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Second image reconsidered: quest for unit complexity in Northeast Asia

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Abstract International politics after the Cold War called our attention to the shifting paradigms in the discipline of international relations. The shift included meta-theoretical attempts for transformations beyond the problem-solving theories searching for systemic stability. Democratic peace theory set itself apart from other system theories by seeking changes at the unit level, and it was closely related to actual policy objectives. The relevance of this theory, however, seemed not to be universal to all the regions, and the reality of Northeast Asia required considerations of the region's particularities as well as general tendencies of the post-Cold War world. Although the liberal peace approach led by the United States has come to form a new global standard in the post-Cold War period and it bears implications for positive changes in the long run, it has its limits in initiating a new virtuous cycle in Northeast Asia. The limitations come from the aspects of realpolitik in American liberalism on the one hand, and from particular characteristics of Northeast Asian states on the other. That is why we need to think about alternative second images for the host of problems besetting the region, including the cross-straits tensions, the Japan question, and the North Korean problem. It means a consideration of the new political order which can solve the dilemma between status quo and transformation in Northeast Asia.

Keywords Second image · Democratic peace · Post-Cold War · The Korean Peninsula · Japan · Cross-straits relations

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War brought dramatic transformations in both the theory and practice of international relations. Some scholars regarded the breakdown of the bipolarity as a "return to the past," predicting greater instability in the emerging multi-polar system (Mearsheimer 1990). Others called the collapse of the Eastern bloc "the end of history," anticipating the arrival of a more stable international order based on a single liberal economy (Fukuyama 1992). Other scholars even argued that the intensification of globalization after the Cold War gave rise to an entirely new world order, the post-modern or new-medieval system (Tanaka 2000). These debates in the 1990s, however, were bound to be affected by 9/11 and the consequent war against terrorism, which revealed the need for a new definition of security and a critical appraisal about the future of globalization (Talbot and Chanda 2001).

These divergent analyses and predictions continue to provide fertile grounds for discussions even in the 2010s. One of the main characteristics of "post-Cold War" theories was that they somewhat emphasized the unit level and "structural modifiers" rather than structural variables themselves, and they practically offered the basis of the Clinton administration's liberal internationalism. In other words, among Waltz's three images, man, the state, and war (Waltz 1959), the second image of the state became the focus of academic and policy considerations, and "democratic peace" theory was a typical example.[1] Democratic peace theory provided the framework for the global and regional strategies of the United States in the post-Cold War period. While the goal of democratic expansion occupied a prominent place in the foreign policies of both Clinton and Bush administrations, scholars tended to neglect the practical implications of the theory or the regional differences in its application. In addressing this theory–practice gap, this paper looks into the limits of democratic peace (or the "liberal peace" in a larger context) theory in Northeast Asia, and explores the possibilities for alternative second images in this region.

The first section of this paper outlines the characteristics of post-Cold War international politics and the US strategy that shaped them. The second section discusses the particular features of Northeast Asian regional politics, along with the limits of applying liberal peace theory to this region. The last section deals with the problem of second images in the Northeast Asian context, and the ways in which that problem could be alleviated with reference to the cases of China, Japan, and Korea.

The post-Cold War international relations and US strategy

Inoguchi's analysis of 21st Century world politics provides a good reference for understanding the complexities and possibilities of post-Cold War international relations. Naming Kissinger, Huntington, and Fukuyama as the representative figures, he suggested three models as frameworks: the Westphalian, the Anti-Utopian, and the Philadelphian. Explaining the geopolitical frameworks, geo-economic foundations, and geo-cultural linkages of each model, Inoguchi predicted that the future of world politics would be determined by three core factors: the continuity of the nation-state system, the deterioration of demographic and environmental conditions, and the evolving patterns of technological innovation (Inoguchi 1999).

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[1] Of course there are many other theories of second image in international relations studies including foreign policy analysis.

