hierarchy of East Asia was now replaced by the punctuated hierarchy of Westphalia. On the one hand, it distinguished civilized sovereign states from barbarians with little or limited sovereignty. On the other hand, it made another distinction between great powers and non-great powers within the society of sovereign states even though, at least in principle, sovereign states were supposed to treat each other as equals. Their interactions were governed by the regulative institutions that originated in Europe.

¹⁸¹ Gong 1983, 184; Okagaki 2013, 86-89; Howland 2016, 24.

¹⁸² Howland 2016, 123-24.

¹⁸³ Nish 1985, 90; Iriye 1989, 774.

¹⁸⁴ Banerjee and MacKay 2020, 14-19.

They were required to exchange resident diplomats, guarantee the basic rights of their own nationals and foreigners alike, and observe the law of war in the use of military force.

In response to the Westphalian transition, Chosŏn Korea shifted from conformist toward defiant status-seeking strategies, but Korea's strategic reorientation was delayed, interrupted, and inconsistent. King Gojong and the reformist elites who seized power in 1873 by supplanting the conservatives shifted toward defiant strategies to introduce Westphalian institutions. However, Korea's commitment to the East Asian world order did not terminate overnight. While the conservatives continued to resist, the reformists were split into several antagonistic factions. The reformists established new government agencies for Western-style modernization, but they failed to completely replace the traditional government structure for Confucian governance. Externally, reformists opened diplomatic relations with the West in accordance with the norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia, but they did not sever tributary relations with the Qing empire until 1896. On the other hand, Korean reformists failed to maintain strategic consistency. Domestically, Confucian intellectuals and the populace resisted the top-down reforms for modernization. Internationally, they failed to obtain external support. Rather, elite factionalism and unstable state-society relations invited foreign intervention, which damaged Korea's strategic consistency. Korea's delayed, interrupted, and inconsistent defiant strategies failed to elevate its status. By 1910, Korea lost its sovereign status and turned into Japan's colony.

In contrast, Japan's status-seeking strategy in this period was defiant as well as consistent. Confronted with Western imperialist powers' coercive diplomacy in the late 1850s, the Tokugawa bakufu opened diplomatic relations with them. Japan's defiant status-seeking accelerated with the rise of the Meiji oligarchy that seized power in 1868 by overthrowing the bakufu. To build a modern sovereign state modeled on the West, the Meiji oligarchs launched

a series of reforms known as the Meiji Restoration. They established a strong central government, a modern army and navy, a modern constitution, and a national assembly. Externally, the Meiji oligarchs sought to establish equal relations with the West, and completely break off from the East Asian world order by supplanting Qing hegemony. Unlike their Korean counterparts, Japanese rulers could maintain strategic consistency. Domestically, Meiji oligarchs subdued or coopted their opponents. Internationally, Japanese rulers garnered support from foreign actors. In particular, foreign experts from Europe helped the Meiji government's reform and diplomacy with the West. Japan's consistent and defiant strategies proved successful. Impressed by Meiji Japan's modernization, the Western powers began to recognize Japan as a legitimate actor in the Westphalian order.

Chapter 5. Status-Seeking in Order Reform

South Korea and Japan During the Détente

In this chapter, I compare the status-seeking strategies of South Korea and Japan and their outcomes during the Détente (1969-1979). The Cold War international order was a bifurcated hierarchy where two competing superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, exercised hegemony respectively within the Free World and the Socialist Camp, each representing antagonistic visions of modernity. In this divided world, legitimate actorhood was granted to sovereign states and reinforced by their political and ideological affiliations with either the US-led Free World or the Soviet-led Socialist Camp. Diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions among sovereign states were regulated by a set of norms, rules, and practices that promoted cooperation and coordination within the same bloc but sustained conflict and hostility across the geopolitical and ideological divide.

The Détente, which lasted from the declaration of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969 to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, was an order reform marked by the rearrangement of regulative institutions without the replacement of the hegemonic states and the transformation of constitutive institutions. Despite power redistribution in this period, the bifurcated hierarchy of the Cold War order remained intact. US hegemony underwent a relative decline due to domestic economic crises, the rise of alternative economic powerhouses, the protraction of the Vietnam War, and the US-Soviet nuclear parity. However, the United States not only maintained its hegemonic position in the Free World but also still stood far ahead of any other state, even the Soviet Union, in terms of comprehensive national capabilities. In the same period, the Soviet Union experienced discords with some dissident socialist states such as China, but its hegemony within the Socialist Camp remained robust.

Instead, power redistribution prompted the United States, the Soviet Union, and other major actors to engage in various types of dialogues and negotiations across the geopolitical and ideological divide, which in turn led to the rearrangement of regulative institutions. Put differently, the Détente was marked by the emergence of new rules of conduct to govern diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions. Since order reform involved the rules of conduct in regular interactions, defiant strategies in this period required behavioral adjustment. It provided a favorable setting for defiant status-seekers that were willing and able to deviate from the past pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict.

In response to the Détente, South Korea and Japan pursued defiant strategies to improve their status by achieving reconciliation, cooperation, and even diplomatic normalization with the Socialist Camp. The Park Chung-hee regime attempted defiant strategies to enhance South Korea's status as a legitimate actor in international society through reconciliation with North Korea and other socialist states. However, the Park regime's strategic reorientation was limited because South Korean ruling elites were still strongly committed to anti-communism underlying the Cold War international order. Their anti-communist commitment prevented the Park regime from completely shifting toward defiant strategies to deviate from the established pattern of inter-bloc conflict. While the Park regime underwent a strategic oscillation in this period, South Korean ruling elites could direct the country as they intended because they maintained a strong grip on domestic society and took advantage of the geopolitical fluidity that arose from the Détente.

In contrast, the pro-China conservatives who seized dominance in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Japanese politics not only adopted defiant status-seeking strategies but also implemented them consistently. Although Japan was a key member of the US-led Free World, the pro-China LDP conservatives were more pragmatic and flexible than

the Park regime in addressing socialist states. In pursuing mutual reconciliation and recognition with socialist states, Japanese ruling elites could draw support from other social actors, especially the opposition parties and the business community. Moreover, the United States, which was seeking rapprochement with China and the Soviet Union, encouraged Japan's reconciliation and diplomatic normalization with the Socialist Camp. Therefore, the pro-China LDP conservatives' defiant strategies enhanced Japan's legitimate actorhood in the Cold War international order.

1. The Détente: Order Reform in East Asia

1) The Cold War International Order

A. Constitutive Institutions

The Cold War international order was a *bifurcated* hierarchy that reflected the geopolitical and ideological divide between the US-led Free World and the Soviet-led Socialist Camp. Although World War II came to an end in 1945, it was followed by another global conflict, known as the Cold War. After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union, two superpowers that once forged a wartime alliance, divided the world into two antagonistic blocs.¹ The rivalry between these superpowers began in Europe and then spilled over into other regions, escalating into a global conflict between the two blocs that represented antagonistic visions of modernity.

In terms of power distribution, the Cold War international order was built upon a bipolarity between the Free World and the Socialist Camp. The Cold War order, initially appearing as a tripolarity among the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain, soon turned

¹ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

into a bipolarity as Britain could no longer compete with the other two on an equal footing.² However, the US-Soviet bipolarity was far from symmetrical because the United States, the leader of the Free World, was far ahead of the Soviet Union and other great powers in material capabilities and resources.³

The Cold War international order was bipolar in ideological terms as well because it involved the clash between two antagonistic visions of modernity.⁴ Both the United States and the Soviet Union posed themselves as an alternative to European colonial empires, but their visions of world politics were in opposition to each other. The United States envisioned a world of liberty that denied collectivism and the centralization of political power and held faith in science and market. In contrast, the Soviet Union presented a communist vision of modernity where market would be “superseded by class-based collective action in favor of equality and justice.”⁵ It was an antithesis to liberal democracy aligned with free market capitalism. This ideological contestation added another layer to the US-Soviet rivalry.

Although East Asia was another significant forefront of the Cold War, the East Asian Cold War took a different path from Europe.⁶ First, the Cold War in East Asia was never as cold as it was in Europe. In the East Asian Cold War, the geopolitical significance of such hot

² William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 95; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 14.

³ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 167; Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945: From Empire by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27.

⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5, 10-12, 39-40; Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), xxi-xxiii; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 3: Global Empires and Revolution, 1890–1945 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 347; Richard W. Stevenson, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: Relaxations of Tension in U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1953-84* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 11-16.

⁵ Westad 2005, 39-40.

⁶ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, “Introduction: East Asia-the Second Significant Front of the Cold War,” in *The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 1-2; Sargent 2015, 21.

wars as the Chinese Civil War (1945-1950) and the Korean War (1950-1953) cannot be overstated. The Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula that had been the most volatile flashpoints in this region remain as such. Second, the presence of China, an Asian juggernaut in the Socialist Camp, was crucial to shaping the contours of the East Asian Cold War.⁷ China possessed a large population and acted as the vanguard of Asian communists, posing a serious threat to the United States on the one hand, and claiming autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union within the Socialist Camp. The presence of China led to the emergence of the US-Soviet-China strategic triangle in East Asia by the 1970s.

Built upon the bipolarity of power and ideology, the Cold War international order consisted of a set of constitutive and regulative institutions. In terms of constitutive institutions, the organizing principle of the Cold War order was a bifurcated hierarchy where the United States seized hegemony in the Free World while the Soviet Union did so in the Socialist Camp. With the end of World War II, European colonial empires fell apart and their former colonies claiming sovereign equality newly joined the international society.⁸ However, the postwar world divided by the superpowers was far from equal. In each bloc, the United States and the Soviet Union formed “informal empires” or “imperium” in which they exercised control in varying ways over other states granted de jure or formal sovereignty.⁹ In this hierarchical structure, legitimate actorhood was granted to sovereign states and reinforced by their political and ideological affiliations with either the US-led Free World or the Soviet-led Socialist Camp.

⁷ Hasegawa 2011, 3-5; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 4: Globalizations, 1945–2011 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 90.

⁸ Sargent 2015, 22-25.

⁹ Mann 2012b; Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, United States: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2-5; Alexander Wendt and Daniel Friedheim, “Hierarchy under Anarchy: Informal Empire and the East German State,” *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (1995): 689–721; Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), 6.

US hegemony in the Free World was one pillar of the bifurcated hierarchy. The “Free World,” the term coined in the wake of the German invasion of Western Europe, now came to represent liberal democracies confronted with the Soviet threat.¹⁰ The United States used its hegemonic position to design a set of regulative institutions or rules of conduct to manage interstate relations within the Free World. These institutions reflected the ideals and procedures of liberal democracy.¹¹ While the United States exerted its power and influence through institutionalized procedures that guaranteed the autonomy and independence of lesser states, they supported US hegemony in the Free World.

Although the United States exercised institutional self-restraint, its military and economic supremacy was still the key building block of US hegemony.¹² Militarily, the United States forged a global network of anti-communist alliances that took different forms across regions.¹³ While US hegemony in Europe relied on the multilateral alliance organized around the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States built up the so-called “hub-and-spoke” system in East Asia, which consisted of separate bilateral alliances. The United States used these bilateral alliances not only to contain the threat of communism but also to restrain its allies’ military adventurism. Economically, the United States used multilateralism and economic aid programs to consolidate its hegemony.¹⁴ To balance a free and open market and domestic economic welfare and stability, it created a fixed but adjustable exchange rate

¹⁰ Lüthi 2020, 90.

¹¹ Ikenberry 2001, 199-203.

¹² Lundestad 2003, 29-31; Katzenstein 2005, 4, 50-52.

¹³ In Europe, the United States relied on NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), a multilateral alliance. To US decision-makers, the rehabilitation of Germany was indispensable to the defense of Europe against the Soviet threat. To European allies, however, the return of Germany was unacceptable without the assurance that it would not turn into an aggressive, expansionist power as it did in the First and Second World Wars. Therefore, European countries, Britain and France in particular, demanded a US commitment in exchange for their acquiescence in—and support for—the US-led German reconstruction. See Ikenberry 2001, 191-99, Lundestad 2003, 9-11, and Katzenstein 2005, 46.

¹⁴ John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 379–415; Ikenberry 2001, 185; Katzenstein 2005, 46; Sargent 2015, 18.

system where the values of national currencies were tied to US dollars, convertible into gold at \$35 per ounce.

Soviet hegemony in the Socialist Camp was the other pillar of the bifurcated hierarchy. Although the Soviet Union advanced the principle of mutual respect for state sovereignty, it exercised supreme authority in defining the boundary of the Socialist Camp and supervising other socialist states.¹⁵ By doing so, the Soviet Union mobilized support from them and enjoyed the benefits of indirect rule, which was less costly and risky than territorial expansion. In the Socialist Camp, inter-governmental relations were enhanced by inter-party connections between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and socialist or communist parties in satellite states that recognized the former's supreme authority.

Soviet hegemony was based on its military and economic supremacy. The Soviet Union and its satellite states signed the Treaties of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, and the Treaty of Warsaw to pursue collective security.¹⁶ It was a European organization but non-European countries were granted observer status. The Soviet Union established economic hegemony as well. It launched the Molotov Plan as a countermeasure to the Marshall Plan, which promised economic aid for socialist satellites in Eastern Europe.¹⁷ Moreover, the Soviet Union launched the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON or CMEA) in 1949 as a multilateral body for economic policy coordination

¹⁵ Robert A. Jones, *The Soviet Concept of "Limited Sovereignty" from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Brezhnev Doctrine* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 9-15, 54-57; Westad 2005, 49-51; Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-1969* (London: Routledge, 2015), 24-25.

¹⁶ Kazimierz Grzybowski, *Soviet International Law and the World Economic Order* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 145-47; Crump 2015, 21-24.

¹⁷ James Libbey, "CoCom, Comecon, and the Economic Cold War," *Russian History* 37, no. 2 (2010), 137-39.

among socialist states.¹⁸ It gradually expanded into an inclusive body joined by non-European countries as well as states with a “socialist orientation.”¹⁹

In the Cold War international order, legitimate actorhood was granted to sovereign states and reinforced by their political and ideological affiliations with either the US-led Free World or the Soviet-led Socialist Camp. Basically, political entities recognized as sovereign states were eligible for legitimate actorhood, the key marker of which was membership in the United Nations (UN), the most authoritative international body in the postwar era. In practice, however, the geopolitical and ideological antagonism between the Free World and the Socialist Camp often forced states to challenge, even deny the legitimate actorhood of others that belonged to the opposite bloc.

In the Free World, legitimate actorhood was limited to anti-communist states, encompassing both liberal democracies and authoritarian states. Although liberal democracies were core members of this bloc, the United States showed flexibility in managing its membership.²⁰ For instance, the United States integrated Germany and Japan, the former fascist enemies democratized under its occupation, into the US-led alliance system. The United States also embraced many authoritarian regimes that shared with it geopolitical interests in or ideological commitment to deterring the expansion of communism. The Socialist Camp exhibited more homogeneity in legitimate actorhood because the Soviet Union effectively imposed the policy of regime duplication on its satellite states.²¹ The homogeneity of

¹⁸ Grzybowski 1987; Crump 2015, 30; Francine McKenzie, “GATT and the Cold War: Accession Debates, Institutional Development, and the Western Alliance, 1947–1959,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3 (2008), 98; Libbey 2010.

¹⁹ Grzybowski 1987, 150–56.

²⁰ Mann 2012b, 96–107, 120; Lüthi 2020, 95–100.

²¹ Jones 1990, 2, 115–19; 142–49; Mann 2012a, 351; Crump 2015, 221; Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Detente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), 30. Theoretically, the communist revolution is accompanied by the demise of the state. In practice, however, states had to be maintained as an instrument of proletarian dictatorship until the revolution reached its final stage. For the role of the state in communism, see Jones 1990, 5–6.

legitimate actorhood in the Socialist Camp was reinforced by Soviet leaders who did not hesitate to turn to coercion and military interventions to secure socialist regimes in the satellite states.

B. Regulative Institutions

While the Cold War international order took the form of a bifurcated hierarchy, interactions between sovereign states were governed by a set of regulative institutions that reinforced the pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc divide.²² These regulative institutions grew out of “a mixture of custom, precedent, and mutual interest.”²³ For instance, they helped the United States and the Soviet Union respect the other side’s sphere of influence, avoid direct military confrontation, treat nuclear weapons only as the last resort, and choose predictable anomalies instead of unpredictable rationality.

In diplomacy, ideology was no less significant than geopolitical interests in guiding states to identify their friends and foes and treat each other accordingly.²⁴ The significance of ideology in diplomatic relations found its extremist expression in the Holstein Doctrine applied to divided nations such as Germany, China, and Korea, which were split into two antagonistic states, with each aligning itself with either the Free World or the Socialist Camp.²⁵ These antagonistic states asserted the sole legitimacy to represent the entire nation, treating each other

²² Ikenberry 2001, 170-73; Sargent 2015, 19.

²³ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System,” *International Security* 10, no. 4 (1986), 132-33.

²⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 281.

²⁵ Thomas D. Grant, “Hallstein Revisited: Unilateral Enforcement of Regimes of Nonrecognition Since the Two Germanies,” *Stanford Journal of International Law* 36, no. 2 (2000): 223-32; William Glenn Gray, *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 81-86; Randall E Newnham, “Embassies for Sale: The Purchase of Diplomatic Recognition by West Germany, Taiwan and South Korea,” *International Politics* 37, no. 3 (2000): 259-83; Damien P. Horigan, “The Hallstein Doctrine: A Living Fossil of International Law,” *Korean Journal of International and Comparative Law* 30 (2002): 93-112.

as illegitimate or non-existent. They also denied or discarded diplomatic relations with third parties that recognized the opposing side of the divided nation.

Military relations were also regulated by the logic of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict. Asymmetrical alliances between superpowers and their client states embodied not only the hierarchic structure that organized each bloc but also the rules of conduct that reinforced the pattern of cooperation and conflict. The United States and the Soviet Union provided security for their client states, which in turn joined their forces with superpowers and offered logistical support. The expansion of alliances in one bloc was often countered by the reinforcement of alliances in the other bloc. In particular, the development of nuclear weapons generated a distinctive pattern, that is, strategic stability between superpowers coupled with strategic instability at the regional and local levels.²⁶ While the acquisition of nuclear weapons by superpowers forced them to exercise self-restraint, regional and local conflicts that involved their client states continued.

In economic relations, the pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict was manifested in “mutual independence” between the Free World and the Socialist Camp.²⁷ Although US decision-makers initially envisioned an inclusive international economic order open to socialist states, the Soviet Union refused to join it and launched the COMECON to promote economic cooperation within the Socialist Camp.²⁸ The economic Cold War escalated as the United States excluded socialist states from the US-led international economic order and

²⁶ Gaddis 1986, 122-23; Sargent 2015, 26-28.

²⁷ Gaddis 1986, 112-14.

²⁸ Philip J. Funigiello, *American-Soviet Trade in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 36; Sargent 2015, 15; Libbey 2010, 135.

imposed export control against them.²⁹ To this end, the United States founded the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) in 1949 to rally the support of its allies.

2) New Rules of Conduct

The *Détente*, a French word meaning the easing of tension, denotes the decade-long period from the late 1960s to the late 1970s marked by US and Soviet efforts for mutual accommodation.³⁰ It was an order reform that entailed the rearrangement of regulative institutions without the replacement of the hegemonic states and constitutive institutions. The *Détente* redefined the rules of conduct that had governed diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions between the Free World and the Socialist Camp and within them. However, it did not alter the basic structure of the Cold War international order, that is, the bifurcated hierarchy where the United States and the Soviet Union secured their hegemonic status in each bloc. In East Asia, the presence of China influenced the process and outcomes of the *Détente*, as it did in shaping the basic structure of the East Asian Cold War.³¹

A. Power Redistribution, Not Power Transition

Power redistribution during the *Détente* took place between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and within the Free World and the Socialist Camp on the other hand. Above all, the *Détente* entailed a decrease in the US-Soviet power asymmetry. The United States that had been far ahead of the Soviet Union in material capabilities and resources

²⁹ McKenzie 2008, 88-92, 104-5; Libbey 2010, 145-46; Jacqueline McGlade, "COCOM and the Containment of Western Trade and Relations," in *East-West Trade and the Cold War*, ed. Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala (Jyväskylä, Finland: Jyväskylä Printing House, 2005), 48-49; Funigiello 1988, 42, 118-19; Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1949-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 48. One rare exception was Poland, which was granted the status of "associate state" with partial access to GATT forums. See McKenzie 2008, 100-3.

³⁰ Stevenson 1985, 11; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Rev. ed (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994), 25.

³¹ Stevenson 1985, 144-45; Hanhimäki 2013, xix.

entered a phase of relative decline in the late 1960s.³² Confronted with the Vietnam War fatigue and economic crisis, the United States had to reduce its military expenditure and security commitments abroad. Moreover, the Soviet Union's newly achieved nuclear parity with the United States disrupted the overall power asymmetry between them.³³ It pushed superpowers, especially the United States, to engage in a series of dialogues to negotiate new rules of conduct.

However, power redistribution in this period did not lead to a power transition between the superpowers. The US-Soviet power parity was confined to military capabilities, especially the size of nuclear arsenals, leaving the United States still ahead of the Soviet Union in comprehensive national capabilities.³⁴ Although US leaders acknowledged that the Soviet Union achieved military parity with their country, they were never willing to endorse political parity between the United States and the Soviet Union.³⁵ Economically, the United States was in trouble due to mismanagement, policy failures, and external shocks, but its economy was still unparalleled by the Soviet Union.³⁶ Soviet economy suffered from low efficiency and productivity, and the expansion of military expenditure, which lowered the chance of economic parity with the United States.³⁷

Moreover, the United States and the Soviet Union secured their leading positions in each bloc. In the Free World, US economic dominance eroded as a result of external and internal challenges, such as the rise of emerging economic powerhouses such as West Germany

³² Gaddis 2005, 318-20; Keith L. Nelson, *The Making of Détente: Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Hanhimäki 2013, 2; Sargent 2015, 49.

³³ Wohlforth 1993, 184-98; Garthoff 1994, 53-54; Zhongchun Wang, "The Soviet Factor in Sino-American Normalization, 1969-1979," in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 157.

³⁴ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1st edition (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 196-97; Wohlforth 1993, 190, 192; Warren I. Cohen, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, vol. 4: Challenges to American Primacy, 1945 to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 189-91.

³⁵ Garthoff 1994, 58; Wohlforth 1993, 212-14.

³⁶ Mann 2012b, 181-82; Cohen 2013, 206-208; Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR 1945-1991* (London: Routledge, 2014), 242-43.

³⁷ Hanson 2014, 101-2; Nelson 1995, 26-27, 33-34.

and Japan, the growth of military expenditure, overconsumption, the increase of overseas investment, the decrease in the gold-dollar convertibility.³⁸ France's Gaullism and West Germany's Ostpolitik, both of which were aimed at the reinforcement of foreign policy autonomy, posed another challenge to US leadership.³⁹ However, these changes did not lead to the collapse of US hegemony in the Free World as the United States remained the leading player in all dimensions of power.⁴⁰

In the Socialist Camp, the Soviet Union encountered the quests and claims for autonomy from other socialist states. Although the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia proved its willingness and capability to maintain hegemony, it exacerbated discords with other dissident socialist states, especially China that had already been in geopolitical and ideological conflicts with the Soviet Union. While China harshly criticized the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia as "socialist imperialism," the Sino-Soviet split escalated into military collisions around the border area.⁴¹ However, China's defection did not lead to the collapse of Soviet hegemony in the Socialist Camp because it was basically a defensive move to secure China's sovereignty and territories from the Soviet Union.⁴²

B. The Rearrangement of Regulative Institutions

The Détente was an order reform that entailed the rearrangement of regulative institutions without the replacement of the hegemonic states and the transformation of constitutive institutions. Although the US economic crisis, the US-Soviet nuclear parity, and the rise of contenders eroded US dominance in the Free World and Soviet dominance in the

³⁸ Nelson 1995, 39-41; Sargent 2015, 30-33, 102.

³⁹ Nelson 1995, 55-56.

⁴⁰ Garthoff 1994, 26; Wohlforth 1993, 214-15.

⁴¹ Lowell Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis," *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (1981), 493-96; Wang 2005, 148-52; Zhang 2001, 21-22.

⁴² Mark L. Haas, *Frenemies: When Ideological Enemies Ally* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022), 126-29; Wang 2005, 152-53.

Socialist Camp, they did not lead to the replacement of hegemonic states in each bloc and the bifurcated hierarchy that had structured the Cold War international order. Instead, these changes pushed the members of the Free World and the Socialist Camp to deviate from the past pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict and to rewrite the rules of conduct to promote dialogue, coordination, and cooperation across the geopolitical and ideological divide.

During the Détente, the United States and the Soviet Union cooperated to revise the regulative institutions that had governed their diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions.⁴³ To build up a “structure of peace,” US leaders launched a series of negotiations with the Soviet Union. Their objective was to reduce the risk of nuclear war, enhance superpower cooperation in crisis management in the Third World, and slow down arms race. Soviet leaders pursued “peaceful coexistence” with the Free World to achieve the US-Soviet political parity without escalating arms race and gain access to food and advanced technology from the Free World. However, the Soviet Union did not cease its support for the class struggle and national liberation movement against capitalist states.

In this period, the United States and the Soviet Union concluded 150 agreements that covered a wide range of issues.⁴⁴ In May 1972, they signed *The Basic Principles of Relations*, which declared that their interactions would be conducted based on the respect for “sovereignty, equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and mutual advantage” and that “[D]ifferences in ideology and in the social systems of the USA and the USSR are not obstacles to the bilateral development of normal relations.” To regulate military relations, superpowers concluded a series of arms control agreements such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I), the

⁴³ Garthoff 1994, 30-41; Nelson 1995, 44-45; Gaddis 2005, 286-96, 309-12; Hanhimaki 2013, 38-39; Sargent 2015, 55-59.

⁴⁴ Eric Grynviski, *Constructive Illusions: Misperceiving the Origins of International Cooperation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 51; Stevenson 1985, 156-58; Hanhimaki 2013, 55-56; Sargent 2015, 62-63. See also American Presidency Project, “The Basic Principles of Relations Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” (May 29, 1972).

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the Interim Agreement on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, which paved the way for the 1979 SALT II.⁴⁵ Beginning with the 1969 revision of the US Export Administration Act, the United States and the Soviet Union signed contracts and trade agreements to encourage commercial ties, cultural exchange, and technological cooperation.⁴⁶

While the US-Soviet dialogue led to the rearrangement of regulative institutions at the global level, the Détente in East Asia began with the 1972 US-China rapprochement. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, both sides needed a breakthrough to address their internal and external challenges.⁴⁷ The United States sought to cooperate with China to offset the Soviet threat, reduce security commitments abroad, and exit from the Vietnam War. China pursued reconciliation with the United States to counter the Soviet threat and obtain US aid for economic development.

