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Ideas, Interests and Identities:
Japanese and South Korean Foreign Policies
toward Central Asia

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The findings from the analysis challenge widely shared rationalists' assumptions, revealing that Japanese and South Korean foreign policies vis-à-vis Central Asia are not dictated by exogenously given interests, but it contingent on the representation of Japan and South Korea's national identities. The study demonstrates that the dominant discourses of Japan and South Korea's respective national identities are the representations of their "Self" with regard to Central Asian "Other". Because Japanese and South Korean policy makers do not function outside the respective discursive spaces, the analysis allows elucidating how various Japanese and South Korean foreign policy practices with regard to Central Asia became possible.

The methodology adopted in this study is exclusively qualitative. Discourse analysis of official statements reflected in official texts related to South Korea and Japan's foreign policies vis-a-vis Central Asia is utilized as the main approach to research to explore the main messages conveyed by the policy makers through the textual representations and analyze their respective visions in regards to the countries' positions in relation to other international actors, especially Central Asian republics. For analytical purposes, the discourse analysis is confined to several main initiatives of three South Korean leaders (Roh Moo-hyun, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-hye), which are considered to be of primary importance for comprehending the nature of South Korea's foreign policy. Hashimoto Ryutaro's "Eurasian Diplomacy," "Central Asia Plus Japan Dialogue" (CAJ) initiated under Junichiro Koizumi's administration and "The Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons" initiative adopted under Shinzo Abe's administration were analyzed for understanding the nature of Japanese foreign policy toward Central Asia.

This strategy was adopted in line with the understanding that an analysis of dominant discourse that prevails in a certain period of time provides a more complex and nuanced picture with regard to the representation of South Korea's and Japan's national identities vis-a-vis Central Asia and reflects the realms in which foreign policy is being formulated and implemented. Taking into account that these initiatives were adopted in different period of time and under different environmental conditions, this method is supposed to allow tracing the dynamic of continuity or change of the South Korea and Japan's dominant identity discourses. Hence, this approach aims to reveal the cognitive lens through which South Korea and Japan understand themselves, formulate and legitimize their foreign policies strategies in relation to Central Asian region.

Certain documents that reflect the view of Central Asian official position with regard to South Korea and Japan and its foreign policy have been analyzed as well. This has been done in order to establish the position of Central Asian countries and to clarify how South Korea and Japan is conceived externally. A number of journal and newspaper articles, interviews and analytical reports have been used for contextualization or exemplification of the perception of certain South Korea's and Japan's foreign policy actions in the Central Asian region articulated by the wider international community.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The disintegration of the Soviet Union ushered a new period in history for newly emerged states in Central Asia¹ in early 1990s. If during the Soviet times, the present-day territory of Central Asia had little or no-contact with the outside world, at the end of 1991 the former *terra incognita* countries began to actively establish relations with members of the international community, facing a new reality of carrying out its own foreign and security policies.

Many scholars have majorly defined Central Asia as a testing field ground for major powers, like Russia, China and the United States (the U.S.) among others. The collapse of the Soviet Union further fueled this narrative. But the list of actors that pursue their policies in Central Asia are not limited to states that are frequently appeared in the relevant literature. In fact, while the historical juncture opened up a number of new foreign policy options not only for the former Soviet republics, it also offered new opportunities and challenges to the countries that were largely constrained by political demands of the Cold War bloc politics— in particular Japan and South Korea (the Republic of Korea or ROK).

The end of the Cold War lifted the structural constraints and limitations placed upon both countries' external strategies by the bipolar system. The new environment gave the two actors more freedom in formulating and pursuing their own policies in Central Asia and elsewhere. Both countries had previously been

¹ Central Asian region is comprised of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

tied firmly to the strategies of the U.S.-led camp as important anti-communist strongholds, allowing them only minor deviations in their own policies. Following the Second World War, Washington had exercised direct control as an occupying force, later it had retained indirect power over Tokyo and Seoul as the most important ally guaranteeing national security against the Soviet threat. The end of the bipolar era thus constituted a significant change in the external setting, granting Japan and South Korea more leeway to pursue foreign policies divergent from the strategies of Washington and its partners.

Once the U.S.-Soviet antagonism became history, Japan and South Korea received more latitude in formulating their external policies and pursuing political and economic agendas that were no longer reflective of the U.S. anti-communist foreign policy.² The remarkable change in the external as well as internal settings of both Japan and South Korea provoked a series of discussions among academics and practitioners on the way these two countries would refashion their respective foreign policies in the post-Cold war period.

By scrutinizing the patterns of Japan's external relations, scholars reveal that throughout the history the nature of Japanese foreign policy has been shifting from one extreme to another. The perception of Japan as a passive and reactive³,

² See for example: Nakayama, Taro. 1991. "Dai 120 kai kokkai ni okeru Nakayama gaimu daijin no gaikō enzetsu". [Foreign Policy Speech By Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama To The 120th Session Of The National Diet]. Tokyo: Gaimushō.<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1991/h03-shiryō-1.htm#a1>.

³ Calder, Kent E. 1988. "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining The Reactive State". *World Politics* 40 (4): 517-541. doi:10.2307/2010317; Pyle, Kenneth B. 1987. "In Pursuit Of A Grand Design: Nakasone Betwixt The Past And The Future". *The Journal Of Japanese Studies* 13 (2): 243-270. doi:10.2307/132470; Blaker, Michael. 2018. "Evaluating Japan's Diplomatic Performance". In *Japan's Foreign Policy After The Cold War: Coping And Change*, 1st ed., 1-42. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

defensive⁴, aggressive, and increasingly active foreign policy actor as well as its image of a “free rider,” a “challenger”⁵ and a “supporter of hegemony”⁶, exemplifies the point. Yet, if a slow and incremental foreign policy transformation is by no means a rare phenomenon in world politics, the radical character of changes in Japan’s foreign policy behavior as well as its general deviation from prescriptions of mainstream international relations theories is what presents the field of interesting inquiry. In terms of the former, one can refer to the times when Japan’s foreign policy underwent complete restructuring⁷: from complete isolation (the Tokugawa period, 1603-1867) to the quest of being recognized as a superior military power in Asia (1904-1905); from the behavior of a “responsible member of the international state system”⁸ to its imperial ambitions and accomplishment of an aggressive foreign policy in the middle of the 20th century. The latter point is adverted to the perceived “abnormality” of Japan as a foreign policy actor, which arises from the fact that its behavior couldn’t be explained to the full extent within a rationalist

⁴ Pharr, Susan J. 1993. "Japan's Defensive Foreign Policy And The Politics Of Burden Sharing". In *Japan's Foreign Policy After The Cold War: Coping And Change*, 1st ed. New York: M. E. Sharpe; Macleod, Alex. 1997. "Japan: A Great Power Despite Itself". In *Role Quests In The Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies In Transition*, 1st ed., 88-110. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt80n0j>.

⁵ Prestowitz, Clyde V. 1988. *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan To Take The Lead*. 1st ed. New York: Basic Books; Choate, Pat. 1990. *Agent Of Influence: How Japan's Lobbyists In The United States Manipulate America's Political And Economic System*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf; Johnson, Chalmers. 1990. "Trade, Revisionism, And The Future Of Japanese-American Relations". In *Japan's Economic Structure*, 1st ed. Seattle: Society for Japanese Studies.

⁶ Inoguchi, Takashi. 1993. *Japan's Foreign Policy In An Era Of Global Change*. London: Pinter Publishers Ltd.; Wan, Ming. 1995. "Spending Strategies In World Politics: How Japan Has Used Its Economic Power In The Past Decade". *International Studies Quarterly* 39 (1): 85-108. doi:10.2307/2600725.

⁷ Holsti, Kalevi Jaakko, Miguel Monterichard, Ibrahim Msabaha, Thomas W. Robinson, Timothy Shaw, and Jacques Zylberberg. 1982. *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring In The Postwar World*. 1st ed. London: Allen and Unwin.

⁸ Lindeman, Kaori. 2008. *Norm-Driven Change: The International Normative System And The Origins Of Japanese Revisionism*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

framework⁹. For instance, despite anticipations in academic research and policy analysis that had suggested that Japan would have more ambitious aspirations at the international level, once it achieved the status of a great economic power, Japan continued counting upon the U.S. in ensuring its security and upholding its image of “a passive and reactive actor.”¹⁰ In this context, it became a matter of controversy as of how to explain Japan’s foreign policy long-term objectives and strategies.

Yet, recently, more evidence of Japan’s willingness to pursue a more “proactive” foreign policy becomes seen. For example, in 2013 Japan adopted the first National Security Strategy, which sets out its fundamental policies concerning diplomacy and defense in relation to national security, and presents the contents of the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace.” According to these fundamental policies, Japan aims “to protect its national interests and conduct proactive and effective diplomacy that fulfills the country’s responsibilities commensurate with its position in the international community.”¹¹ These changes in Japan’s foreign policy are coupled with the government’s call to revise the pacifist Constitution. This proposal is said to be justified by Japan’s attempt “to grasp the changing time” and desire to ensure a “balanced and stable” Asia.¹²

⁹ Layne, Christopher. 1993. "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise". *International Security* 17 (4): 5-51. doi:10.2307/2539020; Waltz, Kenneth. 2000. "Structural Realism After The Cold War". *International Security* 25 (1): 5-41. doi:10.1162/016228800560372.

¹⁰ Miyagi, Yukiko. 2008. *Japan's Middle East Security Policy: Theory And Cases*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

¹¹ Gaimushō. 2014. “Gaikou Seisho”. Tokyo. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2014. “Diplomatic bluebook”. Tokyo]. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/index.html>.

¹² Japan Today. 2014. "Abe Says It Is Time To Revise Pacifist Constitution". January 1, 2014. <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/abe-says-it-is-time-to-revise-pacifist-constitution>.

At the same time, in stark contrast to its neighbor, South Korea became far more active in foreign affairs, broadening its diplomatic horizon after the end of the Cold War. Unlike years past when South Korea thought exclusively in terms of ROK-U.S. alliance, Seoul started to devise a foreign policy strategy that would meet the requirements of the post-Cold War period through steadily moving away from its reactive foreign policy posture and broadening and deepening its diplomatic engagements, connections and linkages beyond its traditional ties with the U.S. One can see this shift in ROK's outreach efforts to Soviet Union (1990), and China (1992). Thus, contrary to rationalists' expectations, Japan and South Korea had acted differently in the post-Cold War geopolitical settings, offering a new empirical material for comparative analysis.

The present study analyses the formation and implementation of Japanese and South Korean foreign policies through case study of their relations with Central Asia. Being a nexus of power relationships due to its strategic geopolitical location in the heart of Eurasia, economic, political and military potential, as well as the vast natural resource deposits, Central Asia presents an area of interest for many external powers, including Japan and South Korea, which eagerly placed the region within the scope of their activities abroad.

The primary question of this research is how Japanese and South Korean respective foreign policies toward Central Asia have been shaped and characterized, and how do they compare. To answer these questions, the study adopts the post-positivist stance to research and examines the representations of Japan's and South Korea's national identities that are being produced and

reproduced through their respective foreign policy discourses at the state level, and analyzes how these particular representations of Japan and South Korea make their modes of interactions with Central Asian countries possible. In particular, special attention is paid to the subject of how these representations of Japan and South Korea's national identities vis-a-vis Central Asia justify the formulation, articulation, and execution of their regional foreign policies. The timeframe of the study concentrates on the contemporary period, roughly between 1992 and early 2017.

Throughout this research, it will be argued that Japan and South Korea's foreign policies vis-a-vis Central Asia are bound up with their sense of national identities and stem from fundamentally diverging views on the role and purpose of their states in the world. The study shows how identities of these actors provide them with worldviews through which the various changes in the international environment are interpreted and their preferences formed.

The findings from the analysis challenge widely shared assumptions that go in line with mainstream rationalist theories, revealing that Japanese and South Korean foreign policies vis-à-vis Central Asia are not dictated by exogenously given interests, but is contingent on the representation of Japan and South Korea's national identities. The study demonstrates that the dominant discourses of Japan and South Korea's respective national identities are the representations of their "Self" with regard to Central Asian "Other". Because Japanese and South Korean policy makers do not function outside the respective discursive spaces, the analysis allows elucidating how various Japanese and South Korean foreign

policy practices with regard to Central Asia became possible.

This dissertation is organized in several main parts with sub-sections. The first part (Chapter 1 and 2) presents the theoretical and methodological frameworks. Since this thesis analysis the role of identity in Japanese and South Korean foreign policies with a special focus on Japan-Central Asia and South Korea-Central Asia relations, this research starts by analyzing how major international relations theories explain ongoing developments in the region and treat the issue of identity. The debate that revolves around the role of identity in international relations can be briefly described as follows: the traditional rational-choice theories neutralize the effect of states' identities on the behavior these actors exhibit. On the contrary, the constructivism rests on the belief that identity is a fundamental factor that shapes players' interests and behavior. Chapter 3 discusses the Japanese and South Korean national identities found in the analysis of foreign policy speeches from both countries. Chapters four and five presents the findings from the case studies about actual foreign policy behavior of Japan and South Korea vis-à-vis Central Asia. Then it discusses whether the particular strategies and policy courses can be understood through their respective national identities. The conclusion summarizes key findings and draw inferences about both countries' foreign policy courses.

Data

This study aims to make a contribution to the existing literature through applying critical constructivism to empirical case study of South Korea and Japan's relations with Central Asia covering the period from 1992 till 2017. The

methodology adopted in this study is exclusively qualitative. To support the argument, the research utilizes a combined methodology consisting of conducting fieldwork, collecting interviews and performing discourse analysis.

This dissertation relies upon field research data that has been collected by the author during 2015-2017. The field trip covered 8 locations, including 4 of the Central Asian Republics: Kazakhstan (Almaty and Astana), Uzbekistan (Tashkent), Tajikistan (Dushanbe), Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek and Osh), as well as Japan (Tokyo) and South Korea (Seoul). Unfortunately due to the visa-related issues, it was not possible to visit Turkmenistan, but this limitation does not pose a huge challenge because the required amount of information was obtained through colleagues and secondary sources, and most importantly as South Korea's and Japan's engagement in Turkmenistan is not comparable to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the Turkmenistan case is not the focus of the current research and does not significantly impact it.

Field trips consisted of both visiting the archives, libraries and relevant organizations and interviews with governmental officials (in particular Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Embassies) and representatives of NGOs. In addition, the fieldwork conducted within the framework of the current research also included a six-month visit to the U.S. (Washington DC, New York city). This part of the data collection was specifically useful due to the opportunity to access the libraries and archives, where the author gathered the necessary documents as well as conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of the respective Embassies in the U.S.

Beyond field research, discourse analysis of official statements reflected in official texts related to South Korea and Japan's foreign policies vis-a-vis Central Asia is utilized as the main approach to research to explore the main messages conveyed by the policy makers through the textual representations and analyze their respective visions in regards to the countries' positions in relation to other international actors, especially Central Asian republics. For analytical purposes, the discourse analysis is confined to several main initiatives of three South Korean leaders (Roh Moo-hyun, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-hye), which are considered to be of primary importance for comprehending the nature of South Korea's foreign policy. Hashimoto Ryutaro's "Eurasian Diplomacy," "Central Asia Plus Japan Dialogue" (CAJ) under Koizumi Junichiro and "The Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons" initiatives that was adopted during Shinzo Abe's administration were analyzed for understanding the nature of Japanese foreign policy toward Central Asia.

This strategy was adopted in line with the understanding that an analysis of dominant discourse that prevails in a certain period of time provides a more complex and nuanced picture with regard to the representation of South Korea's and Japan's national identities vis-a-vis Central Asia and reflects the realms in which foreign policy is being formulated and soft power being wielded. Taking into account that these initiatives were adopted in different period of time and under different environmental conditions, this method is supposed to allow tracing the dynamic of continuity or change of the South Korea and Japan's dominant identity discourses. Hence, this approach aims to reveal the cognitive

lens through which South Korea and Japan understand themselves, formulate and legitimize their foreign policies strategies in relation to Central Asian region.

Certain documents that reflect the view of Central Asian official position with regard to South Korea and Japan and its foreign policy have been analyzed as well. This has been done in order to establish the position of Central Asian countries and to clarify how South Korea and Japan is conceived externally. A number of journal and newspaper articles, interviews and analytical reports have been used for contextualization or exemplification of the perception of certain South Korea's and Japan's foreign policy actions in the Central Asian region articulated by the wider international community.

Given the scope of this research, it is for the analytical purposes that the level of analysis remains at the official state level on the South Korean and Japanese side and the regional level on the Central Asian side. Both English, Kazakh, Russian have been the main languages of this research. For the purpose of addressing the language requirement, certain number of works available in Japanese and Korean as well as those works that have been initially available in translation from the language of origin (Central Asian languages, Japanese and Korean) will be cited as well.

Theoretical assumptions

The strategy of enquiry stems from a set of underlying assumptions pertaining to theoretical stance of critical constructivism, which can be shortly summarized as follows. First of all, identity is seen neither as pre-given nor as

relatively stable. It is relational in the sense that it can be constructed and maintained only through the establishment of socially recognizable differences that become known in the process of interaction with others¹³. An actor cannot shape its identity along or from within, it does so only through communication with Others. Given the existence of multiple actors to whom Self relates, “a sheer range of possible responses to different Others” can be assumed.¹⁴ This means that the notion of difference does not necessarily imply oppositional relationship, but is used just to indicate the relationship-specific construction of Self. This logic further allows anticipating the multiplicity in identities, which literally means that actors can hold several identities at a time, “constructed according to audience, setting, topic and substantive content.”¹⁵

Discursive connotations of identity are caused by the rejection of the view that the process of identity formation is being bounded by the range of possible identities existing in the international system at any historical moment.¹⁶ In line with post-positivist tradition, it is conceived that there can be “no true” or objective identity¹⁷ due to the fact that it is always situated in particular discursive realms. This means that identity remains in “constant flux, being transformed from one social context to another through time and space.”¹⁸

¹³ Connolly, William E. 1991. *Identity/Difference*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹⁴ Hopf, Ted. 2002. *Social Construction Of International Politics: Identities And Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹⁵ Wodak, Ruth, Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Karin Liebhart. 2009. *The Discursive Construction Of National Identity*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

¹⁶ Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. 2001. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program In International Relations And Comparative Politics". *Annual Review Of Political Science* 4: 391-416.

¹⁷ Connolly, William E. 1991. *Identity/Difference*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Identity is assumed to be social because knowledge or intersubjective understandings are diffused through cultural codes which are shared and articulated by masses and propagated in the social realm.

In terms of conceptualization of identity as “political,” the understanding of it draws from the view that the existence of identity depends on its continuous re-articulation ¹⁹ in the context of ongoing struggle between competing discourses that aim to take the domination in order to impose a different regime of truth or to construct an alternative social reality.

Secondly, this study presumes the co-constitutive relationship between identity and foreign policy. This means that identity is constructed and reconstructed through the formulation and legitimation of foreign policy. Following from this, foreign policy is conceived as “the boundary-producing practices central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates.”²⁰

Thirdly, this logic of thinking posits the crucial role of language and discourse in the process of social reality construction. In this study, the language is conceptualized as a constitutive of social reality, not as a tool of communication or transmission of ideas, thoughts, intentions or feelings. In this regard, this study understands that language is utilized in discourses practices – “the process of meaning construction allowing for certain interpretation while excluding others.”²¹ Eventually the significance of discourse is seen in its ability

¹⁹ Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. 1st ed. London: Verso.

²⁰ Campbell, David. 1992. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy And The Politics Of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

²¹ Risse, Thomas. 2007. "Social Constructivism Meets Globalization". In *Globalization Theory: Approaches And Controversies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

to construct “particular subject identities, positioning these subjects vis-a-vis one another and thereby constructing a particular ‘reality’ in which this [foreign] policy became possible, as well as ‘reality’ in which future policies would be justified in advance.”²²

Given the fact that the main concern of this study is not as to why certain foreign policy decisions have been made, but how various South Korean and Japanese foreign policy practices with regard to Central Asia become possible, discourse analysis is chosen as the most suitable approach for research. This decision is further justified by the view that “policy makers also function within a discursive space that imposes on their world and thus creates reality.”²³ Since their goal is “to present a foreign policy that appears legitimate and enforceable to its relevant audience,” foreign policy makers build “a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other.”²⁴ Thus, adoption of discourse analysis approach aims to investigate the discursive construction of South Korea’s and Japan’s national identity through its foreign policies and its significance for South Korea-Central Asian and Japan-Central Asian relations.

The Case Study Choice

There are a few justifications, which served as critical driving selection criteria during the consideration of the case studies featured in this dissertation.

²² Doty, Roxanne Lynn. 1993. "Foreign Policy As Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis Of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy In The Philippines". *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (3): 297-320. doi:10.2307/2600810. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600810>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hansen, Lene. 2006. *Security As Practice: Discourse Analysis And The Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge.