Particularly pertaining to our purpose is the Philadelphian model, which envisions a liberal transition from the politics of state sovereignty to popular sovereignty. Analyzing the birth of the United States and the formation of the American federal system, Deudney argued that American policy makers chose the republican "Philadelphian" model in conscious opposition to the hierarchical "Westphalian" model prevalent in European international relations at that time. He drew implications from his analysis for an alternative to the current international system, proposing the expansion of the American-style federal system and the consequent evolution of a world federation (Deudney 1996). This type of conceptualization is on a continuum with Kant's theory of perpetual peace, which consists of republics at the domestic level, peaceful solidarities at the international level, and international laws to preserve "the spirit of commerce" at the global level (Kant 1983).

The American polity, in other words, was no longer a mere individual unit. Rather, it has become a model for an alternative international system. Choi explains the role of American liberal ideas in this regard as follows:

> As the argument for multiculturalism suggests, the central role of liberalism has evolved from a principle of public relations among citizens in the past to a framework, which defines the modus Vivendi among diverse groups with cultures and lives of their own, today. This insight may lead to the related realization of the fact that the American polity, born as a nation-state upholding liberalism as its fundamental ideology, has grown into an empire that indirectly rules other nation-states by wielding liberalism as a universal ideal (Choi 1999: 148–149).

This kind of theoretical combination of the second and third images was related to works on an "empire" or a "world state" in the early 2000s (Hardt and Negri 2001; Wendt 2003). The discussion also has its origins in the question as to why there is no counter-balancing against dominant American power. While realists highlight the futility of such an attempt due to power disparity, the peculiar geographical location of the United States, or a balance-of-threat explanation, liberals attribute ideational solidarities among state elites as well as economic interdependence among countries as the reasons for such a phenomena. The most important thing here is the fact that different nation-states share common democratic values and political systems. It was this liberal vision that inspired US policy makers to incorporate the spread of democracy as a key element in their foreign policies after the Cold War.

The following citations clearly demonstrate the continuity of the security strategy between the Clinton and Bush administration:

> Underpinning our international leadership is the power of our democratic ideals and values. In crafting our strategy, we recognize that the spread of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law not only reflects American values, it also advances both our security and prosperity. Democratic governments are more likely to cooperate with each other against common threats, encourage free trade, promote sustainable economic development, uphold the rule of law, and protect the rights of their people. Hence, the trend toward democracy and free markets throughout the world advances American interests. The United States will support this trend by remaining actively engaged in the world, bolstering democratic institutions and building the community of like-minded states. This strategy will take us into the next century (The White House 1999).
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> Throughout much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of

our humanity; an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel…. The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world, by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth (Bush 2001).

The "circle of freedom", advocated by US Secretary of State Rice, showed a specific policy manifestation of democratic peace theory. The Kantian framework, however, cannot fully explain the unfolding of the US strategy involving the ongoing war with Iraq. Scholars argued accordingly that US policies must be considered in Hobbesian terms as well. The rise of neoconservatives in policy-making circles of the Bush administration seemed to gradually transform American foreign policy into a rather radical strategy founded on idealism. As a result, the matter of state building in other regions figured as a key policy issue. Given this development, one might interpret the Bush administration's policy as embodying offensive realism based on liberalism.

The US strategy towards East Asia also illustrates this combination of idealpolitik and realpolitik. It is pointed out that the United States in this region, rather than leading a network-based imperial order, could be perceived as being engaged in a modern project intent on containing China through an alliance with Japan (Ahn 2005). In other words, liberal ideals and values, such as free trade, democracy, and human rights are intertwined with the strategic goals of balancing against China's possible rise as the region's single hegemonic power or inducing regime change in North Korea. For this reason, the system that the United States is seeking to establish in East Asia could be understood as either concentric multilateralism pivoting around the liberal-democratic alliances among the United States, Japan, and South Korea (Nau 2002). However, it is uncertain whether a multilateral system like this, presupposing the differentiation of membership, could serve as a stable system of regional governance in the long run.