The US-China rapprochement led to the establishment of a new “modus vivendi,” that is, new rules of conduct that would govern not only the United States and China but also other relevant parties in the East Asian Cold War. These institutions replaced geopolitical and ideological antagonism and diplomatic non-recognition that had prevailed in East Asia. The Shanghai Communique announced at the end of US President Richard Nixon’s 1972 travel to China declared that despite “essential differences... in their social systems and foreign policies” both sides would conduct their relations based on the principles of mutual respect for

⁴⁵ Gaddis 2005, 322-26; Hanhimaki 2013, 53; Cohen 2013, 203.

⁴⁶ Funigiello 1988, 179-80; McGlade 2005, 60.

⁴⁷ Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From “Red Menace” to “Tacit Ally”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 94-96; Wang 2005, 154-59; Jie Li, “China’s Domestic Politics and the Normalization of Sino-U.S. Relations, 1969-1979,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 78-82; Haas 2022, 151.

sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

The US-China rapprochement was followed by the opening of official channels for direct and regular communication. In fact, both sides communicated through ambassadorial talks held in Geneva and Warsaw from August 1955 to February 1970. There were 136 meetings in total before 1972, but the role of ambassadorial talks was limited because they were held without any regular intervals and failed to resolve substantial issues.⁴⁸ It was not until the US-China rapprochement that both sides decided to set up an official channel for stable, open, and regular communication. In February 1973, they agreed to establish liaison offices in the other's capital.⁴⁹

The US-China rapprochement set new rules of conduct in military interactions as well. At the crux of the 1972 Shanghai Communique was the Taiwan problem, which involved US forces on the Taiwan island, the US-Taiwan alliance, and the international status of Taiwan and China.⁵⁰ By proposing the “one China, but not now” formula, US leaders assured that Taiwan was part of “one China,” the Taiwan problem should be resolved peacefully, and they would normalize diplomatic relations with China. The United States and China agreed to cooperate on other military issues as well. The Shanghai Communique declared that both sides would oppose the pursuit of hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, and US forces in Taiwan would be withdrawn in the long term. China agreed to tolerate the presence of US forces in Taiwan for

⁴⁸ Steven M. Goldstein, “Dialogue of the Deaf?: The Sino-American Ambassadorial-Level Talks, 1955-1970,” in *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 225-26, 234-36; Baijia Zhang and Qingguo Jia, “Steering Wheel, Shock Absorber, and Diplomatic Probe in Confrontation Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks Seen from the Chinese Perspective,” in *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 173.

⁴⁹ Haas 2022, 130; Li 2005, 66.

⁵⁰ Goh 2004, 176-79, 192-201; Robert Accinelli, “In Pursuit of a Modus Vivendi: The Taiwan Issue and Sino-American Rapprochement,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 45-49.

the time being because it would serve as a counterweight to prevent the resurgence of Japanese military expansionism in Asia.⁵¹

The US-China rapprochement also led to the establishment of new principles in socioeconomic interactions. China had been the primary target of US export control since the Korean War.⁵² The Consultative Group (CG), created in 1949 to supervise the COCOM in implementing export control against socialist states, established the China Committee (CHINCOM) in 1952 to coordinate multilateral economic sanctions targeting China. These sanctions were called the “China Differential” because the United States treated China far more harshly than other socialist states, even the Soviet Union. Beginning in the late 1960s, however, the United States began to ease travel bans and trade embargos against China.⁵³ In the Shanghai Communique, they agreed that “economic relations based on equality and mutual benefit are in the interest of the peoples of the two countries” and they would “facilitate the progressive development of trade between their two countries.”⁵⁴

2. South Korea

1) Commitment and Strategic Choice

A. The Dominance of Anti-Communists

During the Détente, South Korea was governed by the Park Chung-hee regime, an anti-communist authoritarian regime that stood at the forefront of the East Asian Cold War. A strong anti-communist commitment was one common feature of all elite groups that ruled South

⁵¹ Accinelli 2005, 28.

⁵² Funigiello 1988, 42, 118-19; Zhang 2001, 24, 30-31, 48.

⁵³ Goh 2004, 94; Funigiello 1988, 180.

⁵⁴ Wilson Center Digital Archive (WCDA), “Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China” (February 28, 1972).

Korea in the Cold War era. South Korea's commitment was hardly matched by other members of the Free World, even the United States.⁵⁵ It can be attributed to multiple factors such as the legacy of Japanese colonial rule, US occupation following it, and the divide between South and North Korea. South Korea's anti-communist commitment did not weaken, but rather strengthened with the replacement of ruling elite groups—the Rhee Syngman regime (1948-60) by the Democratic Party (1960-61), and the latter by the Park Chung-hee regime (1961-1979).

It was the leftists who had the upper hand in Korea when it was liberated from Japanese colonial rule in August 1945.⁵⁶ They launched the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI) and the People's Committees as its local branches and declared the foundation of the Korean People's Republic (KPR) on September 6. However, the leftist dominance was short-lived as it led to the rise of an anti-communist coalition between landlords, capitalists, bureaucrats, conservative nationalists, and even those who had served for or collaborated with the Japanese colonial government. United by the fear of purge and punishment by leftists, they founded the Korean Democratic Party (KDP) on September 16 as a counterweight to the CPKI.⁵⁷ To complement the lack of patriotic credentials comparable to the leftists, the KDP cooperated with Rhee Syngman, an ambitious nationalist leader and staunch anti-communist who recently returned from exile. He aligned with the KDP to obtain its organizational and fiscal support.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 74-75; Joonseok Yang and Young Chul Cho, "Subaltern South Korea's Anti-Communist Asian Cooperation in the Mid-1950s," *Asian Perspective* 44, no. 2 (2020), 270.

⁵⁶ Chŏng-wŏn Kim, *Divided Korea: The Politics of Development, 1945-1972* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1975), 48-49; Gregg Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 14.

⁵⁷ Kim 1975, 53; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 91-96, 152-54.

⁵⁸ Kim 1975, 58; Cumings 1981, 190-91, Yong-pyo Hong, *State Security and Regime Security: President Syngman Rhee and the Insecurity Dilemma in South Korea, 1953-60* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 17-22.

The balance of power in South Korea tilted toward anti-communists. The US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) that occupied the southern half of the Korean Peninsula not only illegalized the KPR but also relied on the collaborators who had served in the Japanese colonial government, most of whom were affiliated with the KDP, to govern South Korea.⁵⁹ The failure of the US-Soviet Joint Commission to establish an interim government in Korea accelerated the rise of the anti-communist state in South Korea. In the 1948 UN-supervised election, held only in the south due to Soviet opposition, anti-communists secured a victory and Rhee Syngman was elected as the first president.⁶⁰ Although the KDP and Rhee Syngman who refused to share his power with them broke apart shortly after the election, it was no more than a power struggle because both sides still shared a strong commitment to anti-communism.⁶¹

The Jeju Uprising (1948-1949), the Yeosu-Sunchoen Rebellion (1948), the leftist guerrilla insurgency, and most importantly, the Korean War launched by the communist regime in North Korea helped the Rhee regime transform South Korea into a bastion of anti-communism.⁶² “Anti-communism, articulated and experienced in everyday life, became the premier motif for ideological legitimization of the South Korean state.”⁶³ The National Security Law (NSL) enacted after the Yeosu-Suncheon Rebellion became the symbol of the South Korean ruling elites’ strong commitment to anti-communism in the Cold War era.

⁵⁹ Cumings 1981, 193-97; Jang Jip Choi, “Political Cleavages in South Korea,” in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, ed. Hagen Koo (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 13–50,17; Atul Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64-66.

⁶⁰ Kim 1975, 79-82; Hong 2000, 22-23; Out of 192 seats in the National Assembly, the KDP members and its associates seized 80, Rhee Syngman’s followers took 61, and Rhee was elected as president through the vote in the assembly. See Kim 1975, 81-82.

⁶¹ Kim 1975, 118-119; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 484; Myung-Lim Park, *The Korean War: The Outbreak and Its Origins*, vol. 2: The Origins and Causes of the Conflict (Seoul: Nanam, 1996), 388-95, 439-43.

⁶² Cumings 1990, 250-67; Park 1996, 404-5, 412-15; Hong 2000, 38-39.

⁶³ Choi 1993, 22-23.

Modeled on Japan's Public Security Preservation Law in 1925, the NSL stipulated heavy punishment on "anyone who has organized an association or group for the purpose of arrogating the government or instigating a rebellion, or who acted to serve that purpose."⁶⁴ The Rhee regime expanded the size of police and military forces, and joined the US-led Free World by signing an alliance treaty with the United States in July 1953.⁶⁵

Under the Park Chung-hee regime, the main figures of which came from military background, the South Korean anti-communist state was strengthened. The South Korean army underwent rapid growth in the 1940s and 1950s, which turned it into a modern fighting force with more than 600,000 men. Through military training and education offered by the United States, South Korean military officers were transformed into an elite group with a strong aspiration for national defense and modernization.⁶⁶ Ideologically, a series of revolts and rebellions joined and instigated by leftist soldiers in the late 1940s forced the South Korean army to launch a massive purge of communists inside it, turning itself into the warrior of anti-communism.⁶⁷

In May 1961, Major General Park Chung-hee and a group of young officers in the Eighth Class of the Korean Military Academy (KMA) seized power by overthrowing the civilian government. The coup leaders were united in their aspiration to save the nation and grievance against incompetent and corrupt civilian politicians.⁶⁸ Park, who once participated in a leftist organization before the Korean War, had long suffered disadvantages in promotion.

⁶⁴ Dong-Choon Kim, "How Anti-Communism Disrupted Decolonization: South Korea's State-Building Under US Patronage," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions*, ed. Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 195-96.

⁶⁵ Hong 2000, 44-45, 51-57.

⁶⁶ Yong-Sup Han, "The May Sixteenth Military Coup," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 41.

⁶⁷ Se-Jin Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 55-56; Park 1996, 418-20; Brazinsky 2007, 75.

⁶⁸ Brazinsky 2007, 114-15.

However, Park's distinguished wartime service erased the communist taint on his record and his exclusion from crony networks helped him stay out of corruption.⁶⁹ The KMA Eighth Class, including Kim Jong-pil, Park's nephew-in-law, were a group of reformist officers who argued for the purification campaign within the military.⁷⁰

The South Korean anti-communist state continued to evolve throughout Park Chung-hee's presidency. Following two years of the military government, Park Chung-hee was elected as president in October 1963. One month later, the Democratic Republican Party (DRP) founded by Kim Jong-pil to support Park's rule won the parliamentary election, seizing 110 seats out of 175.⁷¹ Reelected as president in 1967, Park Chung-hee extended his presidency by amending the constitution in 1969 and 1972. The Park Chung-hee regime built a highly cohesive and purposeful state aimed at preserving national security by restoring political order and boosting economic growth. In doing so, the Park regime repressed dissidents and mobilized domestic society through ideological propaganda and campaigns.⁷² In particular, the South Korean ruling elites heavily relied on a set of institutions that embodied anti-communism, which in turn reinforced their anti-communist commitment.

Shortly after seizing the capital on May 16, 1961, Park Chung-hee and other coup leaders issued a six-point pledge in the name of the Military Revolutionary Council (MRC), the first article of which declared "anti-communism to be the cardinal principle that guides the nation" and "the anti-communist posture will be rearranged and strengthened." Articles 2 and 5 stated that "friendships with the Free World nations including the United States will be reinforced" and that "all-out efforts will be made to nurture capabilities to fight communism."⁷³

⁶⁹ Kim 1975, 230; Park 1996, 427-29; Han 2011, 44.

⁷⁰ Kim 1971, 77-82.

⁷¹ Kim 1975, 252-55.

⁷² Kohli 2004, 88-93.

⁷³ Military Revolutionary Committee, "Revolutionary Pledge" (May 16, 1961).

After reorganizing the MRC into the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction (SCNR) on May 19, the coup leaders issued a decree that “national security, public order, and the freedom of people will be preserved by strictly regulating communist activities” and that “the communist party and any other organizations considered sympathetic to it” would be treated as anti-state organizations.⁷⁴ Kim Jae-choon, a key member of the SCNR, stated that “South Korea cannot survive without anti-communism as the national guiding principle... given our position at the forefront of the Free World... Therefore, we, the military... declared anti-communism to be the first principle to guide our nation.”⁷⁵

The Anti-Communist Law (ACL) was another instrument added to the Park regime’s toolkit.⁷⁶ It was enacted in July 1961 to “reinforce the anti-communist system, the first objective of national reconstruction, to block the communist activities that endanger national security, thereby preserving national security and the freedom of people.” The ACL was soon revised to target both domestic and foreign communists, and increase the severity of punishment. It stipulated that not only communists but also “any person who praised, encouraged, or sided with communist organizations or members thereof” were to be punished. Until incorporated into the NSL in 1980, the ACL served as a useful weapon that the Park regime’s anti-communist ruling elites wielded to suppress leftists and political dissidents.

The Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) established by Kim Jong-pil in June 1961 was also the Park regime’s principal instrument of power. The KCIA served “the purpose of countering indirect aggression of the Communist forces.”⁷⁷ Its main function was to “coordinate and supervise domestic and international intelligence activities relevant to national

⁷⁴ Wŏn-sun Pak, *Kukkapoanpŏp Yŏn’gu*. vol. 1 (Seoul: Yuksa Bipyungsa, 1989), 185.

⁷⁵ Pak 1989, 47-48.

⁷⁶ Kim 1971, 145; Pak 1989, 193-97; Lee 2007, 82; Paul Chang, *Protest Dialectics: State Repression and South Korea’s Democracy Movement, 1970-1979* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 34-35.

⁷⁷ Korean Law Information Center, “Supreme Council for National Reconstruction Law” (June 10, 1961).

security as well as criminal investigation and intelligence activities by all government agencies including the military.”⁷⁸ By 1964, the KCIA expanded to a vast organization with 370,000 employees.⁷⁹ The KCIA even could act and run its budgets outside the supervision of the National Assembly. The KICA’s intelligence capabilities and political influence enabled it to play a critical role in both domestic and foreign affairs.⁸⁰

However, South Korean ruling elites did not rely on coercive means alone. Simultaneously, they institutionalized a national education system to instill anti-communism in domestic society.⁸¹ The Park regime revised textbooks and curricula for elementary, middle, and high school students to include anti-communist content. Beginning in the late 1960s, military training was introduced in high schools and universities to prepare the youth for another North Korean invasion. Even female students were required to get basic training for emergency aid and nursing. In 1975, the Park regime revived the National Student Defense Corps, a government-controlled student body founded during Rhee Syngman’s presidency as a paramilitary organization. The institutionalization of anti-communist education enhanced the Park regime’s ideological control over domestic society.

B. “Conflict with Dialogue”

Until the arrival of the Détente in the late 1960s, South Korean ruling elites had exclusively relied on conformist status-seeking strategies to secure their country’s status by affiliating it with the Free World and adhering to the norms, rules, and practices of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict. Although South Korea or the Republic of Korea (ROK)

⁷⁸ Korean Law Information Center, “Korean Central Intelligence Agency Law” (June 10, 1961).

⁷⁹ Kim 1975, 234-35; David C. Kang, *Crony Capitalism: Corruption and Development in South Korea and the Philippines* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 101-2.

⁸⁰ Byung-Kook Kim, “The Labyrinth of Solitude: Park and the Exercise of Presidential Power,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 144-46.

⁸¹ Lee 2007, 85-89.

was founded through the UN-supervised election in May 1948, its international status remained volatile.⁸² While the election to constitute a unified Korean government was held in provinces under US occupation, the UN supervisors were refused entry to the provinces under Soviet jurisdiction. Moreover, despite the UN resolution in December 1948 that recognized the ROK in the south as the only legitimate government of Korea, the Soviet Union supported the North Korean communist regime and used its veto power as the UN Security Council permanent member to block South Korea's admission to the UN.

In this setting, South Korean ruling elites opted for conformist strategies to secure their country's status by establishing it as the anti-communist vanguard standing at the forefront of the Free World. Forsaking recognition from the Soviet Union and socialist states, they turned South Korea into a bastion of anti-communism. As a conformist status-seeker, South Korea fully embodied the norms, rules, and practices of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict that governed regular interactions in the Cold War order. For instance, the Rhee Syngman regime advanced the March North campaign to overthrow the North Korean communist regime by military force, joined the US-led anti-communist alliance system, and played a leading role in promoting the anti-communist alignment among Asian nations.⁸³

South Korea's conformist strategies continued under the Park Chung-hee regime. Unlike Rhee Syngman who claimed that Korea should be immediately reunified by force, Park Chung-hee maintained that reunification should come after economic construction. However, he still believed that the ROK was the sole government of Korea and it should achieve national reunification by dominating North Korea in material capabilities.⁸⁴ The Park regime sought to

⁸² Ch'i-yŏng Pak, *Korea and the United Nations* (Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000). 6; Gabriel Jonsson, *South Korea in the United Nations: Global Governance, Inter-Korean Relations and Peace Building* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2017), 25-32.

⁸³ Park 1996, 594; Hong 2000, 26-27, 112; Cha 2016, 104-8.

⁸⁴ Seuk-Ryule Hong, "Reunification Issues and Civil Society in South Korea: The Debates and Social Movement for Reunification during the April Revolution Period, 1960–1961," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 4 (2002):

secure South Korea's status by demonstrating that it was an indispensable member of the Free World. It enhanced cooperation with Japan, another key US ally in East Asia, and dispatched a large-scale combat force to Vietnam in support of the United States.⁸⁵

However, the Détente pushed the Park Chung-hee regime to explore an alternative strategy for status-seeking. As the hostility between the Free World and the Socialist Camp subsided, diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions across the geopolitical and ideological divide expanded. The exclusive recognition that the two Koreas had enjoyed in each bloc was no longer guaranteed.⁸⁶ In this setting, South Korean ruling elites attempted defiant strategies that deviated from the established pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict. Instead, they sought to improve South Korea's status by achieving reconciliation with socialist states and obtaining recognition from them.

The pursuit of reconciliation with North Korea was a key element of South Korea's newly attempted defiant strategy. In his National Liberation Day speech in 1970, Park Chung-hee urged that "the North Korean Puppet" should suspend all warmongering activities, abandon any plan to overthrow the South Korean government by force, and accept the UN's authority. If so, Park said, he would propose "a groundbreaking and realistic plan that would contribute to humanitarian causes, reunification, and the removal of barriers between the two Koreas," and no longer oppose "North Korea's attendance at the UN to discuss the Korean problem." Moreover, he proposed that both sides should start "a competition in good faith" to bring

1237–57; Jein Do and Mincheol Park, "Between Isolation and Reconciliation: The 'North Korean Puppet' as a Controversy in South Korean Politics, 1966," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 33, no. 1 (2020), 190.

⁸⁵ Jung-Hoon Lee, "Normalization of Relations with Japan: Toward a New Partnership," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 430–56; Min Yong Lee, "The Vietnam War: South Korea's Search for National Security," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 403–29.

⁸⁶ Ria Chae, "Diplomatic War: Inter-Korean Relations in the 1970s," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 27, no. 2 (2015): 307–30, 311–12.

prosperity to the Korean people.⁸⁷ As an initial step, the inter-Korean Red Cross preliminary talk started in September 1971.⁸⁸

South Korea's defiant strategy through reconciliation with the North led to the South-North Joint Communique on July 4, 1972. In May, Lee Hu-rak, Park's closest aide and the KCIA Director, visited Pyongyang. In this secret visit, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung proposed the principles for national reunification, the establishment of communication channels, and the inter-Korean summit, and Lee Hu-rak called for the suspension of mutual vilification, propaganda campaigns, and armed provocation. A few weeks later, North Korean Vice Premier Pak Seong-cheol met with Park Chung-hee in Seoul. In the July 4th Joint Communique, both sides declared the pursuit of national reunification based on the principles of independence, peace, and national unity, the suspension of mutual vilification and military provocations, the onset of the inter-Korean exchanges, the cooperation for the Red Cross talks, and the establishment of the South-North Coordination Committee for political communication.

The Park regime took a bolder step to implement defiant strategies. On June 23, 1973, Park Chung-hee announced the Special Foreign Policy Statement on Peace and Unification.⁸⁹ He declared that South Korea "shall not object to our admittance into the UN together with North Korea if the majority of the UN members so wish, provided that it does not cause hindrance to our national unification" and that "even before our admittance into the UN as a member, we shall not oppose North Korea also being invited to the UN General Assembly's deliberation of "the Korean question."" Park added that South Korea "will open its door to all the nations of the world based on the principles of reciprocity and equality," urging that "those

⁸⁷ Seuk-Ryule Hong, *Pundan ūi hisŭt'eri* (Paju: Changbi, 2012), 148; Park Chung-hee, "The 25th Anniversary Speech for the National Liberation Day" (August 15, 1970).

⁸⁸ Hong 2012, 157-58.

⁸⁹ Park Chung-hee, "The Special Foreign Policy Statement on Peace and Unification" (June 23, 1973). Translation from National Unification Board, *A White Paper on South-North Dialogue in Korea* (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1988), 450-54.

countries whose ideologies and social institutions are different from ours to open their doors likewise to us.” Park’s special statement epitomized South Korea’s new strategy to complete the quest for legitimate actorhood by pursuing mutual reconciliation and recognition with socialist states.

Against this backdrop, the Park Chung-hee regime attempted diplomatic contact and non-political exchanges with the Soviet Union and socialist states in Eastern Europe. The Park regime permitted South Korean diplomats overseas to contact their Soviet counterparts. In response, beginning in 1973, the Soviet Union allowed South Korean athletes, artists, scholars, and government officials to attend international events held in its territories. The Soviet Union also expressed its goodwill by repatriating a South Korean airplane that flew into the restricted airspace.⁹⁰ South Korea expanded non-political exchanges with Eastern European states as well. In 1971, South Korea proposed sports exchanges and trade with Yugoslavia, which led to indirect trade with Eastern Europe. The volume of trade with Eastern Europe continued to increase by 1979, and the exchanges of mail and academics were allowed.⁹¹ By July 1975, South Korea opened telecommunication service with twelve socialist states including the Soviet Union.⁹²

South Korea’s defiant status-seeking strategy was targeting China as well. Beginning in 1971, South Korea attempted diplomatic contact with China through overseas missions and asked friendly nations to support its efforts.⁹³ For instance, the French government informed the South Korean ambassador in May 1972 that French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann would raise the South Korean issue during his visit to Beijing.⁹⁴ In June 1973, British Vice

⁹⁰ Byung-joon Ahn, “South Korea and the Communist Countries,” *Asian Survey* 20, no. 11 (1980), 1102-3.

⁹¹ Ahn 1980, 1106.

⁹² Mark A. Kramar, “Development of East European and Soviet direct trade relations with South Korea, 1970-1991” (Ph.D., Ann Arbor, United States, 1994), 117.

⁹³ Hong 2012, 303-4.

⁹⁴ Presidential Secretariat, “Regarding the Soviet Union and Communist China” (May 27, 1972).

Foreign Minister Anthony Royle stated that Britain was willing to aid South Korea's overture to China.⁹⁵ Simultaneously, South Korea took friendly gestures toward China by distancing itself from Taiwan, its closest anti-communist partner in East Asia. For instance, the South Korean government began to use the title of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in proposing a negotiation for the demarcation of the continental shelf, and abstained from the 1973 Asian Games Federation vote that decided the entry of China and the expulsion of Taiwan.

Although the Detente pushed the Park Chung-hee regime to attempt defiant status-seeking strategies that sought reconciliation with socialist states, South Korean ruling elites' strong anti-communist commitment coupled with their security anxiety prevented them from completely deviating from the established pattern of inter-bloc conflict. For instance, in his press conference after the announcement of the July 4th Joint Communiqué, Lee Hu-rak described the inter-Korean relationship as a "conflict with dialogue," that is, South and North Korea were still in conflict despite the onset of the bilateral dialogue.⁹⁶ Such a limited nature of South Korea's strategic reorientation was evident in the Park regime's internal disagreement, consolidation of authoritarian rule, and continuing diplomatic war with North Korea.

Despite the arrival of the Détente, the North Korean threat continued. Emboldened by North Vietnam's successful struggle against the United States, North Korea launched a series of military provocations on the Korean peninsula in the late 1960s. The North Korean threat escalated in 1968 and 1969 with a commando raid on the South Korean presidential residence, the seizure of a US intelligence ship, and the shooting down of a US reconnaissance plane.⁹⁷ In fact, the Park regime's security anxiety was not groundless because North Korean leaders

⁹⁵ Presidential Secretariat, "Regarding South Korea's Reconciliation with Communist China" (June 27, 1973).

⁹⁶ Lee Hu-rak, "Background Briefing on the South-North Joint Communiqué (July 4, 1972)," in *Nambukdae-hwa Saryojip*, vol. 7 (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2023), 245-46.

⁹⁷ Seongji Woo, "The Park Chung-Hee Administration amid Inter-Korean Reconciliation in the Détente Period: Changes in the Threat Perception, Regime Characteristics, and the Distribution of Power," *Korea Journal* 49, no. 2 (2009), 41-42.

regarded the Détente and the inter-Korean dialogue as an opportunity to foster revolutionary forces in South Korea. In their meetings with Soviet and Eastern European counterparts in the early 1970s, North Korean leaders emphasized that peaceful reunification of Korea would be achieved through the growth of revolutionaries in the south and that they should support those southern revolutionaries by isolating South Korea, especially from the United States and Japan.⁹⁸

In this circumstance, the Park regime's turn to defiant status-seeking through reconciliation with socialist states generated a backlash among the ruling elites themselves. Their strong commitment to anti-communism and the presence of political institutions embodying it inhibited South Korea's complete strategic shift. In drafting the 1970 presidential speech that proposed "a competition in good faith" to North Korea, the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutors' Office strongly claimed that even the exercise of presidential power should not violate the Anti-Communist Law.⁹⁹ The drafting of the July 4th Joint Communiqué was another contested process. KCIA Director Lee Hu-rak was concerned that the announcement of secret contact with North Korea would enrage the military.¹⁰⁰

The inter-Korean dialogue spurred a debate about the legitimacy of the NSL and the ACL, the principal institutions that embodied and enhanced the Park regime's anti-communist commitment. Although Lee Hu-rak proposed the abolishment of the NSL after the Joint Communiqué, his proposal was immediately dismissed by other South Korean leaders.¹⁰¹ For instance, in his remarks at the National Assembly in July 1972, Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil

⁹⁸ WCDA, "Note on Information from DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Ri Man-seok, on 17 July 1972 between 16:40 and 18:00 hours in the Foreign Ministry" (July 20, 1972); WCDA, "Minutes of Conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Economic Delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (September 22, 1972).

⁹⁹ Monthly Chosun, "Round Table: Behind the Scenes of Park Chung-hee's August 15th Declaration on Peaceful Unification" (July 10, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Hong 2012, 191-92.