First, it is rather vital to emphasize the fact that both states, Japan and South Korea, can be fairly called well-developed democracies in Asia that share liberal-democratic values, such as the rule of law, fundamental rights, and accountability, among others. Despite a number of regime flaws in both countries, the two states have consistently been among top highest scoring Asian democracies, according to various annual democracy assessments, namely Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index.²⁵ For instance, the latest Freedom House report rated Japan as a "better" democracy than the U.S. and the "best" democratic regime in Asia²⁶, apart from two "full democracies" in Asia-Pacific represented by Australia and New Zealand. As such, Japan is often cited as a unique case of democracy in the region due to its significantly long and virtually uninterrupted independence, as well as the period of the stable parliamentary democracy (referred to as "Taisho Democracy"), which long preceded the World War II.²⁷ Moreover, Japan represents a successful case of a post-war democratic transformation, which was built upon the pre-war achievements. The Japanese current political system started to emerge under the American tutelage after 1951, although the foundation of the government structure Japan is showcasing at the present time has been laid out in the Constitution of the State of Japan adopted in 1947.

²⁵ Freedom House. 2017. "Freedom In The World 2017". <https://freedomhouse.org/report/fiw-2017-table-country-scores>;

The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2018. "The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index". <https://infographics.economist.com/2018/DemocracyIndex/>.

²⁶ Based on the countries' Aggregate Score (0 = least free, 100 = most free), Japan scored 96, while the United States - 89.

²⁷ Kohno, Masaru. 2012. "Rethinking Japan's Democracy: Origins Of "Hybrid Institutions" And Their Political Consequences". *Contemporary Japan* 24 (1): 95-112. doi:10.1515/ cj-2012-0005.

At the same time, South Korea has proven to be one of the exemplary cases of the successful modernization, rapid industrialization and the relatively smooth democratization of a previously non-democratic regime, and has even been referred to as “more Western-type democracy” than Japan, on top of its wide recognition as one of the third-wave democratic transition stories in Asia.²⁸ Although, neither Japan, nor South Korea should be compared to the Western liberal democracies, it is still fair to suggest that both countries, without a doubt, stand closer to the Westerns ideals in terms of freedoms and liberties than most other political systems found in Asia if measure by the “Western” yardstick.

Second, both states share the same primary military benefactor and ally, the U.S., with whom they have managed to retain strong alliance relationships throughout history. American influence and presence on their territories can be tracked through a series of adopted laws, their intertwined economies, established institutions and the popularity of the Western culture among the Japanese and South Korean consumers, even though an argument can be advanced that a certain gradual shift can be observed in the U.S. relations with these two partners as both Seoul and Tokyo balance between pursuing their national interests and retaining friendship with their Western ally.

For instance, the U.S. led the Allied occupation of Japan in the aftermath of the latter’s defeat in the World War II (WWII), rewrote the Japanese Meiji

²⁸ Chu, Yun-han, Larry Diamond, and Doh Chull Shin. 1999. "Halting Progress In Korea And Taiwan". *Journal Of Democracy* 12: 122-136; Diamond, Larry, Marc F. Plattner, and Yun-han Chu. 1998. *Democracy In East Asia*. 1st ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University; Shin, Doh Chull, and Jun-han Lee. 2003. "Comparing Democratization In The East And The West". *Asia-Pacific: Perspectives* 3 (1): 40-49.

Era Constitution, and without a doubt has heavily influenced Japan's post-war development strategy. It is often assumed that being bounded by the newly drafted constitution, mainly by its Article 9 of Chapter 2, the unarmed Japan had to rely on the U.S. protection from then onward. If for Japan, in spite of the recent changes in the official national security rhetoric, the U.S. has for the longest time been the main partner, which the country has heavily relied on in the matters pertaining to ensuring the safety of the Japanese territories and security of its citizens; then for South Korea, the U.S. troops have been the main ally in their initiatives aimed at deterring the North Korean potential military aggression.

Despite the fact that the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-South Korea alliances, which both formed after the end of the WWII during the early years of the Cold War, have distinct origins, problematiques and structures, the difference between the two has arguably diminished over the years. To be more specific, the cooperation between the U.S. and Japan has started without a clearly defined direct common threat. At the same time the U.S. partnership with Republic of Korea has been based on their mutual aspiration to prevent escalation of the regional tensions involving North Korea, which both actors deem as an aggressor that is of a common concern for Seoul and Washington DC.

In recent years, however, North Korea has drawn the attention of not only South Korea, but Japan and other international actors as well. In fact, it can be rightfully asserted that according to multiple addresses made by Tokyo and Seoul throughout the years, both countries share a common regional security threat in the face of North Korea. Having been forced to confront and actively participate

in the on-going international disputes over the strong and evident resentment of the current North Korean regime towards the Western powers, the unwillingness of Kim Jong-un to cooperate with other international players on many issues of major concern, as well as North Korea's active nuclear and missile testing activities in the region, South Korea and Japan have found themselves in the circumstances that push them to turn their full attention to the issues of their own national and regional security.

Recently the importance of their cooperation has become even more vital due to the quick escalation of tensions in Northeast Asia caused by North Korea's proud nuclear tests and, perhaps, the most provocative missile tests, which have sparked new waves of the United Nations (UN) sanctions and international dialogues. The governments of both nations have taken the security concern very seriously with Japan alerting their citizens of possible threats and performing evacuation drills in the areas that are most likely to be targeted or affected by a potential attack from the Kim Jong-Un regime.²⁹ The dramatic events unfolding in the region have even provoked a heated debate over the change of the Japanese Constitution, which would allow the state to obtain its own preemptive capacity. As of 2017, the Constitution of the country only allows the Japanese forces to respond to a direct attack after an act of military aggression has already occurred, and does not clearly allow or justify the government's attempts to stop or prevent a possible strike from North Korean missiles.

²⁹ Isaksson, Erik, Lars Vargö, and Liam Palmbach. 2017. "Japan And North Korea: Toward Engagement For Regional Security". Institute for Security and Development Policy. <http://isdpeu/publication/japan-and-north-korea-toward-engagement-for-regional-security/>.

The unquestionable “unfriendliness” of the political elite led by Kim Jong-Un, does not affect Japan alone. Continuous threats made by the North Korean leadership, which are directed at the U.S., have made an impact globally producing some serious talks in both Washington and Seoul, among others. As such, after Pyongyang had conducted a test launch of what it claims to be an intercontinental ballistic missile, which can hit any location on the mainland of the U.S., in November 2017, South Korea reacted with a test-launch of a “precision strike” missile signaling its neighbor that if an actual attack occurred, Seoul would be fast to respond.³⁰

At the same time, respective domestic and foreign policies of Japan and South Korea are not only influenced by the standoff on the Korean Peninsula. For Tokyo and Seoul, the “China” and “Russia” factors remain among the most important issues on the states’ agenda. The global and regional role of China has been increasing, pushing Seoul to gradually shift their attention towards this rising power both in terms of economic partnerships and security cooperation. It has been argued by many that ROK has been facing growing pressure to choose between maintaining their alliance with the U.S. and expanding their ties with China amidst the intensification of the Sino-American relations. The emphasis that the country puts on both of these players is evident from multiple factors, including a series of agreements to deepen and further strengthen cooperation with the two partners.³¹ China has also replaced Japan as Seoul’s largest trading

³⁰ McCurry, Justin, and Julian Borger. 2017. "North Korea Missile Launch: Regime Says New Rocket Can Hit Anywhere In US". The Guardian. November 27, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/28/north-korea-has-fired-ballistic-missile-say-reports-in-south-korea>.

³¹ For example “Strategic Cooperation Partnership Improvement Plan”, “South Korea-China FTA

partner, which is a relatively new occurrence that is expected to reshape the dynamics in the region³². As such, Japan has been actively pursuing better relations with China in many spheres including strengthening financial ties, establishing closer cooperation in matters pertaining to peace and security and promoting cultural exchanges. Chinese and Japanese officials have held a series of talks in the past year alone, where the representatives of the two largest Asian markets have agreed to put mutual effort into promoting the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Japan-China-ROK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)³³. In addition, the Government of Japan announced its intention to implement the so-called "Three Bridges" project – an exchange program that is planned to welcome 1,000 youth representatives to Japan for the purpose of promoting understanding between Japan and its partners. The initiative is to be carried out through the Japan-China Afforestation and Tree-Planting International Solidarity project and is comprised of three central components: (i) regional exchanges, (ii) youth exchanges and (iii) cultural and sports exchanges³⁴.

Russia is another major player in the arena of international relations, which both ROK and Japan keep a close eye on. With Moscow and Beijing establishing closer ties, the importance of Russia in Asia increases as well. As such, the

Negotiations" among others.

³² Mukoyama, Hidehiko. 2017. "Can Japan And South Korea Build A New Economic Relationship? Recent Changes In The Global Environment May Help To Repair Relations". *Pacific Business And Industries* XVI (59). <https://www.jri.co.jp/MediaLibrary/file/english/periodical/rim/2016/59.pdf>.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2017. "Japan-China Summit Meeting". http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page4e_000636.html; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2017. "Japan-China Summit Meeting". http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/press3e_000119.html.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2018. "Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting". http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page3e_000817.html.

negotiations on the introduction of a free trade zone between South Korea and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which Russia is a founding member of, have already started despite the dramatic escalation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula³⁵. Japan, too, does not let the territorial disputes and political disagreements with Russia to hinder its ability to improve relations between the countries. This has been reflected in Prime Minister Abe's decision to host Russia's President Putin during their meeting in Tokyo on 15-16th of December 2016, as well as their subsequent bilateral meetings, during which the two leaders reached an agreement on making efforts towards restoring the frozen military contacts and 2+2 format talks³⁶, as well as focus on joint economic cooperation on the disputed islands. Therefore, the two key players in contemporary world politics, Russia and China, are assigned a rather vital role in the Japanese and South Korean respective strategic thinking when it comes to both, their political and economic development trajectories.

In addition, the economic development model followed by the two actors can be argued to have many substantial similarities. Both actors are often put under the umbrella-term of the successful East Asian economies. Although both states have faced the unfavorable conditions of pressing population density and the lack of domestic natural resource deposits, Japan and South Korea have managed to overcome such challenges and achieve economic prosperity in a similar manner, thus, sharing a lot of similarities in their economic vision

³⁵ Russia Today. 2017. "Russia-Led Free Trade Zone Could Include South Korea", November 27, 2017. <https://www.rt.com/business/411049-trade-zone-eaeu-south-korea/>.

³⁶ Johnston, Eric. 2017. "Abe-Putin Summit In Russia To Spotlight Territorial Dispute And North Korean Threat". *The Japan Times*.

regardless of such differences as historic developments, market size and domestic market composition.

To be more specific, the two countries managed to expand their economies by putting emphasis on the industries, which the nations' respective leaderships viewed as the most beneficial ones for their country's financial growth – something that, importantly, enjoyed the required public support as well. It is necessary to note, however, that this achievement has not been made without the substantial assistance from the West, in particular the U.S., which provided vast economic and military help for both Seoul and Tokyo³⁷. Thus, this granted both actors the ability to pursue their development aspirations through relying on the benefits offered to them by their partners overseas due to the nations' strategic geopolitical importance. In other words, Japan and South Korea both enjoyed the vital access to basic technologies and raw materials the countries were in need of during the hard periods of their industrialization. Therefore, the respective governments were not constrained to focus on the low technology and labor-intensive sectors as most other developing states, and could instead devote their attention to facilitating growth in the industries normally emphasized by the advanced economies. As a result of the chosen and, most importantly, available strategies, Seoul and Tokyo have achieved great economic success, with South Korea catapulting from a Third World state to the membership status of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) within the impressive period of 40 years, and Japan catapulting into an advanced economy

³⁷ Gutterman, Alan S. 1991. "Japan And Korea: Contrasts And Comparisons In Regulatory Policies Of Cooperative Growth Economics". *International Tax And Business Law* 8 (2). doi:10.15779/Z38FD02.

status shortly after its defeat in the WWII and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Furthermore, both Japan and South Korea face a range of similar geographical constraints and proximity issues, which force the two actors to mainly engage with and operate in the Central Asian region through the prism of the structural challenges they face. The material reality of not having direct access to the region puts Seoul and Tokyo in an interesting position, and also makes their involvement in the distant Central Asia an interesting topic for investigation. In the absence of shared borders and due to the significant remoteness of the Central Asian countries, the two players can step up their activity in the region only to the degree, to which they are economically and geographically capable of.

Finally, the last motivation to conduct the presented comparative analysis is the fact that both countries can be rightfully called relative “late-comers” to Central Asia in terms of officially announcing a coherent approach to Central Asia. Even though Japan joined efforts aimed at furthering engagement with Central Asia by becoming one of the first states to acknowledge its new status and establishing diplomatic relations with the region in 1992, it was not until 1997 when Japan announced its official strategy towards the region. That being said, at the same time, South Korea, which had previously directed a lot of efforts towards dissociating itself from the North Korean ties with the Soviet Union and has expressed its desire to follow the path of modernization offered by the West, has not been quick to establish close relations with the newly formed

independent post-Soviet republics. Relations between the two have been rather limited at the time, and have worsened amidst the Asian economic crisis, which forced South Korea to completely abandon or temporarily suspend the financing of the projects implemented in the region.

By the mid-2000's, however, the country's engagement with Central Asia has recovered, with the new administration starting to pay closer attention to the five Central Asian states. As such, in 2009, South Korea launched the New Asia Initiative, which featured Central Asia as one of the main beneficiaries and actors of South Korea's specific strategic interests.

Thus, in sight of the reasons discussed, it seems fair to state that Japan and South Korea's respective engagements in the Central Asian region offer an interesting avenue for further research on the guiding principles, factors and forces that shape the choice and structure of each of their foreign policy approaches towards the five former Soviet republics. Despite the fact that the actors' involvement in Central Asia has been paid due attention on the part of the academic world, there is a lack of research that compare their respective pursued strategies.

Existing literature review: South Korea –Central Asia

The paramount importance of the Central Asian region on the map of contemporary politically significant territories stems from its rather unique geographic positioning in the heart of Eurasia. This fact has been emphasized by policy makers both within and outside the region, which drew growing attention

of the global political elites to the potential gains and interests their respective countries might wish to pursue in this strategically vital location. Right after the fall of the USSR, the former Soviet republics have been rebranded into the potentially key natural resource export destinations, which enjoyed the abundance of different kinds of valuable minerals and capacities that would allow the possible beneficiaries of these potential resource deals to enjoy major revenues. Ever since then, the region has been often portrayed as the focal point of Great Power competition.

In other words, once Central Asian states gained their independence in 1991, strategic value of the region started to grow, with more and more global actors, such as the U.S., European Union, China, Turkey and others, advancing into Central Asia to pursue their national strategic interests and global political aspirations. South Korea, too, was among those global actors who had their eye on the geopolitically important region that possesses a great wealth of natural resource deposits and connects two continents – Europe and Asia – together³⁸. Surely, the increasing involvement of international players in the previously closed and inaccessible region has drawn a fair amount of attention from the experts in the field, who have offered their takes on the foreign engagement with the Central Asian states.

A significant amount of literature on the South Korean presence in the five

³⁸ Fumagalli, Matteo. 2016. "Growing Inter-Asian Connections: Links, Rivalries, And Challenges In South Korean-Central Asian Relations". *Journal Of Eurasian Studies* 7: 39-48.; Olimat, Muhamad S. 2015. *China And Central Asia In The Post-Soviet Era: A Bilateral Approach*. Lexington Books; Park Eun-young. 2016. "The role of Korean Companies in Central Asian Infrastructure Development: Railway Vehicle Business in Kazakhstan". *Asia-Europe Society* 13(4): 1-14.[박,은영. 2016. "국내기업의 중앙아시아 인프라 구축사업 참여의 의의 -카자흐스탄의 철도차량사업을 중심으로-". *아시아.유럽미래학회* 13(4):1-14]

post-Soviet republics focus on the arrival and subsequent presence of the Korean population in, at first, the territory of the Russian Empire, and later in the Soviet Union. The main discussions within this dimension of works revolve around the emergence of the Korean immigrants in the Russian Far East and their deportation to the unpopulated areas of primarily then-Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic and then-Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic³⁹.

Another theme that frequently becomes the focus of scholarly research concerns issues pertaining to national and ethnic identity, as well as the (re-) conceptualization of homeland among the Korean migrants residing and integrating into the Soviet setting at the time⁴⁰. From this perspective, the Korean population living in the USSR presented an interesting case study due to the identity (re-) construction phenomenon, which could be argued to have taken place among these Soviet nationals, as well as the further re-imagining of the concept of homeland among the arguably assimilated Koreans in the newly independent Central Asian states after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In a similar vein, a great number of scholarly works has been dedicated to the examination of the impact of the presence of the relatively large Korean community in Central Asia (specifically, in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) on the region's (as well as individual countries') relations with South Korea. Since the last strand of academic works has tied the existence of the Korean Diasporas in

³⁹ Lee, J. 2003. "Korea's policy for Ethnic Koreans Overseas". *Korea Focus*; Kim, German. 2002. *Koreans abroad: Past, Present and Future*. Almaty.

⁴⁰ Diener, A. 2006. "Homeland as Social Construct: Territorialization among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans". *Nationalities Papers*, 34(2): 201-235; Oh, C.J. 2006. "Diaspora Nationalism: The Case of Ethnic Korean Minority in Kazakhstan and Its Lessons for the Crimean Tatars in Turkey". *Nationalities Papers*, 34(2): 111-129; Um, H. 2000. "Listening Patterns and Identity of the Korean Diaspora in the Former USSR". *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 9(2): 121-142.

Central Asian states to their respective foreign policy objectives and outcomes, this study will look into this specific part of the literature on Korea-Central Asia relations. In order to emphasize and address the existing gap in the available research, this dissertation will sort the literature in accordance to the theories the authors have adopted in their studies.

Before proceeding to the theoretical discussions and explanations of the South Korean behavior in its interactions with the region, it is important to set the scene and describe the development and progression of the established relations between South Korea and the Central Asian republics. It has been argued that during the early years of their independence, the Central Asian nations have not been featured on the list of South Korean foreign policy priority destinations. Some explain that due to the country's aspirations to legitimize its own statehood against North Korea, South Korea remained detached from any Soviet associations, including establishing ties with former Soviet republics. In fact, South Korea was not quick at all to put the newly formed states on the map of its main strategic interests limiting its involvement to offering assistance to the descendants of the Korean immigrants who were deported by Stalin from the Soviet Far East in 1937. In other words, the primary focus of the South Korean attention in the region was paid to financing educational exchanges and providing support to the local ethnic Korean communities. The Asian financial crisis, which occurred in 1997, has, for a relatively long time, trumped the ability to maintain or expand its already scarce cooperation with the Central Asian

region as South Korea was forced to discontinue or freeze a significant number of the Korean government financed programs in Central Asia.

It was not until mid-to late 2000's when the interaction between South Korea and Central Asia finally leveled up and saw a sharp rise. Evidently, South Korea has drastically changed its development trajectory relative to the region and finally opened itself up for a closer cooperation with the Central Asian countries. This visionary and strategic shift has been reflected in the dramatic increase of the trade turnover, as well as investment and assets inflow. South Korea was soon to become one of the main aid donors to the Central Asian states, as well as one of its main investors and business and commercial partners.

As such, relations between South Korea and Central Asia can be neatly divided into two phases. During the first phase (in 1990s), the country played a low-profile role in Central Asia amid the unfolding activity of other international actors in the region, which followed the collapse of the USSR and involved such players as the U.S., China, and Russia, among others. Republic of Korea, as it was previously discussed, did not express a particular interest in the region throughout the first decade of CAR's independence, with the exception of Uzbekistan, which quickly found an important economic partner in South Korea. This phase ended after established relations plunged to all-time lows as a result of the financial crisis at the end of the 1990's. The second phase started with South Korea expanding its overall economic activity in Central Asia both in terms of territory and intensity in the beginning of the XXI century. To be more specific, the shift occurred when the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008)

presented their new vision for the Korean development and launched its “Comprehensive Central Asia Initiative,” which was the beginning of Korean increasing attention to the former Soviet markets. Later, the Lee Myung-bak’s administration (2009-2013) expanded on this expressed interest in the region, and has introduced measures aimed at deepening the cooperation between South Korea and Central Asia. As a part of the broader foreign policy strategy that aimed to establish the country as an advanced, globally recognized economic and political actor, the Lee Myung-bak’s government introduced to the world the “New Asia Initiative” in 2009. From this perspective, taking on the role of an important long-term partner of Central Asian countries, and specifically signing beneficial natural resource deals, was an important element in the South Korean aspirations at achieving the goal of becoming a global power. Thus, even though South Korea can be rightfully called a “late-comer” to the region in terms of its energy security interests and overall economic sluggishness caused by the financial crisis, a significant economic drive has been since undoubtedly noticeable.

In an attempt to explain the change in South Korea’s mode of engagement with Central Asian states during the recent years, different scholars refer to various schools of thought to find the most plausible explanations for the phenomenon. Many commentators that base their works on the theory of realism, for instance, argue that, “South Korea’s major strategic interests in the region are defined in terms of energy, trade, technology and cultural ties.”⁴¹ According to

⁴¹ Fumagalli, Matteo. 2016. "Growing Inter-Asian Connections: Links, Rivalries, And Challenges In South Korean-Central Asian Relations". *Journal Of Eurasian Studies* 7: 39-48; Olimat, Muhamad S.

this line of thinking, South Korea has aimed “to establish a staging point in Central Asia for advancement to the Eurasian continent [...] and secure long-term supply of energy resources”⁴². This is said to be due to the fact that Central Asia could play a rather vital part in the global structure as a possible alternative energy supply channel that might help South Korea to diversify the sources of its imports and decrease its dependence on the natural resources from the Middle East⁴³. Therefore, it has been argued that in the face of heated economic competition, South Korea rather successfully pursues its “pragmatic agenda” to address its concerns with “the lack of local sources of energy (SK imports about 84% of its energy); heavy reliance on oil (50%); and heavy dependence on the Middle East as the main supplier of hydrocarbons (75%).”⁴⁴ As such, the energy domain has been the main avenue of interest for Seoul, who is actively pursuing its resource-seeking diplomacy in the region⁴⁵.