Characteristics of Northeast Asian regional politics and limits of liberal peace theory

The characteristics of the post-Cold War international politics were not similar in all the regions of the world. Inoguchi, for example, suggested that the Philadelphian system was likely to decide the future of the international system in the relatively advanced North, while the Anti-Utopian or Westphalian model was likely to prevail in the more dynamic South. Tanaka also described Northeast Asia as caught between a new-medieval system and a modern system. Even when economics came to reign supreme in other regions after the Cold War, the primacy of security was emphasized in Northeast Asia. Whereas European regional politics was perceived as "primed for peace" (Van Evera 1990/1991), Northeast Asia was regarded as "ripe for rivalry" (Friedberg 1993/1994).

In order to understand these regional characteristics and the limits of policies prescribed, it is important first to analyze in depth the structure, units, and processes comprising the international system of Northeast Asia. Whereas scholars discussing the multipolar system in Europe after the Cold War were almost evenly divided between pessimistic realists and optimist liberals, scholars dealing with Northeast Asia evinced greater diversity that included optimistic realists, pessimistic realists, and pessimistic liberals. Disagreeing

with the pervasive pessimistic outlook on Northeast Asian power politics, Ross predicted that the regional system would maintain its stability due to the balance between the United States as a maritime power and China as a continental power. While he did mention the possibility of China's conversion to a maritime power, he nevertheless argued that the United States, with its superior naval power, could maintain the balance in the region for the foreseeable period (Ross 1999).

Friedberg, on the contrary, argued that the post-Cold War Northeast Asia essentially had a multi-polar structure similar to that of Europe. Friedberg, however, was not a pessimistic realist. As for why Europe remained in a relatively stable condition despite its multi-polar structure, he referred to the factors at the level of the second image, the changes of domestic regimes in the region. He emphasized the same non-structural factors to support his prediction of growing instability in Northeast Asia. According to him, Northeast Asia, unlike Europe, has never experienced a cultural transformation brought by "the victory of interests over passions", and the region was plagued by the absence of economic integration as well as identity problems and serious territorial disputes. Nevertheless, the most significant factor of instability, Friedberg noted, was found in the diverse forms of interactions between the democratic states and their non-democratic counterparts in the region. In emphasizing this factor, Friedberg appeared to prescribe liberal solutions through democratization (Friedberg 1993/1994).

At this stage, we need to review democratic peace theory and its Lakatosian supplement, the neo-Kantian peace theory. Russett and Oneal have suggested the existence of "triangulating peace" by adding the elements of classic liberalism and neo-liberalism to the empirical observation of democratic peace theory that democratic countries do not fight with one another. In this model, democracy figures as the core independent variable, while economic interdependence and international organizations form complementary variables. This neo-Kantian theory can be summarized using the following three hypotheses:

a. Democracy reduces conflicts.
b. Democracy and economic interdependence both reduce conflicts.
c. International organizations, likewise, reduce conflicts.

Whereas Russett and Oneal made partial analyses of the reverse causal relations, their emphasis was steadfast on how the positive interplay among these three variables and the peacemaking effects of each variable could help transform the vicious cycle of the anarchical international system into a virtuous cycle of peace (Russett and Oneal 2001). Ikenberry argued that the mere combination of these three variables could not explain the long peace that followed the Second World War, and he proposed that the hegemonic influence of the United States, as an agent that created and maintained liberal order, should also be considered (Ikenberry 1999).

However, these discussions on the characteristics of the units and processes concerned, and the role of the United States in liberal peace, have a limited application to Northeast Asia after the Cold War. Multiple factors that mark the difference between Europe and Northeast Asia can be observed. First of all, the domestic political situations of Northeast Asian countries are more dynamic than those of European countries with relatively well-established democracies. In order to apply democratic peace theory to Northeast Asia, therefore, it is necessary to maintain a clear distinction between democracy and democratization, and also to make detailed analyses of the impact of democratization on interstate relations. In fact, Snyder expressed worries that the transitional nature of democratization could give rise to further conflicts by intensifying nationalism and worsening ethnic disputes (Snyder 2000). Hechter also described how the transition from indirect rule to direct

rule amplified the strength of national identities and led to the emergence of exclusive nationalism (Hechter 2000). Solingen's analysis, presenting the likelihood for the emergence of populism and the rise of an inward-looking political coalition along with democratization, had similar implications (Solingen 1998).