¹⁰¹ Jong-pil Kim, *The Testimony of Kim Jong-pil* (Seoul: Wiseberry, 2016), 399-400.

emphasized that the revision of the ACL was neither necessary nor possible.¹⁰² The attitude of South Korean ruling elites grew more intransigent as North Korea demanded the abolition of anti-communist laws as a precondition for the reunion of separated families.¹⁰³

Although Park Chung-hee permitted dialogues with socialist states, the South Korean ruling elites, including Park himself, still held the basic view that the Détente could jeopardize South Korea's national security, which prompted them to reinforce their authoritarian rule. In December 1971, the Park regime declared a national emergency and enacted the Special Law for National Security that granted extensive emergency power to the president. Park Chung-hee stressed that South Korea's national security was now in jeopardy due to China's entry into the United Nations, US withdrawal from Asia, Japan's overture to socialist states, and North Korea's military threat.¹⁰⁴ Park repeatedly warned that the Détente could generate a "local wind," which might trigger a war on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁰⁵

The promulgation of the Yushin Constitution in December 1972 was also justified in the name of national security. Park already set the stage for the constitutional amendment two months earlier by declaring the dissolution of the National Assembly and the suspension of all political activities, adding that a new constitution to revitalize the country and achieve national reunification was required because the Détente was jeopardizing South Korea's survival.¹⁰⁶ The Yushin Constitution, he said, would save South Korea, which was now confronted with a historical turning point, by fostering national harmony and capabilities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Hong 2012, 196-97.

¹⁰³ Christian F Ostermann and James F Person, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 59-60; Hong 2012, 242-43.

¹⁰⁴ Park Chung-hee, "Special Statement on National Emergency" (December 6, 1971).

¹⁰⁵ Park Chung-hee, "The 1972 New Year's Press Conference" (January 11, 1972).

¹⁰⁶ Park Chung-hee, "Special Declaration by the President" (October 17, 1972).

¹⁰⁷ Park Chung-hee, "Special Address on the Occasion of the Announcement of the Constitutional Amendment Proposal" (October 27, 1972).

The Park regime's limited reorientation toward defiant status-seeking strategies was also evident in the fact that the inter-Korean "diplomatic war" continued.¹⁰⁸ Despite the inter-Korean dialogue and the announcement of the July 4th Joint Communiqué, both sides did not cease their efforts to isolate the other in international society. In this diplomatic warfare, South Korea had the upper hand by the 1960s as it was founded through the UN-supervised election and granted observer status. However, South Korea's superiority began to erode with the influx of anti-Western Third World countries into the UN and North Korea's admission into the World Health Organization and opening of its permanent mission at the UN Headquarters in 1973.

The stalemate in the inter-Korean dialogue inhibited South Korea's overture to the Soviet Union and China as these socialist giants sought North Korea's support in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Soviet Union, despite its friendly gesture to South Korea, was neither willing nor ready to abandon North Korea at the risk of pushing it closer to Beijing.¹⁰⁹ China responded to South Korea's approach more negatively. As the Sino-Soviet split became irreversible, China quickly restored its friendship with North Korea damaged during the Cultural Revolution, acknowledging the latter's autonomy and independence in foreign affairs.¹¹⁰ China also expressed its support for North Korea's demand that US troops completely withdraw from the Korean Peninsula and rejection of South Korea's proposal for separate UN membership.¹¹¹ The Taiwan problem was another factor that pushed China, at least publicly, to side with North Korea's position. As long as China claimed that there was

¹⁰⁸ Chae 2015, 315-17; Pak Ch'i-yŏng 2000, 18-20; Jonsson 2017, 44-46.

¹⁰⁹ Sung-joo Han, "South Korean Policy toward the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 23, no. 2 (1980), 132-35; Ahn 1980, 1103.

¹¹⁰ Yafeng Xia and Zhihua Shen, "China's Last Ally: Beijing's Policy toward North Korea during the U.S.-China Rapprochement, 1970-1975," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 5 (2014), 1089-90.

¹¹¹ Ahn 1980, 1103-4; Charles K. Armstrong and John Barry Kotch, "Sino-American Negotiations on Korea and Kissinger's UN Diplomacy," *Cold War History* 15, no. 1 (2015): 113-34; Presidential Secretariat, "Zhou Enlai's Perspective on the Korean Affairs" (November 24, 1973).

only one China and the PRC was the sole legitimate government representing the Chinese nation, it could not endorse separate UN membership for Korea, another divided nation.¹¹²

2) Strategic Consistency

During the Détente, the Park Chung-hee regime that had relied on conformist status-seeking strategies attempted defiant ones to reconcile with North Korea and socialist states and thus obtain recognition from them. However, South Korea's strategic shift was limited because its ruling elites had been so strongly committed to the Cold War international order and the antagonism between the Free World and the Socialist Camp underlying it. While the Park Chung-hee regime failed to obtain diplomatic recognition from socialist states and then returned to the past pattern of inter-bloc conflict, South Korean ruling elites could direct the country as they intended because they seized the upper hand in state-society relations and took advantage of the geopolitical fluidity that stemmed from the Détente.

A. State-Society Relations

While the Park Chung-hee regime experimented with new policies and returned to the established pattern of inter-bloc conflict, social actors played a limited role. Although South Korean ruling elites explored the possibility of reconciliation with socialist states during the Détente, they did not cease to discipline domestic society with anti-communism. They used a variety of instruments, ranging from coercive means such as the NSL and the ACL, the KICA, and police and army, to softer ones such as propaganda campaigns and education. In this circumstance, unauthorized contact with socialist states and discussions about reconciliation with them were prohibited and punished. Moreover, social actors were neither united nor strong enough to influence the Park regime's strategic choice. While the Park regime allied with a

¹¹² Hong 2012, 353-55.

select number of big companies to boost economic growth, other social actors, such as opposition parties, student activists and dissident intellectuals, and labor activists, failed to develop a common vision for South Korea's relations with socialist states.

The Park regime subordinated all other national goals to economic growth, with national reunification as a secondary goal that should be postponed until South Korea could economically dominate North Korea. To this end, Park Chung-hee allied with a few *chaebols*, that is, “a group of business firms... run by one owner-manager family through an opaque corporate governance structure.”¹¹³ The Park Chung-hee regime provided the chaebols with directions, loans, and licenses required for their businesses, the chaebols supplied political funds to the anti-communist ruling elites.¹¹⁴

Simultaneously, “the Park regime mobilised the working class economically, but completely demobilised them politically.”¹¹⁵ Laborers who would work harder for lower wages were indispensable to South Korea's rapid economic growth. Therefore, the Park regime subordinated labor to government control and discipline in various ways.¹¹⁶ It directed the KCIA-trained workers to organize pro-government labor unions and established a socioeconomic structure where labor unions relied on companies for payment, facilities, and utilities. Workers who resisted were stigmatized as communists or their sympathizers. On the other hand, the government coopted workers by promising job security and imbuing them with

¹¹³ Eun Mee Kim and Gil-Sung Park, “The Chaebol,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 279-80.

¹¹⁴ Kang 2002, 116-17; Kohli 2004, 96-97; Kim and Park 2011, 267.

¹¹⁵ Yunjong Kim, *The Failure of Socialism in South Korea: 1945-2007* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 96-97.

¹¹⁶ Kohli 2004, 98-100; Hagen Koo, “Labor Policy and Labor Relations during the Park Chung Hee Era,” in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, and Cultural Influence*, ed. Hyung-A Kim and Clark W Sorensen (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 124-29; Kim 2016, 98.

a sense of pride as industrial warriors who fought at the forefront of national security and economic development.

While the Park regime allied with the business community and seized control over workers, the opposition parties failed to effectively challenge Park Chung-hee's anti-communist regime. Since the dissolution of the Progressive Party during Rhee Syngman's presidency, there was no leftist party that was able to challenge the ideological dominance of anti-communism in South Korean society.¹¹⁷ More importantly, the New Democratic Party (NDP), the leading opposition that originated from the KDP, had little incentive to challenge the Park regime ideologically. As mentioned earlier, the KDP was founded in 1945 as an anti-communist coalition, and the opposition parties that succeeded the KDP were no less anti-communist than the Park regime.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the NDP did not hesitate to collaborate with the Park Chung-hee regime to block the entry of progressivists into politics.¹¹⁹

In this circumstance, it was student activists and dissident intellectuals who played a prominent role in social protests against Park Chung-hee's authoritarian anti-communist regime. Before Park Chung-hee's military coup, the student movement was a strong social force that led the anti-Rhee Syngman protests and advocated for reconciliation and peaceful reunification with North Korea.¹²⁰ As the Park regime strengthened its authoritarian rule, student activists once again stood at the forefront of the anti-regime movement. They sought an alliance with the working class, resisted the Park regime's on-campus military training and interference in the curriculum, and organized protests to deny Park Chung-hee's legitimacy.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Sungjoo Han, *The Failure of Democracy in South Korea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 181-83; Hong 2002, 1243-44.

¹¹⁸ Hong 2002, 1247-48; Han 1974, 184-85; Pak 1989, 164-79

¹¹⁹ Soo Jin Kim, "Opposition Parties in the Park Chung Hee Era: A Focus on the Sinmindang," in *Kim Dae-Jung and History of Korean Opposition Parties*, ed. Ji-yeon Shim, Sang-young Rhyu, and Samwoong Kim (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2013), 68.

¹²⁰ Han 1974, 200-3; Kim 1975, 121; Hong 2002, 1241-45.

¹²¹ Chang 2020, 55-63.

However, the Park regime's repressive tactics were so effective that the student-led anti-government protests decreased in the late 1970s.¹²²

Dissident intellectuals called the *chaeya* were another social force that challenged Park Chung-hee. They participated in politics without affiliation with opposition parties, weaponizing their moral integrity, partisan neutrality, and intellectual authority. The *chaeya* group, many founders of which had initially been anti-communist Christians who fled from North Korea, radicalized as the Park regime abandoned its democratic façade.¹²³ In the 1970s, the *chaeya* intellectuals provided theoretical grounds for anti-government activists and launched organizations to develop solidarity among the anti-regime activists. Some *chaeya* groups who believed that political democratization, economic reform, and national reunification were inseparable from each other added peaceful unification to their agendas.¹²⁴

The constitutional amendments in 1969 and 1972 to extend Park's presidency, the economic recession in the 1970s, the death of Chun Tae-il, a factory worker and activist who committed suicide by fire in 1971 in protest against labor exploitation, and the Park regime's mounting repression paved the way for the alliance among dissident activists and intellectuals, the working class, and the opposition parties.¹²⁵ Student activists and dissident intellectuals joined underground unions organized by factory workers and supported their claims for labor rights. To ensure the fairness of the 1971 presidential election, students, social activists, and intellectuals launched organizations to monitor voting procedures and report irregularities. In opposition to the Park regime's constitutional revisions, the *chaeya* granted moral authority to

¹²² Chang 2020, 76-77.

¹²³ Myung-Lim Park, "The Chaeya," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 373-75.

¹²⁴ Park 2011, 385-96.

¹²⁵ Choi 1993, 34-35; Hyug Baeg Im, "The Origins of the Yushin Regime: Machiavelli Unveiled," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 243-44.

the NDP's struggle while the NDP provided channels for the chaeya to make their political voice.

However, the pro-democracy alliance failed to influence South Korea's status-seeking strategy and relations with socialist states during the Détente. Of the agendas covered by this alliance in the 1970s, the proportion of those directly and indirectly related to South Korean foreign policy was extremely low.¹²⁶ One exceptional figure was Kim Dae-jung, a young NDP leader who ran against Park Chung-hee in the 1971 presidential election. Kim had continuously questioned the Park regime's foreign policy and developed his own vision of national reunification.¹²⁷ During the 1971 election campaign, Kim proposed peaceful reunification and non-political exchanges between the two Koreas and peace in the Korean peninsula assured by the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan. However, Kim's proposal was more of his personal vision, which did not lead to a consensus within the conservative NDP or the pro-democracy alliance.¹²⁸

B. External Support

During the Détente, US grand strategy was aimed at the reduction of security commitments abroad and reconciliation with the Soviet Union and China. To this end, the United States did not oppose South Korea's overture to North Korea and other socialist states. It provided a permissive setting for the Park Chung-hee regime to attempt alternative, defiant strategies to enhance South Korea's status by achieving mutual reconciliation and recognition with the Socialist Camp.

¹²⁶ Chang 2020, 155-56.

¹²⁷ Do and Park 2020, 202-3.

¹²⁸ Sang-young Rhyu, "Kim Dae-Jung and the Presidential Election of 1971," in *Kim Dae-Jung and History of Korean Opposition Parties*, ed. Ji-yeon Shim, Sang-young Rhyu, and Samwoong Kim (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2013), 163.

The Nixon administration's rapprochement with China helped it keep the Soviet Union in check and downsize security commitments to US allies in East Asia. The reduction and relocation of US forces in South Korea was a part of this grand design. In March 1970, in line with the Nixon Doctrine announced in the previous summer, the US government decided to withdraw the Seventh Infantry Division and three air force battalions from South Korea and relocate the remaining forces away from the frontline. After the Nixon administration informed the Park regime of its decision, both sides reached an agreement in February 1971 that the withdrawal would be completed by June.¹²⁹

In this setting, the outbreak of hostilities between the two Koreas or that involved them had to be restrained and localized so as not to jeopardize US strategic objectives in East Asia. Therefore, the Nixon administration wanted the Park regime to reconsider its policy toward the Socialist Camp. US decision-makers also expressed their interest in South Korea's dialogue with North Korea and other socialist states.¹³⁰ When KICA Director Lee Hu-rak raised the issue of an inter-Korean agreement guaranteed by great powers in December 1971, US Ambassador Philip Habib replied that the US government would welcome such a progress.¹³¹

The Nixon also administration proposed multilateral talks to address the Korean problem.¹³² In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1975, Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, proposed a conference between South and North Korea, the United States, and China, which might be joined by other countries later. Kissinger repeated his proposal in 1976. In his speeches in Seattle, Kissinger once again put

¹²⁹ Chae-Jin Lee, *A Troubled Peace: U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 68-70; Joo-Hong Kim, "The Armed Forces," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 176-77.

¹³⁰ Hong 2012, 123-24.

¹³¹ Hong 2012, 166.

¹³² Hak-Joon Kim, "The Prospect for a Peace Structure on the Korean Peninsula: With Emphasis on the Tripartite Conference," in *Korean Unification Problems in the 1970s*, ed. Chong-Shik Chung and Hak-Joon Kim (Seoul, Korea: Research Center for Peace and Unification, 1980), 226-29.

forth the idea of a four-party conference to handle the Korean issue. At the UN General Assembly held in September, Kissinger presented a revised proposal that the two Koreas would have a preliminary conference first, and if it was successful, the United States, China, and other relevant parties would join it.

More importantly, the Nixon administration closely cooperated with China to encourage the inter-Korean dialogue. In his conversation with Zhou Enlai on February 23, 1972, Nixon said that “[T]he Koreans... are emotionally impulsive people” so “[I]t is important that both of us exert influence to see that these impulses, and their belligerency, don’t create incidents which would embarrass our two countries. It would be silly, and unreasonable to have the Korean Peninsula be the scene of a conflict between our two governments [the United States and China]... with the Prime Minister [Zhou Enlai] and I working together we can prevent this.”¹³³ The Nixon administration’s cooperation with China to localize the Korean problem continued at the UN.¹³⁴ Their cooperation finally bore fruit in November 1973 when the UN General Assembly adopted a consensus statement that urged dialogue and cooperation between the two Koreas.

The Carter administration’s efforts to pull out US forces from South Korea provided permissive conditions for the Park regime’s defiant status-seeking strategies if it was willing to follow through on them. Elected as US president in 1976, Jimmy Carter shared with Richard Nixon’s objective of reducing US security commitments in East Asia.¹³⁵ Shortly after his inauguration, Carter decided on a phased but complete withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea. To expedite US withdrawal, the Carter administration proposed multilateral talks

¹³³ *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), Vol. 17. “197: Memorandum of Conversation” (February 23, 1972).

¹³⁴ Lee 2006, 74; Xia and Shen 2014, 1100-5.

¹³⁵ Lee 2006, 81-86; Khue Dieu Do, “‘The Carter Zeal’ versus ‘The Carter Chill’: U.S. Policy Towards the Korean Peninsula in the Carter Era,” in *Korea and the World: New Frontiers in Korean Studies*, ed. Gregg A. Brazinsky (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 73.

among the two Koreas and the United States.¹³⁶ When he visited Beijing in August 1977, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance expressed the US government's interest in a four-party conference for South and North Korea, the United States, and China. During his travel to Asia in May 1978, US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski discussed the possibility of a tripartite conference involving the two Koreas and the United States with Chinese leaders and Park Chung-hee.

The Park Chung-hee regime accepted the tripartite talk proposal after the US government consented that the proposal could be linked to the postponement of US force withdrawal from South Korea.¹³⁷ Initially, the Park regime opposed the Carter administration's proposal for a tripartite conference. The Park regime did not want the exclusion of China because it was trying to take advantage of the US-China rapprochement to develop a new relationship with China. More importantly, the Park regime was concerned that the trilateral talk could set the stage for direct contact between the United States and North Korea, which would turn to South Korea's diplomatic disadvantage.¹³⁸ The US-ROK joint communique issued during Carter's visit to Seoul in July 1979 proposed a senior-level talk among the representatives of South Korea, North Korea, and the United States. However, the tripartite talk did not materialize as North Korea rejected it.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Kim 1980, 230; Lee 2006, 88; Do 2019, 74; Khue Dieu Do, "Letters and Ping Pong: North Korean Diplomatic Offensive towards the United States in the Late 1970s," *The International History Review* 43, no. 6 (2021), 1188.

¹³⁷ Do 2019, 82.

¹³⁸ Do 2019, 75.

¹³⁹ Do 2021, 1190.

3. Japan

1) Commitment and Strategic Choice

A. The Rise of Pro-China Conservatives

During the Détente, the Japanese ruling elites were more flexible and weakly committed to anti-communism than their South Korean counterparts. When the East Asian Cold War entered a new phase with the arrival of the Détente, it was the pro-China conservatives that formed a new mainstream in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party that dominated Japanese politics. Although the LDP was a coalition of conservatives who opposed leftists, its pro-China members exhibited greater flexibility and pragmatism in addressing socialist states. However, the rise of pro-China conservatives who adopted defiant status-seeking strategies through diplomatic normalization with China and other socialist states was a contested process. Their dominance was achieved only after the pro-China groups won the intra-party struggle, replacing the anti-communist, pro-Taiwan groups within the LDP.¹⁴⁰

The initial objective of the United States was to demilitarize and democratize postwar Japan.¹⁴¹ The Supreme Command for Allied Power (SCAP) disbanded the Japanese army, purged those who collaborated with the military junta during World War II, and launched political reforms to democratize Japan. The Peace Constitution promulgated in 1947 declared in Article 9 that Japan would “forever renounce war as a sovereign right” and that “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.”¹⁴² However, the arrival

¹⁴⁰ I use the term “group” instead of “faction” because many political factions embraced both pro-China and pro-Taiwan members. See Frank C. Langdon, “Japanese Liberal Democratic Factional Discord on China Policy,” *Pacific Affairs* 41, no. 3 (1968), 411.

¹⁴¹ Katzenstein 2005, 48; Cha 2016, 123-29.

¹⁴² Prime Minister’s Office, “The Constitution of Japan” (November 3, 1946).

of the Cold War forced US leaders to shift their strategic objective toward rebuilding Japan as a fortress of anti-communism.

While Japan was integrated into the US-led anti-communist alliance system, the LDP founded in 1955 as a conservative coalition dominated Japanese politics. Postwar Japanese politics was an arena of contestation between the leftists, the right-wing conservatives, and the moderate conservatives who held contending political visions.¹⁴³ The leftists affiliated with the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) claimed that Japan should keep its distance from the United States. They also criticized the atrocities that their country had committed against other Asian peoples during World War II. At the other extreme stood the right-wing conservatives, who were proud of Japan's glorious past and strongly aspired for the restoration of Japan's great-power status. They accepted the unequal alliance with the United States as a means to contain the communist threat but struggled to recast the US-Japan relationship on an equal footing and remove the constitutional constraints on Japan's military sovereignty.

Between these two groups stood the moderate and pragmatic conservatives led by Yoshida Shigeru, who designed Japan's postwar grand strategy during his premiership (1946-1947, 1948-1954), which came to be known as the Yoshida Doctrine. Yoshida and his supporters viewed economic recovery as postwar Japan's national priority and bilateral cooperation with the United States as indispensable to this end. These moderate conservatives wanted to focus exclusively on economic growth without diverting resources to rearmament under the rubric of the US-Japan alliance and the Peace Constitution. They were open to

¹⁴³ Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 119–50; Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), Ch. 2.

establishing commercial and diplomatic relations with socialist states if they could bring benefits to Japan's economy and security.

While the leftists lost their ground due to factionalism and the escalating tension between the Free World and the Socialist Camp, the LDP seized dominance in Japanese politics. However, the LDP was not a single monolith as it was founded as a grand coalition of moderate and right-wing conservatives. While the opposition parties remained relatively weak and incompetent, the LDP's intra-party factional struggle was the key driving force of Japanese politics. Postwar Japan's relations with socialist states emerged as one of the domains where the factional divide was most acute.

The rise of the pro-China groups and the China debate in the LDP demonstrate that Japanese ruling elites were not as strongly committed to anti-communism as their South Korean counterparts. Their growth can be largely attributed to the Yoshida faction's pragmatism. Although Yoshida was a pro-US politician who opposed communism, he held a pragmatic view regarding socialist states, especially China. First, Yoshida believed that the China threat should not be overstated because it was still too weak and the Sino-Soviet relationship would not last long.¹⁴⁴ To address Communist China, he said, diplomacy and economic contact would be more effective than containment. Second, the Sino-Japanese trade was indispensable to Japan's economic reconstruction, which was the Yoshida Doctrine's primary objective.¹⁴⁵ Yoshida said, "I don't care whether China is red or green. China is a natural market, and it has become necessary for Japan to think about markets." Therefore, Yoshida attempted a "two-China policy" to maintain ties with both China and Taiwan until the United States forced him to abandon it.

¹⁴⁴ Qingxin Ken Wang, *Hegemonic Cooperation and Conflict: Postwar Japan's China Policy and the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 119-20; Yinan He, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.

¹⁴⁵ He 2009, 153-59.

Yoshida's pragmatism was inherited by his disciples. Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato (1960-1964), a student of the Yoshida school, advanced the separation of politics and economy (*seikei bunri*) as the principle to govern the Sino-Japanese relations.¹⁴⁶ Prime Minister Sato Eisaku (1964-1972), another disciple of Yoshida, believed that Japan could maintain both diplomatic relations with Taiwan and non-official contacts with China based on the principle of *seikei bunri*.¹⁴⁷ However, the Sino-Japanese reconciliation was hindered by the Vietnam War, the Cultural Revolution in China, and Sato's reliance on pro-Taiwan elders within the LDP as well as his personal sense of indebtedness to Taiwanese leader Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek).¹⁴⁸ Although Sato himself explored the possibility of diplomatic normalization with China, China refused any dialogue with the Sato cabinet.¹⁴⁹

The intra-party struggle between the pro-China and pro-Taiwan groups escalated in the mid-1960s, forming a key cleavage within the LDP.¹⁵⁰ In January 1965, the pro-China conservatives organized the Afro-Asian Problems Research Association (AAPRA) as a counterpart to the Asian Problems Research Association (APRA), which was launched one month earlier by the pro-Taiwan conservatives. The APRA was under the tutelage of anti-communist LDP elders such as Kishi Nobusuke and Kaya Okinari, who emphasized special ties between Japan and Taiwan. The pro-China LDP members soon joined forces with pro-China politicians in opposition parties, forming the Dietmen's League for the Restoration of

¹⁴⁶ Wang 2000, 136-37; He 2009, 161.

¹⁴⁷ Wang 2000, 138-40.

¹⁴⁸ Yoshibumi Wakamiya, ed., *The Postwar Conservative View of Asia: How the Political Right Has Delayed Japan's Coming to Terms with Its History of Aggression in Asia* (Tokyo, Japan: LTCB International Library Foundation, 1999), 134-35.

¹⁴⁹ Sadako Ogata, *Normalization with China: A Comparative Study of U.S. and Japanese Processes* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), 39-40.

¹⁵⁰ Sadako Ogata, "Japanese Attitude toward China," *Asian Survey* 5, no. 8 (1965), 394-95; Sadako Ogata, "The Business Community and Japanese Foreign Policy: Normalization of Relations with the People's Republic of China," in *The Foreign Policy of Modern Japan*, ed. Robert A. Scalapino (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 183-84, 191-92; John Quansheng Zhao, "Informal Pluralism" and Japanese Politics: Sino-Japanese Rapprochement Revisited," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 1989), 68-69; Wakamiya 1999, 127-31.

Ties with China (1970) and the People's Congress for the Restoration of Diplomatic Ties between Japan and China (1971).

The 1972 LDP presidential election was a turning point in the intra-party struggle. In this election, Tanaka Kakuei, allied with other pro-China candidates Miki Takeo and Ohira Masayoshi, won a landslide victory over Fukuda Takeo, anti-communist Kishi's political heir.¹⁵¹ Miki was the first main faction leader who declared his pro-China stance and urged the abrogation of the Japan-Taiwan Peace Treaty. In his negotiation with Tanaka and Ohira, Miki demanded the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization as his condition for the tripartite alliance against Fukuda. Ohira was another pro-China conservative. In his speech in September 1971, Ohira highlighted that:

“Since last Autumn, there has been a rapidly growing trend among the membership of the United Nations towards granting Beijing the right to represent China. The number of countries establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing has continuously increased and this is echoed in the movement of popular opinion within our nation. It is my judgment that the time is fully ripe for the government to make an accurate assessment of the situation and bring about a resolution to the so-called “China issue.””¹⁵²

The pro-China group now formed a mainstream in the LDP. Tanaka's China initiative was largely driven by political realism to elicit support from his allies, Miki and Ohira, and

¹⁵¹ Ogata 1977, 199-200; Ogata 1988, 46; Wang 2000, 161-62.