This view has been also supported by Fumagalli (2012, 87), who argues that the intensification of its engagement in Central Asia can be explained “by

2015. *China And Central Asia In The Post-Soviet Era: A Bilateral Approach*. Lexington Books.

⁴² Ko, Jae-nam. 2009. "President Lee's Visit To Uzbekistan And Kazakhstan And Future Tasks". *Korea Focus*.

⁴³ Fumagalli, Matteo. 2012. "South Korea's Engagement In Central Asia From The End Of The Cold War To The "New Asia Initiative"". *Journal Of Northeast Asian History* 9: 71-97; Hwang, Balbina. 2012. "A New Horizon In South Korea-Central Asia Relations: The ROK Joins The “Great Game”". Korea Compass. Korea Economic Institute.

http://keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_koreacompass_template_balbinahwang.pdf;

Peyrouse, Sébastien. 2010. "South Korea's advances into Central Asia". The CACI Analyst. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program.

<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12122-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2010-9-1-art-12122.html>.; Sogaku, Miyamoto. 2009. "South Korea's Energy Diplomacy Towards Central Asia". In *SAIS US-Korea 2009 Yearbook*. Johns Hopkins US-Korea Institute.

⁴⁴ Calder, Kent E., and Viktoriya Kim. 2008. "Korea, The United States, And Central Asia: Far-Flung Partners In A Globalizing World". *Korea Economic Institute* 3 (9).

⁴⁵ Peyrouse, Sébastien. 2010. "South Korea's advances into Central Asia". The CACI Analyst. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program; Sogaku, Miyamoto. 2009. "South Korea's Energy Diplomacy Towards Central Asia". In *SAIS US-Korea 2009 Yearbook*. Johns Hopkins US-Korea Institute.

Seoul's attention and interest in the region's natural resources and local economies.”⁴⁶ The author also refers to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as the primary benefactors of South Korea's foreign direct investment in Central Asia, which in turn increases its local involvement while on the quest for valuable regional assets. It is also explained that Seoul is unable to match the financial spending in the form of large scale investment flows and projects in the region as those offered by the major powers due to the size of its economy, and is, thus, at a competitive disadvantage relative to such big regional players as China, Russia and the U.S.⁴⁷

An important point often raised in realist studies on South Korea-Central Asia relations is the position of the former as a global middle power, which it proudly promotes. To be more specific, South Korea has emerged as a new middle power – the status that is mainly defined by material factors – due to its domestic transformation as a result of the rapid economic development and modernization. Despite the progress made, the economy of the Republic of Korea still cannot be compared to such Asian economic giants as China and Japan, for instance, which places it within the realm of international middle powers.

Therefore, the strategy the South Korea pursues in Central Asia is different from those implemented by the above-cited large international actors. First of all,

⁴⁶ Fumagalli, Matteo. 2012. "South Korea's Engagement In Central Asia From The End Of The Cold War To The "New Asia Initiative"". *Journal Of Northeast Asian History* 9: 71-97

⁴⁷ Calder, Kent E., and Viktoriya Kim. 2008. "Korea, The United States, And Central Asia: Far-Flung Partners In A Globalizing World". *Korea Economic Institute* 3 (9); Fumagalli, Matteo. 2012. "South Korea's Engagement In Central Asia From The End Of The Cold War To The "New Asia Initiative"". *Journal Of Northeast Asian History* 9: 71-97.

despite some minor recent attempts of the national elites to add a political dimension to their overall foreign policy and engagement with Central Asia specifically in order to enhance ROK's international political visibility, South Korea does not seek to fit its economic activities into their own political agenda. Thus, the driving force behind Seoul's presence in the region has been mainly economic in nature. In order to stand out in comparison to other large investors, South Korea made a bid on the diversity of the deals it might potentially offer and areas it invests into, as well as on the comprehensiveness of the services and assistance it may provide to improve or grant access for the Central Asia produces to reach other overseas markets, as opposed to the size of the deals and the amount of money invested. In other words, the country actively tries to turn some of its relative weaknesses into some added strengths.

At the same time, the political aspect has been emphasized in another wave of realist studies that point at the fact that South Korean distributed aid and offered investment is largely perceived by both the Central Asian countries themselves and such great power as the U.S. as simultaneously reinforcing the independence of the former Soviet republics and preventing the dominance and rise of Chinese and Russian influence over the region. The proponents of this view suggest that access to energy assets is not the only explanation for South Korea's renewed interest in Central Asia; there are also larger political aspirations behind it. As such, the "New Asia Initiative," which conveniently included the region, is aimed at reaching the country's objectives to foster and deepen relations and economic cooperation between the two actors, and,

importantly, to establish some form of an “Asian caucus,” which it deems necessary amid a wide portfolio of current pressing issues and global challenges⁴⁸.

Nonetheless, despite a certain degree of plausibility of such explanations that deem political factors as an important force behind the strategic choices of Seoul’s current foreign policy towards Central Asia, many experts believe that economic involvement has overshadowed any other concerns, including the issues related to the Korean diaspora in the region and possible political reforms. According to this line of thinking, these factors play a marginal role in contrast to energy security and trade, which have consistently been the main driving factors behind Korea’s aspirations to make closer ties with Central Asia⁴⁹. Thus, economic gains seem to be dominating the realist literature on South Korea’s motivations and goals in the region.

Although the theory of realism does provide some interesting insights into and potential explanations for the country’s involvement in the former Soviet states by citing economic interests of Seoul as the impetus of such activities, the presented realist studies fail to explain the sudden change in South Korea’s foreign policy in regards to Central Asia. In other words, it provides no justification and possible reasons for country’s shift from a low profile “late-comer” into one of the most active regional players.

⁴⁸ Blank, Stephen. 2010. "South Korea’s Move in Central Asia". The CACI Analyst. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12006-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2010-3-3-art-12006.html>.

⁴⁹ Fumagalli, Matteo. 2006. "Identity And Interests In South Korea's Policy Towards Central Asia". *Proceedings Of The World Congress Of Korean Studies, 183-191*, 183-191. http://congress.aks.ac.kr/korean/files/2_1358493169.pdf.

Another bulk of academic literature dedicated to the analysis of the South Korean Eurasia Initiative aim to explore if the project, together with the Russia's turn to the East policy, could open up great opportunities for further regional cooperation between North-East Asia and Eurasia, especially in the field of energy⁵⁰. Some claim that Russia's "Pivot to the East," China's "One Belt, One Road (OBOR)," and Korea's "Eurasia Initiative," if properly coordinated, could transform the Asia-Pacific region from an area dominated by conflicting dialectics to the so-called "ocean of peace."⁵¹ Central Asia, which some see as a possible buffer zone, has a potential to play an important role in the process of this peace-building project.

Other scholars argue that the significance of the region has increased in the post-9/11 world due to a range of transnational (Islamic extremism, drug and human trafficking) and geopolitical threats, which stem from the region's close location to Russia, China, Southwest Asia and Afghanistan⁵². Thus, in light of the increasing role Central Asia plays on the global arena, it is suggested that the Republic of Korea pushed for tighter cooperation and partnership with the region. However, some experts note that although South Korea has expressed its interest in Central Asia, its resource development cooperation with Central Asia, which they believe to be the priority of South Korean engagement with the region, has

⁵⁰ Baek, Jun Kee. 2015. "The "Ukrainian Crisis" And Geopolitical Realignment Of Eurasia: Implications For The "Eurasian Initiative (EAI)". *The Korean Journal Of Defense Analysis* 27 (4): 489-505.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Kim, Seun-Rae. 2011. "Kyrgyzstan's national security and self-defense dilemma in the process of nation-building", Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, International Area Studies Center, 14(4):.27-52 [김, 선래. 2011. 국가건설과정에서 키르기스스탄의 국가안보와 자주국방의 딜레마, 한국외국어대학교 국제지역연구센터, <국제지역연구> 14(4):27-52].

remained limited despite having a great potential⁵³. It is often argued that Central Asian republics design their respective energy policies based on their relations with the U.S., China, and Russia⁵⁴. The main string of recommendations local experts offer in response to Korean relatively unsuccessful attempts to secure access to the abundant natural resources in the region is for Korea to familiarize itself with what the Central Asian republics want and to make attempts to address those “wants”⁵⁵.

Existing literature review: Japan-Central Asia

As for Japan, scholarly endeavours in understanding the nature of Japanese engagement with Central Asia also produce a growing divergence of opinions.

The realist interpretation of Japan relations with Central Asia has also been dominating the literature over the last two decades. This is not surprising considering the fact that Central Asia has been traditionally seen as “a testing field for great-power relations”⁵⁶, which has provided a fertile ground for realist thinking.

Although different studies, which examine the subject from the realist perspective, assign different weight to possible reasons that induce Japan’s interest to Central Asia, as well as to potential motivations behind Japan’s

⁵³ Lee, Kyung-Hee. 2008. Central Asia Energy Resources and International Relations, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, 27(1): 231-259. [이,경희. 2008. 중앙아시아 에너지 자원과 국제관계, 한국외국어대학교 중동연구소, <중동연구> 27(1): 231-259].

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Lim, Hyung-Baek. 2014. “Research on the cooperation scheme development relating to Kyrgyzstan’s mineral resources”, Asian Studies 17(2):153-178. [임,형백, 2014. 키르기스스탄의 광물자원을 연계한 협력체계 구축을 위한 연구, 17(2): 153-178]

⁵⁶ Wilhelmsen, Julie, and Geir Flikke. 2008. "Central-Asia: Testing Ground For New Great Power Relations?". Oslo: Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/281220>.

decision to use a set of particular foreign policy strategies, they were grouped together under the “realism umbrella” for analytical purposes of this research. The reason behind this decision is the fact that these studies rest on the core beliefs of realism, mainly that states are “instrumentally rational” actors that seek to ensure their own survival and to maximize their expected utility in an anarchical international system⁵⁷. Thus, realism is viewed here “not as [unified] theory”⁵⁸, but as an “attitude of mind” with “a quite distinctive and recognizable flavour”⁵⁹, as a paradigm or “disposition,” which rests on several basic assumptions.

In line with this logic, these studies share a number of tenets with regard to Japan’s foreign policy vis-a-vis Central Asia. Specifically, according to this train of thought, Japan has to ensure its survival and prosperity as a rational actor in world politics. Having the lack of natural resources, Japan has to make strategic calculations in order to guarantee its energy security and to maximize the state’s power beyond its traditional sphere of influence. In an attempt to achieve this goal, Japan tries to strengthen relations with the oil-and-gas-rich countries of Central Asia⁶⁰. Despite resting on the same theoretical assumptions, there are differences among these studies. For example, Calder (2001) argues that “energy

⁵⁷ Mearsheimer, John J. 1994. "The False Promise Of International Institutions". *International Security* 19 (3): 5. doi:10.2307/2539078.

⁵⁸ Donnelly, Jack. 2000. *Realism And International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁹ Garnett, John C. 1984. *Commonsense And The Theory Of International Politics*. SUNY Press.

⁶⁰ Sadykova, R. 2013. "Japan’S Policy Towards The Countries Of Central Asia". *International Journal Of Social, Education, Economics And Management Engineering* 7 (8); Muzalevsky, Roman. 2012. "Japan Eyes Central Asia For Strategic Resources". Asia Times; Gavrilina, Elena. 2012. "Prioritety Vneshnei Politiki Iaponii V Stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii Na Sovremennom Etape". *Armiia I Obschestvo* 4 (32): 1-8; Dobrinskaya, Olga. 2011. "Energeticheskaya Diplomatiya Iaponii V Tsentral'noi Azii". *Iaponiya.Ezhgodnik*.

is the catalyst behind Japan's involvement in the region," and in the combination with "a rising desire for political influence," the two factors are accountable for the continuous transformation of the overall relationship between the actors⁶¹. Hickok (2000, 17) shares a similar view and argues that Japan aims "to find opportunities to expand its role in areas outside its traditional sphere of influence."⁶² Unlike Calder (2001), however, Hickok (2000) claims that while "the oil and gas are important as tools" for justifying Japan's involvement in the region, these are "not an end in itself."⁶³ Gavrilina (2012), on the other hand, while admitting that Tokyo is attracted to Central Asian natural resources, argues that Japan's interest in the region was initially caused by its concerns about ensuring security and stability in this conflict-prone territory.⁶⁴

Other possible interpretations include Japan's intentions to create new transport routes that would connect Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, aims to gain additional support for its bid for the UN Security Council seat, and aspirations to provide economic support to the U.S. in exercising its military-political influence over the region.⁶⁵

While these studies discuss quite realistic gains Japan could potentially enjoy, if it was more active and assertive in the region, none of these explanations seem to reflect the reality. In particular, the relations between Japan and Central

⁶¹ Calder, Kent. 2001. "Japan's Energy Angst And The Caspian Great Game". *The National Bureau Of Asian Research* 12 (1).

⁶² Hickok, M. 2000. "The other end of the Silk Road: Japan's Eurasian initiative". *Central Asian Survey* 19(1): 17-39.

⁶³ Ibid, p.22.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kazantsev, Andrei. 2008. *Bol'shaia Igra" S Neizvestnymi Pravilami: Mirovaia Politika I Tsentral'naia Aziia*. Moscow: Nasledie Evrazii.

Asia are not “distinguished by high activity”.⁶⁶ Even though “energy security is considered to be the key sphere of interest for Tokyo”⁶⁷, the overall “Japanese involvement has been slow and remains limited”.⁶⁸ Dobrinskaya (2011), for instance, depicts that while the actors’ cooperation in the oil and gas industry is limited to the projects devoted to reprocessing of the hydrocarbon resources, to this day, Japan does not directly benefit from those⁶⁹. As such, according to the World Bank (2016), Japan’s largest trading partner among the Central Asian states is Kazakhstan, however, the level of exports from Kazakhstan to Japan and vice versa remain very low even in the energy sector (approximately 10 times less than China and Russia’s levels) with Japan amounting for only 2.1% of total Kazakhstani exports.

In an attempt to rationalize Japan’s continuous refusal to get involved in the “energy rivalry unfolding in the region”⁷⁰, some scholars refer to neorealist explanations. The neorealist axiom, which links struggle for power and rivalries to the structure of international system as opposed to the nature of states⁷¹,

⁶⁶ Nurgaliev, Marat, and Timur Shaimerzgenov. 2007. "Japanese Diplomacy Makes New Headway In Central Asia: Its Problems, Expectations, And Prospects". *Central Asia And The Caucasus* 48 (6): 125-135.

⁶⁷ Dobrinskaya, Olga. 2011. "Energeticheskaya Diplomatiya Iaponii V Tsentral'noi Azii". *Iaponiia.Ezhgodnik*. <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/energeticheskaya-diplomatiya-yaponii-i-tsentralnoy-azii>.

⁶⁸ Watanabe, Koji. 2000. "Japan And The New Central Asia". In *The New Central Asia: In Search Of Stability*, 1st ed., 39-50. New York, Paris, and Tokyo: The Trilateral Commission.

⁶⁹ Dobrinskaya, Olga. 2011. "Energeticheskaya Diplomatiya Iaponii V Tsentral'noi Azii". *Iaponiia.Ezhgodnik*. <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/energeticheskaya-diplomatiya-yaponii-i-tsentralnoy-azii>.

⁷⁰ Len, Christopher. 2005. "Japan's Central Asian Diplomacy: Motivations, Implications And Prospects For The Region". *The China And Eurasia Quarterly* 3 (3): 127-149.

⁷¹ Morgenthau, Hans. 1978. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power And Peace*. 5th ed. New York: Knopf; Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory Of International Politics*. Boston, Mass.: McGraw-Hill; Gilpin, Robert. 1981. *War And Change In World Politics*. Cambridge University Press; Waltz, Kenneth. 1993. "The Emerging Structure Of International Politics". *International Security* 18 (2): 44. doi:10.2307/2539097; Elman, Colin. 1996. "Horses For Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories Of Foreign Policy?". *Security Studies* 6 (1): 7-53. doi:10.1080/09636419608429297.

generates arguments that “Japan cannot afford the confrontational structure in Central Asia”.⁷² In other words, Japan’s international behaviour is constrained by the international structure, which narrows the range of its foreign policy possibilities and consequently assigns the country with a particular role. According to this view, this is the reason why “Japan-Central Asia relations have been and remain predominantly economic in nature”.⁷³ This claim is supported by Kazantsev (2008), who believes that the combination of such factors as geographical remoteness, the lack of experience in cooperation with Central Asian countries, as well as its military-political alliance with the U.S., all forces Japan to mainly operate in the region through economic means.⁷⁴

Thus, taking into account structural constraints, one should expect Japan to step up its activity in the region (as has been previously discussed) only to the degree, to which it is economically capable. Nevertheless, from the outset of its presence in the region, Japan’s foreign policy behaviour goes against the above-mentioned logical expectations. It is evident from the non-substantial trade relations between the two and meagre Japanese direct investments;⁷⁵ from Japan’s overall presence in the region, which is largely limited to its prolonged “status as the region’s biggest ODA donor country”;⁷⁶ from its unceasing assistance to the Central Asian development and from the lack of any visible

⁷² Mangi, Lutfullah. 2011. "The Political And Economic Strategy Of Japan Towards Central Asia". Social Research Center Publications.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kazantsev, Andrei. 2008. *Bol'shaia Igra* S Neizvestnymi Pravilami: Mirovaia Politika I Tsentral'naia Aziia. Moscow: Nasledie Evrazii.

⁷⁵ Watanabe, Koji. 2000. "Japan And The New Central Asia". In *The New Central Asia: In Search Of Stability*, 1st ed., 39-50. New York, Paris, and Tokyo: The Trilateral Commission.

⁷⁶ Tanaka, Tetsuji. 2013. "Overview Of Central Asia And The Southern Caucasus Re-Engage Now With Central Asia And The Southern Caucasus". Central Asia And Japan. Tokyo: Institute for International Studies and Training.

avaricious interests apart from idealistic aspirations of promoting peace and security around the globe.

Alternative reasoning for Japan's foreign policy behaviour towards Central Asia is provided by studies that are premised on the liberal paradigm, primarily on the idea that international relations are all about transnational relations, where state-state affairs "have been supplemented by relations among private individuals, groups and societies".⁷⁷ The important aspect of it lies in the fact that stronger transnational ties between individuals and groups would lead to the "emergence of security communities" and ultimately result in the prevalence of peaceful relations over rivalries.⁷⁸ In addition to that, a higher degree of transnational links between states equals a higher level of interdependence between them. Therefore, the importance of military welfare is expected to decrease⁷⁹, while potential for cooperation ought to become more significant with the establishment of international institutions and the alleviation of international distrust among actors in a self-help international system.⁸⁰

With respect to Japan, after its defeat in the war, the country became strongly attached to the ideals of pacifism declaring its belief in non-aggressive human nature. It is clearly manifested in the Japan's "Peace" Constitution, which

⁷⁷ Rosenau, James N. 1980. *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁷⁸ Deutsch, Karl. 1957. *Political Community And The North Atlantic Area*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁷⁹ Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye. 1977. *Power And Interdependence: World Politics In Transition*. Boston: Little, Brown.

⁸⁰ Keohane, Robert O. 1989. *International Institutions And State Power: Essays In International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press; Young, Oran R. 1989. *International Cooperation. Building Regimes For Natural Resources And The Environment*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Hasenclever, Andreas, Peter Mayer, and Volker Rittberger. 1997. *Theories Of International Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

states that the country aims to preserve its security by “trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the World”.⁸¹

In addition, in line with republican liberalism, which rests on the claim that liberal democracies are more inclined towards peace and are more submitted to the law than other political systems⁸², some scholars argue that Japan has “a developmental rather than a geopolitical focus on the region.”⁸³ This is evident from its significant and consistent support for democratization efforts and market development in the area (mainly through Japanese Official Development Assistance).

Institutional liberalism also provides a fruitful avenue for expanding the knowledge about Japan-Central Asia relations through analysing the cooperation between the two within international institutions (UN, ADB, etc.) and various initiatives (e.g. “Central Asia + Japan” Dialogue, and “The Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”).⁸⁴ According to these frameworks, Japan attempts to promote cooperation based on equal partnership and ensure peace and security in the region (e.g. “Central Asia + Japan” Dialogue). These arguments fit well in explaining the peaceful development of relations between Japan and Central Asian countries, especially in light of globalization and strengthening of

⁸¹ The Constitution Of Japan. 1947.

⁸² Kant, Immanuel. 1957. *Perpetual Peace*. New York: Liberal Arts Press.

⁸³ Len, Christopher, Tomohiko Uyama, and Hirose Tetsuya. 2008. *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving The Road Ahead*. Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute.