The causal relationship between democratization and nationalism is a crucial factor in understanding the interactions between domestic and international politics in Northeast Asia. The democratization in China, for example, can set off multiple security issues with respect to center-region relations and ethnic minorities. Paradoxically, an abrupt domestic political transition can threaten internal security, heightening the Chinese authorities' sense of vigilance, and the progress of democratization may also strengthen national identities, leading the Chinese government to take on increasingly aggressive foreign policies. Taiwan's democratization and the consequent reinforcement of Taiwanese nationalism in the 1990s ended up worsening cross-straits relations (Chang 1996).

South Korea's process of democratization in the 1990s did not promote goodwill and cooperation with neighboring countries either. The period actually accompanied a rise of anti-American sentiments and increasing political tensions with Japan. In other words, the expanding influence of civil society through democratization did not necessarily lead to cooperative and efficient foreign policy.[2] The potential for nationalism is also evident even in Japan, which has a relatively stable democratic system. Reflecting the foundation of Japan's emperor system, Ruoff criticized the conventional dichotomy between the conservative government and liberal civil society in Japan, and highlighted the increased influence of right-wing factions in Japanese society (Ruoff 2001).

A functionalist approach emphasizing positive effects of increasing economic interdependence can cogently be applied to Northeast Asia, and it is hard to deny the benefits of a natural economic sphere and an open regional economic system. However, one must remember that the primacy of security in the region can easily offset the ripple effects of economic interactions. As the debate on absolute gains and relative gains shows, Northeast Asian countries without a confidence in each other's strategic intentions are choosing the relative gains position due to the worries that differences in economic gains are fungible of the disparity of military power. The same tendency is noted in bilateral relations, including those between China and Japan, China and Taiwan and the two Koreas. The problem of vulnerability associated with increasing economic interdependence, partly illustrated by the Asian financial crisis, also remains unsolved.

In Europe's case, democracy and economic interdependence variables work closely with institutional variables (international organizations) to generate positive effects in interstate cooperation. However, even in Europe, the institutional factors are often regarded as intermediate or dependent variables rather than independent variables. As for the conditions of common security through multilateral consultations, Buzan listed a multipolar power structure, the states that are internally integrated and externally transparent, and elements of an international society that make civilized interactions possible (Buzan 1991). As far as the international society elements are concerned, Northeast Asia sharply contrasts Europe in that the former lacks the latter's shared values, while possessing conflicting collective identities. Goh noted that Northeast Asian countries had actually been weary of one another since pre-modern era, and the same characteristic still persisted in present era (Goh 1995). The problem is that this habit of mutual estrangement had been converted to that of mutual antagonism through modern experiences. Offensive

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[2] Acharya (2010) and Lind (2011) criticized the "democratization and war" hypothesis and argued for the stability of democratic transitions in East Asia.

nationalism born of this historical context, therefore, continues to shed darkness over the prospect of a regional community being built in Northeast Asia.

All these consideration reaffirm the centrality of ideas such as identity, history, and memory in the regional politics of Northeast Asia. Gong described East Asia as a ground not for a clash of civilizations, but for a "clash of histories". He argued that history could affect strategic alignments as a tool of negotiations; that technological advances could in fact amplify conflicts over different interpretations of history; and that public sentiment and perception of history could gain increasing importance along with the process of democratization (Gong 2001). Therefore, the history problem acts as a major obstacle to functionalist or neo-liberal projects in East Asia. As Gong's discussion implies, the confrontational structure between anti-colonialism and liberalism has not been resolved in Northeast Asia, and the "Japan question", unlike the "German problem", is not likely to be solved within a regional system. This characteristic has limited the effectiveness of multilateralism led by the United States or the US–Japan alliance, and it casts significant problems for the application of democratic peace theory to Northeast Asia. For the liberal peace approach focusing on ideational commonality and regional integration based upon it, conflicts with non-democratic or non-liberal actors can easily be justified.