¹⁵² Ryuji Hattori, *China-Japan Rapprochement and the United States: In the Wake of Nixon's Visit to Beijing*, trans. Graham B. Leonard (London: Routledge, 2021), 24-25.

thus isolate his rival, Fukuda. However, Tanaka himself was also enthusiastic about diplomatic normalization with China. According to Tanaka's secretary, Hayasaka Shigezo, the prime minister said:

“The tide is high: I’ll do the Japan-China thing in one fell swoop... Mao and Zhou are Commies. But those guys built everything from the ground up: they’re founders and owners... The way they were able to bring together and unify such a huge country and its people is something absolutely out of the ordinary. It stands to reason that they’re able to calculate and take into account what their nation needs to get from Japan in order to get by. They’ve sent a message to us saying that when we begin to talk about restoring ties, the US-Japan Security Treaty can stand as is, but we have to break off diplomatic relations with Taiwan; they won’t demand reparations. I’ll take their word and get it all done in a jiffy.”¹⁵³

Shortly after his inauguration, Tanaka (1972-1974) appointed Ohira as Foreign Minister and declared, “I will work to hasten the normalization of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China and forcefully promote the diplomacy of peace within the everchanging international situation.”¹⁵⁴ Tanaka also elicited an intra-party consensus that the Japanese government would open negotiations with China on the condition that sufficient consideration would be given to Japan’s relationship with Taiwan.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Wakamiya 1999, 164-65.

¹⁵⁴ Hattori 2021, 34.

¹⁵⁵ Ogata 1988, 51.

Although Tanaka resigned in December 1974, the pro-China conservatives maintained their dominance within the LDP. Disenchanted by Tanaka's plutocracy, Miki allied with Fukuda who led anti-communist, pro-Taiwan conservatives. However, the Miki cabinet (1974-1976) still placed the Sino-Japanese peace treaty on top of its agenda.¹⁵⁶ Ironically, it was during Fukuda Takeo's premiership (1976-1978) that Japan signed the Sino-Japanese peace treaty. Fukuda could not disregard the pro-China group because he had to cooperate with the Tanaka and Ohira factions to win the LDP presidential election. Moreover, Fukuda himself realized the need to conclude a peace treaty with China.¹⁵⁷ After his inauguration, Fukuda announced that his cabinet would pursue the Sino-Japanese peace treaty and appointed as foreign minister Sonoda Sunao, well known for his friendship with Tanaka and Ohira. The LDP also decided to support the treaty negotiation with China unless Japan would be involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

B. Reconciliation and Normalization with Socialist States

Since Japan was a war criminal country defeated in World War II, the most urgent task of postwar Japanese diplomacy was to regain membership in international society. However, the onset of the Cold War and the antagonism between the Free World and the Socialist Camp hindered Japan's smooth reentry into international society. In this bifurcated world, the moderate conservatives who formed the mainstream in the ruling LDP chose conformist status-seeking strategies that aligned Japan with the US-led Free World. To expedite Japan's return to international society, they decided to join the United States and its anti-communist alliance system, conforming to the logic of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict. The Yoshida

¹⁵⁶ Wang 2000, 184-85.

¹⁵⁷ Wang 2000, 194; Ogata 1988, 86.

Doctrine, which was aimed at revitalizing economy, minimizing rearmament, and rejoining the international society under US auspices, became the guiding principle of Japanese leaders.¹⁵⁸

Japan's conformist status-seeking strategies proved effective. Since Japan's robust economy and alliance with the United States were critical to containing communism in East Asia, the United States allowed Japan to return to international society and assume a greater role as its alliance partner.¹⁵⁹ It helped Japan establish diplomatic and economic relations with other US allies in East Asia, conclude the San Francisco Peace Treaty on generous terms, and obtain membership in principal international institutions in the postwar world. The United States also opened its market to Japan to boost the latter's economic reconstruction. Japan, once a vanquished country, quickly returned as a key member of the Free World.

However, Japan's choice to align itself with the US-led Free World was not without costs because the US-Japan alliance prevented Japan from obtaining diplomatic recognition from socialist states. First, the US-Japan partnership was an obstacle to the Sino-Japanese relationship.¹⁶⁰ The United States forced Japan to open diplomatic relations with Taiwan instead of China, and to join the US-led multilateral trade embargo to isolate it. Second, the Soviet-Japanese relationship was also interrupted by the United States. Hatoyama Ichiro, who took office as prime minister (1954-1956) after Yoshida, was highly critical of his predecessor's pro-US stance. To reclaim Japan's autonomy, the Hatoyama cabinet normalized diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in October 1956. However, the United States stepped into the negotiation process to prevent Japan from deviating from the US orbit.¹⁶¹ As a result, Japan

¹⁵⁸ Berger 1993, 140; Sun-Ki Chai, "Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine: Three Techniques for Institutionalization," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997), 395-99.

¹⁵⁹ He 2009, 121-22; Cha 2016, 138-46, 154-55.

¹⁶⁰ Wang 2000, 112-14, 122-23; He 2009, 153-54.

¹⁶¹ Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-US Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2018), 114-16; Sergey V. Chugrov, "Postwar Relations between the USSR and Japan from the Late 1940s to the 1950s," in *A History of Russo-Japanese*

failed to settle territorial disputes and sign a peace treaty with the Soviet Union to terminate the state of war between them.

In response to order reform during the Détente, the pro-China LDP conservatives adopted defiant status-seeking strategies that deviated from the established pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict. They sought to enhance Japan's legitimate actorhood by obtaining recognition from socialist states that had refused to recognize it. In doing so, they also attempted to reinforce Japan's autonomy in foreign affairs that had been limited by the US-Japan alliance.¹⁶²

The pro-China conservatives' defiant strategies gained momentum with Tanaka Kakuei's inauguration as the LDP president and prime minister in July 1972. Two months later, after confirming that China was willing to establish diplomatic relations with Japan, Tanaka visited Beijing from September 25 to 28. On the last day of his visit, Tanaka and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issued a joint communique that declared the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization. In terms of status-seeking, Japan could enhance its legitimate actorhood and foreign policy autonomy by normalizing relations with a former adversary that had refused to recognize it.

The Sino-Japanese Joint Communique consisted of the preface and nine articles, most of which were related to the terms of mutual recognition.¹⁶³ In the preface, Japan expressed its understanding of "the three principles of the restoration of relations" proposed by China in 1971: (1) the government of the People's Republic of China was the sole legal government; (2) Taiwan was an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC; and (3) the Japan-Taiwan Peace

Relations: Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition, ed. Dmitry Streltsov and Nobuo Shimotomai (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 387-88.

¹⁶² Ogata 1965, 396-97.

¹⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China" (September 29, 1972).

Treaty was illegal and void and thus should be denounced.¹⁶⁴ Japan was willing to recognize Taiwan as the PRC's territory and terminate diplomatic relations with it. However, Japan insisted that the state of war between Japan and China had already been terminated and China's right to war reparation renounced by the 1952 Japan-Taiwan Peace Treaty. China respected Japan's position, so the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué announced that "the abnormal state of affairs," not "the state of war," was terminated and that China renounced its "demand," not "right" for war reparation.

By normalizing diplomatic relations with China, Japan could establish new rules of conduct with its former adversary.¹⁶⁵ In the joint communiqué, Japan agreed with China to expand interchanges of people and embark on negotiations to conclude agreements for trade, shipping, aviation, and fisheries. Japan also lifted restrictions on economic relations with China, discarding the principle of *seikei bunri* that had dictated the Sino-Japanese relations until 1972. The non-governmental and semi-official agreements that had regulated bilateral trade were now replaced by long-term, inter-governmental ones.

Japan's pursuit of recognition from China was completed in August 1978 with the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship.¹⁶⁶ The primary obstacle was how Article 7 of the Joint Communiqué, the so-called "anti-hegemony" clause, would be translated into the peace treaty. It stated, "... the normalization of relations between Japan and China is not directed against any third country. Neither of the two countries should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony."¹⁶⁷ While China wanted Japan to join the anti-Soviet coalition,

¹⁶⁴ Ogata 1988, 44.

¹⁶⁵ He 2009, 196-97.

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship" (August 12, 1978).

¹⁶⁷ See footnote 163.

Japan wanted to avoid being dragged into the Sino-Soviet dispute as it was seeking to improve relations with the Soviet Union as well. The negotiation made a breakthrough on August 9, 1978, as Beijing agreed that the peace treaty would not affect either country's relations with third countries.¹⁶⁸ This so-called "third-country" clause was based on four conditions put forth by Japanese Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi in 1975 to dilute the anti-Soviet connotation of the anti-hegemony clause.¹⁶⁹

The Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization served as a springboard for Japan to improve its relations with other socialist states. It initially had a mixed effect on the Soviet-Japanese relations. On the one hand, the fear of encirclement by the US-China-Japan coalition motivated the Soviet Union to restart the negotiation for a peace treaty with Japan. Although both sides normalized diplomatic relations in 1956, territorial disputes between them remained unsettled and they had not yet concluded a peace treaty to terminate the state of war. On the other hand, the antipathy of Soviet leaders against Japan's overture to China pushed them to take an intransigent, high-handed stance against Japan. Overall, however, the fear of encirclement and isolation overrode the antipathy, altering the Soviet Union's attitude toward Japan.

The Tanaka cabinet's defiant status-seeking strategy extended to the Soviet-Japanese relationship.¹⁷⁰ In response to Soviet protest against the anti-hegemony clause in the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué, Japanese Foreign Minister Ohira Masayoshi visited Moscow in

¹⁶⁸ Ogata 1988, 91-92.

¹⁶⁹ Miyazawa's four conditions were: (1) hegemony would be opposed not only in the Asia-Pacific region but also anywhere else; (2) anti-hegemony was not directed against a specific third party; (3) anti-hegemony did not mean any common action by Japan and China; and (4) a principle that was in contradiction to the spirit of the United Nations Charter would not be accepted. See Ogata 1988, 84; Wang 2000, 192-93; He 2009, 187.

¹⁷⁰ Ogata 1988, 79-80; Go Ito, *Alliance in Anxiety: Detente and the Sino-American-Japanese Triangle* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 112-13; Viktor V. Kuz'minkov and Viktor N. Pavlyatenko, "Soviet-Japanese Relations from 1960 to 1985: An Era of Ups and Downs," in *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 428-30.

October 1972 and assured that it did not imply an anti-Soviet alliance. Ohira also reached an agreement with Soviet leaders that they would soon start a peace treaty negotiation. In October 1973, Tanaka Kakuei visited Moscow and had a summit with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. They issued a joint communique that acknowledged the presence of unsettled territorial disputes between Japan and the Soviet Union and promised the expansion of economic cooperation and sociocultural exchange. These accomplishments helped Japan enhance its status by improving its relations with another socialist giant.

However, Japan's diplomatic achievement in the Soviet-Japanese relations was limited by the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty.¹⁷¹ It hardened Soviet attitudes toward Japan, aborting the negotiation of the Soviet-Japanese Peace Treaty. When it was made public that the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty included the anti-hegemony clause, the Soviet Union harshly criticized Japan for now joining the Chinese-led anti-Soviet coalition. However, the Soviet reaction was far more restrained than expected. Despite its strong rhetoric, Moscow did not take any concrete actions that would deteriorate the Soviet-Japanese relations, shifting the blame mainly to China and the United States. US State Department expected that the Soviet side would exercise self-restraint given that it had a strong interest in economic ties with Japan and the US-China relationship was moving toward diplomatic normalization.¹⁷²

Japan's defiant strategies included diplomatic normalization with smaller socialist states. In November 1971, the supra-partisan Dietmen's League for the Promotion of

¹⁷¹ Robert E. Bedeski, *The Fragile Entente: The 1978 Japan-China Peace Treaty in a Global Context* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), 49-50; Haruko Ozawa, "Soviet-Japanese Relations and the Principle of the 'Indivisibility of Politics and Economics,' 1960-1985," in *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition*, ed. Dmitry Streltsov and Nobuo Shimotomai (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 412-13.

¹⁷² Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "A Strategic Quadrangle: The Superpowers and the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1977-1978," in *The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 229-30.

Friendship between Japan and North Korea was launched.¹⁷³ While 246 Dietmen out of 751 participated in this organization, most LDP participants simultaneously held membership in the AAPRA that played a central role in the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization. The Tanaka cabinet was not ready to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea but sought to expand non-political cooperation and exchanges. Some conservative politicians even called for the renouncement of the 1969 Nixon-Sato communique that tied Japan's security to that of South Korea.

In January 1972, the Dietmen's League sent its goodwill mission headed by LDP member Kuno Chuji to Pyongyang.¹⁷⁴ After a series of meetings with North Korean leaders, they declared the basic principles of the North Korean-Japanese relations and signed an agreement to open trade missions in each other's capital and expand bilateral trade. The Tanaka cabinet took additional measures to promote cooperation with North Korea.¹⁷⁵ It allowed the Japanese Export and Import Bank to grant a loan to North Korea, exhibited a positive attitude toward the North Korean proposal that the two Koreas should be reunified under the name of the Koryo Confederation, and acknowledged the North Korean regime's status as the legitimate government in the northern half of the Korean peninsula.

However, Japan's cooperation with North Korea did not lead to diplomatic normalization.¹⁷⁶ Japanese leaders could not take a more proactive stance toward North Korea because of the latter's resurging militarism emboldened by the communist victory in Vietnam and US withdrawal from South Korea. More importantly, Japan was not ready to normalize

¹⁷³ Jung Hyun Shin, "Japanese-North Korea Relations in the 1970's: From A Linkage Politics Perspective," *Asian Perspective* 4, no. 1 (1980), 76-78.

¹⁷⁴ Shin 1980, 79; Denny Roy, "North Korea's Relations with Japan: The Legacy of War," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 12 (1988), 1285-86.

¹⁷⁵ Seung-young Kim, "Miki Takeo's Initiative on the Korean Question and U.S.-Japanese Diplomacy, 1974-1976," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 20, no. 4 (2013), 383-84.

¹⁷⁶ Shin 1980, 80.

relations with North Korea at the expense of its existing alignment with South Korea. Ushiroku Torao, Japanese Ambassador to Seoul, recommended that the Japanese government be cautious because the North would not be able to replace the South in international society.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, the Tanaka cabinet considered a “two-Korea” policy that Japan would maintain diplomatic relations with the South and cultivate economic and cultural ties with the North, repeatedly confirming its strategic priority to the Japanese-South Korean relations.¹⁷⁸

Japan’s defiant strategies were more successful in its relationship with North Vietnam, another secondary socialist state with which Japan normalized diplomatic relations during Tanaka’s premiership. Japan’s overture to North Vietnam started during the Sato cabinet. The Sato cabinet, alarmed by the Nixon administration’s unilateral strategic adjustment in East Asia, decided to expand economic ties with North Vietnam and dispatched diplomats to Hanoi.¹⁷⁹ The North Vietnamese government agreed with the exchange of trade representatives and the need of bilateral communication. On the other hand, the Sato cabinet sent Miyake Wasuke, a diplomat who had advocated the Japanese-Vietnamese diplomatic normalization, to Hanoi in February 1972 and proposed the resumption of diplomatic relations.

Sato’s Vietnam initiative was inherited by Tanaka. The 1973 Paris Accords among North and South Vietnam and the United States provided a favorable setting for the Tanaka cabinet. Foreign Minister Ohira said, “... the Saigon government is not the only legitimate government even in South Vietnam... There is no reason why the Japanese government should hesitate to resume diplomatic relations with North Vietnam.”¹⁸⁰ Finally, Japan and North Vietnam agreed to open a negotiation for diplomatic normalization in July 1973. While Japan

¹⁷⁷ Kyungwon Choi, “Japan’s Foreign Policy toward Korean Peninsula in the Détente Era: An Attempt at Multilayered Policy,” *NKIDP Working Paper* 6 (2017), 6-7.

¹⁷⁸ Shin 1980, 84; Choi 2017, 8-10.

¹⁷⁹ Ito 2003, 122-29.

¹⁸⁰ Ito 2003, 128.

did not want to fall behind other Free World nations that had already resumed diplomatic relations with Hanoi, North Vietnam wanted to have the upper hand in diplomatic competition with South Vietnam. The negotiation was successful, and on September 21, Japan and Vietnam declared the establishment of diplomatic relations between them.¹⁸¹

2) Strategic Consistency

During the Détente, the LDP pro-China conservatives could adopt and consistently implement defiant status-seeking strategies that began with the 1972 Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization. Domestically, Japanese ruling elites were not confronted with any serious challenges against their defiant strategies. While the opposition parties either did not oppose the pro-China conservatives' strategies or were too weak to do so, the business community supported the LDP's China initiative. Externally, the United States that pursued rapprochement with China and the Soviet Union generated permissive conditions for Japanese leaders to consistently engage in reconciliation with socialist states. Rather, the United States encouraged Japan's overture to the Socialist Camp as long as it helped the United States achieve its strategic interests in East Asia.

A. State-Society Relations

Although the pro-China LDP conservatives' defiant status-seeking strategies began with the 1972 Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization, Japanese public opinion remained unfriendly until Tanaka visited Beijing.¹⁸² The negative view of China in domestic society stemmed from China's communist ideology and military potential as well as the fear that Japan might be dragged into the conflict between the United States and China. However, Japanese

¹⁸¹ Ito 2003, 130.

¹⁸² He 2009, 165-69.

ruling elites could continue their China initiative as they obtained support from opposition parties and the business community.

While the Détente eased the divide between the Free World and the Socialist Camp and the LDP pursued diplomatic normalization with socialist states, the JSP and the JCP played a little or limited role. First, the JSP and the JCP failed to take a common stance on the China issue. The JSP that had adhered to the principle of neutralism in the 1950s began to lean toward China in the late 1960s. In contrast, the JCP had been in close contact and collaboration with the Soviet Union and China in the 1950s, but these connections were almost broken by the late 1960s.¹⁸³ In particular, there was little space for the JCP in the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization because Chinese leaders blamed the JCP for not joining the anti-Soviet coalition and not being revolutionary. Moreover, the JSP members were largely skeptical about the collaboration with the JCP given its low popularity in domestic society and conspiratorial tactics behind the slogan of the united front.

Second, the JSP, which had the upper hand among Japanese leftists, suffered from intra-party factionalism. Established in 1945, the JSP consisted of three factions with different views on foreign policy: the left-wings, the right-wings, and the centrists that continuously switched sides between them. In 1949, the JSP officially accepted the principle of “positive neutralism” that supported peaceful coexistence between the capitalist and communist worlds.¹⁸⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, however, there emerged a split between the left-wing faction claiming that Japan should no longer recognize the Taiwanese government, and the right-wing faction countering that the reality of “two Chinas,” at least provisionally, should be

¹⁸³ Swearingen and Langer 1952, 231-37; Peter Berton and Sam Atherton, *The Japanese Communist Party: Permanent Opposition, but Moral Compass* (London: Routledge, 2018), 104-6; Stockwin 1968, 113-21; Ito 2003, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Stockwin 1968, 31-37.

acknowledged.¹⁸⁵ Although the left-wingers dominated their opponents, the JSP's solidarity and agency were seriously damaged.

While the JSP and the JCP played a limited or little role in the Sino-Japanese relationship, it was the Komeito (Clean Government Party) that backed up the ruling LDP's defiant strategies. The Komeito, founded in 1964 by a Buddhist religious society called the *Soka Gakkai*, was one of the opposition parties that supported diplomatic normalization with China. The Komeito delegations shuttled between Tokyo and Beijing as a messenger, paving the way for the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization.¹⁸⁶ In 1971, Komeito leader Takeiri Yoshikatsu visited Beijing and shared his prospect with Chinese leaders that the pro-China conservatives such as Tanaka and Ohira would soon seize power in the LDP. In July 1972, Takeiri visited Beijing again and delivered a 21-point draft based on his conversations with Tanaka and Ohira. After reading Takeiri's memo, which translated Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's reply into Japanese, Tanaka decided to visit Beijing.

Chinese leaders selected the Komeito and Takeiri as their messengers for several reasons.¹⁸⁷ First, while many Japanese were preoccupied with the potential of China as an export market, the Komeito sponsored by the Soka Gakkai was financially stable, so it was not desperate to pursue its parochial economic interests from China. Second, China wanted an alternative, non-governmental communication channel out of the concern that negotiations through an official, inter-governmental one might be interrupted by the pro-Taiwan politicians in the Diet. Finally, Takeiri Yoshikatsu had a personal friendship with Tanaka, so he could deliver messages directly and swiftly to Japanese leaders.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Stockwin 1968, 84.

¹⁸⁶ Zhao 1989, 73-75.

¹⁸⁷ Ito 2003, 95-97.

¹⁸⁸ Takino Yūsaku, "The Top Secret Document that Took Tanaka Kakuei to Beijing" (September 28, 2022).

The business community was another social force that supported the pro-China LDP conservatives. The growth and involvement of non-governmental actors were a feature of the Sino-Japanese relationship in the postwar era.¹⁸⁹ They launched a variety of organizations that called for closer ties with China. Of these non-governmental actors, the business community was the strongest advocate for the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization.¹⁹⁰ China was a promised land both as a market and a supplier of raw materials. Moreover, cultivating friendly ties with China was so important given the overseas Chinese community in Southeast Asia, another important market for Japan. As a result, the pro-China entrepreneurs established the Association for the Promotion of Sino-Japanese Trade and participated in the Association of Sino-Japanese Friendship in 1949.

Due to the East Asian Cold War, economic relations between Japan and China in the 1950s exclusively relied on small-scale informal trade. This trade was governed by four non-governmental trade agreements signed in June 1952, October 1953, May 1954, and March 1958.¹⁹¹ However, informal trade was continuously interrupted by the Sino-Japanese diplomatic disputes. It was also too small and insignificant in Japan's total trade. The Sino-Japanese trade entered a new phase in the 1960s with the conclusion of semi-official trade agreements.¹⁹² The 1962 L-T Trade Agreement, named after its signatories, Liao Chengzhi and Takasaki Tatsunosuke, was a five-year program endorsed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku. It was succeeded by the Memorandum Trade Agreement, which was renegotiated and extended on an annual basis.

¹⁸⁹ Ogata 1988, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Wakamiya 1999, 168; Wang 2000, 118.

¹⁹¹ Ogata 1988, 9; He 2009, 157.

¹⁹² Ogata 1988, 12-13.

As the volume of the Sino-Japanese trade increased, the Japanese business community turned into a strong supporter of diplomatic normalization between them. Japanese firms and entrepreneurs that developed interests in Chinese market were confronted with many challenges.¹⁹³ The most fundamental one was the vulnerability of the Sino-Japanese economic relations to political fluctuations. As long as Japan and China did not normalize their diplomatic relations, bilateral trade would remain limited and unstable. For instance, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai declared in 1960 that the Sino-Japanese trade would be carried out through official and governmental agreements, non-government contracts between Japanese firms and appropriate Chinese corporations, and small Japanese enterprises labeled by China as “friendly firms.”¹⁹⁴ In 1970, Zhou presented “four conditions” as new criteria for trade with Japan. He declared that contracts with Chinese corporations would not be allowed to Japanese firms that supplied weapons for US forces or economic assistance for US allies in East Asia.¹⁹⁵

The business community moved to secure and maximize their economic interests in China, which in turn helped the pro-China conservatives enhance their strategic consistency. In response to Zhou Enlai’s four conditions, Japanese companies that participated in “friendly trade” with China denounced the Japan-Republic of China (Taiwan) Cooperation Committee and warned business organizations affiliated with it. Industries located in the Kansai region inhabited by businesses that once developed close connections with China took the lead.¹⁹⁶ As China gained both UN membership and a permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 1971, the entire business community began to call for diplomatic normalization with China.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Ogata 1965, 396-97.

¹⁹⁴ Ogata 1977, 181-82.

¹⁹⁵ Ogata 1977, 185-86; Ogata 1988, 14.

¹⁹⁶ Ogata 1977, 188-90.

¹⁹⁷ Ogata 1977, 197-200.

B. External Support

The shift in US grand strategy that began with the Nixon Doctrine generated mixed effects on Japan.¹⁹⁸ On the one hand, it aroused the fear of abandonment among the LDP conservatives who had heavily relied on the United States for national security and economic growth. On the other hand, the doubt and resentment that stemmed from the US-China rapprochement strongly motivated Japanese leaders to initiate an independent approach to socialist states in Asia. Despite the LDP leaders' initial fear and anxiety, the US-China rapprochement set a permissive condition for them to consistently pursue reconciliation and mutual recognition with socialist states including China.

In a series of talks in 1971 and 1972, US and Chinese leaders reached a consensus that the US-China rapprochement was not incompatible with the US-Japan alliance. During Henry Kissinger's visits to Beijing in July and October 1971, Zhou Enlai expressed his concern about the resurgence of Japanese militarism.¹⁹⁹ Kissinger replied that the US-Japan alliance would prevent Japan from pursuing aggressive policies, assuring that the United States would oppose "Japanese military expansion outside their home islands." The Shanghai Communiqué reflected their consensus on the US-Japan alliance. While China expressed its opposition to "the revival and outward expansion of Japanese militarism" and support for "the Japanese people's desire to build an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan," the United States confirmed that it "places the highest value on its friendly relations with Japan" and would "continue to develop the existing close bonds."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ogata 1988, 50; Ito 2003, 49-55; He 2009, 186.

¹⁹⁹ *FRUS*, Vol. 17, "139. Memorandum on Conversation" (July 9, 1971); *FRUS*, Vol. 17, "140. Memorandum of Conversation" (July 10, 1971); *FRUS*, Vol. 17, "143. Memorandum of Conversation" (July 11, 1971).

²⁰⁰ WCDA, "Joint Communiqué between the United States and China" (February 27, 1972).

Although the US-China rapprochement provided a favorable setting for Japan's defiant status-seeking strategies, the United States did not want the LDP's China initiative to undermine US strategic interests. Specifically, the Nixon administration did not want the Tanaka cabinet, which was in a hurry to normalize diplomatic relations with China, to sacrifice the US-Japan alliance and their security commitment to Taiwan declared in the 1969 Nixon-Sato Joint Statement.²⁰¹ In his memorandum to Nixon before the US-Japan summit, which was held a few weeks earlier than Tanaka's visit to Beijing, Kissinger emphasized that "we have a definite interest that Japan not agree to possible PRC requirements which ... [would] inhibit our ability to fulfill our defense commitments, particularly with respect to Taiwan and Korea."²⁰² The US government was concerned that Tanaka might normalize diplomatic relations with China "on terms adversely affecting US interests."²⁰³

To alleviate US concerns over Taiwan and secure its support for Tanaka's China initiative, the Japanese government assured that the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization would not damage the US-Japan alliance, especially Japan's cooperation in the defense of Taiwan.²⁰⁴ When Kissinger visited Tokyo, Japanese Foreign Minister Ohira Masayoshi confirmed that Japan would cooperate with the United States in dealing with China. At the Nixon-Tanaka summit held in Honolulu, Tanaka promised that the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization would be pursued without undermining the US-Japan alliance and altering the status of Taiwan, and finally obtained Nixon's endorsement. In his meeting with Nixon in

²⁰¹ In this statement, Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku said that "the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area was also a most important factor for the security of Japan." The full text of this statement is available at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/joint-statement-following-discussions-with-prime-minister-sato-japan>; Ogata 1988, 50; Wang 2000, 164-65.