⁸⁴ Yuasa, Takeshi. 2007. "Japan'S Multilateral Approach Toward Central Asia". *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 16: 65-84; Kawato, Akio. 2008. "What Is Japan Up To In Central Asia". In *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving The Road Ahead*, 1st ed., 15-31. Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute; Marat, Erica. 2008. "Kyrgyzstan: Japan'S Prime Partner In Central Asia?". In *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving The Road Ahead*, 1st ed., 87-100. Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute; Len, Christopher. 2008. "Understanding Japan'S Central Asian Engagement". In *Japan'S Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving The Road Ahead*, 1st ed. Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute.

economic interdependence. However, they do not fully explain the fluctuations in Japan's strategic behaviour patterns toward Central Asia, which changed from a high level of intensity to inertia when existing policies remained unaltered. For instance, Japan has started to "attach certain conditions to [ODA], most notably references to democratization and human rights," which had not been the case until the 1990s.⁸⁵ This being said, even though "the change in the strategy of Japanese assistance programmes from pure economic interest to support for changes to human capital values and political systems as well as economic reforms"⁸⁶ has been depicted; the reasons that induce these changes remain poorly understood.

Recently valuable insights on the issue of Japan foreign policy toward Central Asia have been offered by scholars who pointed out the importance of non-material factors (identity, norms, values) in shaping Japan's foreign policy vis-a-vis Central Asia. Dobrinskaya (2014), for example, argues that Japan "naturally relies on soft power," which rests on several resources: "its culture, political values and its foreign policy." She argues that Japan is a pacifist country; therefore, it prefers to use non-coercive methods in its relations with Central Asian countries.⁸⁷ Despite giving this study credit for painting a broader picture of Japan's regional politics, it has to be pointed out that this kind of reasoning does not resonate with the recent governmental attempts to revise the interpretation of the Constitution, which is said to underline the mentioned

⁸⁵ Dadabaev, Timur. 2014. "Chinese And Japanese Foreign Policies Towards Central Asia From A Comparative Perspective". *The Pacific Review* 27 (1): 123-145. doi:10.1080/09512748.2013.870223.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Dobrinskaya, Olga. 2014. "Characteristics of Japan's soft power in Central Asia". Center for strategic assessment and forecasts.

pacifist identity.

Having said this, the most recent article by Dadabaev (2014) presents the most substantial effort to analyse Japanese policies with respect to Central Asia focusing on domestic non-material factors. In his work, Dadabaev adopts the constructivist standpoint, which focuses on social constructs (such as norms, values and beliefs) that shape shared understandings of social identities and accordingly construct their interests, to analyse the strategies of Japan toward the region.⁸⁸ In particular, he argues that Japan is attempting “to re-define and re-construct its foreign policy in the changing environment [...]” which reflect the changing nature of its identity.⁸⁹ By acknowledging the importance of national identity, he leaves the domain of rationalists’ approaches of realism and neoliberalism, and shifts the subject of inquiry into another domain, where “rationality” is not pre-given, but is socially constructed in line with one’s self-understanding. Dadabaev argues that being “largely the victim of its identity,” Japanese foreign policy is “ambiguously defined” and is trapped somewhere between “idealism and pragmatism”.⁹⁰ He contends that “Asian [cultural] roots” and “Western” norms determine the duality of the national identity of Japan, which in turn shapes “ambiguously” defined interests in the region, as well as the strategies of Japan, which are perceived to be “a lesser degree of efficiency

⁸⁸ Adler, Emanuel. 1997. "Seizing The Middle Ground:: Constructivism In World Politics". *European Journal Of International Relations* 3 (3): 319-363. doi:10.1177/1354066197003003003;
Ruggie, John Gerard. 1998. "What Makes The World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism And The Social Constructivist Challenge". *International Organization At Fifty: Exploration And Contestation In The Study Of World Politics* 52 (4): 855-885. doi:10.1162/002081898550770;
Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory Of International Politics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Dadabaev, Timur. 2013. "Japan's Search For Its Central Asian Policy: Between Idealism And Pragmatism". *Asian Survey* 53 (3): 506-532. doi:10.1525/as.2013.53.3.506.

compared with the engagement of other states in the region”.⁹¹

As a result of preliminary literature review, this study joins the flow of studies that argue for the necessity to strain away from the mere rationalist framework in examining Japan-Central Asia relations and South Korea-Central Asia relations, and focus instead on non-material influencing factors such as identity, norms, ideas and culture. Having said this, this research joins the aforementioned studies in arguing that constructivism can offer a more nuanced understanding of Japan’s and South Korea’s foreign policy behavior vis-a-vis Central Asia and yield more insights into causes of its formulation and change over the last two decades.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.143

Chapter 2: Theories and Methods

While the previous sections have introduced the reader to the grounding base of the presented work and identified its theoretical home among a vast array of options available in international relations theory, the study acknowledges that constructivism is not a monolithic approach in research and is rather characterized by plurality.⁹² “Constructivist family” consists of a range of variants, each seeking to strike a different midpoint between positivist and interpretivist paradigms. As pointed out by Ruggie: “significant differences exist” among a multitude of diverse strands of constructivist thought, even though shared commonalities in the form of specific peculiar facets put these strands under the same umbrella by separating them from “mainstream theorizing”.⁹³

As such, given the incredibly broad nature of constructivist movement,⁹⁴ the existing differences in how scholars draw distinctions between various constructivist approaches come as no surprise.⁹⁵ As Price and Reus-Smit (1998,

⁹² Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia Lynch. 2007. *Strategies For Research In Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

⁹³ Ruggie, John Gerard. 1998. "What Makes The World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism And The Social Constructivist Challenge". *International Organization At Fifty: Exploration And Contestation In The Study Of World Politics* 52 (4): 855-885. doi:10.1162/002081898550770.

⁹⁴ Palan, Ronen. 2000. "A World Of Their Making: An Evaluation Of The Constructivist Critique In International Relations". *Review Of International Studies* 26 (4): 575-598. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0260210500005751.

⁹⁵ Ruggie, John Gerard. 1998. "What Makes The World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism And The Social Constructivist Challenge". *International Organization At Fifty: Exploration And Contestation In The Study Of World Politics* 52 (4): 855-885. doi:10.1162/002081898550770; Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner. 1998. "International Organization And The Study Of World Politics". *International Organization At Fifty: Exploration And Contestation In The Study Of World Politics* 52 (4): 645-685. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601354>; Palan, Ronen. 2000. "A World Of Their Making: An Evaluation Of The Constructivist Critique In International Relations". *Review Of International Studies* 26 (4): 575-598.

http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0260210500005751; Adler, Emanuel. 2005. *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations Of International Relations*. London: Routledge; Acharya, Amitav. 2008. "The Limitations Of Mainstream International Relations Theories For Understanding The Politics Of Forced Migration". Lecture, Centre for International Studies, Oxford University.

288) put it: “there are many constructivists, and thus perhaps many constructivisms”.⁹⁶ Zehfuss (2002, 6) has also contributed to the discussion by stressing that “although constructivism has been defined, explained, assessed and positioned [...] we still lack clarity on what constructivism is”.⁹⁷ Therefore, given the continuous inherent fluidity of divisional boundaries separating different types of constructivism,⁹⁸ this dissertation neither focuses on examining the variety of existing classifications, nor aspires to offer alternative labeling schemes.

Since enhancing understanding about the relationship between Japan’s and South Korea’s foreign policies towards Central Asia and the states’ respective identities is the primary purpose of this research, for analytical purposes this study adopts the classification of constructivism proposed by Hopf (1998, 71)⁹⁹, which distinguishes between “mainstream/conventional” constructivism and its critical (radical) variant.¹⁰⁰

The main explanation for this decision is the fact that this approach allows to stress the difference between the two in terms of ontological and epistemological positions of several constructivist works with maximum clarity, while also acknowledging the existing commonalities among them. More

⁹⁶ Price, Richard, and Christian Reus-Smit. 1998. "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory And Constructivism". *European Journal Of International Relations* 4 (3): 259-294. doi:10.1177/1354066198004003001.

⁹⁷ Zehfuss, Maja. 2002. *Constructivism In International Relations: The Politics Of Reality*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁸ Wight, Colin. 2002. "Philosophy Of Social Science And International Relations". In *Handbook Of International Relations*, 1st ed., 23-51. Sage Publications; Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia Lynch. 2007. *Strategies For Research In Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

⁹⁹ Hopf, Ted. 1998. "The Promise Of Constructivism In International Relations Theory". *International Security* 23 (1): 171. doi:10.2307/2539267.

¹⁰⁰ This study is particular interested in the post-structuralist strand.

specifically, the underlying logic for adopting this stance is that both types of constructivism are preoccupied with social ontology. At the same time, what sets them apart is that the former and the latter stand fall on the positivist and post-positivist ends of the epistemological spectrum respectively.

This research recognizes the necessity of a deeper elaboration with regard to the difference between these two approaches for the purpose of proceeding further in the discussion. This is due to the fact that both – conventional and critical constructivism – emphasize the important role of non-material factors, in particular identity. Thus, in order to address this concern, the next sub-section proceeds as follows.

Firstly, the discussion will start with a brief review of the core premises of constructivists reasoning, which will juxtapose these elements with key arguments advanced by structural realism and institutional neoliberalism. This approach allows for the required clarity in the process of indicating the difference between rationalism and constructivism. Next, since evaluating the relationship between Tokyo's and Seoul's foreign policy strategies toward Central Asian republics and their respective national identities has been established as the main interest of this research, the section will be move on to the discussion of conventional and critical variants of constructivism and the brief review of distinctions between the two with regard to the question of identity and foreign policy. Finally, the concluding part is devoted to the explanation of the decision to adopt critical constructivism (informed by the post-structuralist approaches to research) as a theoretical lense for interpreting the changing nature of Japan's

and South Korea's advances into Central Asia for this particular research.

Rationalist approaches

The 1990s served as a pivotal period for international relations theory as constructivism gained momentum and popularity due to the indisputable “collective failure” of the mainstream IR theories to provide a comprehensive explanatory framework for fundamental shifts and major transformations¹⁰¹ of the international system.¹⁰² The capacity of constructivist theory to offer adequate alternative explanations for various phenomena in the world politics¹⁰³ has quickly established it as “a challenger to the continuing dominance” of rationalist theories.^{104 105} In order for the precise contribution of constructivist theory to the field of international relations to be clear, it is worth to take a look at several core assumptions of rational theories, which became “a particular target for constructivists’ arrows”,¹⁰⁶ by summarizing the fundamental logic of neorealists and neoliberalist reasoning.

First, the neorealist position holds that the ordering principle of international political system is anarchy. This structure is formed and maintained

¹⁰¹ For example “peaceful but radical transformation of the Soviet Union” and the reconciliation between the East and the West

¹⁰² Lebow, Richard Ned, and Thomas Risse-Kappen. 1995. "Introduction: International Relations Theory And The End Of The Cold War". In *International Relations Theory And The End Of The Cold War*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁰³ For example: the meaning of anarchy, balance of power, the relationship between state and identity and interest

¹⁰⁴ Neorealism or structural realism and neoliberalism or institutional neoliberalism.

¹⁰⁵ Hopf, Ted. 1998. "The Promise Of Constructivism In International Relations Theory". *International Security* 23 (1): 171. doi:10.2307/2539267.

¹⁰⁶ Copeland, Dale C. 2000. "The Constructivist Challenge To Structural Realism: A Review Essay". *International Security* 25 (2): 187-212. doi:10.1162/016228800560499.

through the interactions between its main building blocks – sovereign states. Second, these actors that inhabit the international system are characterized by “functional sameness”,¹⁰⁷ which implies that the primary objective of any state as a unit of the system is to “ensure [its] survival.” In other words, even though states possess external and internal decision-making sovereignty in choosing how to address various challenges, the behavior they exhibit is nothing else but an emulation of each other’s activities. As Kenneth Waltz explained, all states regardless of their differences in size, wealth power and form “perform or try to perform tasks, most of which are common to all of them”.¹⁰⁸ The sameness of the participants of the international system is explained by the fact that they operate and eventually are socialized in a self-help environment. This implies that states are self-interest-seeking actors that display egoistic behavior in pursuit of their interests, which have been identified from a pre-given set of choices. Third, despite the fundamental uniformity, states do differ in their capabilities for performing similar tasks. While treating states as functionally undifferentiated actors, neorealists argue that the only possible course of change in international system is explained by the (re)distribution of capabilities.¹⁰⁹ In other words, neorealists hold that competitive international system acts as an inhibiting and disposing force for the interacting units contained within it. Consequently, states compelled to compete with each other and adjust to one

¹⁰⁷ Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory Of International Politics*. Boston, Mass.: McGraw-Hill.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Thies, Cameron G. 2004. "Are Two Theories Better Than One? A Constructivist Model Of The Neorealist–Neoliberal Debate". *International Political Science Review* 25 (2): 159-183. doi:10.1177/0192512104041282.

another for their own survival and flourishing.¹¹⁰

In contract to neorealists, neoliberalists maintain that states interaction does not have to be conflictual in nature, and cooperation between different countries is possible. This perspective assigns international institutions an important role in promoting international cooperation. “The formation of institutionalized arrangements, containing rules and principles”¹¹¹ leads to the subsequent reduction of potential transaction costs and lowers risks associated with agreement-making and implementation, which in turn further facilitates partnerships between different actors. Neoliberalism rests on the assumption that greater cooperation is possible, since international institutions have the capacity to transform the states’ identities and following strategy preferences through binding norms and agreements. Thus, neoliberalism regards international organizations as efficacious instruments for boosting cooperation and establishing mutually beneficial ties.¹¹²

Notwithstanding aforesaid disagreements, some common suppositions between these schools of thought can be identified.¹¹³ Both theorize that despite differences in capabilities, all states share their rational, self-interested, utility-maximizing nature, serve as the main actors of international system and operate in a larger environmental context of anarchy, in which they pursue their

¹¹⁰ Waltz, Kenneth. 1988. "He Origins Of War In Neorealist Theory". *Journal Of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (4): 615-628. doi:10.2307/204817.

¹¹¹ Keohane, Robert O. 1984. *After Hegemony*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.

¹¹² Jervis, Robert. 1999. "Realism, Neoliberalism, And Cooperation: Understanding The Debate". *International Security* 24 (1): 42-63. doi:10.1162/016228899560040.

¹¹³ Powell, Robert. 1994. "Review: Anarchy In International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate Neorealism And Its Critics. By Robert O. Keohane; Neorealism And Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate. By David A. Baldwin". *International Organization* 48 (2): 313-344. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706934> .

exogenously informed interests. To put it simply, such principles as individualism, state-centrism, materialism, egoism and instrumentalism became the premises for both of the above-discussed rationalist approaches.¹¹⁴

Constructivist approaches

Divergent in nature, constructivism¹¹⁵ disagrees with rationalism on many points and offers its own distinctive explanations for various phenomena in international relations. First, constructivists raise challenging arguments against individualist ontology of rationalism. Here, individualism dictates that the “ultimate source of social patterns” are individual actors, whose “identities, interests and preferences” are pre-determined and largely fixed.¹¹⁶ Constructivists refuse to endorse such view, by criticizing both schools of rationalism – neorealism and neoliberalism – for treating “the identities and interests of agents as exogenously given and focus on how the behavior of agents generates outcome”.¹¹⁷

Second, constructivists question rationalists’ materialist approaches to analysis, which presume that actors in the system of international relations face

¹¹⁴ Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2003. *The EU, NATO And The Integration Of Europe: Rules And Rhetoric*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹⁵ For the analytical purpose, in this section constructivism is conceptualized as an umbrella term for several varieties of constructivism, and based on this understanding certain generalizations common for major strands of constructivism are made. see for example Berenskoetter, Felix. 2011. "Reclaiming The Vision Thing: Constructivists As Students Of The Future". *International Studies Quarterly* 55 (3): 647-668. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00669.x.

¹¹⁶ Alexander, Jeffrey C., Bernhard Giesen, Richard Munch, and Neil J. Smelser. 1987. *The Micro-Macro Link*. Berkley: University of California Press.

¹¹⁷ Wendt, Alexander. 1992. "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics". *International Organization* 46 (2): 391. doi:10.1017/s0020818300027764.

a constraint in the form of anarchic structure of world politics predominantly characterized by state stratification that is based on wealth and power.

Constructivism contra to rationalism adopts social ontology, as it is largely concerned with the role of ideas in construction of social reality. Constructivists argue that fundamental structures of international relations are built as a result of social relationships and maintained through practices.¹¹⁸

Constructivism maintains that structure is not self-sufficient and does not exist in its own nature. Not material powers, but ideas establish the architecture of international relations. An important prerequisite for ideas to execute this power and have a direct bearing on the construction process, however, according to the theory of constructivism, is for these ideas to be instantiated in practice and be accepted and shared by masses. Constructivist emphasis on the role of ideas here highlights the school's core assumption that "the key structures in the state system are intersubjective, rather than material."¹¹⁹ From this perspective, the order of international system is established through interaction and exists only as an intersubjective awareness among the participants of this process.

Therefore, constructivists contend the rationalists' ¹²⁰ notion about the central role of material characteristics and anarchy in system-shaping processes and products of political interactions.

Constructivists stress that international anarchy does not necessarily foster inter-state competition, aggression and rivalry. In their view, "self-help and

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Wendt, Alexander. 1994. "Collective Identity Formation and the International State". *The American Political Science Review* 88(2): 384.

¹²⁰ In particular neorealists

power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy”.¹²¹ The environment, in which actors currently operate, is largely the result of “the process, not structure”. In other words, social reality is formed by practices and meaningful action. According to constructivist reasoning, correctly predicting whether competition or cooperation among the states will emerge from the anarchical ordering of the system is a rather challenging task. For them, the outcome is now known prior to the process of interaction between them commences. This is mainly due to the fact that, as mentioned above, the identities and interests states possess are not exogenously given, they are created and instantiated through continuous social interactions. “Structure has no existence of causal powers apart from process”, which means that “anarchy is what states make of it”.¹²² If actors in international system perceive other members of the system as hostile or unfriendly, this judgement about their surroundings causes them to act accordingly and exhibit either defensive or aggressive behavior. However, if states hold positive friendly images of one another, then they behave in a cooperative, favorably disposed and responsible manner.

Thus, to summarize the constructivist assumptions, the theory argues that international relations are defined by intersubjective ideas, since both structure and agents are comprised of them. This leads to the belief that the way states and the system of states are constructed largely dictates whether the anarchic structure of international system becomes conflictual or cooperative in nature.

¹²¹ Wendt, Alexander. 1992. "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics". *International Organization* 46 (2): 394. doi:10.1017/s0020818300027764.

¹²² Ibid.

It is important, however, not to strip off all value from material power. Constructivists recognize that material conditions play an important role, but their significance is limited to the extent, to which the intersubjective meaning allows it to be.

At the same time, one should be careful not to wrongfully assume that ideas are central solely to constructivism and inconsequential to rationalism. Asserting that constructivism contributes to the international relations theory by opening up the discussion about the role of ideas in the field would be not exactly accurate. Both rationalists and constructivists agree that ideas matter.¹²³ Yet, the vital distinction between the notions they hold lies in the core approaches they adopt to explain why and how ideas should be valued. To be more specific, materialism does not argue against the assumption that social norms and values can constrain states in their behavior. Instead, it warns that the importance of these intersubjective norms and rules, when it comes to mechanisms of international order, should not be exaggerated.

Rationalist theories largely treat ideas as intervening variables “between material interests and the material environment of the actors, on the one hand, and the individual actions and collective outcomes, on the other”.¹²⁴ In this sense, rationalist ontology is centered on the nature of causality.¹²⁵ What it implies is that for the supporters of rationalist reasoning, ideas are significant as far as they

¹²³ For the distinction between materialist rationalism and idealist rationalism materialists and rational idealists see Fearon, James, and Alexander Wendt. 2002. "Rationalism Vs. Constructivism. A Skeptical View". In *Handbook Of International Relations*, 52-72. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

¹²⁴ Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2003. *The EU, NATO And The Integration Of Europe: Rules And Rhetoric*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁵ Elder-Vass, Dave. 2012. *The Reality Of Social Construction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

have a causal effect on outcomes (e.g. actions/non-actions). More specifically, since rationalist approaches premise on egoism and instrumentalism, agents' decision-making and behavior are informed by the ideas these actors developed about their needs and objectives. Certainly, both the latter and subsequently the former are not always the same and subject to change. In general, if a certain shift in the distribution of material capabilities among units of international system occurs, it would in turn may trigger alterations in states respective interests and the corresponding chosen strategies. This claim is derived from the assumption that interests at minimum originate from beliefs actors have in regards to their own essentials and necessities. Yet, despite the fact that rational theories of international relations accept the limited importance of ideas, the fundamental principles of states interests, as viewed by rationalists, remain unchanged: it is essentially a synthesis of the desire for survival, utility maximization and prosperity. As Hurd (2008, 302) points out "it does not alter the fact that the primary interests that drive states are refigured by the material resources and situation of the states in international system".¹²⁶ Thus, this approach to interpreting the phenomena that take place in world politics seeks to establish essential and substantial requirements connecting a precedent cause to a following result in more or less a mechanical way.¹²⁷ To put it simply, "social norms, ideas provide constraints and incentives, not reasons, for action; they alter cost-benefit calculations, not identities and interests".¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Hurd, Ian. 2008. "Constructivism". In *The Oxford Handbook Of International Relations*, 1st ed., 298-316. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹²⁷ Fearon, James, and Alexander Wendt. 2002. "Rationalism Vs. Constructivism. A Skeptical View". In *Handbook Of International Relations*, 52-72. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

¹²⁸ Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2003. *The EU, NATO And The Integration Of Europe: Rules And Rhetoric*.