In addition to the Asia–Pacific model, the "ASEAN way" is often mentioned as a design of regional governance in East Asia. Acharya pointed out that the Southeast Asian countries in the ASEAN refused formal treaties or alliances, relying instead on the concept of sovereignty and forming a regionalism of their own with the elements of "soft institutionalism" (Acharya 2003). Although Acharya made some efforts to address the future of ASEAN + 3, he had no clear answer to the potential problems of the power disparity and conflicting collective identities when three Northeast Asian countries join the club. Unlike their Southeast Asian counterparts, one of the most important problems in forming a multilateral framework among Northeast Asian countries is that of membership due to the peculiar natures of sovereignty in the region. Therefore, in Northeast Asia, the issue of the unit governance needs to be considered before, or at the same time as the discussion of the regional governance, and the domestic political changes towards democracies cannot simply solve the problems of unit governance.

Second images reconsidered in Northeast Asia

Optimistic outlooks on 21st Century world politics after the Cold War, envisioning a liberal empire or a world federation, had supposed a smooth transition from a modern international society to a world society or a post-modern global community. However, Northeast Asia, as described above, still lacks the proper conditions of international society. Although the idea of sovereignty and the logic of modern interstate system are "imported models" for Northeast Asian countries, their historical experiences forced them to accept and complete the project of modernity. This Northeast Asian predicament has two sources: first, the fact that each nation in the region had developed a "primordial" nationalism with the territorial boundaries conterminous with that of the present interstate system; and second, the fact that each nation in Northeast Asia has come to develop a resistant type of nationalism while undergoing peculiar modern events, such as colonialism, the two World Wars, and the Cold War.

China with its objective for perfect integration, Japan with its hope for becoming a normal state, and the Korean peninsula with its aspiration for national unification are all

subjected to the so-called "dynamics of normalization". Each state in Northeast Asia accepts the phenomenon as natural in its territory and derives from it a strong impetus for domestic politics, while discouraging or disdaining the same phenomenon observed in the rival states. For example, China and Korea worry about the security threat that a normalized Japan might pose to the region. Japan, on the other hand, suspects that new developments across the Taiwan straits or in the Korean peninsula would destabilize regional international relations. Local or regional dynamics, stressing national self-determination and sovereignty, often run contrary to universal liberal norms, such as democracy and human rights.

If the post-Cold War transformation in Northeast Asia were to be inevitable and irreversible, the states in the region should commence more active discussions on a peaceful course or scenarios of transition rather than merely insisting on the status quo. A key question to consider in these discussions is whether if and how Northeast Asian countries can manage the instability at the system level that can arise from changes at the unit level. In other words, the regional states need to answer how they can inhibit the growth of hostile nationalisms; how they can ensure compatibility among nationalism of different natures; and how they can promote peaceful coexistence among nationalism, regionalism, and globalism. Solutions for these matters require more than the democratization of individual states, the intensification of economic interdependence, or the formation of multilateral institutions among the given units, and it may be necessary for Northeast Asian countries to discuss various and complex types of second images. Instead of instantly and provisionally reformulating the present units, the countries in the region need to consider a phase-by-phase process of change, flexible collective identities, and the formation of viable institutions under the comprehensive conceptual understanding of the "one" and the "normal".

Although efforts were made in China, Taiwan, Japan, and the two Koreas to reformulate each country's second image after the Cold War, these attempts appeared to lack internal consensus or external consent. While China has continued to insist on the principles of one China and peaceful unification with the arrangement of the "one-country-two-systems", Taiwan envisioned a more gradual unification process, and the voices for the two-state solution or Taiwanese independence also emerged (Choi 2003). As mentioned earlier, there was a momentum for a stronger Taiwanese identity and, consequently, a tension with Chinese nationalism as the progress of democratization of Taiwan occurred (Kim 2005).