²⁰² Kazukiho Togo, "Japan's Foreign Policy under Détente: Relations with China and the Soviet Union, 1971-1973," in *The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 189-90.

²⁰³ Ito 2003, 94.

²⁰⁴ Ogata 1988, 50-51; Wang 2000, 166; Ito 2003, 100.

October 1972, Ohira once again confirmed that Chinese leaders did not raise any demand that would damage the US-Japan alliance.

As Nixon's cooperation was conducive to the Tanaka cabinet's diplomatic normalization with China, the Carter administration's new détente strategy generated momentum for the Fukuda cabinet's peace treaty negotiation with China. In the early years of Jimmy Carter's presidency, the Soviet-first group represented by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance prevailed, so the United States treated the US-China relations as secondary.²⁰⁵ Faced with the stalemate in the US-Soviet arms control negotiation and the resurgence of Soviet expansionism in the Third World, however, the United States turned to China again to contain the Soviet Union.²⁰⁶

Against this backdrop, the Carter administration strongly encouraged Japan to conclude a peace treaty with China. At the Carter-Fukuda summit in May 1978, Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo learned that the United States would welcome the Sino-Japanese peace treaty.²⁰⁷ In his meeting with Fukuda, Carter expressed his support for Fukuda's successful negotiation with China. It became evident that the Sino-Japanese peace treaty was in harmony with Carter's plan to normalize diplomatic relations with China. The Carter-Fukuda summit was a great encouragement to Japanese ruling elites given that in the late 1970s Japan's efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union reached a stalemate due to territorial disputes and that the Carter administration's plan to speed up military withdrawal from South Korea raised concern in Japan regarding its national security.

US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski's meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda and Foreign Minister Sonoda in late May 1978 reinforced Japanese leaders'

²⁰⁵ Hasegawa 2011, 218.

²⁰⁶ Hasegawa 2011, 227.

²⁰⁷ Bedeski 1983, 40; Wang 2000, 211.

confidence in US support for the Sino-Japanese peace.²⁰⁸ During his travel to Tokyo via Beijing, Brzezinski said that the US-Japanese and Sino-Japanese friendships would be “complementary and reinforcing” each other, and assured that the United States would not oppose the anti-hegemony clause, if any, to be included in the Sino-Japanese peace treaty if it could expedite the negotiation. Before Brzezinski’s meeting with Fukuda, his aide Michael Armacost suggested that Brzezinski should emphasize that “you and the Chinese agreed on the importance of good Sino-Japanese relations and... they [the Chinese] attach great importance to the preservation of close U.S.-Japanese links” and “it is in the interests of the Japanese to conclude the Treaty of Peace and Friendship... [and] to incorporate the anti-hegemony clause... [because] it will be a restraint on China... [and] it would also be beneficial to the image of Japan.... It is also beneficial to Japanese resistance against Soviet pressure.”²⁰⁹

4. Conclusion

The Détente was an order reform that entailed the rearrangement of regulative institutions without power transition and the transformation of constitutive institutions. In terms of power distribution, US hegemony experienced a relative decline as a result of domestic economic crises, the emergence of alternative economic powerhouses, the Vietnam War, and the US-Soviet nuclear parity. However, power redistribution during the Détente neither led to power transition nor altered the constitutive institutions of the Cold War international order. Despite the relative decline of the United States, the overall US-Soviet power asymmetry did not alter and both superpowers maintained their hegemonic positions within the Free World and the Socialist Camp respectively. Instead, the Détente was accompanied by the rearrangement of

²⁰⁸ Ogata 1988, 95; Wang 2000, 211.

²⁰⁹ Hasegawa 2011, 228.

regulative institutions, that is, the establishment of new rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions.

In response to the *Détente*, South Korea attempted defiant status-seeking strategies to reconcile with socialist states and obtain recognition from them. The Park Chung-hee regime pursued reconciliation with North Korea and other socialist states, including the Soviet Union and China. Although South Korea's defiant strategies led to the July 4th Joint Communique and the opening of dialogues, indirect trade, and sociocultural exchanges with socialist states, they failed to draw diplomatic recognition from the Socialist Camp. Most importantly, South Korea's shift toward defiant strategies was incomplete because the Park regime that had ruled South Korea did not abandon its anti-communist commitment. In attempting defiant strategies, the Park regime could take advantage of its dominance in state-society relations and the geopolitical fluidity that emerged out of the *Détente*. However, South Korean ruling elites who had been so strongly committed to the Cold War international order failed to completely depart from the established pattern of intra-bloc cooperation and inter-bloc conflict.

In contrast, Japan's status-seeking strategy in this period was defiant as well as consistent. Faced with the *Détente*, the pro-China conservatives who seized dominance in the ruling LDP and Japanese politics adopted defiant strategies to enhance Japan's status by obtaining recognition from socialist states and expanding socioeconomic cooperation with them. Beginning the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization in 1972, Japanese leaders proactively pursued reconciliation and cooperation with other socialist states such as the Soviet Union, North Korea, and North Vietnam. During the *Détente*, Japanese ruling elites could implement defiant strategies they adopted because they garnered support from principal social actors, especially the opposition parties and the business community. Moreover, the United States that sought to enhance its strategic position between China and the Soviet Union

encouraged Japan to improve its relations with socialist states as long as they did not undermine US interests in East Asia.

Chapter 6. Status-Seeking in the Age of Uncertainty

South Korea, Japan, and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order

In this chapter, I trace the evolution of the liberal international order, analyze the status-seeking strategies of South Korea and Japan in the post-Cold War era, and examine the challenges they are facing as a result of the crisis of the liberal order. The demise of the Soviet Union and socialist states paved the way for the global expansion of the US-led liberal order, which was a nested part of the bifurcated Cold War international order. The post-Cold War order was structured by US unipolarity and the ideological dominance of liberalism. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States that had led the Free World now became the only superpower that stood above all other states in both economic and military capabilities. As the socialist experiments ended up in failure, liberal democracy combined with free market came to be regarded as the only model to organize the political and economic life of mankind.¹

The post-Cold War liberal international order is now in a complex crisis. Power shift that resulted from the rise of China and the decline of US hegemony is fueling a strategic competition between them and eroding the ground underlying the liberal order. However, the crisis of the liberal order can be neither reduced nor attributed to the US-China strategic competition because the resurgence of great power conflicts is increasingly entangled with global democratic backsliding, economic deglobalization, the growing inefficiencies of international regimes, and even climate change and global and regional pandemics. As the key building blocks comprising the liberal order are falling apart, so too is the status hierarchy that emerged from it.

¹ Francis Fukuyama is a notable exemplar of this kind of triumphalism. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

The crisis of the liberal international order is posing great challenges to South Korea and Japan, which have relied on conformist strategies to elevate their status by proactively participating in the established order. Since both countries already obtained the status of sovereign states in international society, their status-seeking strategies have been aimed to enlarge their role and influence within the liberal order. Based on its economic growth and political democratization by the 1980s, South Korea began to claim itself as an emerging middle power in the liberal order. The growing significance of South Korea as a key stakeholder in East Asian regional security, as an intermediary between advanced and underdeveloped economies, and as a major participant in global governance helped its pursuit of middle-power status. Japan sought to reclaim the great-power status in East Asia that it once held before the end of World War II. Although Japan restored economic prowess during the Cold War, the Peace Constitution promulgated under US occupation has put limitations on Japan's rights to use military force, which is a key element of great-powerhood. In the post-Cold War era, Japan has continuously attempted to remove these obstacles and enlarge its role as a key ally of the United States and a major contributor to the liberal order.

1. The Crisis of the Liberal International Order

1) The Liberal International Order in the Post-Cold War Era

A. Constitutive Institutions

With the end of the Cold War, the liberal international order evolved into an overarching order with a global reach. The basic structure of this order was already laid out by the United States during the Cold War. Since the world was divided into the US-led Free World and the Soviet-led Socialist Camp, the liberal order was a “bounded” or “inside” one nested in the Cold War

international order, which governed interactions between the United States and its allies and client states.² The collapse of the Socialist Camp ushered in a new era of US unipolarity. After the Soviet Union fell apart, the United States became the only superpower. It was the unipole far ahead of any other state in military and economic strength. US leadership in the Gulf War and other US-led humanitarian interventions demonstrated that the United States was the only country with the capabilities and willingness to play the managerial role in the post-Cold War era. In 1990, US President George H. W. Bush declared that the United States would build “a new world order [which is] ... freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace.”³

The arrival of US unipolarity spurred debates among scholars and practitioners, leading them to coin different terms to capture the nature of the post-Cold War international order. The term “American unipolarity” focuses on US supremacy in terms of the distribution of material capabilities, whereas “American hegemony” and “American empire” are more concerned with the social and relational structure underlying the post-Cold War order. “American hegemony” emphasizes that the hierarchical order in the post-Cold War era is based on the bargain between the United States and other states.⁴ While the United States promised lesser states to provide public goods such as security and to exercise self-restraint in wielding its power, they promised their support for US leadership in return. The proponents of “American empire” look into the varied networks constituting the post-Cold War international

² G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 222-23; John J. Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order,” *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019), 18-20; Gregorio Bettiza, Derek Bolton, and David Lewis, “Civilizationism and the Ideological Contestation of the Liberal International Order,” *International Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (2023), 5-6.

³ George H. W. Bush, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit” (September 11, 1990).

⁴ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 26-27; Ikenberry 2011, 70.

order.⁵ They argue that empire is a relational structure characterized by the dynamics of divide-and-rule and heterogeneous contracting between the center and peripheries. The imperial center exercises influence and control through local intermediaries in peripheral communities, and their relations with the center are defined by heterogeneous contracts that specify varied rights and responsibilities to each periphery.

Regardless of whether the United States was a unipole, hegemon, or empire, however, there was little doubt that the United States now became the most powerful country in the world. US dominance paved the way for the global expansion of the liberal international order. In this US-led hierarchical order, legitimate actorhood was granted to sovereign states that achieved liberal democracy and free market economy or those on the path toward them. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Cold War was a geopolitical struggle between the Free World and the Socialist Camp on the one hand, and an ideological clash between two antagonistic visions of modernity they represented on the other hand. Therefore, the end of the Cold War was not only the US victory over the Soviet Union but also the victory of liberal democracy and market economy over authoritarianism coupled with planned economy, which in turn gave birth to the liberal “standard of civilization.” It distinguished “civilized” and “uncivilized” states depending on whether and the extent to which they embraced democratic principles, universal human rights, free market economy, and liberal internationalism.⁶ States that aspired for full

⁵ Daniel H. Nexon, “Discussion: American Empire and Civilizational Practice,” in *Civilizational Identity: The Production and Reproduction of “Civilizations” in International Relations*, ed. Martin Hall and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 109–16; Paul Musgrave and Daniel H. Nexon, “States of Empire: Liberal Ordering and Imperial Relations,” in *Liberal World Orders*, ed. Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 211–30.

⁶ Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999), 193; David A. Lake, Lisa L. Martin, and Thomas Risse, “Challenges to the Liberal Order: Reflections on International Organization,” *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021), 229–30; Bettiza et al. 2023, 5–6.

and legitimate actorhood in the post-Cold War order were required to fulfill these liberal standards.

Politically, the collapse of the Socialist Camp took place in tandem with the spread of democracy across different regions, which Samuel P. Huntington labeled as the third wave of democratization.⁷ Beginning with the overthrow of the authoritarian regime in Portugal in 1974, this wave lasted until the early 1990s, sweeping Southern Europe, Latin America, the Asia-Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa, and finally Eastern Europe. It toppled socialist states in the Soviet sphere as well as anti-communist authoritarian regimes that had belonged to the US-led Free World. The spread of democracy not only resulted from international and domestic political changes but also constituted a significant part of the policies of advanced democracies and major international organizations.⁸

Economically, the end of the Cold War accelerated the march of capitalism to the Socialist Camp.⁹ Russia, the former Soviet Union, and East European countries, which had long suffered from economic stagnation and decline induced by the inefficiencies of planned economy, now adopted free market economy. While other socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe fell apart, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was one exceptional case that could secure its power and control over domestic society. Deng Xiaoping and other reformist leaders preemptively introduced capitalism and carried out economic reforms to facilitate China's capitalist transition. It seemed that the spread of capitalist market economy was as much inevitable and irreversible as the wave of democratization.

⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), Ch. 1.

⁸ Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, "Democracy Promotion as a Practice of Liberal World Order," in *Liberal World Orders*, ed. Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196-99.

⁹ Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). Ch. 5; Norrin M. Ripsman, "Globalization, Deglobalization and Great Power Politics," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021), 1325-27.

The rise of the post-Cold War liberal international order entailed tensions with the Westphalian international order.¹⁰ In fact, the liberal order emerged out of the Westphalian order. As Ikenberry noted, “[T]he Westphalian logic has given world politics organizational principles built around state sovereignty and norms of great-power restraint and accommodation. Norms of self-determination and nondiscrimination have also been enshrined in the Westphalian vision. *Most of these rules and norms have provided the foundation for the liberal international project.* Liberal internationalism in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been premised on a stable system of states.”¹¹ The liberal order gradually took deep root as two liberal great powers, Britain and the United States, assumed hegemony in succession.

Although sovereign states were still treated as the principal and legitimate actors in the post-Cold War liberal order, the liberal standards of civilization underlying it were often at odds with the Westphalian order that acknowledged, at least in theory, the equality of sovereign states. In particular, Western efforts to spread liberal democracy and free market economy abroad generated backlash from the target states that either rejected political and economic liberalization or accepted only partial liberalization that would not jeopardize their illiberal or non-liberal regimes.¹² They often claimed that the Western promotion of liberal democracy and market economy was an infringement of sovereignty.

¹⁰ G. John Ikenberry, “The Logic of Order: Westphalia, Liberalism, and the Evolution of International Order in the Modern Era,” in *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 91-96; Lake et al. 2021, 228-29.

¹¹ Ikenberry 2014, 94.

¹² Benjamin Miller, “How ‘Making the World in Its Own Liberal Image’ Made the West Less Liberal,” *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021), 1362-64.

B. Regulative Institutions

Built upon US unipolarity and the liberal standards of civilization, the post-Cold War international order developed a distinct set of regulative institutions that govern the behaviors of participant actors and their interactions. The norms, rules, and practices of Westphalia were modified to embrace liberal values. In the issue areas where the Westphalian order did not provide the proper rules of conduct, new norms, rules, and practices imbued with liberalism were enacted.

The traditional means of national and international security were not abandoned but new instruments to achieve both security and liberalism were added to the toolkit of sovereign states. Instead of outright balancing through arms buildup and military alliance, they increasingly turned to non-military means for security. For instance, international institutions considered epiphenomenal to power politics were now employed by states to mutually bind and constrain each other.¹³ Moreover, as the number of democracies increased, there emerged new security concepts that stressed cooperation, mutual constraint, and solidarity among democracies.¹⁴ The novel notion that state sovereignty is not absolute and can be compromised if it undermines universal liberal values gained wide currency. State sovereignty was respected but the intervention of international society was endorsed to protect individuals whose basic rights were threatened by state repression.¹⁵ US interventions for regime change, legitimized by such liberal notions, revealed the normative hierarchy embedded in the liberal order.

Economic relations were reorganized in a way that accelerated the free movement of goods, capital, and labor, leading to an unprecedented level of economic connectedness. The

¹³ Deudney and Ikenberry 1999, 182-84; T. V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 46–71; T. V. Paul, *Restraining Great Powers: Soft Balancing from Empires to the Global Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

¹⁴ Ikenberry 2011, 183-89.

¹⁵ Ikenberry 2011, 246-47; Lake et al. 2021, 229.

architects of the Cold War liberal order pursued a balance between economic freedom and regulation by embedding market economy within a social contract to protect those negatively affected by economic openness.¹⁶ National governments retained policy instruments to tame free market and established a welfare system that provided safety nets including social insurance. As the Cold War approached its end, however, embedded liberalism gave way to neoliberalism.¹⁷ Neoliberals, dissatisfied with the worsening performance of US economy and government regulations, rallied around politicians such as Ronald Reagan who supported their call for the lifting of regulation and disciplines, the downsizing and privatization of public sectors, and the freer movement of goods, capital, and labor. Neoliberalism now became the dominant ideology, paving the way for a globalized capitalist economy.

Multilateral cooperation and coordination were another regulative institution that comprised the liberal international order.¹⁸ Multilateralism was a form of interstate cooperation for generalized, long-term stability “without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies... in any specific occurrences.”¹⁹ Under post-Cold War US hegemony, international institutions established during the Cold War for cooperation between the United States and its allies underwent expansion. Multilateral institutions created to facilitate interstate cooperation evolved into authoritative bodies that promoted liberal values and even infringed upon state sovereignty to do so. In the long term, however, the growing intrusiveness of liberal international institutions backfired because they produced dissidents and pushed them to challenge the liberal international order.

¹⁶ John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 379–415.

¹⁷ Gerstle 2022, Ch. 4.

¹⁸ Lake et al. 2021, 231–32; Tanja A. Börzel and Michael Zürn, “Contestations of the Liberal International Order: From Liberal Multilateralism to Postnational Liberalism,” *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021): 282–305.

¹⁹ John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution,” *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (1992), 571.

2) Beyond Power Transition?

The post-Cold War liberal international order is now confronted with a complex crisis, which is neither limited nor reduced to any one dimension of the existing order.²⁰ China's rise coupled with US decline is arousing the concern that the US-China strategic competition would lead to another hegemonic war that repeatedly occurred when the rising power overtook the declining hegemon. However, the US-China strategic competition not only involves a power shift between great powers but also reignites ideological contestation that was considered to have already come to an end with the collapse of the Socialist Camp. While the US model that combines liberal democracy and free market economy is revealing its limitations, the Chinese model that combines authoritarianism with state capitalism is gaining appeal to those states that have been marginalized within the US-led liberal order. Moreover, anthropogenic crises such as climate change and global and regional pandemics, which resulted from human activities for massive production and consumption, are increasingly intertwined with geopolitical conflicts, eroding the liberal international order from its foundation.

The rise of China is a key driver of the geopolitical shift underlying the crisis of the liberal international order. As the liberal order expanded after the end of the Cold War, it came to integrate illiberal and partially liberal states.²¹ The leaders and strategists of the core liberal states, especially the United States, held the optimistic view that those non-liberal states could be tamed, socialized, and eventually democratized through economic interdependence and

²⁰ For an overview of various challenges to the post-Cold War international order, see Jaeyoung Kim, "The Agency of Secondary States in Order Transition in the Indo-Pacific," *The Pacific Review* 37, no. 1 (2024), 3-4. See also Markus Kornprobst and T. V. Paul, "Globalization, Deglobalization and the Liberal International Order," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021), 1310-13; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at Its Centenary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), Ch. 9. According to Acharya and Buzan (2019), global international society (GIS) is entering a period of "deep and sustained transition." It will not be any form of "back to the future," leading to a "deeply pluralist structure layered between regional and global levels" (278-84).

²¹ Lake et al. 2021, 232-33.

inter-societal connections within the liberal international order. In East Asia, the US-China partnership was key to the expansion and stability of the post-Cold War liberal order.²² Economically, the United States allowed China to access the global market and maintain control over the domestic market, which helped its rapid economic growth. On the security side, the United States tried to manage differences with China and encouraged it to play a constructive role in regional and global security.

Paradoxically, the expansion of the liberal order and the accommodation of non-liberal states were too successful, gradually leading to power shift from the United States toward China. China was the largest beneficiary that took full advantage of the liberal order and its economic openness.²³ With Deng Xiaoping's ascent to power, China embarked on economic reforms to introduce capitalist elements including free market. These reforms were so successful that China swiftly turned into a main powerhouse in the capitalist world economy. Moreover, the optimism that China's economic growth and deepening interdependence with international society would lead to China's democratization proved wrong. While China grew into a global factory first and then into a global market, the CCP's authoritarian rule continued. The CCP still retains control over capitalist economy, limits individual rights and monitors civil society, wields laws as a principal means of statecraft instead of submitting itself to the "rule of law," and mobilizes ethno-nationalism to reinforce its authoritarian rule.²⁴

²² Michael Mastanduno, "Order and Change in World Politics: The Financial Crisis and the Breakdown of the US-China Grand Bargain," in *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 170-73.

²³ John M. Owen, "Two Emerging International Orders? China and the United States," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021), 1425-26.

²⁴ Jessica Chen Weiss and Jeremy L. Wallace, "Domestic Politics, China's Rise, and the Future of the Liberal International Order," *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021), 640-42.

While illiberal China's economic growth and military modernization are undermining US hegemony, US commitment to the liberal international order is also wavering.²⁵ In the absence of a paramount threat comparable to the Soviet Union, US turn to unilateralism, the backlash against it, and the erosion of bipartisanship for grand strategy paved the way for US retrenchment from the post-Cold War liberal order.²⁶ The failure of US interventions to promote liberal democracies led to skepticism over US grand strategy. Beginning in the George W. Bush administration, the prolonged wars to force regime change in the Middle East drained US economic and military resources and eroded the domestic consensus that the United States should exercise global leadership.

The 2007-2008 global financial crisis further damaged the US-China partnership that contributed to the stability of the post-Cold War liberal international order.²⁷ The housing bubble burst, the bankruptcy of financial institutions, the surging unemployment rates, and the growing fiscal deficit in the United States generated negative spillover effects abroad, causing global economic recession. In this setting, the United States found itself no longer able to accommodate rising China as it had done since the end of the Cold War. To address this economic predicament, the United States began to blame China as an unfair trader, currency manipulator, and intellectual property robber. US policy change is posing great challenges to China, which has heavily relied on exports to the United States for economic growth. In the long term, however, it helped China reduce its economic dependence on the United States by diversifying export markets and turning to domestic consumption for economic growth.

²⁵ Steve Chan, "Challenging the Liberal Order: The US Hegemon as A Revisionist Power," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021): 1335–52; Steve Chan et al., *Contesting Revisionism: China, the United States, and the Transformation of International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²⁶ Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, "Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (2007): 7–44; Georg Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis: Choosing Between Imposition and Restraint* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 148-50.

²⁷ Mastanduno 2014, 174-82.

The anxiety that China will catch up with the United States is pushing US leaders to employ various means to maintain US supremacy while slowing down, and if possible, frustrating China's rise. The United States is strengthening ties with traditional allies and forging networks with new partners that consider rising China a potential or actual threat.²⁸ Simultaneously, the United States is trying to reduce its economic interdependence with China, which seems to have enriched China at the expense of US interests.²⁹ Even after US leaders realized that economic decoupling from China was neither feasible nor desirable, they are engaging in economic de-risking instead, which is still aimed at managing the risks that might result from overreliance on China and its strengthening grip on the global supply chain. In response, China is building up its arms to counter US military initiatives to contain and isolate China, reinforcing partnerships with Russia and other emerging powers, and launching new multilateral institutions and forums under its auspices.³⁰

China's rise, US decline, and the US-China strategic competition are arousing the concern that both sides, sooner or later, cannot avoid a hegemonic war. IR scholars are now revisiting hegemonic transition theories of different strands and examining their implications for the US-China relationship.³¹ For instance, Graham Allison argues that the United States

²⁸ Abraham M. Denmark, *U.S. Strategy in the Asian Century: Empowering Allies and Partners* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2020), Ch. 3; Sung Chul Jung, Jaehyon Lee, and Ji-Yong Lee, "The Indo-Pacific Strategy and US Alliance Network Expandability: Asian Middle Powers' Positions on Sino-US Geostrategic Competition in Indo-Pacific Region," *Journal of Contemporary China* 30, no. 127 (2021): 53–68; Hugo Meijer, "Shaping China's Rise: The Reordering of US Alliances and Defence Partnerships in East Asia," *International Politics* 57, no. 2 (2020): 166–84.

²⁹ Agathe Demarais, "What Does 'De-Risking' Actually Mean?" *Foreign Policy* (August 23, 2023); Brad Glosserman, "De-Risking Is Not Enough: Tech Denial Toward China Is Needed," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2023): 103–19; Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, "The New Economic Security State: How De-Risking Will Remake Geopolitics Essays," *Foreign Affairs* 102, no. 6 (2023): 106–22.

³⁰ Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2015); Elizabeth Wishnick, "In Search of the 'Other' in Asia: Russia–China Relations Revisited," *The Pacific Review* 30, no. 1 (2017): 114–32; Alexander Korolev, "On the Verge of an Alliance: Contemporary China-Russia Military Cooperation," *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (2019): 233–52; Oliver Stuenkel, "The BRICS: Seeking Privileges by Constructing and Running Multilateral Institutions," *Global Summitry* 2, no. 1 (2016): 38–53.

³¹ Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); Steve Chan, *China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory: A Critique* (London:

and China are now trapped in the Thucydides's Trap, that is, "the natural, inevitable discombobulation that occurs when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power." He says, "... on the current trajectory, war between the US and China in the decades ahead is not just possible, but much more likely than currently recognized." Against this pessimism, some scholars stress that the relationship between the rising and established powers did not necessarily lead to a hegemonic war. They investigate why and how great powers exercise self-restraint and accommodate each other.³²

However, it is worth noting that the current crisis of the post-Cold War liberal international order is so complex that it cannot be reduced to power shift between the United States and China. China's rise and US relative decline reignited the ideological contestation regarding the proper model of governance and political economy, which seemed to be concluded long ago with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite the expectation that China's economic liberalization and entry into the liberal international order will democratize China, the CCP survived and China is still standing on the authoritarian capitalist path. Rather, the repeated financial crises pushed the United States to share the stabilizer role it had monopolized with rising China.³³ Moreover, Chinese leaders who witnessed the failure of market economy that culminated in the global financial crisis in 2007 and 2008 became more confident in their authoritarian capitalist model.

Routledge, 2008); M. Taylor Fravel, "Power Shifts and Escalation: Explaining China's Use of Force in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2007): 44–83; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Douglas Lemke and Ronald L. Tammen, "Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China," *International Interactions* 29, no. 4 (2003): 269–71; David Rapkin and William Thompson, "Power Transition, Challenge and the (Re)Emergence of China," *International Interactions* 29, no. 4 (2003): 315–42; Ronald L. Tammen and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transition and China–US Conflicts," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1, no. 1 (2006): 35–55; Zhiqun Zhu, *US-China Relations in the 21st Century: Power Transition and Peace* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³² T. V. Paul, ed., *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); T. V. Paul et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

³³ Carla Norrlof and Simon Reich, "American and Chinese Leadership during the Global Financial Crisis: Testing Kindleberger's Stabilization Functions," *International Area Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (2015), 246.

As China's economic and military profile grows, the tension between China's capitalist authoritarianism and the liberal standards of civilization will grow more acute.³⁴ As long as China's liberalization is limited to the introduction of capitalism under state supervision, China's ambition for regional or global leadership within the liberal international order cannot be fulfilled. The rise of China whose development model cannot be reconciled with the post-Cold War liberal order can lead to a divide between the reduced liberal international order led by the United States and Europe on the one hand, and the authoritarian-capitalist international order led by China.³⁵ In this divided world, economic and societal interactions will continue between these two orders but will shrink and be limited.