Contrary to this perspective, which attributes a causal role to ideas, constructivist theory emphasizes its constitutive nature. For instance, Copeland (2000, 187) suggests that “the intersubjectively shared ideas shape behavior by constituting the identities and interests of actors”¹²⁹ What this means is that the constructivist school of thought rejects the rationalist conjecture that interests spring from material sources. Instead, it claims that states’ identities and preferences are neither pre-determined, nor are they rigid structures insulated from change. This implies that these non-material factors are being constructed and reconstructed over time through interactions between actors and with the occurring transformations in the international environment.

The brief review of rationalist-constructivist discussion provided in the presented section identifies the central lines of reasoning of constructivism. Applying these gained insights to the current research, certain conclusions can be drawn from it. In the eyes of rationalists, Japan remains to be an “abnormal” foreign policy actor that stands out due to its “ambiguous” interests. Yet, what the previous discussion points to, this conceptualization does not offer much insight into the behavior Japan displays internationally. The same applies to South Korea. Due to this, the presented study maintains that constructivism can provide more compelling explanations for Japanese and South Korean respective behavioral logics, which underline their foreign policy choices.

By shifting the focus from aiming to determine an effect of anarchy and

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁹ Copeland, Dale C. 2006. "The Constructivist Challenge To Structural Realism: A Review Essay". *International Security* 25 (2): 187-212. doi:10.1162/016228800560499.

distribution capabilities and taking a closer look at the importance of ideas and intersubjective dimension of knowledge, constructivism serves as a more suitable theoretical framework for scrutinizing formulation and implementation of Japan and South Korea's foreign policies in Central Asian context.

However, since constructivism is not uniform, an examination of the differences between the fundamental premises of conventional and critical constructivist approaches that pays due attention to state identity, foreign policy and interests is required.

Conventional constructivism/ critical constructivism[1]

The degree of importance of identity as a variable in the domain of international relations is conditional upon the choice of theoretical foundation the study employs. As it has been previously pointed out, rationalist (neorealist) approaches generally minimize the notion of state identity by assuming that all existing unitary actors at the international arena hold a sole essential identity – that of an egoistic state. Constructivism, on the other hand, stresses the significance of state identity. Complying with an ontology that invokes mutual constitution of agents and structures, constructivists define identities as social relationships prone to transformations across time and space.

Yet, in spite of this common ground, various strands of constructivism deploy the concept differently. In particular, methodological and conceptual issues underscore the controversy between the supporters of conventional and

critical variants of constructivism.¹³⁰ While both of these adopt social ontology in their analysis, their distinct respective epistemological orientations set them far apart.

To illustrate the point, conventional constructivists generally agree with the basic insights of neorealism, which insists on the primacy of sovereign states as key actors in world politics and is committed to a positivist method in comprehending observed phenomena. In this respect, conventional constructivism serves as a “middle ground” between rationalism and reflectivism. In Adler’s words: “while accepting the notion that there is real world out there [...] [constructivists] nevertheless believe that it is not entirely determined by physical reality and is socially emergent”.¹³¹ The supporters of conventional constructivism stress that “they do not depend exceptionally upon any specialized separate “interpretive methodology” and rather hold the position of “methodological conventionalism”.¹³² They argue that mingling a positivist epistemology with a post-positivist ontology is, in fact, an achievable task. Wendt, for example, explains that “when it comes to the epistemology of social enquiry I am a strong believer in science – a pluralistic science to be sure, in which there is a significant role for ‘understanding’, but science just the same. I

¹³⁰ Hopf, Ted. 1998. "The Promise Of Constructivism In International Relations Theory". *International Security* 23 (1): 171. doi:10.2307/2539267; Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. 2007. *International Relations Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹³¹ Adler, Emanuel. 1997. "Seizing The Middle Ground: Constructivism In World Politics". *European Journal Of International Relations* 3 (3): 319-363. doi:10.1177/1354066197003003003.

¹³² Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein. 1996. "Norms, Identity, And Culture In National Security". In *The Culture Of National Security*, 33-75. New York: Columbia University Press.

am a ‘positivist’”.¹³³ Consequently, some side with the view that conventional constructivism and rationalism are not conflicting, but rather “complementary” approaches since their disagreement arises from ontological, not epistemological concerns.¹³⁴

From conventional constructivist perspective, “actors acquire identities – relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” through the process of interaction.¹³⁵ Following this line of reasoning, the positivist epistemological orientation of conventional constructivists presumes causality between identity and foreign policy. Conventional constructivists consider identity to be “a property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions”.¹³⁶ In accordance with this assumption, the theory holds that identity possesses the capacity to explain dependent variables it influences. More specifically, state identity is not simply seen as an instrumental rationality, but is treated as having the ability to evoke a particular type of international behavior through constructing and informing certain interests.¹³⁷ Hence, in empirical research, conventional constructivists are primarily concerned with the processes that “link context and actions in the development of a sense of self, its meanings and their recursive effects.”¹³⁸

¹³³ Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory Of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹³⁴ Checkel, Jeffrey J. 1998. "The Constructive Turn In International Relations Theory". *World Politics* 50 (2): 324-348. doi:10.1017/s0043887100008133.

¹³⁵ Wendt, Alexander. 1992. "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics". *International Organization* 46 (2): 391. doi:10.1017/s0020818300027764.

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory Of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Katzenstein, Peter J. 1996. *The Culture Of National Security*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹³⁸ Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia M. Lynch. 2007. *Strategies For Research In Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

This methodology, however, has become the target of much criticism on the part of some scholars, who question its consistency due to their concern with the combination of post-positivist ontology and positivist epistemology it relies on.¹³⁹ To be more precise, their skepticism arises from the following: if we accept that reality is, indeed, a modifiable construct produced through social interactions, then how sound is the argument about the existence of an “objective” self-sufficient world scientific realism offers. Specifically, the challengers of the above-mentioned methodology have stated that if something is said to be socially constructed, then it must be contingent, not “inevitable” or “determined by the nature of things”.¹⁴⁰

In response to this, the proponents of thus said method have put forward an argument of their own, which holds that “method should serve theory, not the reverse”.¹⁴¹ For instance, in an attempt to shift the discussion away from the epistemological polemics, Wendt (1999, 78) insists on a “question-driven,” not a “method-driven approach” to social inquiry.¹⁴² It has been emphasized that if theoretical irregularities occur, they should be enquired about. However, the endless debate “over epistemology and methodology” has just been “obstructing the actual point of any theory of international relations; the useful study of

¹³⁹ Pouliot, Vincent. 2004. "The Essence Of Constructivism". *Journal Of International Relations And Development* 7 (3): 319-336. doi:10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800022.

¹⁴⁰ Hacking, Ian. 1999. *The Social Construction Of What?*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Pouliot, Vincent. 2010. *International Security In Practice: The Politics Of NATO-Russia Diplomacy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴¹ Finnemore, Martha. 1996. *National Interests In International Society*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press.

¹⁴² Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory Of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

politics in the global arena.¹⁴³

The proposed suggestion has been met with a retort, which claimed that “(conventional) constructivism can offer an understanding of social reality but cannot criticize the boundaries of its own understanding”.¹⁴⁴ Zehfuss (2002, 63) further scrutinized conventional constructivism by arguing that “how either the actors or the ideas about self and other get constituted in the first place is not part of the account”.¹⁴⁵

Such assertion was not left without an appropriate response with conventional constructivists deflecting the criticism by stating that they are mostly concerned with the question of whether the state identities and their interests are “exogenous or endogenous to the state system”.¹⁴⁶ For them, the assumption that neither identities nor interests are exogenously determined offers an interesting avenue in and of itself. Since, from this point of view, states acquire identities through interacting with one another and with the system at large, the process of identity construction is important in helping to shed light on the reasons behind actors’ behavior.

Another significant point to bring up is that even though state identity is constituted and changed in the process of intersubjective relations, it nonetheless remains to be stable enough, at least to the degree, to which it can bring forth

¹⁴³ O’Loughlin, Antony. 2014. *Overcoming Poststructuralism Rawls, Kratochwil And The Structure Of Normative Reasoning In International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁴⁴ Hopf, Ted. 1998. "The Promise Of Constructivism In International Relations Theory". *International Security* 23 (1): 171. doi:10.2307/2539267.

¹⁴⁵ Zehfuss, Maja. 2002. *Constructivism In International Politics: The Politics Of Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴⁶ Wendt, Alexander. 1992. "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction Of Power Politics". *International Organization* 46 (2): 391. doi:10.1017/s0020818300027764.

impetus for actors' actions and be considered as the underlying source of its interests.

Critical constructivists refuse to treat identity as a variable of foreign policy behavior. From that angle, identity does not have a universally accepted or stable meaning. The multitude of simultaneously existing contested identities within a state does not make it possible for it to be conceptualized as the "true" cause of behavior.¹⁴⁷ Zehfuss (2002, 36) develops this idea further by arguing that "reality cannot be known other than through representations [...] Therefore, a claiming a reality to start from, be it one of state, norms or natural raw materials, already involves a political act".¹⁴⁸ Critical constructivism, thus, invokes treating the issue of knowledge creation and to the processes through which it becomes possible with special care. If the research objective is to investigate state behavior, due consideration should be paid to words, language and style of articulation. Such approach to analysis is motivated by the fact that actors are believed to ascribe meanings to their actions and conceive reality through discursive practices.¹⁴⁹ The latter establish power politics since they enable agents to "understand certain problems in certain ways, and pose questions accordingly".¹⁵⁰ Even though the agents themselves are the primary actors that impose the meanings, they are not independent entities due to the discursive

¹⁴⁷ Pouliot, Vincent. 2004. "The Essence Of Constructivism". *Journal Of International Relations And Development* 7 (3): 319-336. doi:10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800022.

¹⁴⁸ Zehfuss, Maja. 2002. *Constructivism In International Politics: The Politics Of Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴⁹ Risse, Thomas. 2007. "Social Constructivism Meets Globalization". In *Globalization Theory: Approaches And Controversies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

¹⁵⁰ Diez, Thomas. 1999. "Speaking "Europe": The Politics Of Integration Discourse". *Journal Of European Public Policy* 6 (4): 598-613.

context in which they are located (ibid). Therefore, the nature of the relationship between identity representation and state foreign policy is constitutive, not causal.¹⁵¹ This implies that the set of causal mechanisms that connect identity and foreign policy cannot be traced because they are closely intertwined. Thus, critical constructivists reject the epistemological approach that is used to identify and explain causal relations in favor of the interpretivist method.

For this reason, this study adopts critical constructivism (informed by post-structuralist reading) as the main theoretical orientation that guides the analysis presented here. For the purpose of providing a complete thorough evaluation, however, the work will have to first address the issue of critical constructivism/post-structuralism divide, and then justify its decision to utilize the conventional constructivism/critical constructivism (including post-structuralism) typology as opposed to the conventional/critical/postmodern classification.¹⁵²

Critical constructivism/post-structuralism

This research acknowledges the tendency to delineate critical constructivism and post-structuralism. Critical constructivists usually accept their own involvement “in the reproduction, construction and fixing the social

¹⁵¹ Campbell, David. 1992. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy And The Politics Of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.; Hansen, Lene. 2006. *Security As Practice: Discourse Analysis And The Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge.

¹⁵² Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner. 1998. "International Organizations And The Study Of World Politics". *International Organization At Fifty: Exploration And Contestation In The Study Of World Politics* 52 (4): 645-685. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601354>.

entities they observe”.¹⁵³ Their general preoccupation with “how people come to believe in a single version of a naturalized truth”¹⁵⁴ points to an “epistemic foundation”.¹⁵⁵ Put simply, the existence of an established intersubjective foundation is a precondition that enables the supporters of critical constructivism to enquire about “what agents believe to be true and how they put these meanings into operation to communicate their interests and intentions”.¹⁵⁶

For post-structuralists, on the contrary, there is no such thing as “stable knowledge”. Textual deconstruction presents a more interesting avenue for research for the proponents of this theoretical approach. On this account they also perceive language as a structure of its own that needs to be deconstructed. For instance, certain scholars insist that reality “can be nothing other than a text, a symbolic construction that is itself related to other texts – not to history or social structure – in arbitrary way”.¹⁵⁷

This study, notwithstanding the existing differences between the two lines of reasoning, is built on the understanding that critical constructivism and post-structuralism also share fundamental premises: both (a) emerge from a critique of mainstream theories, (b) take the post-positivist orientation to research, and (c) have concerns with regard to the notion of knowledge.

Reposing on the view that exploring the divergence among methodological

¹⁵³ Hopf, Ted. 1998. "The Promise Of Constructivism In International Relations Theory". *International Security* 23 (1): 171. doi:10.2307/2539267.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Adler, Emanuel. 2005. *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations Of International Relations*. London: Routledge.

¹⁵⁶ Donnelly, Faye. 2013. *Securitization And The Iraq War: The Rules Of Engagement In World Politics*. Routledge.

¹⁵⁷ Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1995. *Fin de Siecle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason*. London: Verso.

implications of various intellectual traditions is a more productive way of dealing with their differences as opposed to “engaging in the disciplinary war of paradigms”¹⁵⁸, this work embraces theoretical boundary-crossing efforts.

This should not, however, be interpreted as an attempt to conduct this research under “general rubric of constructionism”.¹⁵⁹ Quite the contrary, this study acknowledges the presence of the previously discussed intellectual disagreement between constructivist ‘middle-ground’ theorizing¹⁶⁰ and post-structuralism, and utilizes the conventional/critical constructivism classification.

This being said, the present research aims to untangle the relationship between Japanese and South Korean respective foreign policy strategies and identities in the Central Asian context by examining those through a critical constructivist lense, which “accepts enough stability in meanings to employ language, describe discourses and theorize power”¹⁶¹, yet do so by employing the analytical tool of post-structuralist approaches – discourse analysis.

Following from this, in the framework of this study the term and notion of “critical constructivism” is used to refer to a collective of works produced by self-labelled “post-structuralists” and constructivists, who are primarily concerned with discourse analysis and its consequential significance for the expansion of knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand that the term

¹⁵⁸ Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia M. Lynch. 2007. *Strategies For Research In Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

¹⁵⁹ Harris, Scott R. 2010. *What Is Constructionism? Navigating Its Use In Sociology*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

¹⁶⁰ Adler, Emanuel. 1997. "Seizing The Middle Ground: Constructivism In World Politics". *European Journal Of International Relations* 3 (3): 319-363. doi:10.1177/1354066197003003003.

¹⁶¹ Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia M. Lynch. 2007. *Strategies For Research In Constructivist International Relations*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

does not refer to a particular camp of scholars, and is rather utilized to signpost how the link between identity and foreign policy is understood in this research.

Chapter 3: The Discursive Construction of National Identities: Japan and South Korea

Contents of the Chapter were published in the journal "Nationalities Papers."

The title is "Japan's Central Asia Policy Revisited: National Identity, Interests and Foreign Policy Discourses," and it was published in Nationalities Papers, Vol. 47, No. 5, pp. 853-867, September 2019. It directly reflects the content of the Chapter of the dissertation.

According to the guidelines of the Nationalities Papers of Cambridge University Press, full publication of the content of the journal is not permitted permanently. Thus, the author hereby applied for an extension of the Internet publication of the full text of the dissertation. Furthermore, based on the HaSS's discussion and authorization, the Chapter pp. 66-111, was closed to the public.

If readers hope to read the contents of the Chapter, please refer to the above article directly. Thank you.

Chapter 4: Japanese and South Korean Cooperation Schemes in Central Asia

“Central Asia plus Japan” dialogue

This chapter starts will looking closely at the 2004 “Central Asia plus Japan” initiative by revealing and discussing the elements of the adopted strategy and the features of the conducted activities within the framework of the chosen approach.

In the beginning of the 21st century, the Japanese government made a decision to move away from the mode of interaction with the region, which it had set out in the previous years, and deepen the relations between the two players by making its engagement with Central Asia more targeted. If before Central Asia, a region the Japanese officials deemed as an important geopolitical location, was dealt with through the lens of its position of being a constituent part of a broader space – Eurasia, now Tokyo’s focus has narrowed down to specifically involve the five post-Soviet Republics.

The new project titled “Central Asia plus Japan,” intended to “elevate relations between Japan and Central Asia to a new level”²⁵⁹ was developed and established under the management of Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi. The declared change in the Japanese foreign policy choices in

²⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2004. “Central Asia + Japan” Dialogue/Foreign Ministers' Meeting—Relations between Japan and Central Asia as They Enter a New Era— Joint Statement.” Astana. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/joint0408.pdf>

regards to the region, officially presented to the audience in Astana, Kazakhstan, thus, structuralized and institutionalized the ties between the actors by setting concrete priorities and objectives they aspire to achieve, as well as reaffirming central beliefs and norms the cooperation rested upon. It was the first meeting among the foreign ministers of Japan and the Central Asian countries, which signified a new stage in the relations between the actors.

The Dialogue itself, established as a result of the meeting in Astana, was to regularize the meetings of the Foreign Ministers to foster partnership between the actors, and was to proceed in accordance with three key principles at its core: respect for diversity, competition and coordination, and open cooperation. Multiple types of forums, all serving as platforms for discussions on mutual partnerships among the governmental officials of the participating states, have been held within the framework of the introduced initiative. Those include Foreign Ministers Meeting, Senior Official Meeting (SOM), Intellectual Dialogue in Tokyo, and Economic Forum.

Foreign Ministers Meetings

In the Joint Statement "Central Asia + Japan" Dialogue/Foreign Ministers' Meeting —Relations between Japan and Central Asia as They Enter a New Era, which was issued as a result of the first meeting under the “Central Asia plus Japan” umbrella, the four main areas and the parties’ views in regards to the future development in these directions have been outlined.

First, the fundamental principles and values the partners had already committed to uphold in their mutual interactions have been once again clearly emphasized. Both Japan and the Central Asian states have once again stressed their shared view that ensuring and maintaining peace and stability in the region is in the global interest, and, therefore, should be a vital priority not only for the countries located in Eurasia, but for the whole international community as well. Moreover, Tokyo and Central Asia once again acknowledged the progress that had been made by both players to strengthen their cooperative relationship over time, and expressed the interest and willingness to work together on fostering mutual cooperation further. Continuous dialogue between the two has been mentioned to be an integral part of the process, as exchanging views and ideas about possible areas of future partnership, as well as the means and process of such developments are detrimental elements in deepening and expanding the already established friendly relations between the actors, Statement says. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan recognized the efforts made by the former Soviet republics to sustain stability and facilitate growth in Central Asia, which had a positive effect on the overall peace and development dynamics in Eurasia, while also stressing the importance of continuing and further strengthening the existing initiatives aimed at poverty eradication, counterterrorism activities, freedom and democracy promotion, provision of human security and the improvement of people's standard of living. Yoriko Kawaguchi underscored the presented expectations Japan had in regards to the regional developments while also reaffirming Tokyo's readiness to provide assistance to the Central Asian

countries on their path to achieving those objectives. In fact, all involved parties have expressed their intentions to work closely together in addressing various global and regional issues, and acknowledged the importance of increasing international effort in the battle against terrorism, which the participating states have all condemned.

The second out of the four discussed topics in the published piece was further deepening and broadening of the relationship between Japan and Central Asia. Under this collection, the Ministers of both Japan and Central Asian states have assigned common historical and cultural links a specific place in their respective agendas claiming those to be the necessary foundation further cooperation can be built upon. The countries have also exchanged positive sentiments with Japan, as a more advanced partner, granting the Central Asian republics appreciation for their nation-building undertakings and accomplishments, and the latter, in turn, expressing their gratitude for Tokyo's support and assistance offered to them as a part of the Japanese "Silk Road diplomacy", which was said to have positively and significantly contributed to the peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Despite the outlined achievements, however, all participating states recognized the role Central Asia played on the world stage both in terms of global economic growth, security, safety and stability, due to its vital geopolitical location. Thus, the necessity to enhance and establish partnerships in different areas, including consolidation of peace, economic and social development, energy and environmental issues, cultural and human exchange, as well as human resource development, have

been a point of major concern and significance for the parties involved.

The next topic of mutual interest was, of course, the importance of intraregional cooperation within Central Asia itself. As it has been fairly observed in the Joint Statement, all countries of the region equally face a number of common challenges pertaining to water resource management, effective use of energy, terrorist threats, drugs and transportation among others, the document called for a search for viable solutions to these pressing issues that were hard for any individual state to deal with on their own. On top of that, the participants recognized that the Central Asian countries need to strengthen their economic cooperation in order to reach the region's full economic potential. The long-term objective of such aspirations was the creation of the common regional market that could help the states involved to effectively take advantage of the resources available in Central Asia, ensure sustainable growth and deepen intraregional cooperative relationships. One of the ultimate goals, as seen by the partners, was to make sure to transform the five republics into a coherent and resilient community based on mutual solidarity, which could benefit off of the already established and later introduced practices. Of course, the case of Afghanistan has been paid its due attention in the Statement as well, with all of the above mentioned actors recognizing the need for active support and assistance in the process of achieving peace and reconstruction of the country for further development of the entire region. Reaching this and the list of other aforesaid objectives, according to the Ministers, required a specific set of measures and willingness on the part of the participating states to continue to work together in

spite of possible arising difficulties.