The normal state argument in Japan gained increasing attention due to the rise of a new nationalistic mood in the midst of "the lost decade" and the debate on constitutional amendment. Nevertheless, as the disagreement among Ozawa, Hatoyama, and Nakasone illustrated, the specific contents of the amended Article 9 remained unsettled (Itoh 2001). As for the substantive meaning of the normal state, scholars had no clear agreement, merely referring to the saving clause in the article against nuclear and missile developments and against military activities contradictory to the policies of the United States and the United Nations (Kitaoka 2000). Given the present domestic political situation in Japan, however, it is not too unreasonable to be concerned that a normal Japan could offer a source for regional conflicts.

Article 2 of the South–North Korean Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000, marked probably the only instance in which the two sides appeared to converge on the prospects for unification. The article stated: "For the achievement of unification, we have agreed that there is a common element in the South's formula of "commonwealth" and the North's formula for a loose form of "confederation"; The South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction". Some scholars, however, stressed that the two formulae,

notwithstanding their outward similarity, were fundamentally different with each other; the two Koreas were still unwilling to develop a less self-centered unification process (Choi 2002). The political dialogue between the two Koreas ran into another stalemate when President Bush came to power, and the second North Korean nuclear crisis has made discussion over the peace system of the Korean peninsula as an issue of the six-party talks or the US–North Korean negotiations.

In order for Northeast Asian countries to begin a serious dialogue on how to achieve unit-level transformations beyond the liberal peace theory, it might be necessary to confront them with the fundamental ontological question: why should a single territorial state with the monopoly of military power remain as the ultimate unit in 21st century Northeast Asia? A clue for this question can be found not in the unbreakable image of a billiard ball, but in complex and multi-layered second images. As some scholars argued, we may need to make efforts to discover the potential for "creative deviation" from "problematic sovereignty" (Badie 2000; Krasner 2001). On the nature of sovereignty, Jackson pointed out as follows:

> Sovereign statehood… does not entail a permanently fixed domestic arrangement of political life. On the contrary, there are many possibilities, and sovereign states, particularly long-lasting ones, usually experience substantial reincarnations over the course of history (Jackson 2007: 147-148).

Examples of modified sovereignties in Northeast Asia can be the "one-country-two-polities" paradigm for the one China principle, the combination of normal state characters and peace state characters in Japanese constitutional amendments, and a new type of state union for the peace system in the Korean peninsula.

Conclusion

International politics after the Cold War called our attention to the shifting paradigms in the discipline of international relations. The shift included meta-theoretical attempts for transformations beyond the problem-solving theories searching for systemic stability. Democratic peace theory set itself apart from other system theories by seeking changes at the unit level, and it was closely related to actual policy objectives. The relevance of this theory, however, seemed not to be universal to all the regions, and the reality of Northeast Asia required considerations of the region's particularities as well as general tendencies of the post-Cold War world. This paper tries to suggest a new scope condition under which differential attempts are made, and it means the focusing of the peculiarity of sovereign situations in Northeast Asian countries. It can be related to other studies that emphasize the implication of "identity politics" or "ontological security" in understating Northeast Asian international relations.

Although the liberal peace approach led by the United States has come to form a new global standard in the post-Cold War period and it bears meanings for positive changes in the long run, it has its limits in initiating a new virtuous cycle in Northeast Asia. The limitations come from the aspects of realpolitik in American liberalism on the one hand, and from particular characteristics of Northeast Asian states on the other. That is why we need to consider alternative second images for the host of problems besetting the region, including the cross-straits tensions, the Japan question, and the North Korean problem. Nevertheless, the reality-ideal gap of this argument is evident in that the international,

regional, and local politics today are not moving in the direction that this study prescribes. However, it is still crucial for us to ask the questions of what practical changes are required to establish "perpetual peace" in Northeast Asia, and in doing so, we also need to consider the specific methods for the changes and limitations of the methods.

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