The post-Cold War liberal international order is collapsing from within. Paradoxically, the success of the liberal order sowed the seeds for its own demise.³⁶ Economic globalization, societal interconnectedness, and cultural cosmopolitanism brought about economic inequality, social grievance, and identity crisis in the core regions of the liberal order. For instance, political activism in the United States after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, such as the Tea Party movement, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrated that discontent against the post-Cold War liberal order was spreading across the racial and class divides.³⁷ The sense of marginalization and misrecognition shared among those who have been alienated or experienced the decline of socioeconomic stature is now paving the way for the rise of populist demagogues who exploit their anger and anxiety.³⁸

³⁴ T. V. Paul, "Globalization, Deglobalization and Reglobalization: Adapting Liberal International Order," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021), 1612-14.

³⁵ Owen 2021, 1429-31.

³⁶ Ripsman 2021, 1327-28; Miller 2021, 1365-74; Paul 2021, 1606-7.

³⁷ Gerstle 2022, 230.

³⁸ Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ayşe Zarakol, "Struggles for Recognition: The Liberal International Order and the Merger of Its Discontents," *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021), 618-19.

The crisis of the liberal international order is growing more complex as power shift and ideological contestation are increasingly intertwined with the crisis of the Anthropocene. The term “Anthropocene,” formally introduced by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000, highlights “the central role of mankind in geology and ecology” and “the overarching impact of human activities on Earth and atmosphere.”³⁹ The crisis of the Anthropocene is drawing attention as human activities, which are aimed at progress and prosperity, destroy the planet and jeopardize the sustainability of human societies.

This crisis manifests itself through the acceleration of climate change and the recurrence of global and regional pandemics, which share a lot in common in their causes, processes, and consequences.⁴⁰ They both result from the “growth imperative” embedded in capitalism, which drives massive production and consumption and capital accumulation and as a result interrupts and alters nature. Climate change and the global pandemic are also similar in their processes. Hyperglobalization and societal interconnectedness provide a favorable setting for local activities to generate unexpected, inequitably distributed, and problematic effects across the globe. The negative effects of human activities for economic growth now travel across great distances and cause a large number of fatalities, especially among vulnerable populations.

In terms of consequences, climate change and pandemics are restructuring the landscape of geopolitical and ideological contestations.⁴¹ On the one hand, they revealed the

³⁹ Cameron Harrington, “The Ends of the World: International Relations and the Anthropocene,” *Millennium* 44, no. 3 (2016), 487; Thomas Heyd, “COVID-19 and Climate Change in the Times of the Anthropocene,” *The Anthropocene Review* 8, no. 1 (2021), 25.

⁴⁰ Diana Stuart, Brian Petersen, and Ryan Gunderson, “Shared Pretenses for Collective Inaction: The Economic Growth Imperative, COVID-19, and Climate Change,” *Globalizations* 19, no. 3 (2022), 410-19; Heyd 2021, 23-25; Richard A. Higgott, *States, Civilisations, and the Reset of World Order* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 67.

⁴¹ Ryan Katz-Rosene, “The Pandemic, the Economy, and Environmental Change: Six Implications for the Study of International Political Economy,” *Global Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2021), 1-2.

limitations of capitalist market economy, prompting the search for an alternative model of political economy that can reduce the risk of climate change, biodiversity decline, zoonotic diseases, and economic contractions. On the other hand, the absence of collective action against climate and public health crises shows that international regimes established for multilateral cooperation and coordination, which are the crucial components of the liberal international order, do not work effectively any longer.⁴²

It is worth noting that climate change and pandemics are increasingly intertwined with the US-China strategic competition. While the disagreement between advanced economies and developing ones persists, international agreements barely signed to address climate change have failed to produce visible outcomes, deepening discords between the United States and China.⁴³ The COVID-19 pandemic also negatively affected the US-China relationship.⁴⁴ While both the United States and China failed to exercise effective leadership, they blamed each other for the spread of the pandemic and propagated their performance in handling it, adding another layer to the ideological debate on the strengths and weaknesses of democratic and authoritarian regimes. Moreover, the US-China mutual distrust regarding the supply of

⁴² Paul G. Harris, "Collective Action on Climate Change: The Logic of Regime Failure," *Natural Resources Journal* 47, no. 1 (2007): 195–224.; Cinnamon P. Carlane, "Rethinking a Failing Framework: Adaptation and Institutional Rebirth for the Global Climate Change Regime," *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 25, no. 1 (2012): 1–50; William Nordhaus, "The Climate Club: How to Fix a Failing Global Effort," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 3 (2020): 10–17; Anne Applebaum, "When the World Stumbled: COVID-19 and the Failure of the International System," in *COVID-19 and World Order: The Future of Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation*, ed. Francis J. Gavin and Hal Brands (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 223–37; Janice Gross Stein, "Take It Off-Site: World Order and International Institutions after COVID-19," in *COVID-19 and World Order: The Future of Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation*, ed. Francis J. Gavin and Hal Brands (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 259–76.

⁴³ Michael Schuman, "Where U.S.-China Competition Leaves Climate Change," *The Atlantic* (November 21, 2022); Nikos Tsafos, "China's Climate Change Strategy and U.S.-China Competition" (March 17, 2022); Sara Schonhard and Zack Colman, "They're Talking, but a Climate Divide Between Beijing and Washington Remains," *POLITICO* (November 20, 2023).

⁴⁴ Milan Babić, "The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order: Geopolitical Fissures and Pathways to Change," *Global Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2021), 1–3; Jacques deLisle, "When Rivalry Goes Viral: COVID-19, U.S.-China Relations, and East Asia," *Orbis* 65, no. 1 (2021), 48–62; Thomas Wright, "The COVID Pandemic—A Global Crisis in an Era of Great Power Rivalry" (June 23, 2021); For a broader overview of global health as a component of, and challenge to, the liberal international order, see Markus Kornprobst and Stephanie Strobl, "Global Health: An Order Struggling to Keep up with Globalization," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021): 1541–58.

medical equipment reinforced the momentum of economic decoupling and reshoring between them, especially from the US side.

2. South Korea

1) The Conservative-Progressive Divide

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the third wave of democratization and the end of the global Cold War intersected with each other on the Korean Peninsula, paving the way for political transition in South Korea.⁴⁵ In 1987, South Korea's democratization entered a new phase with the June 29th Declaration. Roh Tae-woo, the leader and presidential candidate of the ruling Democratic Justice Party (DJP), declared that "the Constitution should be expeditiously amended, through agreement between the government party and the opposition, to adopt a direct presidential election system, and presidential elections should be held under a new Constitution to realize a peaceful change of government in February 1988."⁴⁶ As South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan accepted this declaration, the new constitution that restored the direct presidential election system was promulgated in October 1987. It marked the end of South Korea's authoritarian rule established by and extended through military coups.

The end of the global Cold War was another pivotal change that restructured South Korean politics. As the triumph of liberal democracies and free market economy became evident with the collapse of the Socialist Camp, the geopolitical and ideological barriers that had divided the world for nearly half a century broke down. The legitimacy of anti-communism that had served as the dominant ideology in South Korean politics and society began to be

⁴⁵ Samuel S. Kim, "Korea's Democratization in the Global-Local Nexus," in *Korea's Democratization*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3–8.

⁴⁶ Uk Heo and Terence Roehrig, *South Korea since 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38.

questioned as well.⁴⁷ The end of the global Cold War and the demise of anti-communism enabled South Korea, which had stood at the vanguard of the Free World, to resume dialogues with North Korea for peaceful coexistence and national reunification, and to normalize diplomatic relations with other socialist states, including the Soviet Union and China.

Democratization and the end of the Cold War led to the demise of the authoritarian regime that had relied on anti-communism to mobilize domestic society for security and economic growth. As the authoritarian regime and the opposition leaders reached an agreement, South Korea's democratization unfolded peacefully.⁴⁸ In the first post-democratization held in December 1987, the pro-democracy forces were divided as Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, two opposition leaders who spearheaded democratization, broke apart to run for the election. While the opposition camp was split, Roh Tae-woo, the leader of the ruling DJP and heir to Chun Doo-hwan, was elected as president. The schism among pro-democracy politicians and activists, coupled with Roh Tae-woo's victory, resulted in the emergence of a four-party system based on the competition between Roh's DJP, Kim Jong-pil's New Democratic Republican Party (NDRP), Kim Young-sam's Reunification Democratic Party (RDP), and Kim Dae-jung's Party for Peace and Democracy (PPD).

The divide between the authoritarian regime and the pro-democracy force gradually gave way to a new divide between conservatives and progressives. Although Roh Tae-woo was elected as president, he won only 36 percent of the vote and the ruling DJP barely won 125 seats out of 299 in the general election held in April 1988.⁴⁹ To break through this political

⁴⁷ Kwang-Yeong Shin, "The Trajectory of Anti-Communism in South Korea," *Asian Journal of German and European Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017), 5-7.

⁴⁸ Huntington 1991, 151-61; Sung Deuk Hahm, Kwangho Jung, and Dohee Kim, "Peaceful Power Transfers or Successions and Democratic Consolidation in South Korea," *Korean Social Science Journal* 40, no. 1 (2013): 53-64.

⁴⁹ Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 70-71.

stalemate, Roh Tae-woo chose to ally with Kim Young-sam and Kim Jong-pil, declaring the merger of the DJP, the RDP, and the NDRP in January 1990. This marked the rise of a conservative alliance that encompassed not only the previous members of the authoritarian regimes such as Roh Tae-woo and Kim Jong-pil, but also conservative pro-democracy figures such as Kim Young-sam. Regionally, it was an alliance between Northern Gyeongsang, Southern Gyeongsang, and Chungcheong provinces, with each supporting Roh Tae-woo, Kim Young-sam, and Kim Jong-pil respectively.

The 1990 conservative alliance was accompanied by the establishment of the Democratic Liberal Party, which in turn isolated Kim Dae-jung.⁵⁰ While this new ruling party seized 217 seats out of 299 in the National Assembly, Kim Dae-jung's PPD had only 70 seats. Regionally, Kim Dae-jung found his political base confined to Jeolla province. In November 1991, Kim Dae-jung and his supporters established the New United Democratic Party (NUDP) to enhance their alliance with progressive activists and intellectuals who participated in the pro-democracy movement and to expand their political base beyond Jeolla. The pro-democracy forces who opposed Kim Young-sam's defection rallied around Kim Dae-jung.

The conservative-progressive divide grew more acute with the rise of the so-called 386 generation by the early 2000s.⁵¹ Broadly, the term "386 generation" refers to those who were in their thirties in the 1990s, attended universities in the 1980s, and were born in the 1960s. Politically, the 386 generation is a group of former student leaders who spearheaded the pro-democracy protests against the authoritarian regime on campus and in the streets. Their entry

⁵⁰ Jin Park, "Political Change in South Korea: The Challenge of the Conservative Alliance," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 12 (1990), 1157-61; Keedon Kwon, "Regionalism in South Korea: Its Origins and Role in Her Democratization," *Politics & Society* 32, no. 4 (December 1, 2004), 556-66.

⁵¹ Maeil Business Newspaper, *Power Elites in the Roh Moo-hyun Era* (Seoul: Maeil Business Newspaper, 2003), 11, 42-43; Jung-Hoon Lee, "The Emergence of 'New Elites' in South Korea and Its Implications for Popular Sentiment Toward the United States," in *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, ed. Paul F. Chamberlin and Derek J. Mitchel (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004); Snyder 2018, 115-18.

into politics accelerated during the presidency of Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008), a progressive president who came to office after Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003). Although Roh himself was a self-educated human rights lawyer who never attended university or college, he shared progressive visions with the 386 generation. They now formed a new political majority within the presidential office and the National Assembly.

While the conservatives and progressives contended over many issues, South Korea's grand strategy and foreign policy were the issue areas where their split was most acute.⁵² The conservatives tend to emphasize reciprocity and the South-led national reunification of Korea. They believe that South Korea should lead peaceful national reunification as the end of the global Cold War proved the superiority of liberal democracy and free market economy. Although South Korea can provide support for North Korea's economic development and entry into the global society, it should maintain military preparedness as long as the North Korean regime keeps provoking military conflicts and seeks nuclear weapons. In this vein, the conservatives stress the reinforcement of the US-ROK alliance that has served to deter North Korea's security threats. Moreover, they pursue a comprehensive partnership with the United States beyond military alliance because the United States is South Korea's principal economic and diplomacy partner. Japan is also a key partner since it is another Asian liberal democracy in a bilateral alliance with the United States.

The progressives take a more conciliatory and accommodative stance toward North Korea.⁵³ Kim Dae-jung was a leading figure who had eagerly promoted his novel vision of

⁵² Norman D. Levin and Yong-Sup Han, "Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002); Young-Geun Kim, "Reciprocity in South Korean Security Policy Vis-à-Vis North Korea and the United States," *Asian Perspective* 37, no. 2 (2013): 183–208; Marco Milani, "Progressive and Conservative Visions of Inter-Korean Relations," in *The Korean Paradox: Domestic Political Divide and Foreign Policy in South Korea*, ed. Marco Milani, Antonio Fiori, and Matteo Dian (London: Routledge, 2019), 54–68.

⁵³ Jong Kun Choi, "Sunshine over a Barren Soil: The Domestic Politics of Engagement Identity Formation in South Korea," *Asian Perspective* 34, no. 4 (2010): 115–38; Cheng Li, "The Rise, Fall, and Transformation of the

regional peace. In the 1971 presidential election, he already proposed peaceful reunification between the two Koreas and peace in the Korean Peninsula assured by the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan. Kim's aspiration bore fruit in his presidency with the first inter-Korean summit held in June 2000. The Roh Moo-hyun administration that succeeded him also sought to expand the inter-Korean cooperation. The 386-generation politicians who were strongly influenced by nationalism since they served as pro-democracy student activists were proactive in national reconciliation. Moreover, the progressives emphasized balanced diplomacy. Although they did not deny the significance of the US-ROK alliance, they tried to avoid South Korea's overdependence on the United States by enhancing cooperation with other partners, especially rising China. While the conservatives highlight the commonalities between South Korea and Japan for future-oriented cooperation, the progressives demand Japan's apologies and reparations for its colonial rule as a precondition for bilateral cooperation.

As South Korean politics is polarized, the conservative-progressive divide and the split over foreign policy are deepening. Geopolitical conditions are also shifting in a way that reinforces this split rather than promotes national unity and consensus. The US-China strategic competition and their efforts to enhance cooperation with traditional partners are fueling the conflict between the United States, Japan, and South Korea on the one hand, and China, Russia, and North Korea on the other hand, which resembles the divide between the Free World and the Socialist Camp during the Cold War era. In response to this challenge, the conservatives seek to expand cooperation with the United States and Japan to deter North Korea's military adventurism and keep China's assertiveness in check, whereas the progressives call for

'386': Generational Change in Korea," in *Emerging Leaders in East Asia: The Next Generation of Political Leadership in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan*, ed. J. Patrick Boyd (Seattle, Wash.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), 99–122.

cooperation with North Korea and balanced diplomacy to prevent South Korea from being dragged into the US-China strategic competition.

2) The Quest for Middle-Power Status

Although the conservative-progressive divide came to restructure South Korean politics after democratization and the end of the global Cold War, South Korean leaders have generally identified their country as a middle power and pursued conformist strategies to enhance its autonomy and influence without challenging or defecting from the established liberal international order. It remains uncertain when the term middle power was first used in South Korea's policy discourse. However, it gradually emerged as a key concept that South Korean leaders and policy-makers turned to define their country's position and frame foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.⁵⁴

In his 1991 speech at Stanford University, Roh Tae-woo, the first post-democratization president, labeled South Korea a middle power. He said:

“The gross national product of South Korea, which was only 2.1 billion dollars in 1960, reached over 238 billion dollars by 1990, marking an increase of more than 100 times. Additionally, the country's trade, which was 360 million dollars 30 years ago, expanded to nearly 135 billion dollars last year, an increase of almost 400 times. What the world witnessed at the Seoul Olympics was not a long procession of starving children and refugees brought about by war, but a vibrant new country... South Korea is now a middle

⁵⁴ Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *South Korea's Grand Strategy: Making Its Own Destiny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 63.

power [chungjin-gukka] with a national per capita income of around \$5,500... In the next decade, as South Korea enters the twenty-first century, it will join the ranks of advanced nations with a national per capita income reaching \$15,000. South Korea will support a free economic order and will fulfill corresponding responsibilities for its development. Positioned as a middle power [chunggan-gukka] between advanced and developing nations, South Korea will take on a new role moving forward... Over the past four years since my June 29th Declaration, South Korea has made rapid progress in democratization, which realizes the principles of human rights, freedom of the press, free elections, and the separation of powers... Among the countries that achieved independence after the [Second World] War, it is rare to find a country practicing democracy like South Korea. We will continue to advance toward democracy without wavering.”⁵⁵

The content and context of Roh Tae-woo’s speech offer clues on how South Korea began to define itself as a middle power in the post-Cold War liberal order. First, South Korea, once a war-torn country devastated by the Korean War, achieved economic growth unparalleled by any other newly independent country in the post-war world. By the late 1980s, South Korea emerged as a major exporting country and South Korean conglomerates as global players in the capitalist world economy. Second, South Korea, which was governed by anti-communist authoritarian regimes, transformed into a liberal democracy. Among the countries that underwent the third wave of democratization, South Korea’s transition was relatively peaceful because the authoritarian regime and the pro-democracy forces reached a consensus. Although

⁵⁵ Roh Tae-woo. “Luncheon Speech at Stanford University” (June 29, 1991).

Roh Tae-woo himself was a key member of the authoritarian regime, he was elected president through a free and competitive election. Finally, South Korea used such major international events as the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games to showcase its economic and political development abroad.

Post-democratization presidents in the 1990s expanded South Korea's diplomatic horizon, paving the way for conformist status-seeking strategies to establish itself as an emerging middle power in the post-Cold War liberal order. First, Roh Tae-woo's *Nordpolitik* opened diplomatic relations and dialogue with socialist states and North Korea.⁵⁶ The breakdown of the geopolitical and ideological barriers encouraged South Korea to establish diplomatic relations with the Socialist Camp, which it failed to achieve during the Détente. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Roh Tae-woo administration (1993-1998) established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1990, and with China in 1992. *Nordpolitik* was targeting North Korea as well. By cultivating ties with the Soviet Union and China, North Korea's two principal patrons, the Roh administration tried to bring North Korea to the dialogue table. Such efforts bore fruit as the two Koreas signed the 1991 Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation and the 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.⁵⁷

The Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998) turned its eye to the global stage, bringing up key agendas for South Korea's further integration into the liberal order.⁵⁸ In his

⁵⁶ Victor D. Cha and Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *Korea: A New History of South and North* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), 120-24; Pacheco Pardo 2023, 94-96, 99-101.

⁵⁷ United Nations Peacemaker, "The Agreement Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation" (December 13, 1991); United Nations Peacemaker, "The Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" (January 20, 1992).

⁵⁸ In-Taek Hyun, "Strategic Thought Toward Asia in the Kim Young-Sam Era," in *South Korean Strategic Thought toward Asia*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, In-Taek Hyun, and Shin-wha Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 55-76; Snyder 2018, 78; Sangsoo Lee, "The Dynamics of Democratized South Korean Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," in *The Korean Paradox: Domestic Political Divide and Foreign Policy in South Korea*, ed. Marco Milani, Antonio Fiori, and Matteo Dian (London: Routledge, 2019), 24.

inauguration speech, Kim Young-sam expressed his aspiration to build a “New Korea,” marked by free and mature democracy, justice, harmony and prosperity, respect for culture and human dignity, and peaceful national reunification. He added that New Korea should be a “country that stands at the center of the new civilization, making contributions to world peace and human progress.”⁵⁹ “Globalization” (*Segyehwa*) was another key agenda of the Kim Young-sam administration. In his 1994 New Year’s press conference, Kim Young-sam emphasized that “globalization,” along with economic and military power and culture, was a key ingredient of national capabilities and it should be achieved through “autonomy, openness, and rationalization.”⁶⁰ On his way back from the 1994 APEC Summit, he stressed again, “[W]e must achieve globalization... We should find opportunities from globalization for export, investment, economy, and manpower interchange. We should view our problems from a global perspective. We should concentrate our capabilities on globalization to build a vibrant country.”⁶¹

The Kim Dae-jung administration’s Sunshine Policy eased the tensions and hostility between the two Koreas in the early 2000s, which was the largest obstacle to South Korea’s security and diplomacy.⁶² Upon his inauguration, Kim Dae-jung declared that South Korea would not absorb North Korea but instead actively seek reconciliation and cooperation with it.⁶³ Against this backdrop, the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003) expanded economic cooperation and sociocultural exchanges with North Korea, culminating in the first inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang in June 2000.⁶⁴ Kim Dae-jung also underscored the

⁵⁹ Kim Young-sam, “The 14th Presidential Inauguration Address” (February 25, 1993).

⁶⁰ Kim Young-sam, “The 1994 New Year’s Press Conference” (January 6, 1994).

⁶¹ Kim Young-sam, “Press conference from the APEC Summit” (November 19, 1994).

⁶² Yong-Sup Han, “The Sunshine Policy and Security on the Korean Peninsula: A Critical Assessment and Prospects,” *Asian Perspective* 26, no. 3 (2002), 44-63.

⁶³ Kim Dae-jung, “The 15th Presidential Inauguration Address” (February 25, 1998).

⁶⁴ United Nations Peacemaker, “The June 15th South-North Joint Declaration” (June 15, 2000).

significance of international support in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula. Kim Dae-jung highlighted that permanent peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula could be achieved through regional and international cooperation, especially diplomatic normalization between North Korea and the United States and Japan, the support from the United States, Japan, China, and Russia to encourage North Korea to become a responsible member of the international society, and the removal of WMDs and arms control on the Korean Peninsula.⁶⁵

South Korea's conformist strategies epitomized in middle-power diplomacy gained further momentum in the early 2000s. While inheriting Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy, the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008) stressed that reconciliation and stability in the inter-Korean relations were inseparable from peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia.⁶⁶ Although Northeast Asia newly emerged as a global economic powerhouse, this region suffered from historical conflicts that stemmed from the Cold War, and more fundamentally, the clash between continental and maritime forces. The Roh administration emphasized that South Korea should be an agent in peace-building in Northeast Asia because it was no longer a weak country on the periphery but "a middle power with economic and military power ranking 12th globally, democratic governance, and cultural influence."⁶⁷ Furthermore, Roh Moo-hyun promoted various policy concepts and discourses such as the "central state in Northeast Asia," the "Northeast Asian balancer," and "cooperative self-defense," which were aimed at reinforcing the autonomy and agency of South Korea as a middle power in its relations with the United States and other neighboring great powers.

⁶⁵ Kim Dae-jung, "Interview with CNN" (May 5, 1999); Snyder 2018, 101.

⁶⁶ Seong-Ho Sheen, "Strategic Thought Toward Asia in the Roh Moo-Hyun Era," in *South Korean Strategic Thought toward Asia*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, In-Taek Hyun, and Shin-wha Lee, Strategic Thought in Northeast Asia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 101–26; Hong Nack Kim, "South-North Korean Relations Under the Roh Moo-Hyun Government," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 10, no. 1 (2006): 37–59.

⁶⁷ Republic of Korea Government Information Agency. *The Roh Moo-hyun Administration Statecraft White Paper*, vol. 5: Reunification, Diplomacy, and Security (Seoul: Republic of Korea Government Information Agency, 2008), 20.

South Korea's quest for middle-power status entered a new phase during Lee Myung-bak's presidency (2008-2013). While his progressive predecessors, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, tried to establish a virtuous cycle between the inter-Korean relations and regional peace in East or Northeast Asia, Lee Myung-bak sought to claim South Korea's status as a middle power on the global stage.⁶⁸ The Lee Myung-bak administration claimed that South Korea already accomplished industrialization and democratization and that it now should be an "advanced first-class nation" that would serve as "a model to mankind" and earn "respect from the world."⁶⁹ The Lee administration also actively pursued the "Global Korea" agenda to consolidate South Korea's status as an emerging middle power. During Lee's presidency, South Korea hosted such major international conferences as the 2010 G-20 Summit, the 2011 High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, and the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit, demonstrating the growing significance of South Korea in global governance, international development, and global security. In particular, the Lee administration acted as an agenda-setter in climate change by promoting the vision of "Green Growth," which led to the establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

South Korea's global orientation experienced a relative decline during Park Geun-hye's presidency (2013-2017), which was focused more on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. In her 2011 *Foreign Affairs* article, which was published when she was still a member of the National Assembly, she proposed the policy of "trustpolitik" for trust-building between the two Koreas.⁷⁰ As Park took office in 2013, trustpolitik developed into a comprehensive

⁶⁸ Snyder 2018, 143-48, 195-99; Marco Milani and Antonio Fiori, "The Impact of Political Alternation on South Korea's Foreign Policy," in *The Korean Paradox: Domestic Political Divide and Foreign Policy in South Korea*, ed. Marco Milani, Antonio Fiori, and Matteo Dian (London: Routledge, 2019), 41-42.

⁶⁹ Lee Myung-bak, "The 17th Presidential Inaugural Address" (February 25, 2008); Lee Myung-bak, "The 48th Anniversary Speech for the March 15th Movement" (March 15, 2008); Lee Myung-bak, "The 63th Anniversary Speech for the National Liberation Day" (August 15, 2008).

⁷⁰ Park Geun-hye Park, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust between Seoul and Pyongyang Comment," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): 13-19.

concept to frame South Korea's grand strategy. She claimed that South Korea should initiate a trust-building process to build permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, and simultaneously, a multilateral dialogue process in Northeast Asia. Broadly, they were crucial components of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative to address "Asia's Paradox" that emerged from "the disconnect between growing economic interdependence... and backward political, security cooperation."⁷¹ Park also proposed the Eurasia Initiative to integrate Eurasia and transform it into a continent of creativity and peace.⁷² However, the Park administration did not cease middle-power diplomacy by participating in MIKTA, a grouping of Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia that aspired to "bridge divides between developed and developing nations."⁷³

In the post-Cold War and post-democratization era, South Korean leaders have pursued conformist strategies to establish their country's status as an emerging middle power within the existing liberal international order. The specific content and means of middle-power strategy varied depending on the incumbent administrations and their strategic visions.⁷⁴ For instance, Roh Moo-hyun and Park Geun-hye focused on peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, whereas Lee Myung-bak put more emphasis on South Korea's integration into the global society. Each administration also held different visions regarding which issue area South Korea should put priority to establish its middle-power status, whether it was trade and investment, regional or international security, international development, or other newly emerging issues such as climate change.