Finally, the Statement touched upon the cooperation between the players in the international arena. Within this topic, the importance of mutual solidarity among the Central Asian states was brought up once again through emphasizing that the full potential of the region, including enhancing its position and importance in the scene of the world politics, is impossible without regional unity. At the same time Japan was to engage with the republics through various international organizations, including but not limited to the United Nations. In other words, the countries have committed to constructively collaborate on different projects and initiatives aimed at addressing a variety of challenges that have international dimension. It is also important to mention that the Central Asian states have shared their expectations for Japan's increasing political roles in the international arena and expressed their support for the country to obtain permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

The second Foreign Ministers Meeting, which was hosted by Japan in 2006, saw a series of important announcements on the part of the officials of the participating states. Earlier that year, on June 1, 2006, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Taro Aso, delivered policy speech entitled "Central Asia as a Corridor of Peace and Stability," in which the main principles and visions of Japan on its engagement with Central Asia have been outlined and highlighted. In his message, Aso emphasized that Japanese mode of interaction with the region is, first and foremost, guided by the policy of honoring the so-called ownership each of the former Soviet republics had over their future and

development. From this perspective, Japan perceived Central Asian actors as agents that have their own interests and possess the right to pursue those without other international players dictating the region what to do. Thus, as explained by Aso, Japan strongly believed in the leading role of Central Asia in the ongoing process of negotiation and cooperation between Central Asia and Tokyo.

Moreover, three guidelines that formed Japan's presence and activities in the region have also been announced. First, it has been stated that the Japanese involvement in Central Asia to be more broad-based in nature. To be more specific, it has been recognized that stability and peace in Central Asia are impossible to ensure and sustain without paying due attention to the neighboring states such as Afghanistan, which shared borders with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Thus, having this in mind and directing their mutual efforts towards the closely located states was also a priority from Japanese perspective on how its relations with Central Asia should evolve. Second, Japan emphasized open regional cooperation as a key to reaching stability and prosperity, especially taken historic developments in Central Asia. Soviet legacy that each of the former USSR republics got was dependence of their economies on a set of specific industries and no expertise in other types of productions. This has proven to be a very fragile state of operation once the countries gained their independence upon the collapse of the Communist power. Due to the narrow specializations of each partner, from the Japanese perspective regional cooperation was seen to be vital for future growth of Central Asia. Finally, Japan has also stressed the importance of establishing partnerships that are rooted in

the same set of universal values and principles, such as rule of law, democracy, human rights and market economy. All of these, the Central Asian republics have agreed to uphold in their path to stable economic growth and political development and reaffirmed their commitment to these values during the second Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tokyo.²⁶⁰

Furthermore, the event marked the adoption of the Action Plan²⁶¹ that included five vectors of mutual cooperation: political dialogue, intra-regional cooperation, business promotion, intellectual dialogue, and cultural and human exchanges. For the purpose of a clearer understanding of the elements of the proposed structure, the following discussion will look into the specific purposes behind each of the endorsed dimensions.

Political Dialogue

The first pillar with the presented framework rests on two underlying constituent parts: dialogue within the “Central Asia plus Japan” initiative and cooperation in the international arena. The former implied the commitment of the involved actors to continue to host regular meetings and discussion at the high governmental level about possible collaborative effort within the framework of the project and achieved results. The latter reaffirmed the role of the UN and other international organizations as vital platforms for future

²⁶⁰ Yagi, Takeshi. 2007. ""Central Asia Plus Japan" Dialogue And Japan's Policy Toward Central Asia". *Asia Europe Journal* 5 (1): 13-16.

²⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2006. “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue - Action Plan. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/action0606.html>

partnership between Tokyo and Central Asia. One of the highlights of the discussions pertaining to this pillar was the urgent necessity of the United Nations to revise and reform its mode of conduct in order to be able to respond to the global crisis situations in the most effective way. The need for expanding the number of permanent and temporary members in the UN Security Council was among the most essential and necessary changes the actors called for. Central Asia once again expressed its support for Japan's permanent membership in the UNSC. On top of that, Japan responded very positively to the idea of establishing Nuclear Weapon Free Trade Zone in the region stating that such achievement would significantly contribute to the stability and security in Central Asia. Having said that, all participating states have agreed to actively support and promote the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction worldwide, on top of adhering to the Process of 2010 NPT Review Conference and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocols in their development, as well as furthering nuclear security and atomic energy safety globally.

Intraregional cooperation

The second pillar of the Action Plan encompassed nine focus areas: **(1) measures against terrorism and narcotics** (reinforcement of regional mutual undertakings and cooperation in information exchange and tight border control to ensure regional security, as well as Japanese assistance in the sphere of anti-

terrorist activities); **(2) clearance of anti-personnel mines** (recognizing the efforts the Central Asian states have put into clearance of land mines and preparedness of Japan to continue to be actively involved in the process through granting aid and other forms of support); **(3) poverty alleviation** (the five republic have committed to revise the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper (WISP) and address the issues outlines in the documents in order to increase the standard of living on their respective territories, including the areas surrounding Aral Sea and Ferghana Basin, with the kindly offered Japanese assistance); **(4) health and medical care** (the partners recognized the importance of mutual cooperation, especially in activities aimed at combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, avian flu, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases); **(5) environment** (the Central Asian states emphasized their commitment to address the environmental concerns in the area caused by industrial production and radioactive waste storages, and have expressed their appreciation for the decision of Japan contribute to the process with their donation to the Syrdariya Delta Control and Northern Aral Sea Preservation Project through the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund of the Japan Special Fund reserved at the World Bank); **(6) disaster prevention and reduction** (the countries of the region thanked Japan for sharing its expertise in the field of disaster prevention, and stressed the need for sophisticate anti-disaster policies to be implemented in the future while also welcoming Kazakhstan's intention to hold the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2007); **(7) energy / water** (the countries discussed the need for

elevating the role of Central Asia in the international energy supply market through diversifying the supply routes of oil and natural gas within and across regions); **(8) trade and investment** (the participating states have exchanged their opinions and have agreed on the importance of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in further regional economic development and prosperity, and have discussed Japan's readiness to assist the Central Asian states through the earlier announced Japanese "Development Initiative"); and **(9) transport** (the infrastructure development projects in the region, as well as Japan's involvement in the process have been once again acknowledged, and the role of those as vital elements of the regional prosperity in the landlocked countries of Central Asia has been emphasized).

Business promotion

Increasing business opportunities and climate in Central Asia lies at the core of the next pillar dedicated to business promotion. Within the framework of this focus area, the Japanese Government utilized the Japan Centers for Human Resource Development in had opened in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in delivering trainings and courses on various aspects of business environment, including strategic corporate management, production and quality control, human resource development, and industrial policies, which were highly appreciated among the local businessmen and government officials. Specific attention has been paid to the creation of possible deals for Japanese firms on the

Central Asian markets, and to the establishment of closer economic ties between the two players through the existing channels of interaction, such as Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO) Offices, Japanese Embassies and Center for Human Resources Development among others. Japan has also expressed its commitment to continue to support local enterprises in the region through these established offices.

Intellectual dialogue

Intellectual dialogue has been officially recognized by all 6 participants of the meeting as an important element in developing and establishing a broad-range, long-term, sustainable cooperation between the actors. It has been also pointed out that the so-called “Tokyo Dialogue” meeting was a significant and successful undertaking in the process and should be continued in the future. Specific outcomes of these Dialogues are to be discussed in detail below.

Cultural and human exchanges

The Foreign Ministers emphasized the essential role of cultural and human exchanges in fostering mutual understanding, which serves as the foundation for establishing strong and close ties between political actors. The achievements made in the field of education, specifically the opening of the Japanese research centers in Central Asia and other types of cooperation in this regard, have been

highlighted and further cooperation in the sphere was strongly encouraged. Cooperation in field of tourism has also become a topic of discussion, and a set of possible measures aimed at increasing tourist traffic among the countries, including Japan, have been also touched upon.

The main outcomes of the event could be summarized in the following way:

- Most of the assistance promised by Japan to its Central Asian partners under the above-discussed Action Plan was going to be delivered through Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA), which includes provision of technical assistance, financial grants, and concessional loans where possible;
- The adoption of the Action Plan was not the only achievement of the 2nd Foreign Ministers' Meeting with the framework of the strategy. Afghanistan as, as important player in the region from geopolitical, economic and security perspectives, was invited as a guest attendee to the events held under the "Central Asia plus Japan" initiative. Such decision is no surprising considering the significant role peace and stability in Afghanistan play for its Central Asian neighbors.
- Japan and Central Asia reaffirmed and strengthened their commitment to engage in various cooperative networks through both bilateral and multilateral channels.

The significance of the third Foreign Ministers' Meetings, which was held in August 2010 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, stems from the fact that the intent to hold an economic forum to advance economic exchanges between the two actors

in the future has been officially announced at the event. Apart from that, the overall exchange held at the meeting revolved around three main topics: regional peace and stability, regional economic prosperity and sustainable development and environment preservation. With regards to peace and stability in Central Asia, the participants brought up such pressing and relevant issues as terrorism and narcotics, Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, the unstable political situation and ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Development of commodity distribution and transportation infrastructures and promotion of economic exchanges between Japan and Central Asia have become the main focus points of the discussion on regional economic development and growth. This is when Foreign Minister of Japan, Okada made a proposition to hold the "Japan-Central Asia Economic Forum," which would serve as a more targeted platform specifically aimed at the talks on business environments and investment prospects in Central Asia. To this day, only one meeting of this kind was held on July 26, 2011. More details of the discussion during the forum will be discussed further in the chapter. Finally, rationalization of water resources use and climate change were addressed by the participating states during the discussion on environment and sustainable development in the region. The third meeting finished with the representatives of each of the countries reaffirmed their commitment to meet each other regularly at the Senior Officials' Meetings.

The fifth Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on July 16, 2014, the year that marked the tenth anniversary since the start of the "Central Asia plus Japan"

Dialogue. The meeting gathered Foreign Ministers of all member states together, which it had not been able to do before that date. The participants have discussed the achievements of the Dialogue and the progress made within the ten years of its existence; the representatives of the attending nations have reaffirmed the cooperation development trajectory set out by the Action Plan and restated their commitment and interest to continue their practical efforts to establish closer ties with one another. The Foreign Ministers signed the Joint Declaration that features exchanges on the following four topics: ten year anniversary of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue, regional cooperation in the field of agriculture, cooperation aimed at stability and development of Central Asia, and cooperation in the international arena. On top of that, the member states adopted the “Roadmap,” which focused on the specific initiatives and collaborative efforts within the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture.²⁶²

Turkmenistan hosted the most current Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on May 1, 2017²⁶³ on the 25th anniversary year since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Central Asian republics. In line with the third FMM meeting, which focused on the progress made within 10 years of existence of the “Central Asia plus Japan initiative,” this event was started off by the discussions on the developments in Tokyo-CA relations within the 25 years of their interaction. The participants signed the Joint Statement, which raised a wide range of issues, and specifically for the first time mentioned the security

²⁶² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2014. "Visit By Minister For Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida To The Kyrgyz Republic". http://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ca_c/kg/page22e_000455.html#section1.

²⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2017. "Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida Attends The Sixth Foreign Ministers' Meeting Of The "Central Asia Plus Japan" Dialogue". http://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ca_c/page1e_000160.html.

challenge in the face of North Korea. The 6 nations agreed that nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches cannot be tolerated in any circumstance and called upon North Korea to cooperate with the international standards and protocols and comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Another significant addition to the list of the previously declared and discussed areas of interest was the humanitarian challenges in the region, such as abductions. Moreover, “Roadmap for Regional Cooperation in Transport and Logistics,” which focuses on the collaborative efforts between the members thus far and highlights possible future joint activities in the field, was adopted by the participants. Importantly, Japan announced to provide 24 billion yen of assistance in order to implement concrete steps towards closer ties along this dimension.

Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

The next constituent part of the adopted above-mentioned Action Plan is Senior Officials Meetings (SOM). The first SOM event was held on March 4, 2005 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan²⁶⁴. This event should be seen as an opportunity for high senior officials of the involved states to get together after the launch of the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue and discuss further cooperation within this framework. The above-discussed pillars of partnership have been reaffirmed with intra-regional cooperation serving as the main focus of the conducted talks

²⁶⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2005. ""Central Asia Plus Japan" Dialogue/ Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2005/3/0304-2.html>.

due to the importance of it on both regional and global scale. Senior Official Meetings have been officially attributed the role of the discussion platform, a chance for the representatives of the relevant governments to talk about the progress made and exchange their visions for future developments in their relations. The topics raised during these events have all revolved around the priority areas that have been chosen as the pillars of the Japan-Central Asia cooperation. There are significantly lesser statements provided by the respective governments (in comparison to the Foreign Ministers' Meeting or Tokyo Dialogues) on the exact contents of those meetings, although the general overview seems to point at the relevance of the dialogues to the projects and activities implemented or planned to be implemented with the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" initiative.

Tokyo Dialogues

Another platform regularly utilized by the governments of the respective countries to foster partnership and exchange opinions is the meeting known as the Intellectuals' Dialogue or Tokyo Dialogue. Although the first Dialogue was held in March 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan provides detailed contents of the meetings starting from the second Tokyo Dialogue hosted by Japan on January 30th, 2007.²⁶⁵ The event was attended by five experts from the Central Asian region, eighteen panelists-representatives of Japan (some of

²⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2007. "'Central Asia Plus Japan' The Second Tokyo Dialogue. Chairperson's Summary". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/summary0701.html>.

whom were government officials) and sixty members of audience. The two themes selected for that year's meeting were: "Prospects for regional cooperation in Central Asia on water resources and electric power" and "Prospects for diversification of Central Asia's energy supply routes." The discussion held within the framework of the first theme revolved around the importance and necessity of a closer regional cooperation in regards to water resources management and energy supply. It has been rightfully asserted that while Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are proud possessors of valuable and vast natural resource deposits, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are beneficial partners due to their location in the upstream of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers. Thus, reaching consensus and establishing partnerships among the above-mentioned republics is vital to ensure optimal distribution of water resources and electric power. As discussed at the meeting, during the Soviet era the downstream countries rich in fossil fuels would provide resource-poor Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with energy during winter time; at the same time the upstream states would reciprocate with water supply during the irrigation period in summer. Such crucial cooperation system has collapsed with the fall of the USSR, and the attempts to re-establish a similar cooperation model have not been successful. The Japanese experts have noted that this failure of the Central Asian states to reach an agreement caused by their self-sufficiency policy and conflicting interests resulted in tremendous losses in investments and put a great amount of pressure on environment due to the inefficient use of regional resources. In light of this, Japan has offered its

assistance in the process of optimization of resources consumption.

The second theme "Prospects for diversification of Central Asia's energy supply routes" unsurprisingly touched upon the challenges the resource-abundant region faces in signing major energy trade deals as a landlocked territory despite attracting the vast international interest. Therefore, the participating countries have once again reaffirmed their commitment to work together to reach economic prosperity and stability of the region. The essential part the diversified distribution routes and supply chains play in providing Central Asia with access to foreign markets have been recognized by all member states; and future cooperation in the field was described to be a common interest of all parties involved.

The third Tokyo Dialogue, which took place on February 20, 2009,²⁶⁶ brought together 5 representatives of Central Asia and 20 delegates from Japan (including scholars and government officials), and about 40 audience-members. The theme of this meeting was "Environment" and consisted of two sessions: "Environmental cooperation for soil protection in Central Asia" and "The effects of climate change on the environment in Central Asia and countermeasures." In regards to the former, major mismanagement of the biophysical resources on the part of the Central Asian states both during and after the Soviet era has been brought up in the discussion. The experts also shed light on poor and environmentally unfriendly natural resource extraction

²⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2018. ""Central Asia Plus Japan" Intellectual Dialogue. The Third Tokyo Dialogue. Chairperson's Summary". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/summary0902.html>.

practices the five republics adopted, which resulted in severe soil contamination in certain areas and caused a tremendous negative impact on the Central Asian ecosystem. Thus, specialists in the field emphasized the potential benefits and even necessity for the Central Asian states to look into the implementation of advanced technology in order to decrease the negative effect of their economic activities on the environment. A set of carefully planned countermeasures that would involve a wide range of local stakeholders was said to be a possible and tangible solution to these potentially detrimental challenges.

The second session on the effects of climate change focused on three areas of concern related to the global shift in average temperatures. First, it has been pointed out that global warming could result in the destabilization of the water supply and deterioration of the soil in the region. Second, all member states have agreed that eliminating the causes of and tackling the negative impacts of the climate change is a global responsibility and, thus, require meaningful cooperation on both global and regional scale. Finally, Japan's knowledge and information-sharing efforts have been brought up and discussed. The partners have expressed their willingness to continue to closely work on the implementation of the environmentally friendly projects and concluded the Dialogue with a list of proposals for future cooperation in the field.

The topic of the forth Tokyo Dialogue, which was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan with the cooperation of the Japan Foundation on February 25, 2010, was "Future improvements to logistics

infrastructure in the Central Asia region."²⁶⁷ This discussions conducted at that year's Dialogue were closely linked to those of the previously held Foreign Ministers' Meetings and dealt with the opportunities better logistics infrastructure, harmonization of regional transit procedures and more efficient transportation systems present to each of the Central Asian countries and Japan as well. The importance of intra-regional cooperation was highlighted once again and the states have agreed on the set of concrete measures. Among the donors that were contributing to the positive regional developments in this sphere, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) were cited along with the government of Japan.

Economic Forum

On July 26 2011, Central Asia and Japan organized the first and the yet only economic forum²⁶⁸ within the framework of "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue. The main purpose of the event was to discuss possible enhancement of economic exchanges between Japan and Central Asia. As it has been previously mentioned the trade turn-out between the two actors, for the most part, remain rather limited. Therefore, both sides have expressed their interest

²⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2010. ""Central Asia Plus Japan" Intellectual Dialogue. The Fourth Tokyo Dialogue. Chairperson's Summary". http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/chair_summary1002.html.

²⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2011. "Japan-Central Asia Economic Forum in the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue "For the promotion of Japan-Central Asia Economic Exchanges". http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/forum1107_pgm_e.html

in expanding their relationships in terms of trade of goods and services. The event commenced with the opening speech delivered by the Japanese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Yutaka Banno. In it Yutaka Banno offered explanations for why Japan perceives Central Asia as an important partner. First, the geopolitical positioning of Central Asia in the heart of Eurasia implies that peace, stability and prosperity on the whole Eurasian continent is dependent on the situation in the region as it serves as a crossroad that unites Eurasia. Second, the resource poor Japan still deems Central Asia to be significant due to the possession of vast deposits of minerals, natural gas, oil and other valuable materials, which Japan could potential benefit from. Finally, according to Yutaka Banno, Central Asia holds the key to solving the most pressing issues the international community faces today, in particular those pertaining to drug trafficking, stabilization of Afghanistan and spread of extremism and terrorism.

The discussions held were expected to revolve around three main issues that were on Japan's agenda: possible strategies to advance economic development of the Central Asian region as a whole, potential ways of turning the regional market into an attractive investment for prospective foreign contributors, and contribution on the part of the Japanese businesses needed to foster further economic development of Central Asian states.²⁶⁹ Therefore, the forum consisted of three main sessions, each devoted to the one of the following topics: "New Development," "Initiatives of Central Asian countries and the

²⁶⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2011. "Japan-Central Asia Economic Forum Keynote Speech by State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Yutaka Banno".
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/svm/speech110726.html>

‘Central Asia plus Japan’ Dialogue,” and “Activities by Japanese businesses in the areas of cooperation within the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue.”

The exchanges that took place at these sessions of the Economic Forum are presented in the table format below adopted from the information provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:²⁷⁰

	Content of the Discussions	Outcomes
1st Session: "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue: toward new development	<p>Japan proposed initiatives aimed at promoting economic exchanges between Japan and Central Asia in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for economic activities in Central Asia (infrastructure improvement, resources and nuclear power); • Cultivation of industry and trade promotion in Central Asia (diversification of industry, vitalization of the private sector, holding of bilateral economic forums, dissemination of business information to Japanese businesses, and support for exports from Central Asia to Japan); • Improvement of fundamental systems for market economy operation and economic exchange (facilitation of the operation of the market economy, strengthening of legal foundations by concluding investment treaties and other accords, and improvement of the investment environment); 	<p>Japan's involvement in the region is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) and other international organizations; • Improvements to north-south and east-west transportation corridors, power plants and grids, and others. <p>Japan will evaluate the possibility of further cooperation using tools such as ODA in these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution routes to the south to contribute to the stability of Afghanistan; • Improvements to energy and

²⁷⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2011. "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue: Japan-Central Asia Economic Forum"For the Promotion of Japan-Central Asia Economic Exchanges". Chairperson's Summary". http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/dialogue/forum1107_csummary_e.html

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivation of human resources (business courses and seminars, taking on of trainees, and exchange of experts) • Japan acknowledged the developments in regards to the business environments in Central Asian countries, but encouraged the CA republics to address the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graft and corruption; • Customs and immigration procedures; • Interpretation and application of laws; • Overseas remittance of funds; • Maintenance and disclosure of basic economic data and other information. 	<p>infrastructure beneficial to the neighboring countries.</p> <p>The five Central Asian republics called for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued cooperation through the framework of ODA; • Expanded investment from Japan; • Support for further encouragement of human exchange.
<p>2nd Session: Initiatives of Central Asian countries and the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue</p>	<p>Central Asian states presented the following implemented measures aimed at attracting foreign investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of domestic laws concerning the activities of foreign businesses; • Tax benefits for business activities; • Formulation of industrial development programs; • Establishment of special free economic zones and free tourism zones; • Improvement of assessments by the World Bank and other international organizations; • Introduction of "one-stop" projects that enable registration and other procedures to be carried out via Internet websites. <p>Central Asian states called for Japanese</p>	<p>Japan will continue efforts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the legal foundations by concluding investment treaties and other accords; • Support Japanese businesses embassies in the region, and implement working groups. • Raise the transparency, fairness, and investment predictability with regard to business activities through cooperation on improvement of systems;

	<p>investment in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power plants, power grids, transportation, and other basic infrastructure improvements; • Uranium, rare earth metals, and other mineral resource development, oil-shale and other oil resource development, and water and energy resource usage and development, introduction of alternative and renewable energy sources. • Automobiles, medical equipment, precision instruments, building materials, and other manufacturing industries, chemical and petrochemical industries, the metallurgy industry, the pharmaceutical industry, the textile industry, and agricultural industry, with the aim of modernizing industry through transfer of technologies from Japan; • Tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost the capabilities of the private sector in Central Asian countries. <p>The following propositions were made to Central Asia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up one-stop services for registration procedures and other administrative services; • Maintain and disclose information on bank and corporate finances; • Improve power, gas, water, and other public infrastructure; • Organize business matching services through which trustworthy business partners can be secured; • Understand the national character of the Japanese people and their cultural background; • Give special consideration to predictability, promise-keeping, and a long-term perspective.
<p>3rd Session: Activities by Japanese businesses in the areas of</p>	<p>Japanese businesses have reported on their work in Central Asia in the fields of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uranium and rare metals development in Kazakhstan; 	<p>The Japanese government once again reaffirmed its intent to continue to proactively support the advancement of economic</p>

<p>cooperation within the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery of rare metals and rare earth metals from uranium tailings, modernization of oil refineries, construction of distribution centers, construction of licorice product manufacturing plants in Tajikistan; • Cooperation on the creation of a gas master plan for Turkmenistan; • Development of oil-shale and oil-containing minerals in Uzbekistan. • The following challenges of conducting business in Central Asia were outlined: • Frequent changes in laws, regulations, and other conditions on which investment is contingent; • Difficulty of obtaining visas; • Frequent transfers of personnel; • Corruption and graft. • The Japanese side emphasized the long term nature of their engagement with Central Asia. The abundance of human resources in the region was also highlighted during the discussion as playing an important role in expanding business in the area. 	<p>exchanges between Central Asia and Japan, and expressed hopes for future expansion of economic relations between the two players.</p>
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Central Asia-Korea Cooperation Forum

The initiative, which provided ground for elevating multilateral cooperation between South Korea and Central Asia, is Central Asia-Korea Cooperation Forum organized since 2007. The first session of the forum, which

was chaired by Vice Minister Cho Jung-pyo, saw the participation of around 150 representatives from Korea and Central Asia ranging from governmental official to professionals from academic and cultural circles. As it has been emphasized by the leaders of the Central Asian republics on multiple occasions including the first Central Asia-Korea Cooperation Forum, the Korean model of development, which brought economic prosperity and modernization to the country in a rather short period of time, is an example the transitioning economies have chosen for their own development trajectory²⁷¹. It is worth noting that the South Korean approach to Central Asia, which the latter described as the one based on the principles of equal, mutually beneficial and cooperative relations, was positively received by the political elites in each of the respective former Soviet republics. On top of that, the humanistic policies Seoul has chosen in regards to Islam, which can be fairly titled as the dominant religion in Central Asia, have also been praised by the Central Asian leadership. All in all, the first forum has been met as a success and has provided a lot of hope for the expansion of the ROK-CA relations in the future.

As such, this initiative represents a platform that is supposed to provide the players involved with an opportunity to expand their partnership, both in terms of potential areas for mutually beneficial cooperation and the extent of these activities. In December 2008, during the second session of the forum, the participating states (Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan)

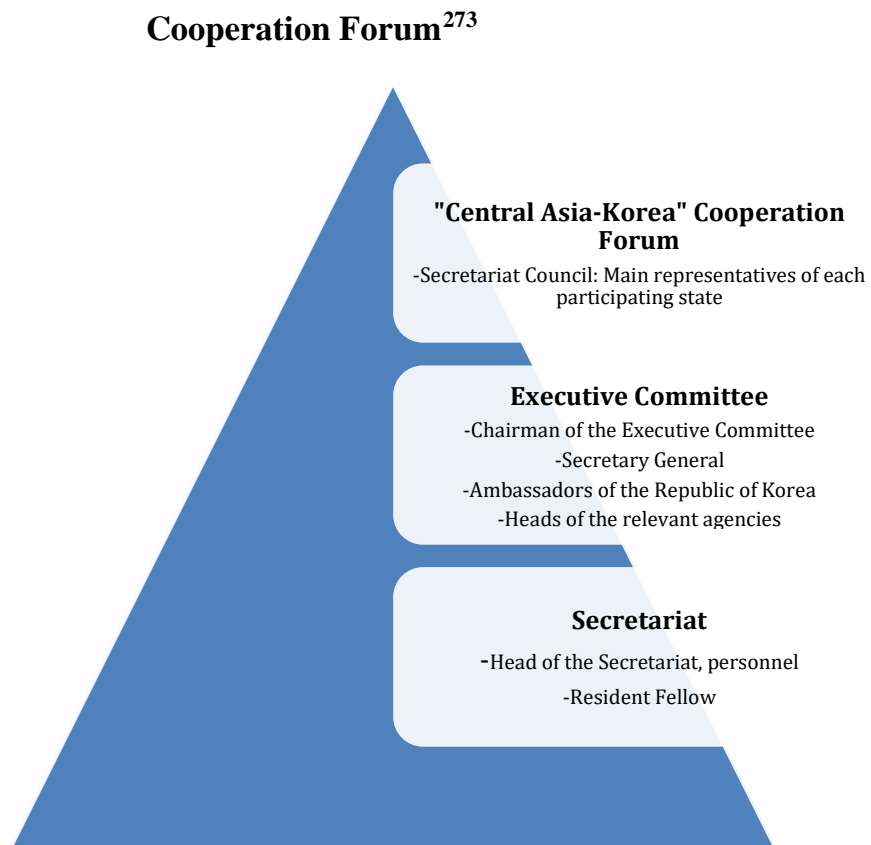
²⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea. 2007. "Outcomes of the 1st Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum".

agreed to conduct the meeting within the framework of the forum on a regular basis; and in December 2009, during the third session of the forum in Seoul, the initiative's status as a regular, multilateral, consultative body has been officially established. The next major development announced at the event took place during the seventh session of the forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Korea Forest Service (KFS) and the five Central Asian states, which covered the cooperation in the forestry industry, including projects aimed at reforestation of areas damaged by logging and environmental abuse. This was the first multilateral cooperation project all six nations have agreed to take part in. Of course, such achievements should be seen as a part of a larger picture as well. According to Korea's "Eurasia Initiative," which was presented to the world in 2013, Central Asia plays a rather significant role in Korea's vision for Eurasia's prosperous future.

In April 2014, during the eighth session of the forum the members expressed their common interest to start working on the establishment of the Secretariat on the cooperation between the partners. Finally, after a couple of years of planning, on November 15, 2016, during the tenth Central Asia-Korea Cooperation Forum, the participating states officially announced their decision to establish the Secretariat within the Korea Foundation (KF), and signed a joint declaration (Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan, Republic of Tajikistan). Kim Gwang-keun has been announced to take on the position of the Secretary General, and the Secretariat's organization and structure

have also been presented as demonstrated in the graph below.²⁷²

Graph 1. Structure of the Secretariat of the “Central Asia-Korea”



A year later, in 2017, the KF Gallery in Suha-dong, Seoul hosted the opening ceremony, which marked the beginning of Secretariat’s work. The Secretariat chose six areas of prospective cooperation between the two actors: transportation/logistics, energy, modernization and diversification of industries,

²⁷² Adopted from "한-중앙아협력포럼사무국". 2018. *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>. ["Central Asia-Republic of Korea” Cooperation Forum Secretariat”. *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>.]

²⁷³ Ibid.

climate change/ecology, healthcare/medicine, and education/culture.²⁷⁴

Transportation/Logistics

The primary objective that partnership between Seoul and Central Asia along this dimension has is development of logistics and improvement of supply chains in the region. South Korean plan in Central Asia should be seen as a part of larger development aspirations of Seoul – closer ties in the whole Eurasia. From this perspective, improving transportation links and transport infrastructure, as well as removing or at least weakening other intangible barriers to trade are vital elements in establishing efficient economic connections throughout the Eurasian continent. Thus, proposed projects under this priority area are mainly aimed at these two targets: (1) developing efficient and stable transportation system and (2) overcoming intangible barriers. The list of initiatives pertaining to the former consists of establishment of regional logistics centers and complex facilities and terminals and modernization of roads and railways; while cooperative measures focused on the latter include regional harmonization of transport regulations, simplification of transport procedures, building an effective regional logistics chain, and transfer of Seoul's experience in the development and use of state territories (transport, communication, information).

²⁷⁴ "한-중앙아협력포럼사무국". 2018. *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>. ["Central Asia-Republic of Korea" Cooperation Forum Secretariat". *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>.]

Energy

Rationalization of energy consumption and development of renewable and alternative energy sources lies at heart of the second priority area of the cooperative efforts between Central Asia and South Korea. Seoul's orientation along this dimension of cooperation is ultimately aimed at assisting the Central Asian republics in the process of adopting a strategy to maximize energy efficiency in the region that is based on both their level of consumption and interest in renewable sources of energy, as well as the experience the Republic of Korea. As such, the five Central Asian states are open to learn from South Korea's development path and are particularly interested in the possibility of cooperating with Seoul on information and experience-sharing in regards to implementation and management of the projects dedicated to energy rationalization and discovery of new sources of energy. To be more specific, initiatives for the rationalization of energy use consist of those that are designed to (1) facilitate the reduction of energy losses, (2) build necessary energy infrastructure, and (3) establish and sustain cross-border energy network. At the same time, efforts directed towards new renewable sources of energy focus on research and development of (1) hydropower / wind power / solar energy/ energy from waste, and (2) possible deals in regards to the provision of light-emitting diodes (LED) lighting systems.

Modernization and diversification of industries

Learning from the Korean experience and expertise in the areas of special economic zones management and privatization of state property, as well as cooperation in the field of new technologies are the main priorities of the partners along this dimension. Both actors understand that economic diversification and industrial upgrading and modernization are vital elements in ensuring prosperity and development in the region, as well as make Central Asian production more competitive in the international market. Aspired by the South Korean impressive economic success story, the Central Asian states aim to take advantage from the possibility of practical knowledge and experience transfer from Seoul. Cooperation with the Republic of Korea in the area of special economic zones management is expected to expand to include (1) the introduction and implementation of the necessary measures to successfully apply Seoul's expertise in the region; (2) the collaborative efforts in terms of starting and continuing consulting process aimed at attracting foreign investors into Central Asia; and (3) the advancement of economic exchanges between two actors through providing satisfying conditions in the regional market for the best medium and small Korean enterprises.

Technological cooperation between Seoul and the Central Asian republics can be divided into six main directions. Those consists of (1) successful tax administration modernization programmes; (2) projects directed towards the creation of prospective intelligent transportation systems; (3) technological

cooperation in the form of consultation on prospective policies in the field of information and communication technologies and e-government; (4) creation of ventures for partnerships in the field of new high technologies; (5) establishment of the Central Asian Center for Technological Cooperation that would provide training to prospective information technology specialists; and (6) modernization of the data management system in regards to the collection, processing, storage and provision the general information on land areas: maps of land registers, projects with relevant drafts, plans and drawings.

Climate change/Ecology

The design and implementation of cooperative the so-called green and forestry projects is yet another mutual aspiration of both Seoul and the Central Asian region. Taken into account the current environmental issues observed in the area, the partners have agreed to work together on the introduction of the projects aimed at preventing desertification occurring in the region, as well as on the adoption of appropriate strategies directed towards efficient and economic use of water resources. It is believed that closer technological cooperation between Seoul and Central Asia in this field, and potential expansion of multilateral ties among the Central Asian states on the issues concerning environment would bring about many positive developmental trends in both the Central Asian region and South Korea.

As such, the two have been determined to expand their joint activities in

the field of forestry, specifically aiming to (1) introduce effective forest management policies for the prevention of desertification; (2) exchange of technology developed by Korea to explore means of protecting and restoring devastated areas throughout the region; (3) create and implement ecologically clean domestic farming and organic agriculture; and (4) provide support for the Korean enterprises in the field of forestry and wood processing to enhance their position in the international market. At the same time, partnerships related to ecology are to revolve around three main purposes: (1) conducting joint research into possible solutions for the conservation of the resources of the Aral Sea and prevention of desertification of the Central Asian territories; (2) committing to work together on the adoption of a strategy for a more efficient municipal waste management and the creation of the so-titled environmental master plan for improving the biophysical surroundings; (3) engaging specialists working in the field of environment protection and conservation and ecological sphere in general in a series of seminars conducted by and with the support of the participating states; (4) building an environmentally friendly or “green” urban landscape; (5) implementing effective natural disaster prevention and management systems (fire/flood response systems); (6) enhancing collaborative efforts towards combating air pollution including those projects aimed at sharing and adopting relevant measuring and analyzing equipment necessary for accurate air quality monitoring; (7) establishing a Meteorological Information Center.

Healthcare/Medicine

Introduction of the appropriate programs for training medical personnel and enhancing cooperation in regards to the medical exchanges are the primary focus of the next focus area. Projects that target this industry are mainly those aimed at the provision of technological support and equipping healthcare workers with necessary professional qualifications, as well as those that have the expansion of the regional market access for the South Korean medical enterprises as their primary objective. The main reasons for choosing this field and including it into the official cooperation framework between Central Asia and Seoul is the increasing and pressing need for high-quality health and medical services in the region, as well as the need for strengthening the public health system and improving sanitation, especially in the less developed areas. There is also a strong interest in the dissemination and adoption of the advanced Korean medical equipment and technologies on the part of the Central Asian states. The projects in respect to healthcare and medicine also can be divided into two focus areas, the first one being training of medical personnel and technological support, and the second one being expansion of the presence of South Korean medical organizations and specialists in the region.

The former consists of the following initiatives: (1) increasing export of certain prescription drugs, medicines and medical equipment produced in the Republic of Korea, as well as facilitating the transfer of South Korean technology; (2) improving performance of the emergency medical services (e.g.

technological cooperation in the field of ambulance services); (3) establishing the so-called U-healthcare centers (remote medical care centers; (4) building an efficient system of clinical treatment networks; (5) information-sharing and experience-exchange in health insurance and health policy; (6) modernizing existing medical institutions. The latter encompasses such efforts as: (1) reaching an agreement on recognition of professional credentials and licensing for medical workers from the Republic of Korea, and (2) developing programs that facilitate international visits to Central Asia by the representatives of Korean medical organizations and enterprises.

Education/Culture

The expansion of cultural and sport exchanges and building a network of the next generation leaders are the last priority objectives within the framework of the “Central Asia-Korea Cooperation Forum” Secretariat. Mutual interest in furthering intercultural dialogue between the partners stems from multiples reasons. First, the many cultures and people of Central Asia, as well as Koreans belong to the Altaic family of cultures. Second, the recent massive worldwide success of the Hallyu (the Korean Wave) has sparked an increasing curiosity on the part of the Central Asian populations in respect to the Korean culture and media products. Finally, the establishment and maintenance of strong collaborative partnership needs to be constantly reinforced through the increased exchange of representatives of new generations for the ties between Korean and

the Central Asian states to remain strong in the future.

As such, education and personnel exchange initiatives are the first focus of the cooperation in this area. Central Asia and Seoul aim to (1) build a network of high-level new generation representatives in Central Asia; (2) create strong educational infrastructure (e.g. e-learning system); (3) offer vocational training to young people from vulnerable segments of the populations; (4) create a system of grants and government scholarships to assist interested parties specializing in Korean studies; (5) establish closer cooperation between research centers and institutions in the Republic of Korea and Central Asia. Promotion of sports, mutual understanding and cultural interchange is the second priority area, where the main objectives of the involved actors are (1) technological cooperation in the sphere of museum management and preservation of cultural heritage; (2) the establishment of a temporary Central Asian cultural center; (3) creation and application of the contents of common folklore resources; (4) creation of interchange opportunities for sports specialists and introduction of the system of information exchange in regards to athletes and coaches trainings programs; as well as (5) hosting friendly football matches and sports competitions among South Korea and each of the Central Asian states.

Currently, in line with the introduced vision for the future cooperation between the partners, there are five projects, which have been announced and are already running, that are supposed to further and deepen ties between the Central Asian nations and South Korea. The following discussion will briefly look into each of them and will introduce the main actors involved in each of the projects

and what objectives these initiatives are aimed at achieving.²⁷⁵

Project title	Body in charge	Benefactors	Project overview
<i>Establishment of the Eurasian Spatial Data Infrastructure</i>	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea National Geographic Information Institute Relevant cooperation bodies in Central Asia	Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Uzbekistan	Conducting an evaluation of the state of infrastructure and spatial information in Central Asia Developing a master plan Conducting a joint study on the national spatial data infrastructure and structure design
<i>Bolster the foundation for cooperation in the field of health and medicine in Central Asia</i>	Ministry of Health & Welfare of the Republic of Korea Korea Health Industry Development Institute Relevant cooperation bodies	Republic of Korea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan	Hosting conferences and corporate consultations on cooperation in the field of medicine on the basis of the relevant concluded Memoranda of Understanding with the countries of Central Asia Sending a delegation of the Republic of Korea to Central Asia consisting of representatives of medical enterprises

²⁷⁵ "한-중앙아협력포럼사무국". 2018. *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>. ["Central Asia-Republic of Korea" Cooperation Forum Secretariat". *Centralasia-Korea.Org*. <https://www.centralasia-korea.org/web/index.do>.]

	in Central Asia		
<i>Korean-Central Asian Culture and Tourism Festival</i>	Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of the Republic of Korea Asia Culture Center Relevant cooperation bodies in Central Asia	Republic of Korea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan	Conducting exhibitions and presentations to introduce the cultures, religions and art of the Central Asian countries
<i>The Korea-Central Asia Next-Generation Leaders Network Program</i>	The Korea Foundation Relevant cooperation bodies in Central Asia	Republic of Korea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan	Regular invitation of 30-40 year old high-ranking representatives from various fields of activity from Central Asia Holding joint forums together with specialists from the Republic of Korea Discussing the international and interregional situation
<i>Transfer of the smart systems of water consumption</i>	Korea Water Resource Corporation (K-Water)	Republic of Korea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan	Contributing to the process of enhancing the efficiency of water consumption through offering training in the smart systems of water resources use based on information and communication technologies, and by

	Relevant cooperation bodies in Central Asia		inviting Central Asian government officials working in the water sector
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Chapter 5: Japanese and South Korean Official Development

Assistance Schemes in Central Asia

Official Development Assistance (ODA) specifically and foreign aid at large have been an interesting avenue for academic and policy research ever since the invention of the concept. As such, there have been a great number of studies produced for the purpose of determining the aid disbursement patterns of donor-countries and understanding the motivations behind aid allocation strategies employed by those actors.

Many argue that foreign aid as a foreign policy tool has been primarily used as a scheme utilized by aid providers to create favorable development conditions for the donor itself, not the benefactor that becomes a recipient of these contributions. From this perspective, foreign aid frequently serves as a mean to shape, alter and influence domestic policies in the developing countries that require assistance. This is done through the introduction of political and economic conditionality and the distribution of what is referred to as “tied aid”. This implies that recipient states are expected and at times obliged to meet certain requirements of the donor to be able to benefit from the potential finances and/or resources from abroad. One of those conditions comes in the form of a mandate for the offered funds to be spent to exclusively procure goods or services from the donor-country or a selected group of states, which according to the OECD estimates can potentially result in skyrocketing costs of development projects²⁷⁶.

²⁷⁶ For more information, refer to "Organisation For Economic Co-Operation And Development".

Inefficiency of thus agreements in achieving foreign aid goals they set out comes from a multitude of factors including increased transaction costs, associated financial risks, corruption and recipients' limited ability to choose their own course of action.

On the other hand, international actors have used ODA as a way to increase their soft power in the recipient-states, which, in turn, provides them with other indirect but tangible economic, social and political benefits that usually take the form of valuable connections and favorable environment for further cooperation. Such method of exercising agents' self-interest, therefore, helps donors pursue their agendas in the recipient states without having to resort to more forceful tactics including tied aid²⁷⁷. While the effectiveness of this approach to foreign aid is a question of its own, it is still important to note that such intent associated with aid spending has been a concern for many experts in the field who argue that policymakers in wealthier countries may allocate its foreign aid to primarily maintain friendships abroad regardless of its development impact.