⁷¹ Park Geun-hye, "Address to the Joint Session of US Congress" (May 7, 2013); Sang-Hyun Lee, "The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI): A Vision toward Sustainable Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia," *The Asan Forum* (blog) (December 15, 2014).

⁷² Park Geun-hye, "Keynote Speech at the Conference on International Cooperation in the Eurasia Era" (October 18, 2013).

⁷³ See MIKTA <http://mikta.org/about/what-is-mikta/>.

⁷⁴ Sung-Mi Kim, "South Korea's Middle-Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges," *Chatham House Research Paper* (2016).

While the middle-power strategies of each administration have exhibited variations in different dimensions, they have faced two common challenges. First, South Korean leaders should develop strategies regarding how to address North Korea. Tensions and conflicts on the Korean Peninsula force South Korea to expend its military, economic, and diplomatic resources that otherwise could be used for status-seeking. The conservatives stress that the inter-Korean relations should be reciprocal and the North Korean threat should be deterred, whereas the progressives emphasize appeasement and engagement toward North Korea. Second and relatedly, South Korean leaders disagree over how South Korea should position itself vis-à-vis the United States and other neighbors, especially China. The conservatives highlight that the US-ROK alliance should be reinforced because it can enhance South Korea's security and status within the liberal international order. In contrast, the progressives tend to emphasize balanced diplomacy, warning against South Korea's overreliance on the United States that undermines its sovereignty and autonomy.

3. Japan

1) The Rise of Neo-Conservatives

Beginning in the 1990s, the validity of the Yoshida Doctrine that had guided Japan during the Cold War was put to the test. While the US-Japan alliance provided basic security and the Peace Constitution prohibited the use of military force for purposes other than exclusive self-defense, postwar Japan concentrated its national resources on economic growth and engaged in international affairs cautiously and selectively. The Yoshida Doctrine proved successful as Japan, the vanquished aggressor country, was readmitted to the international society and ascended as the second-largest economy in the world by the 1960s.

However, the end of the global Cold War and the newly emerging geopolitical environment posed challenges to the Yoshida Doctrine.⁷⁵ The collapse of the Soviet Union required Japanese leaders to search for new visions and roles for the US-Japan alliance that was established to contain the Soviet threat in East Asia. The backlash against Japan's checkbook diplomacy during the US-led Gulf War was a warning that Japan could no longer stay as an economic giant passive to make international contributions other than financial aid. Although Japan provided massive financial support for the United States and its partners during the Gulf War, Japan's delayed and limited participation in military operations provoked international criticism of Japan's cheap riding, which in turn damaged its national reputation. The US-led global war on terror and US military transformation aimed to enhance the flexibility of its military posture once again pushed Japan to play a greater role in international society.

The skepticism about the Yoshida Doctrine was intertwined with power shift within the ruling Liberal Democracy Party (LDP). Since the foundation of the LDP, Yoshida Shigeru, his disciples and protégés, and their successors had formed the mainstream within the party and dominated Japanese politics. As the Yoshida Doctrine lost its validity, however, the LDP conservatives began to explore alternative visions that would guide Japan's security and diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. The demise of the Yoshida Doctrine led to the rise of new conservatives who argued that Japan should enlarge its role and actively engage in global and regional affairs. Some of them were strongly influenced by anti-Yoshida and anti-mainstream LDP leaders such as Kishi Nobusuke. These new groups of conservatives agreed that Japan

⁷⁵ Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 66-67, 82-84; Cheol Hee Park, "Conservative Conceptions of Japan as a 'Normal Country': Comparing Ozawa, Nakasone, and Ishihara," in *Japan as a "Normal Country"?: A Nation in Search of Its Place in the World*, ed. David A. Welch, Yoshihide Soeya, and Masayuki Tadokoro (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 100-1; Andrew Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 44-45.

was an “abnormal” country constrained in the use of military force. To become a “normal” country, they claimed, Japan should strengthen its military force and revise the Peace Constitution that had shackled Japan’s military actions other than exclusive self-defense.

However, the newly emerging conservatives held different interpretations of what it means to become a “normal” country.⁷⁶ Ozawa Ichiro, the pupil of Tanaka Kakuei, was the proponent of a globalist or internationalist perspective. He maintained that Japan should be a “normal” country able to employ its military capabilities in a way that contributes to the international society. Specifically, he emphasized that Japan’s military force should be deployed under the UN banner. While a normalized Japan would serve the interests of the international community, its contributions would also benefit the country itself, as its survival and prosperity hinge on the maintenance of a peaceful and stable international order.

There were other LDP conservatives who maintained that the US-Japan alliance should be reinforced and Japan as a normal country should be able to use its strengthened military capabilities for collective self-defense. While “collective security” refers to multilateral cooperation to enhance the security of non-allied states, “collective self-defense” is the use of military force to defend an ally, which had long been prohibited by the Peace Constitution.⁷⁷ The pro-alliance conservatives were divided into two groups depending on their attitudes toward Japan’s past and war responsibility. Realists were critical of political leaders’ visits to the Yasukuni Shrine where war criminals are honored and apologetic for the wartime atrocities Japan had committed to its neighbors. In contrast, neo-conservatives took a revisionist position on historical issues. They felt less apologetic for Japan’s wartime aggression, rather harboring nostalgia for the past in which Japan had dominated Asia. In place of the declining moderates

⁷⁶ Samuels 2007, 124-27; Park 2011, 100-7.

⁷⁷ Samuels 2007, 48.

who inherited Yoshida's legacies, these neo-conservatives gradually formed a new mainstream within the LDP.

Political changes within the LDP were entangled with the crisis of the LDP's dominant position in Japanese politics. The antipathy against the LDP's incompetence, corruption, and factionalism generated opportunities for the opposition parties to challenge the LDP's decades-long dominance. Of these opposition parties, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) emerged as a principal challenger.⁷⁸ The DPJ was an anti-LDP coalition led by three leaders, that is, Hatoyama Yukio, Kan Naoto, and Ozawa Ichiro. It was founded in 1996 by Hatoyama Yukio who defected from the LDP and Kan Naoto who came from the Democratic Social Federation. The DPJ continued to grow by absorbing other opposition parties. In 2003, the DPJ's rise accelerated as it was joined by Ozawa Ichiro who left the LDP. By winning a landslide victory in the 2009 general election, the DPJ accomplished a peaceful transfer of power from the LDP.

The DPJ sought to implement an alternative vision of Japanese grand strategy in contrast to the Yoshida School moderates and neo-conservatives within the LDP, both of which emphasized the US-Japan alliance. The DPJ's three principal leaders and their backgrounds heralded that they would pursue a different path from the LDP. Hatoyama Yukio, the first DPJ prime minister, was the grandson of Hatoyama Ichiro, an anti-Yoshida LDP leader who achieved Soviet-Japanese diplomatic normalization during his premiership. As his grandfather did, Hatoyama sought to enhance Japan's autonomy, especially in its relations with the United States. Kan Naoto was a former member of the Democratic Social Federation, which consisted of defectors from the Japanese Socialist Party that opposed the US-Japan alliance in pursuit of

⁷⁸ Oros 2017, 107-8; Kenji E. Kushida and Phillip Y. Lipscy, "The Rise and Fall of the Democratic Party of Japan," in *Japan under the DPJ: The Politics of Transition and Governance*, ed. Kenji E. Kushida and Phillip Y. Lipscy (Stanford, CA: The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2013), 8-9; Daniel M. Smith, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Ellis S. Krauss, "Building a Party: Candidate Recruitment in the Democratic Party of Japan, 1996-2012," in *Japan under the DPJ: The Politics of Transition and Governance*, ed. Kenji E. Kushida and Phillip Y. Lipscy (Stanford, CA: The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2013), 162-63.

pacifism. As noted earlier, Ozawa Ichiro was a normal nationalist who claimed that post-Cold War Japan should enlarge its role through cooperation with international organizations rather than depend exclusively on the US-Japan alliance. However, the DPJ cabinet did not last long because it lost in the 2012 general election.

While the Yoshida Doctrine lost its validity and the DPJ failed to establish an alternative grand strategy that would guide Japan in the post-Cold War era, it was the neo-conservatives who newly seized dominance within the LDP and Japanese politics.⁷⁹ With the moderate conservatives retired or increasingly marginalized, the neo-conservatives steered Japan toward the path of normalization, where Japan was freed from the constraints of the Peace Constitution that had prohibited collective self-defense, strengthened its military alliance with the United States, and reestablished itself as a leading power in Asia and international society.

Abe Shinzo was the central figure of these neo-conservatives. Elected as the LDP president and the youngest prime minister in postwar Japan, Abe claimed that Japan should occupy a “rightful place” in international society, which it had failed to secure in the past decades.⁸⁰ He was not only the successor to Koizumi Junichiro, a normal nationalist conservative who enhanced Japan’s right to collective self-defense, but also the grandson of Kishi Nobusuke, an anti-Yoshida LDP prime minister who revised the US-Japan alliance treaty by stipulating Japan’s right to use its military force to defend its alliance partner. Against this backdrop, Abe and his neo-conservative allies sought the revision of the Peace Constitution, especially Article 9 that prohibits the possession of a regular army and the use of military force for collective self-defense.

⁷⁹ Oros 2017, 21; Michal Kolmaš, *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism: Abe Shinzō’s Vision of a Beautiful Japan and Its Limits* (London: Routledge, 2019), 53-58.

⁸⁰ Kolmaš 2019, 83.

As long as the neo-conservatives maintain dominance within the ruling LDP and the opposition parties fail to form a united front against it, it is highly likely that Japan will continue to pursue the path of normalization as envisioned by Abe Shinzo. Geopolitical conditions are also turning favorable for Japan's transformation into a normal country. In response to China's rise, the United States is expecting Japan to play a greater role as its alliance partner in East Asia. Balancing against China also aligns with Japan's national interests because the rise of China is the largest challenge to Japan's pursuit of a leading position in East Asia. If the dominance of neo-conservatives in Japanese politics remains unchallenged and the US-China strategic competition escalates, Japan will continue to build up its military capabilities, enhance the US-Japan alliance, and pursue a greater role in East Asia and international society.

2) Becoming A “Normal Country” or Reclaiming Great-Power Status

The demise of the Yoshida Doctrine in the post-Cold War era encouraged Japanese leaders to explore alternative strategies to secure and enhance Japan's status in world politics. Although the LDP and DPJ cabinets adopted different strategies, they were all more or less conformist because their common objective was to establish Japan's position as a leading country within the existing liberal international order rather than challenge and overthrow it. The neo-conservatives who formed a new mainstream in the LDP cabinets during Koizumi and Abe's premiership pursued the restoration of Japan's great-power status it had enjoyed in Asia before the end of World War II. To this end, they carried out reforms to remove the constitutional constraints on Japan's military, enhanced the US-Japan alliance, and promoted the vision of the liberal international order in which Japan would play a leading role. The DPJ cabinets that briefly seized power from 2009 to 2012, albeit less explicit than their LDP counterparts, were no less eager to establish Japan's leading position in world politics. They

argued for Japan's enlarged security role under UN banners, autonomy vis-à-vis the United States, and leadership in regional cooperation.

The Koizumi cabinet (2001-2006) sought to enhance Japan's status by reducing the constitutional constraints on Japan's right to use military force and promoting the vision of East Asian regionalism. Above all, the 9/11 attack and the US-led War on Terror, the rise of China, and North Korea's nuclear and missile development helped the Koizumi cabinet embark on institutional reforms that would enable Japan to deploy its military force for purposes other than exclusive self-defense. It connected "Japanese rearmament to a transformation of the Japanese political system."⁸¹ Koizumi's reforms were aimed to enlarge the role of the prime minister's office in policy-making, enhance the grip of politicians on bureaucracy, turn the Japanese Coast Guard into a de facto fourth branch of the Japanese military, and reduce the constraints of the Peace Constitution.⁸² One principal target was the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB), which had interpreted the Peace Constitution narrowly, imposing strict limitations on the use of military force.⁸³

In particular, the Koizumi cabinet exploited the 9/11 attack and the US-led War on Terror following it as opportunities to enlarge Japan's role in international security.⁸⁴ After the outbreak of the 9/11 attack, the LDP neo-conservatives enacted a series of bills to support the United States and its allies and authorize the Japanese Self-Defense Force's operations beyond Japanese territories. In October 2001, the Japanese Diet passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, which allowed the dispatch of the JSDF vessels to the Indian Ocean to provide

⁸¹ H. D. P. Envall, "Transforming Security Politics: Koizumi Jun'ichiro and the Gaullist Tradition in Japan," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (2008).

⁸² Samuels 2007, 72-81.

⁸³ Rikki Kersten, "Japanese Security Policy Formation: Assessing the Koizumi Revolution," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2011), 7.

⁸⁴ Samuels 2007, 94-101; Kersten 2011, 8; Ji Young Kim, "Dismantling the Final Barrier: Transforming Japan into a 'Normal Country' in the Post-Cold-War Era," *Pacific Focus* 30, no. 2 (2015), 239-41; Oros 2017, 44-45.

logistical support for the US-led multinational coalition forces in Afghanistan. In March 2003, Koizumi launched an “Iraq response office,” which a few weeks later declared Japan’s economic reconstruction and humanitarian assistance for the removal of weapons of mass destruction and landmines. A few months later, the Japanese Diet also passed the Special Measures Law for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq, which authorized the JSDF’s non-combat operations in conflict zones. These special laws breached the established principles that derived from the Peace Constitution, such as exclusive self-defense and the dispatch of the JSDF abroad for UN-sanctioned activities.

While Koizumi’s neo-conservative cabinet sought to enhance Japan’s status by enlarging Japan’s military role and reinforcing the US-Japan alliance, it also attempted the Japan-led regional cooperation.⁸⁵ In his 2002 speech in Singapore, Koizumi said:

“Our goal should be the creation of a “community that acts together and advances together.” And we should achieve this through expanding East Asia cooperation founded upon the Japan-ASEAN relationship. While recognizing our historical, cultural, ethnic and traditional diversity, I would like to see countries in the region become a group that works together in harmony... The deepening of Japan’s cooperation with China and the Republic of Korea will also be a significant force in propelling this community. The Trilateral Meeting of the leaders of Japan, China and the Republic of Korea set some wonderful precedents... I expect that the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and moves toward economic partnership

⁸⁵ Daniel Sneider, “The New Asianism: Japanese Foreign Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan,” *Asia Policy* 12, no. 1 (2011), 114; Green 2022, 124-25.

between ASEAN and Australia and New Zealand will make similar contributions. If one considers the specific challenges to be tackled in the region, it is only natural that these countries will deepen their partnerships with each other. Through this cooperation, I expect that the countries of ASEAN, Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand will be core members of such a community.”⁸⁶

The vision of an East Asian community was repeated in the 2002 task force report titled, *The Basic Strategies for Japan's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, which defined Japan's basic national interests and the means to promote them.⁸⁷

The DPJ that formed non-LDP cabinets from 2009 to 2012 continued to enhance Japan's status. However, the DPJ's status-seeking strategies differed from the LDP neo-conservatives who sought to elevate Japan's status by transforming it into a “normal country” and enlarging its security role in the context of the US-Japan alliance. Instead, the DPJ leaders struggled to enhance Japan's status by claiming its autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. The DPJ founders were so critical of the LDP cabinets' reliance on the US-Japan alliance that they argued for an equal partnership between Japan and the United States.⁸⁸ In the 1999 manifesto on basic security policies, the DPJ declared, “[B]ecause... Japan has been satisfied with simply being a junior partner, the Japan-U.S. relationship cannot be called an alliance in the true sense

⁸⁶ Koizumi Junichiro. “Japan and ASEAN in East Asia: A Sincere and Open Partnership” (January 14, 2002).

⁸⁷ Mike M. Mochizuki, “Strategic Thinking under Bush and Koizumi: Implications for the US-Japan Alliance,” *Asia-Pacific Review* 10, no. 1 (2003), 90-92.

⁸⁸ Sneider 2011, 104-6; Christopher W. Hughes, “The Democratic Party of Japan's New (but Failing) Grand Security Strategy: From ‘Reluctant Realism’ to ‘Resentful Realism’?” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012), 117-18; Narushige Michishita and Richard J. Samuels, “Hugging and Hedging: Japanese Grand Strategy in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia*, ed. Henry R. Nau and Deepa Ollapally (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 157-58.

of the word.” Japan should “engage in close dialogue and consultation with the United States, giving full consideration to Japan's national interests” because “the national interests of Japan and the United States will not always coincide perfectly.”⁸⁹ Against this backdrop, Hatoyama Yukio, the first DPJ prime minister, said in his 2009 speech at the Diet, “[I]n order to reconstruct a close and equal Japan-US alliance, we will strengthen our cooperative relations and frankly discuss with each other the outstanding issues between our two nations.”⁹⁰

To enhance Japan’s autonomy in the US-Japan alliance, the DPJ raised various issues. The most controversial one during Hatoyama’s premiership (2009-2010) was the relocation of US military bases.⁹¹ Beginning in the 1990s, Japan and the United States negotiated to move US military bases in Okinawa. In its basic security policies announced in 1999, the DPJ claimed that the form and scale of US military bases should be constantly reviewed because they had imposed “heavy cost and burden on Okinawan people... since the end of the World War II.”⁹² In 2006, the United States finally reached an agreement with the LDP cabinet to relocate the US Marine base in Futenma of southern Okinawa to Henoko in northern Okinawa. However, Hatoyama Yukio who assumed office as prime minister in 2009 rejected this agreement, arguing that the US base should be transferred outside of Okinawa, not within it. Since the Hatoyama cabinet attached such importance to this issue, its failure to renegotiate the base relocation led to his resignation in 2010.

The DPJ’s pursuit of national autonomy in the US-Japan alliance was coupled with its Asianism. In 1996, the DPJ founders declared that Japan should reduce its overdependence on the United States on the one hand, and give greater weight to its relationships with other

⁸⁹ Democratic Party of Japan, “The Democratic Party of Japan’s Basic Policies on Security” (June 1999).

⁹⁰ Hatoyama Yukio, “Basic Policies of the Hatoyama Government” (September 16, 2009).

⁹¹ Kushida and Lipsy 2013, 14; Hughes 2012, 118-19; Oros 2017, 113-14.

⁹² Democratic Party of Japan 1999.

countries in the Asia-Pacific region.⁹³ In the 2009 general election manifesto, the DPJ announced that it would strengthen cooperation with other Asian countries “with the aim of building an East Asian community.”⁹⁴ Hatoyama, the DPJ leader who was most eager for the vision of the East Asian Community, believed that East Asia could achieve a high level of regional cooperation and integration as Europe did, and grounded this vision in his philosophy of fraternity (*yuai*).⁹⁵ However, it is worth noting that the DPJ’s East Asian Community was a strategic vision to enhance Japan’s position, not a byproduct of absurd optimism. It was intended to reinforce Japan’s regional leadership and enmesh rising China within the Japan-led network of regional cooperation. The strategic dimension of the East Asian Community vision exhibited the continuity between the LDP and DPJ cabinets.⁹⁶

The DPJ’s failure to address internal and external challenges, especially China’s growing assertiveness and the US-Japan discords, paved the way for the return of the LDP neo-conservatives led by Abe Shinzo (2006-2007, 2012-2020), who resigned from his brief first premiership in 2006 and 2007.⁹⁷ Upon taking office again in 2012, Abe reactivated the neoconservative vision of a “normal country.” As the Koizumi cabinet did, the Abe cabinet sought to enhance Japan’s position as a leading country in Asia by reinforcing the US-Japan alliance and enlarging Japan’s security role.⁹⁸ In his 2013 summit with US President Barack Obama, Abe proposed the realignment of roles and missions between US and Japanese forces, and Japan’s participation in the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In *The National Security Strategy* published in 2013, the Abe cabinet emphasized Japan’s partnership with the United States and its role as a contributor to peace:

⁹³ Sneider 2011, 104-5.

⁹⁴ Democratic Party of Japan, “The Democratic Party of Japan’s Platform for Government” (August 11, 2009).

⁹⁵ Sneider 2011, 112; Hughes 2012, 116.

⁹⁶ Sneider 2-11, 116-17; Hughes 2012, 126-27.

⁹⁷ Oros 2017, 132-32; Green 2022, 90-91.

⁹⁸ Green 2022, 91-92.

“Japan has maintained its security, and contributed to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, by enhancing its alliance with the United States (U.S.) with which it shares universal values and strategic interests, as well as by deepening cooperative relationships with other countries... Japan will continue to adhere to the course that it has taken to date as a peace-loving nation, and as a major player in world politics and economy, contribute even more proactively in securing peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community, while achieving its own security as well as peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, as a “Proactive Contributor to Peace” based on the principle of international cooperation. This is the fundamental principle of national security that Japan should stand to hold.”⁹⁹

The Abe cabinet’s efforts to connect Japan’s transformation into a normal country and the US-Japan alliance continued. For instance, the 2015 Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation challenged the Peace Constitution by declaring, “[T]he Self-Defense Forces will conduct appropriate operations involving the use of force to respond to situations where an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occur.”¹⁰⁰

The Abe cabinet’s status-seeking strategies were accompanied by domestic institutional reforms.¹⁰¹ In 2013, the Japanese government established the National Security Council, a standing body to serve as a control tower and coordinate Japan’s security strategy.

⁹⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, *The National Security Strategy* (December 17, 2013), 2-4.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Defense, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* (April 27, 2015), 9-10.

¹⁰¹ Christopher W. Hughes, “Japan’s ‘Resentful Realism’ and Balancing China’s Rise,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 2 (2016), 142-43; Oros 2017, 133-39.

Moreover, the LDP neo-conservatives enacted security-related bills and measures to buttress Japan's military roles by strengthening the protection of sensitive intelligence, lifting arms export regulations, defining Japan's rights to the use of outer space for defensive purposes, and coordinating Japan's ODA and security policies.

Most importantly, the Abe cabinet effectively weakened the constitutional constraints on Japan's military capabilities. As the neo-conservatives did during Koizumi's premiership, Abe began with the assault on the CLB that had adhered to the interpretation that Japan's collective self-defense is unconstitutional. By appointing Ichiro Komatsu as the new director, the Abe cabinet forced the CLB to alter its interpretation, concluding that "not only when an armed attack against Japan occurs but also when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival... use of force to the minimum extent necessary should be interpreted to be permitted under the Constitution as measures for self-defense."¹⁰²

The Abe cabinet's pursuit of the normal country status and the reinforcement of the Japan-US alliance were coupled with its entrepreneurship in regional order-making, which was epitomized in the vision of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP). The FOIP vision had two pillars: the rules-based liberal international order and cooperation among democracies. The FOIP can find its origin in Abe's value-oriented diplomacy during his first premiership.¹⁰³ In this period, Abe Shinzo and his cabinet members proposed such key concepts and proposals as the "Arc of Freedom and Speech," the elevation of the Quad to a platform for cooperation among major maritime democracies, that is, the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, and

¹⁰² Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan* (2019), 198-99; Oros 2017, 153-54; Green 2022, 92-94.

¹⁰³ Balazs Kiglics, "Japan's Asia-Pacific Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century: Empty Rhetoric or a New Paradigm?," in *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: Diplomacy in a Contested Region*, ed. Robert G. Patman, Patrick Köllner, and Balazs Kiglics (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 115-42, 119-20; Yuichi Hosoya, "FOIP 2.0: The Evolution of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," *Asia-Pacific Review* 26, no. 1 (2019), 19-20; Green 2022, 127-29.

the “confluence” of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, all of which formed the key building blocks of the FOIP. Building upon these concepts, the second Abe cabinet put forth the visions of the FOIP to build a prosperous, peaceful, and rules-based order, and Asia’s “democratic security diamond” that led to the resurrection of the Quad as a vehicle for security cooperation among the four democracies that shared the concern for China’s growing assertiveness.¹⁰⁴ The Abe cabinet’s entrepreneurship proved successful as the FOIP concept gained wide currency among the relevant parties, especially the United States.¹⁰⁵

4. Conclusion

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Camp, the US-led liberal order nested within the Cold War order expanded into an international order with a global reach. While the United States now became the sole superpower or unipole, the norms, rules, and practices grounded in liberalism laid the normative and ideological foundations of the post-Cold War international order and came to govern interactions between sovereign states. In this setting, liberal democracy aligned with capitalist economy was considered the path that sovereign states should take to be recognized as civilized and thus granted full legitimate actorhood. Authoritarian states, many of which belonged to the Socialist Camp in the past, were pressured, even forced to embrace liberal democracy, market economy, or both.

In the post-Cold War era, both South Korea and Japan have primarily relied on conformist strategies to elevate their positions by contributing to the existing liberal

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Kliem, “Why Quasi-Alliances Will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad,” *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2020), 281-84; Kiglics 2022, 127-28.

¹⁰⁵ Tsuneo Akaha and Keiko Hirata, “US Bilateralism Under Trump, Power Shift in East Asia, and Implications for Regional Security and Prosperity: A Theoretical Analysis of Japan’s Strategic Adjustment,” in *Trump’s America and International Relations in the Indo-Pacific: Theoretical Analysis of Changes & Continuities*, ed. Tsuneo Akaha, Jingdong Yuan, and Wei Liang (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 41.

international order and embodying its norms, rules, and practices. Based on its remarkable economic growth and democratization, South Korea has sought its status as a middle power. To this end, South Korea explored solutions to address instability in the Korean Peninsula and tried to enlarge its role in East Asian regional security, international development, and global governance. Since the early 2000s, a small non-Western country located on the southern half of the peninsula, once devastated by the war, has claimed itself as an emerging middle power that is ready and willing to make meaningful contributions to international society.

Japan has sought to enhance foreign policy autonomy and restore the leading position in East Asia, which it once occupied before the end of World War II. Although post-war Japan returned to international society and emerged as an economic giant, the Peace Constitution promulgated under US occupation has put constraints on Japan's right to use military force for self-defense and international cooperation. The neo-conservatives who gained dominance in Japanese politics from the early 2000s have gradually but effectively weakened the constitutional constraints on Japan's military force, which have prevented it from claiming great-power status.

In the coming decades, the rise and fall of South Korea and Japan in the international status hierarchy depend on what type of change the current crisis of the liberal international order will be, which type of strategy their ruling elites will choose to secure or elevate their country's position, and whether those elites can maintain and enhance their strategic consistency by eliciting support from domestic society and foreign actors.

The complex crisis of the post-Cold War liberal international order is now posing great challenges to both South Korea and Japan, which have primarily relied on conformist status-seeking strategies. China's rise and growing assertiveness coupled with US decline are not only sparking a strategic competition between them but also shaking the ground underlying the

liberal order. The rise of an authoritarian great power with a large economy and modernized military forces is redistributing material capabilities, and undermining the normative and ideological foundations of the liberal international order. The liberal order is eroding far more quickly as the United States is turning against the established international order that it reigned as the hegemon. Moreover, the acceleration of climate change and the recurrence of global and regional pandemics are making the crisis of the liberal international order more than just another power shift between the rising power and the established power. They are exposing the limitations of the growth-oriented neoliberal capitalist economy and multilateral internationalism as well as worsening the distrust and discord between major countries including the United States and China.

The complex crisis of the liberal order, which is marked by the interplay between power redistribution and the demise of liberal norms and values, is likely to prompt South Korea and Japan to explore alternative strategies for status-seeking. The US-China strategic competition is increasing the risk of entrapment as they are the key allies of the United States. Global democratic backsliding, the backlash against economic globalization, and the growing ineffectiveness of international regimes are also putting South Korea and Japan to the test because they have developed democracies, relied on capitalism and free trade for economic growth, and claimed themselves as contributors to the liberal international order. Both countries are now facing domestic challenges as well. In South Korea, the deepening of political polarization is hindering its leaders from reaching a strategic consensus on how to navigate the US-China strategic competition and the crisis of the liberal order. In Japan, the neo-conservatives have maintained dominance in Japanese politics since the early 2000s. However, it is uncertain whether they can remain a single dominant force after the assassination of Abe Shinzo in 2022.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I summarize my theoretical argument and case studies in each chapter, discuss my findings and their implications, some of which were not addressed in depth in the previous chapters, and examine the contributions of this study. It makes three contributions by proposing a general theory of status ascent, providing analytical tools to elucidate the current crisis of the liberal international order and assess state behaviors, and paving the way for the cross-fertilization among IR, history, and area studies, thereby advancing scholarship on global IR and historical IR. I begin with my contribution to the study of status, followed by a separate discussion about my findings. Then, I delve into how this study can contribute to the discipline of IR more in general, especially to the study of the current crisis of the liberal international order as well as global IR, historical IR, and regional orders.

1. Enriching the Study of Status

Above all, this study contributes to status scholarship, which has emerged as a flourishing avenue of research over the past decade. The quest for status is one of the basic needs of human beings. A higher or more privileged status has intrinsic value because it can be a source of self-esteem. It has instrumental value as well because it can be used to achieve other goals or benefits. As long as states continue to serve as the principal political entities with which individuals identify themselves, the quest for status will continue to remain a key driving force in world politics.

However, despite the growth of status scholarship in IR, a general theory to explain the rise and fall of status-seeking states remains underdeveloped. The literature on status has

explored a variety of strategies available to status-seeking states and investigated the logics behind their strategic choices. However, the development of a general theory of status ascent has been hindered by the mistreatment of international social structure, the dominance of the bellicist paradigm and SIT, and the practice of state categorization.

To fill this gap, I proposed a theory that considers both the strategies of status-seekers and the international social structure where they are embedded (Chapter 2). I focused on status-seeking during periods of international political change, when the interplay between status-seekers and structure becomes salient. Status is a social construct, which can be defined when there is a set of shared norms, rules, and practices that stratify states and legitimize such stratification. In other words, status-seeking takes place against the backdrop of the established international order, and more broadly, international social structure that emerges out of it. Moreover, one strategy can produce different outcomes depending on the structural conditions surrounding status-seekers. Therefore, a general theory of status ascent should consider the strategies of status-seekers, the international social structure, and the interplay between them.

Against this backdrop, I argue that when the established international order undergoes a transition, the rise and fall of status-seekers depend on (1) the type of *strategies* they choose and (2) the type of *international political change* they encounter. Status ascent occurs when the strategies of status-seeking states align with changes in the international social structure surrounding them. Otherwise, they will fail—they should risk status descent at worst. When two status-seekers faced with international political change employ the same and proper type of strategy, the one that secures *strategic consistency* or consistently implements that strategy will have a greater chance of status ascent than the other that fails to do so.

Since status-seeking does not take place in a social vacuum, states can improve their status either by conforming to the established international order and its norms, rules, and

practices, or by defying and challenging them, and if possible, enacting alternative ones. If the ruling elites are strongly committed to the established order, a status-seeking state is more likely to choose conformist strategies. In contrast, if the ruling elites are weakly committed to the established order, a status-seeking state is more likely to adopt defiant strategies. The level of commitment is not a constant but a variable that can change when: (1) the ruling elite group alters its attitudes toward the existing order, (2) the ruling elite group is replaced by another one, or (3) the ruling elite group undergoes regrouping in which its members abandon their initial group affiliation and form a new coalition with outsiders.

On the other hand, international political change lays an uneven ground for status-seekers. International order cannot be permanent because change, whether endogenous or exogenous in its origin, becomes inevitable at some point. Since international order is a complex of power and institutions, there can be three different types of change—power transition, order reform, or order transition—the distribution of material capabilities (power transition), institutional arrangements (order reform), or both (order transition). Power transition favors conformist status-seekers as it leaves the norms, rules, and practices intact. In contrast, order transition and order reform, which involve institutional changes, are favorable for defiant status-seekers.

If two or more status-seeking states choose the proper type of strategy that aligns with changes in the international social structure, we should consider their relative strategic consistency, that is, whether their ruling elite groups can implement the selected strategy without halt, retreat, or conversion. A status-seeking state will exhibit a higher level of strategic consistency if its ruling elite group can elicit support from both domestic society and foreign actors. When there are multiple status-seekers that adopt the proper strategy, the one that maintains or enhances strategic consistency will outperform the competitors that fail to do so.

To examine the validity of my theory, I compared Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan during the Ming-Qing transition (Chapter 3), Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan during the Westphalian transition (Chapter 4), and South Korea and Japan during the D  tente (Chapter 5) (Table 7-1). Since this study was a structured and focused comparison, I paid attention to the type of international political change that Korea and Japan encountered in each period, the extent to which their ruling elites were committed to the established international order, the type of strategies those elites adopted to improve their country's status, and whether they could enhance strategic consistency by eliciting support from domestic society and foreign actors. In each case study, I used the method of process tracing to analyze processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events.

In Chapter 3, I compared the status-seeking strategies of Chosŏn Korea and Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan during the Ming-Qing transition. The Ming-Qing transition was a power transition within the established order, which entailed the replacement of the hegemonic state without institutional transformation. Power transition in this period set an uneven ground that favored conformist status-seekers.

In response to the Ming-Qing transition, Korea's Neo-Confucian ruling elites who had been strongly committed to the East Asian world order adopted conformist strategies to secure their country's status by defending and adhering to the incumbent order. Although their conformist strategies caused military and diplomatic conflicts with stronger enemies such as Toyotomi Japan and the Manchu-Qing, in the long term, such strategies proved effective as Korean rulers could secure their country's special and privileged status as a highly civilized secondary state. In contrast, Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan governed by the warrior rules without such a strong commitment opted for defiant strategies to elevate Japan's status by challenging

and overthrowing the established order. Their military, diplomatic, and ideological campaigns to build a Japan-centered world order backfired, leaving Japan as an outcast in East Asia.

In Chapter 4, I compared the rise and fall of Chosŏn Korea and Meiji Japan during the Westphalian transition. The Westphalian transition was an order transition that entailed both power transition and institutional transformation. While the Qing was overtaken militarily and economically by Western imperialist powers and Meiji Japan, the constitutive and regulative institutions of East Asia were replaced by those of Westphalia. Order transition in this period was a favorable setting for defiant status-seekers.

During the Westphalian transition, Chosŏn Korea's reformist elites adopted defiant strategies to break off from the old East Asian world order and join the new Westphalian international order. However, their strategic reorientation was delayed and interrupted due to the resistance of conservative elites and factionalism among reformists themselves. Moreover, Korean reformists could not maintain strategic consistency because they failed to draw support from domestic society and foreign actors. In contrast, Meiji Japan adopted defiant strategies and implemented them consistently. The Meiji oligarchs, most of whom came from the low-ranking warrior class with a weak commitment to the traditional order, were united in their aspiration to exit from East Asia and modernize Japan as a sovereign state modeled on the West. In pursuing their defiant strategies, the Meiji oligarchs could enhance strategic consistency by subduing or co-opting domestic opponents and obtaining support from foreign actors. While Korea's delayed and inconsistent strategic reorientation led to the loss of sovereignty, Meiji Japan's defiant and consistent status-seeking strategies paved the way for Japan's entry into the Westphalian order and the rank of great power within it.

In Chapter 5, I compared the strategies of South Korea and Japan for status-seeking during the *Détente*. It was an order reform that entailed the rearrangement of regulative

institutions without power transition and the transformation of constitutive institutions. While the new rules of conduct in diplomatic, military, and socioeconomic interactions emerged, the basic structure of the Cold War international order, that is, the bifurcated hierarchy based on the US-Soviet bipolarity remained intact. Since the Détente still involved institutional change, it provided a favorable setting for defiant status-seekers.

During the Détente, South Korea attempted defiant strategies to obtain diplomatic recognition from the Socialist Camp. However, South Korea's strategic reorientation in this period was limited because the Park Chung-hee regime was so strongly committed to anti-communism that it could not completely deviate from the established pattern of inter-bloc conflict. Although South Korean ruling elites underwent a strategic oscillation, they could direct the country as they intended because they maintained a strong grip on domestic society and took advantage of the geopolitical fluidity that resulted from the Détente. In contrast, Japan adopted and consistently implemented defiant strategies to achieve reconciliation and diplomatic normalization with socialist states. The pro-China conservatives who formed a new mainstream within the ruling LDP were more flexible than their pro-Taiwan colleagues and South Korean counterparts. Their diplomatic initiatives to expand cooperation and establish diplomatic relations with socialist states elicited support from domestic society and the United States. While South Korea's limited strategic reorientation failed to improve its status, Japan's defiant and consistent strategies enhanced its status through reconciliation and diplomatic normalization with socialist states.

		The Ming-Qing Transition (1583-1683)	The Westphalian Transition (1839-1912)	The Détente (1969-1979)
Type of Change		<i>power transition</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> patchworked hierarchy of East Asia remained hegemonic replacement without institutional transformation 	<i>order transition</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> punctuated hierarchy of Westphalia replaced patchworked hierarchy of East Asia power transition and institutional transformation 	<i>order reform</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bifurcated hierarchy of the Cold War remained power redistribution without hegemonic replacement; new rules of conduct emerged
(South) Korea	Strategic Choice	<i>conformist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wars against Toyotomi Japan and the Manchu-Qing Korea as “Little China” and the successor to the Ming 	<i>conformist → defiant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engaged in Western-style diplomacy with the West and Japan and reforms for Western-style modernization strategic reorientation delayed 	<i>conformist → defiant → conformist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempted dialogue and reconciliation with North Korea and other socialist states returned to the established pattern of inter-bloc conflict
	Level of Commitment	<i>strong</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dominance of Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats 	<i>strong → weak</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reformists replaced conservatives factionalism among reformists 	<i>strong</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dominance of anti-communists Park Chung-hee’s anti-communist authoritarianism
	Strategic Consistency		<i>low</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discord between ruling elites and Confucian and reformist intellectuals; popular/ peasant revolts skepticism among Western countries regarding Korea’s modernization 	<i>high</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> anti-communist ruling elites dominated other social actors (e.g. opposition parties, student activists and dissident intellectuals, labor activists, and so on) obtained support or acquiescence from the United States
	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be recognized as the most civilized secondary state and the most loyal tributary state in historical East Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lost sovereignty and be colonized by Meiji Japan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failed to achieve reconciliation with socialist states and obtain diplomatic recognition from them
Japan	Strategic Choice	<i>defiant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> invasions of Korea and Ryukyu Great Prince (<i>Taikun</i>) diplomacy; denial of Ming/Qing hegemony 	<i>defiant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> launched reforms for Western-style modernization engaged in Western-style diplomacy with the West; diplomatic/military challenges to Qing hegemony 	<i>defiant</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pursued reconciliation and diplomatic normalization with China and other socialist states
	Level of Commitment	<i>weak</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> warrior class (<i>samurai</i>) replaced civil aristocrats Toyotomi regime; Tokugawa bakufu 	<i>weak → weaker</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tokugawa bakufu opened diplomacy with the West Meiji oligarchy supplanted Tokugawa bakufu 	<i>moderate → weak</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pro-China conservatives seized dominance in the ruling LDP and Japanese politics (Yoshida → Tanaka)
	Strategic Consistency		<i>high</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> subdued reactionary warrior class; coopted parliamentarians elicited support from the West for modernization 	<i>high</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> elicited support or acquiescence from opposition parties and the business community obtained support from the United States
	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remained an outcast in historical East Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtained legitimate membership and joined the rank of great powers in the Westphalian order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> achieved reconciliation and/or mutual recognition with China and other socialist states

Table 7-3. Theory and Cases

Based on this summary, I raise three points that should be addressed more in detail. First of all, three sets of case studies that compared (South) Korea and Japan demonstrate the validity of my argument: when the established international order undergoes a transition, the outcomes of status-seeking depend on the type of strategies and the type of international political change. That is, the strategies selected by status-seekers should align with changes in the international social structure surrounding them. If two status-seekers adopt the proper type of strategy, the one that consistently implements it by drawing support from domestic society and foreign actors will outperform the other that fails to do so.

Each type of international political change lays an uneven ground for status-seekers. Power transition is favorable for conformist status-seekers as it is not accompanied by institutional change. In contrast, order transition and order reform, which involve institutional change, favor defiant status-seekers. Therefore, the status-seekers that adopted the proper type of strategy could improve their status (see Chosŏn Korea in the Ming-Qing transition, Meiji Japan in the Westphalian transition, and Japan in the *Détente*). However, the status-seekers that did not choose the proper strategy failed to do so (see Toyotomi-Tokugawa Japan in the Ming-Qing transition). The status-seekers that attempted the proper strategy but could not implement it consistently failed as well (see Chosŏn Korea in the Westphalian transition and South Korea in the *Détente*).

Second, as noted earlier, the level of commitment to the established order, which delimits the range of strategies imaginable and acceptable to status-seekers, is not a constant but a variable. The level of commitment changes as the ruling elite group renews its attitudes toward the existing order, gives way to another one, or undergoes regrouping in which its members abandon their initial group affiliation and form a new coalition with outsiders. These

processes are not mutually exclusive, so one or two of them can be observed in the same case. For instance, the decisions by King Gojong and the Tokugawa bakufu to open diplomatic relations with the West represent the cases of attitude renewal. In the three sets of paired comparisons, the ruling elite group replacement was far more common—factionalism among Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats, the rise and fall of warrior rulers, the resignation of Grand Prince Yi Ha-eung forced by King Gojong and his allies, the overthrow of the Tokugawa bakufu by the Meiji oligarchs, and the military coup of Park Chung-hee. Given that Fukuda Takeo and Miki Takeo represented the pro-Taiwan and pro-China conservatives respectively, their alliance that prompted the Fukuda cabinet to sign a peace treaty with China was the case of regrouping.

Finally, the paired comparisons of Korea and Japan in different eras help us not only conduct both cross-case and within-case comparisons but also capture synchronic and diachronic linkages between cases. Methodologically, three sets of paired comparisons in this study corroborate one of its core arguments, that is, one strategy can produce different outcomes depending on the structural conditions surrounding the status-seeker. For instance, the rise and fall of Korea and Japan during the Ming-Qing transition and the Westphalian transition demonstrate that conformist strategies are effective in power transition but can be counterproductive in order transition. Conversely, defiant strategies are effective in order transition but would backfire in power transition.

Moreover, these paired comparisons reveal various linkages between cases, some of which were not explicitly addressed in this study. Synchronically, in all three periods, Japan's status-seeking strategies more or less influenced Korea's strategic choices and their outcomes. For instance, Toyotomi Japan's invasion of Chosŏn Korea, which was part of Japan's defiant strategies, prompted Korea to enhance its ties with the Ming and commitment to the established

East Asian world order, which in turn caused Korea's intransigence toward the Qing in the next decades. Meiji Japan's defiant strategies, which were aimed to exit from East Asia, overthrow Qing hegemony, and attain legitimate membership in the new Westphalian order, damaged the consistency of Chosŏn Korea's defiant strategies. During the Détente, Japan's defiant strategies to expand cooperation with socialist states including North Korea contributed to the anxiety of South Korean ruling elites who were then engaging in both dialogue and diplomatic war with North Korea.

There are diachronic linkages between cases as well. Both Korea and Japan show that the outcomes of status-seeking in the past can influence the strategic choice of ruling elites in the next generation. For instance, Chosŏn Korea's conformist strategies during the Ming-Qing transition were rewarded as the Qing restored Korea's special and privileged status as a highly civilized secondary state it had enjoyed under Ming hegemony. In the long term, however, Korean elites' pride and commitment to the East Asian world order reinforced in this period prevented them from swiftly shifting toward defiant strategies during the Westphalian transition. In the post-Cold War era, both South Korea and Japan have been more or less influenced by their past. For instance, the Roh Moo-hyun administration highlighted that South Korea now became a middle power able to act as an agent in regional peace-building since it was no longer a weak country as it had been during the nineteenth century, that is, the Westphalian transition. The LDP neo-conservatives such as Abe Shinzo are driven by their aspiration to reclaim Japan's great-power status it once held in Asia.

These diachronic linkages suggest that IR scholars should pay more attention to how status-seekers and their behaviors are influenced by their past. Given that status-seeking is a social, cultural, and historical phenomenon, the study of temporality will enrich the literature

on status. For instance, Freedman proposes a temporal comparison theory that status-seekers engage in not only social comparisons with their contemporary peers but also temporal comparisons with themselves in the past.¹ He maintains that status-seekers often define their goals in light of their own past because they associate status recognition with “the correction of what they perceive to be a historic wrong.” Krickovic and Zhang also explore the temporal dimension of status politics.² Drawing upon prospect theory, they argue that the utility calculations and strategic choices of status-seekers are influenced by their relative power trajectories. That is, decliners or status-seekers facing the imminent loss of power or status become more risk-acceptant and aggressive, whereas risers or status-seekers who find themselves as winners become more risk-averse and less confrontational.

2. Elucidating the Crisis of the Liberal International Order

This study makes two additional contributions that are not confined to the study of status. The second contribution is that it offers analytical tools such as the typologies of international political change and status-seeking strategies, which can help not only scholars but also practitioners elucidate the current crisis of the liberal international order, assess state behaviors, and if possible, estimate their outcomes. In Chapter 6, I trace the evolution of the liberal international order and analyze the status-seeking strategies of South Korea and Japan in the post-Cold War era. The end of the global Cold War paved the way for the global expansion of the US-led liberal order, which was a nested part of the bifurcated Cold War international order.

¹ Joshua Freedman, “Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2016): 797–822.

² Andrej Krickovic and Chang Zhang, “Fears of Falling Short versus Anxieties of Decline: Explaining Russia and China’s Approach to Status-Seeking,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 2 (2020): 219–51.

Built upon US unipolarity and the ideological dominance of liberalism, it was a hierarchical order where liberal democracy coupled with free market economy served as the standard model to organize the political and economic life of mankind. In the post-Cold War era, South Korea and Japan have primarily relied on conformist status-seeking strategies to enlarge their roles and influence by making contributions to the established liberal order and embodying its norms, rules, and practices.

The post-Cold War liberal international order is now in a complex crisis, which requires us to develop a broader perspective that considers various types and mechanisms of international political change including but not confined to power transition.³ A global power shift is now underway because China's economic rise and military modernization and the decline of US hegemony are fueling a strategic competition between them. While many scholars and practitioners are revisiting hegemonic transition theories of different hues, there is a growing interest in the possibility of peaceful change and accommodation in great power politics.

However, the current crisis of the liberal international order cannot be fully captured by power transition. First, although power transition is associated with the power parity or disparity between the rising power and the established power, the US-China strategic competition is also eroding the ideological and normative foundations underlying the post-Cold War liberal international order. Despite the expectation that China's capitalist transition and

³ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Huiyun Feng and Kai He, "Rethinking China and International Order: A Conceptual Analysis," in *China's Challenges and International Order Transition: Beyond "Thucydides's Trap,"* ed. Huiyun Feng and Kai He (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 1–24; Kalevi J. Holsti, *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Aseema Sinha, "Building a Theory of Change in International Relations: Pathways of Disruptive and Incremental Change in World Politics," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (2018): 195–203; T. V. Paul et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

economic interdependence with the West would result in democratization, China has maintained and even reinforced its unique model of political economy that combines capitalist market economy with the CCP's authoritarian rule.

Second, it is often assumed that the source of instability during power transition is the rising power's dissatisfaction with the established power and international order under its domination. However, the US-China strategic competition shows that the established power can be a destabilizer as much as the rising power can be.⁴ The United States, increasingly preoccupied with China's growing presence in world politics, is turning against the liberal international order that it designed and has reigned over as the hegemonic state. There is a growing concern that the United States will unilaterally rewrite, twist, or even abandon liberal norms, rules, and practices that no longer serve its own interests.

Finally, and more importantly, the current crisis of the liberal international order is growing more complex, so that it can no longer be reduced to power shift and ideological contestation between the United States and China. The US-China strategic competition is not only facilitating the resurgence of great power conflicts but also intertwined with other challenges, both endogenous and exogenous to the liberal international order. They encompass global democratic backsliding, the backlash against globalization and cosmopolitanism, the growing inefficiencies of international regimes and organizations, and even the crisis of the Anthropocene such as climate change and the recurrence of global and regional pandemics.

It is worth noting that the crisis of the liberal order is not merely a topic of debate within academia but also a significant concern for national leaders and decision-makers. In this

⁴ Steve Chan, "Challenging the Liberal Order: The US Hegemon as A Revisionist Power," *International Affairs* 97, no. 5 (2021): 1335–52; Steve Chan et al., *Contesting Revisionism: China, the United States, and the Transformation of International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

study, one of my key arguments is that the strategies of status-seekers produce different outcomes depending on the structural conditions or structural changes they are faced with. While power transition lays a favorable ground for conformist status-seekers, order reform and order transition favor defiant ones. Therefore, if the leaders fail to grasp the nature of international political change upon their country, they cannot adopt and implement the proper type of strategy, which at worst can lead to the demise of their own country. For now, it remains to be seen whether the crisis of the liberal order is ending in the establishment of an alternative international order, the rise of a new hegemonic state, or the partial reform of norms, rules, and practices in regular interactions. Such uncertainty is posing a significant challenge for secondary or lesser states, especially those in East Asia that is quickly turning into the epicenter of the US-China strategic competition.

The complex crisis of the liberal international order presents both challenges and opportunities for the actors that have been more or less influenced by the liberal order. As discussed in Chapter 6, the current crisis is more of a challenge to conformist status-seekers such as South Korea and Japan that have sought to enlarge their roles and influence by embodying the norms, rules, and practices based on liberalism. In contrast, this crisis can be an opportunity for defiant status-seekers that have tried to establish their positions by denying or challenging the established liberal order. Who will rise or fall depends on whether the current crisis escalates beyond power transition, which type of strategy each status-seeker will choose, and whether its ruling elite group can draw support from domestic society and foreign actors.

3. IR, History, and Regional Orders

Finally, this study contributes to the historical turn in IR, which is recently manifested in the form of global IR and historical IR. For many years, IR scholars have endeavored to rectify Western- or Eurocentrism and make the discipline more diverse and inclusive.⁵ The rise of global IR was a crucial part of this struggle. Setting the agenda for global IR one decade ago, Amitav Acharya stressed that it should pursue a “pluralistic universalism,” ground itself in world history, subsume existing IR theories and methods, integrate disciplinary approaches and area studies, eschew exceptionalism and parochialism, recognize multiple forms of agency, and consider rising interdependence and shared fates.⁶ By bringing East Asian history into building a general theory of status ascent, this study can contribute to the dialogue among global IR scholars, which is aimed at the cross-fertilization between IR, history, and area studies.⁷

Relatedly, this study can also enrich the burgeoning literature on historical East Asia, and historical IR in general. The rise of global IR is taking place in tandem with the resurrection of historical IR.⁸ To build and examine a theory that explains the rise and fall of status-seekers,

⁵ Amitav Acharya, “Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59; Amitav Acharya, “Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions,” *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 4–15; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at Its Centenary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). For a critical review of global IR, see Michael Barnett and Ayşe Zarakol, “Global International Relations and the Essentialism Trap,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023) and other articles in the same issue. They examine both the accomplishments and limitations of global IR. See also Yong-Soo Eun, “Knowledge Production Beyond West-Centrism in IR: Toward Global IR 2.0,” *International Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (2023): viad015. In this article, Eun puts forth the vision of “Global IR 2.0” based on a “non-essentialist, non-universalist ontology” and a “pluralist epistemology.”

⁶ Acharya 2014.

⁷ For the relationship between IR, history, and area studies, see Michael Barnett and George Lawson, “Three Visions of the Global: Global International Relations, Global History, Global Historical Sociology,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023): 499–515; Julian Go, George Lawson, and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Historical Sociology in International Relations: The Challenge of the Global,” in *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, ed. Benjamin de Carvalho, Julia Costa Lopez, and Halvard Leira (London: Routledge, 2021); and Jan Busse et al., “Contextualizing the Contextualizers: How the Area Studies Controversy is Different in Different Places,” *International Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (2024): viad056.

⁸ Barnett and Lawson 2023; Go et al. 2021.

I conducted a macro-historical comparative analysis that covers early modern, Cold War, and post-Cold East Asia. Due to the growing significance of East Asia in world politics, which is largely attributed to the rise of China, IR scholars are now paying more attention to the history of regional order-making in East Asia. However, given that China or the Chinese state has played a crucial role in this region since ancient times, an uncritical reading of history may lead to the study of historical East Asia biased toward Sinocentrism.⁹ By shedding light on the agency of non-Chinese and non-hegemonic actors such as Korea and Japan, this study can help us avoid “exchanging Eurocentrism for Sinocentrism.”

In the long term, this study can be a steppingstone for comparative regional order studies.¹⁰ I do not deny that East Asia as a region has unique characteristics and experiences that make it distinct from other regions. From a macro-historical perspective, however, the uniqueness of East Asia should not be oversold given that it still shares with other regions many similarities that enable a comparative study of regional orders. For instance, the rise and fall of regional actors including a hegemonic polity and the emergence, evolution, and demise of norms, rules, and practices shared among regional actors are common phenomena observed anywhere. In particular, each non-Western region more or less had to undergo a transformation of unprecedented scale, scope, and depth as they were integrated into the Westphalian international order that originated in Europe but expanded beyond it. The analytical tools

⁹ Acharya and Buzan 2019, 306-7; Victoria Tin-bor Hui, “‘Getting Asia Right’: De-Essentializing China’s Hegemony in Historical Asia,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023), 481.

¹⁰ For pioneering works that fit into this genre, see Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya, *Re-Imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Amitav Acharya, “Before the Nation-State: Civilizations, World Orders, and the Origins of Global International Relations,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 16, no. 3 (2023): 263–88.

provided in this study, such as the concepts of status and international order and the typologies of change and status-seeking strategies, can help us prepare for and carry out comparative regional order studies.

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