Thus, the international aid structure has long been criticized for prioritizing the interests of the donors, and not meeting the demands of the countries that are in a need of external help. The proponents of this view suggest that offering assistance through the ODA channels should be a responsibility of any state that was able to achieve a certain level of prosperity, and the main goal of the practice, thus, has to be achieving tangible results and fostering development in the

2018. *Oecd.Org*. <http://www.oecd.org>.

²⁷⁷ For instance, Bermeo, Sarah. 2017. "Not Your Parents' Foreign Aid: The Shift From Power To Proximity And Poverty". *Future Development*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2017/09/20/not-your-parents-foreign-aid-the-shift-from-power-to-proximity-and-poverty/>.

country-benefactor of aid, not merely feeding donor's ambitions.²⁷⁸

The conversations around the motivations behind aid allocation has fueled discussions of an even greater scale – on how aid mechanisms could be strengthened and what donor behavior and activities help achieve specific development targets and produce positive development impacts. As such, based on certain characteristics of aid providers, there have been various attempts to categorize ODA lenders in accordance to those features. For instance, since donor-states are not a homogenous group, there exists a division between the so-called “traditional” and “emerging” aid providers, although the latter term can be misleading due to the fact that the chosen terminology might inaccurately imply their new status as donors, which is not reflective of reality in all cases. For instance, China is often seen as the main donor-country in the emerging assistance providers' camp even though it has been delivering aid for over several decades. Traditional donors as a term, in turn, is best and most commonly defined as those aid providers that belong to the OECD – DAC group.

Thus, in the face of such dangerous misconception, some authors have offered other potential more accurately titled categories donors that offer assistance might be divided into. For instance, Mawdlsey (2012) advocated for the use of the term “DAC” and “non-DAC” donors to clearly distinguish between the two on the basis of their membership in the OECD DAC group – the group of major aid providers that share a common set of principles and adhere to the

²⁷⁸ For instance, refer to Hirvonen, Pekka. 2005. "Stingy Samaritans: Why Recent Increases In Development Aid Fail To Help The Poor". Global Policy Forum.
<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/240/45056.html>.

same definition of ODA outlined in the OECD DAC Charter²⁷⁹. Nevertheless, some suggest that this categorization overlooks certain differences between the so-called Western actors (e.g. the U.S., Germany, and the United Kingdom) and non-Western actors (Japan, South Korea) within the DAC system, which may potentially lead to confusion. Due to the fact that depending on which camp a particular actor perceives or is perceived to be a part of, their actions are attributed with a certain meaning, such homogenization of the DAC donors group, according to the opponents of this categorization, may lead to some vital misconceptions and analytical errors.

Another foreign aid lingo employed by ODA scholars is that of the “post-colonial” states. Alesina and Dollar (2000) argued that the aid flows of former empires tend to be directed at their once-colonies for the purpose of retaining power in those regions. Some of the exemplary cases illustrating this logic are that of Turkey, whose ODA has been primarily benefiting the states that were once under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and France, which prioritizes a particular aid distribution pattern that matches its historical geographical spheres of influence and control²⁸⁰. However, this thesis has most likely been raised with the Western powers in mind and may not be applicable in the Asian setting, where colonialism and related concepts are not that easily defined and distinguished²⁸¹.

Given the fact that the nature of this debate offers some important insights

²⁷⁹ Mawdsley, Emma. 2012. *From Recipients to Donors: The Emerging Powers and the Changing Development Landscape*. London: Zed Books.

²⁸⁰ Alesina, Alberto, and David Dollar. 2000. “Who gives foreign aid to whom and why?” *Journal of Economic Growth* 5(1): 33-63.

²⁸¹ Watson, Ian. 2014. *Foreign Aid and Emerging Powers: Asian Perspectives on Official Development Assistance*. Routledge.

into international aid architecture and represents an interesting avenue for further inquiry, it is, thus, necessary to look beyond superficial divides and dig deeper into donors' potential diversity. For this reason, this section will briefly discuss how the respective aid schemes of the two East Asian donors that are the focus of this study – Japan and South Korea – echo and differ from each other. For the sake of simplicity, the following discussion will be limited to pointing to broad similar characteristics and distinctions between the donors by assessing available ODA reports and recalling relevant debates in current literature.

The study will proceed by taking a closer look at Japanese and South Korean respective aid behavior, and evaluating Tokyo's and Seoul's individual engagements with Central Asia to determine to what extent the aid structures that have been established and utilized by the two actors emulate each other or diverge from one another. Hence, the next section of the chapter is dedicated to Tokyo's and Seoul's respective "stories" as ODA donors at large and their respective roles as aid providers in Central Asia specifically.

Japanese official development assistance: JICA

Despite having been left in the ruins of atrocious destruction as a result of the World War II and forced to rely on external funds for its own restoration and development, Japan was to become one of the largest global aid donors within a matter of a few decades. After the end of WWII, Japan was one of the main benefactors of foreign aid allocated by Japan's main post-war ally the U.S., and

such high-profile international organizations as the UN and the World Bank. However, less than two decades after the unfolding of these events, Japan became a founding member of the DAC in 1961, and by early 1990s and almost throughout the entire last decade of the XX century, Japan was the single major donor to provide the most development assistance to other countries apart from the U.S.²⁸²

A quick remark needs to be made to avoid unnecessary confusion. Although this study acknowledges the rich history of Japanese involvement in bilateral aid-giving, which takes its roots in the post-WWII mandatory reparations and the following voluntary assistance transfers including the engagement in the Colombo Plan²⁸³, this section will mainly focus on Tokyo's recent ODA activities and rhetoric, which the country has been showcasing in the past couple of decades. A general development path of Japan as a founding member of DAC will be outlined, the devoted paragraphs will also discuss Japan's previously exhibited ODA behavior as a donor-country prior to the beginning of the 1990s for the context.

Japan took on a new role when it joined the camp of actors, which set an objective to establish key standards for global development cooperation in the early 1960s. The country continued to advance the efforts to expand its role as an international donor further, and 1968 marked the year when Japan diversified its aid performance by introducing food aid to its ODA scheme. The following

²⁸² Dadabaev, Timur. 2016. "Japan's ODA Assistance Scheme and Central Asian Engagement: Determinants, Trends, Expectations". *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7 (1):. doi:10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.002.

²⁸³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2014. "Japan's Official Development Assistance White Paper". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000119315.pdf>.

year Tokyo launched the Grant Aid for General Projects, and in a few years it was already featured among the top four assistance providers in the world. In response to the concerns related to aid effectiveness, Japan implemented a number of initiatives aimed at developing a project evaluation system: Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) in 1975, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 1981, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1982²⁸⁴. OECF (also known as Japan Bank for International Cooperation/JBIC) and JICA were merged together in 2008 to form the aid agency that is operating in Japan today, although to many, it plays a minor role in foreign aid-related decision-making.²⁸⁵

In spite of being recognized as the world's top ODA donor in the late 1980s, it was not until 1992, when Japan finally introduced an official document, which comprised the fundamental aid policies set out by Tokyo. Many scholars argue that Japan's adoption of its ODA Charter should be seen as a response to the growing international pressure, which called for Tokyo to stick to a clearer vision of its own development assistance activities abroad and to commit to solving the most pressing international challenges such as poverty and environmental concerns²⁸⁶. Thus, Japan's aid philosophy today rests on the belief that aid represents a form of international and humanitarian responsibility, and according to Tokyo's ODA Charter, which was revised in 2003, Japanese aid should be seen as a tool that helps Japan achieve two goals at the same time: to foster

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ For example, Lancaster, Carol. 2007. *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

²⁸⁶ For instance, Fukushima (2000).

development in the recipient countries and establish close ties with its partners for Japan's own continued economic development²⁸⁷. For Tokyo, foreign has become an indispensable foreign policy tool taken the fact that the country is constitutionally constrained from participating in the international affairs through the use of its military²⁸⁸.

As far as the institutional arrangements go, policy-makers divided responsibilities pertaining to the national ODA oversight among four main domestic agents: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) (general foreign policy trajectory), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) (commercial matters), Ministry of Finance (MOF) (budget allocation), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (vague duties in regards to Japanese aid-giving activities) (Lancaster, 2007)²⁸⁹.

South Korean official development assistance: KOICA

Both the World War II (WWII) and the Korean War (1950-53) have left devastatingly noticeable marks on South Korea's development, which required substantial resources to overcome. As such, within 40 years after the end of the WWII, South Korea received the total of \$13 billion in aid from one of its main

²⁸⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2018. "Official Development Assistance: 50 Years Of Japan's ODA". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/cooperation/anniv50/pamphlet/progress2.html>.

²⁸⁸ Lau, Tim. 2015. "Interview: Official Development Assistance An 'Indispensable Tool' In Japan's Foreign Policy, Says JICA President". *Asia Society*, 2015. <https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/interview-official-development-assistance-indispensable-tool-japans-foreign-policy-says-ji>.

²⁸⁹ Lancaster, Carol. 2007. *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

allies – the U.S.²⁹⁰. Indeed, in the middle of the XX century it was North Korea that was experiencing faster development due to the assistance it received from their communist “friends” – China and the Soviet Union. It was not until General Park – ROK’s prominent authoritarian leader – came to power, when the country entered the development path that would be soon referred to the “Miracle on the Han River”²⁹¹. Contrary to the shared expectation of many who have witnessed the social, economic and political circumstance the Republic of Korea found itself in during and after the duration of the Korean War, the country was able to showcase a true economic miracle in the form of rapid industrialization and remarkable economic boost. It is worth noting that the so-called East Asian Tiger prioritized economic growth over political transformation and democratization for over two decades following General Park’s inauguration²⁹².

Korea’s ODA activities started long before its admission to the “elite” donor club dating all the way back to the early 1960s²⁹³. To be more specific, after the economic takeoff that the country started in 1961²⁹⁴, Korea started its first Fellowship Program in 1963 through the funds allocated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with an objective to assist partner-countries in human resource development and capacity building

²⁹⁰ Roehrig, Terence. 2013. "South Korea, Foreign Aid And UN Peacekeeping: Contributing To International Peace And Security As A Middle Power.". *Korea Observer*, 2013.
<https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/roehrig-korea-observer-winter-2013.pdf>.

²⁹¹ Cumings, Bruce. 1997. *Korea's Place In The Sun: A Modern History*. New York: W.W. Norton.

²⁹² Amsden, Alice H. 1992. *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea And Late Industrialization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

²⁹³ Korea International Cooperation Agency. 2014. "Old Training Program".
<http://www.koica.go.kr/english/schemes/training/index.html>.

²⁹⁴ Roehrig, Terence. 2013. "South Korea, Foreign Aid And UN Peacekeeping: Contributing To International Peace And Security As A Middle Power.". *Korea Observer*, , 2013.
<https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/roehrig-korea-observer-winter-2013.pdf>.

for future growth. A couple of years later, South Korea officially implements the project as a part of its national budget and no longer relied on the external finances in funding the initiative. The program brought together participants from Seoul's partner countries and provided them with trainings in various fields in accordance with South Korea's own development experience equipping them with skills and knowledge, which they could later use in their respective domestic settings. At the time up until early 1990s the foreign aid projects were overlooked by different individual ministries, and in 1987, Korea established the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) to support concessionary loans to developing countries through Korea's Export-Import Bank²⁹⁵.

Upon the establishment of the Korea International Cooperation Agency in 1991, the Fellowship program became one of the main KOICA projects, which aimed to "share important technical skills and knowledge as well as to build capacities for sustainable socio-economic development."²⁹⁶ In 2012, the initiative was rebranded and renamed "Capacity Improvement and Advancement for Tomorrow" or CIAT, which translates as "seed" from Korean and carries an important symbolic meaning that corresponds with the project's vision.

In 1996, ROK became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and 13 years later, South Korea was officially welcomed as the 24th donor-country of the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD – DAC). ROK's experience with foreign aid is quite unique

²⁹⁵ Korea International Cooperation Agency. 2011. "Korea International Cooperation Agency: 20 Years Of KOICA 1991-2010". http://www.koica.go.kr/upload/pr/annual/20anniversary_eng.pdf.

²⁹⁶ Korea International Cooperation Agency. 2014. "Old Training Program". <http://www.koica.go.kr/english/schemes/training/index.html>.

making it one of the few countries that successfully transitioned from an aid-dependent agent as of 1995 to an active foreign assistance provider within a relatively short period of time – the achievement that evoked the sense of national pride and gained international recognition²⁹⁷. The South Korean officials often recall the words of the U.S. General Douglas MacArthur that went as follows: “Unless there is a miracle, it will take 100 years for South Korea to recover from the Korean War.”²⁹⁸

Today, contrary to the expectations of many, the ROK is the 15th largest ODA donor-country with the net amount of aid allocated in 2017 amounting to \$US 2.1 billion in current prices²⁹⁹. Korea prides itself in being a former recipient country that through hard work and determination was able to shift its own development trajectory for the better and just within half of century of being a country with one of the lowest Gross Domestic Products (GDP) in the world join the club of economically advanced states. Seoul utilizes the image of Korea as the country that can relate to the experiences of the developing states it extends its assistance to, and at the same time emphasizes the knowledge that it can share to facilitate growth in the recipient state. A great illustration of such Korea’s self-image is Korean Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) launched in 2004, which describes Korea as “a war-torn country” that managed to become an economic

²⁹⁷ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2012. "Korea". Development Assistance Committee Peer Review. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Korea%20CRC%20-%20FINAL%2021%20JAN.pdf>.

²⁹⁸ Korea International Cooperation Agency. 2011. "Korea International Cooperation Agency: 20 Years Of KOICA 1991-2010". http://www.koica.go.kr/upload/pr/annual/20anniversary_eng.pdf.

²⁹⁹ Donor tracker. 2017. "South Korea". https://donortracker.org/country/south-korea?gclid=EAIaIQobChMImbj9xb3H2QIVwZa9Ch2jWQIZEAMYASAAEgILAPD_BwE.

miracle in the span of 50 years and “the envy of most developing countries in its unprecedented economic growth.”³⁰⁰ The initiative was specifically designed to offer policy individual-based policy recommendations for South Korea’s partner-countries based on Seoul’s own development experience, and the list of potential benefactors is not limited to the DAC list of ODA recipients.

In 2011, Korea hosted the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that was held in Busan resulting in the Busan Partnership agreement, and, consequently, led to the establishment of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, which served as a framework designed to introduce the international standard pertaining to the principles of aid effectiveness and good development. The Busan Partnership agreement rests on four common principles all development actors need to subscribe to in order to make the development cooperation effective³⁰¹: a) ownership of development priorities by developing countries (actors involved in development cooperation need to clearly define the development model they wish to implement); b) a focus on results (all development cooperation players should aim at introducing and promoting initiatives and activities that have a sustainable impact in their partner-countries); c) partnerships for development (it is important for all actors in the international system to be involved in the process of development, where diversity and complementarity of their functions are important elements to be recognized by all participants; d) transparency and shared responsibility (all

³⁰⁰ Ministry of Strategy and Finance of the Republic of Korea. 2018. “Knowledge Sharing Program”. Accessed May 29. <http://www.ksp.go.kr/main/main.jsp>

³⁰¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2012. “The Busan Partnership For Effective Development Cooperation”. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/Busan%20partnership.pdf>.

development cooperation initiatives must be transparent in nature and bear accountability towards all citizens).

Japan and South Korea's Official Development Assistance Schemes

Aside from the obvious resemblance – the official status of DAC members -, Tokyo and Seoul as major aid lenders in Asia share some other important similarities. For instance, their assistance structures share the following common characteristics³⁰²: first, the aid flows fueled by these lenders are primarily confined within the region; in other words, their ODA disbursement patterns tend to favor their geographical neighbors, which is not the case for the Western donors. In fact, South Korea has surpassed Japan as the top donor to Asia in terms of share of its aid that the country allocated to the region in 2014-2016 with 60% of Seoul's development assistance during that period being directed towards the Asian states³⁰³. Japan was not far behind, however, spending as much as 59% of its total funds in terms of ODA on the region. Taken the undoubted superiority of the Japanese economy, Tokyo quite comfortably retains its current status as Asia's greatest aid provider based on the net ODA disbursements, although such dynamics may be shifted in the future with China and India increasing their involvement in the overseas development operations.

Using the OECD database on the donors' ODA activities, this study

³⁰² Stallings, B. 2010. Regional economic integration in East Asia: the role of ODA. Paper presented at Shanghai Forum, Fudan University, May 28-29.

³⁰³ For more information, see Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2018. "Development Aid At A Glance". Statistics By Region. <http://www.oecd.org/dac>.

presents the maps of top benefactors of aid coming from three different providers: Japan (Map 1), South Korea (Map 2), and all DAC donor-states (Map 3) as of 2017.

Map 1: Top 10 Recipients of Japan's Bilateral ODA (2016)



Source: OECD DAC, 2017

As shown by the available data, the main target of Japanese attention on the continent are the countries located in the South and Central Asia (29,4%) followed by their neighbors in the rest of Asia and Oceania (26,8%). In terms of the top recipients of Tokyo's funds, India (US\$ 1 699 mln) and Vietnam (US\$ 1 501 mln) have reportedly been granted quite a large chunk of Japan's ODA pie - approximately three times greater than the third biggest recipient Bangladesh

(US\$ 517 mln). Despite being removed from Asia's largest donor in terms of its geographical location, South of Sahara (10,6%) is also listed among top destinations of Japan's assistance. As for the focus areas of the transfers and transactions, economic infrastructure (51,9%) amounts for the majority of the allocated funds. Lower middle income countries are the primary benefactors of the assistance coming from Tokyo - 45% of the total ODA disbursed, which is twice the amount of Japan's donations to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - 20,8%.

Map 2: Top 10 Recipients of South Korea's Bilateral ODA (2016)



Source: OECD DAC, 2017.

Despite the institutional resemblances discussed in the beginning of the section, Korea's aid fund allocation pattern does not fully emulate that of Japan. As such, donations to the countries combined under the category "Other Asia and Oceania" (32,9%) receive approximately a third of the total assistance Korea provides. South of Sahara (23,3%) is second in the top three recipient list, which is completed by South and Central Asia (15,2%). Interestingly, while Tokyo's disbursements for the states across Asia is sustained at an approximately consistent level – around 26-29% of its total aid, Seoul's priorities lie primarily in the regions of Asia outside of its South and Central parts with the latter category of states receiving less than a half of the funds allocated to the former.

Taking a look at another divergence of Korea's aid-giving behavior from the path set out by Japan may shed light into the territorial preferences Seoul exhibits. The distinction is illustrated by the special attention ROK pays to the groups of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by transferring the majority of its total ODA (37,5%) to these actors. The share of the Lower Middle Income countries is slightly smaller - 35.9%, which still represents a large portion of Korea's total aid. Such slight inclination towards the LDCs could be explained by the history of Seoul's own transformation. To be more specific, the rhetoric of "the first Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member emerging from the ranks of the least developed countries (LDCs)" has been often utilized by the South Korean policy-makers in the promotion of their Global Korea vision³⁰⁴. According to this stance, South Korea, which takes pride in their achievements,

³⁰⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. 2018. "Development Cooperation: Overview". Accessed May 29. http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_5444/contents.do.

is now committed to contribute to the international community by assisting current LDCs on their path to development. As such, ROK has been substantially increasing its ODA disbursements to Africa - the continent that hosts the majority of the world's LDCs³⁰⁵. In fact, after President Roh Moo-hyun announced the "Korean Initiative for the Development of Africa" during his visit to Egypt, Algeria and Nigeria in 2006, it tooks Seoul a couple of years to more than double the amount of aid allocated to Africa. Upon President Lee Myung-bak taking the office, Korea's foreign policy towards Africa was broadened in scope to cover the LDCs located in the Sub-Saharan region, and the Korean engagement on the continent was said to follow a "win-win cooperation" scheme³⁰⁶.

Furthermore, in terms of the individual benefactors of ROK's assistance, Vietnam is on the top of the recipient list with 206 USD million being allocated to the country, according to the latest estimates. Another assertion to be made is that, based on the available information, Korea's aid seems to be more balanced than its Japanese counterpart in terms of the sectors Seoul decides to allocate its resources to. This stems from the fact that despite initially sharing the preferable target area for its ODA with Japan, Korea's commitment to economic infrastructure has been significantly lower compared to Japan's levels. In fact, even though economic infrastructure and the establishment of production facilities remains to be among the top priority areas for both of these Asian aid

³⁰⁵ "Africa". 2018. Korea: Official Development Assistance. Accessed May 29.
http://www.odakorea.go.kr/eng.result.RegionCountry_Africa.do.

³⁰⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. 2018. "Africa". Accessed May 29.
http://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_4910/contents.do.

providers, the focus of Seoul's engagements in the developing countries has been consistently inclined towards Social infrastructure over the past years³⁰⁷. Therefore, a significant distinction between Korea's and Japan's ODA general commitments can be pointed out, although it is worth noting that Korea's priority sector commitment change depending on the recipient-state. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

On top of it, Japan and Korea, as opposed to their Western fellow-DAC members, do not push for political conditionality and for the most part do not tie their aid to any political requirements (e.g. human rights, democracy, and governance). Reilly (2012) seems to support this observation by arguing that Japan and ROK both (a) prioritize achieving economic growth objectives in the recipient states; (b) have a general preference for subsidized loans as opposed to other forms of aid, namely grant aid; (c) mostly focus on the projects pertaining to infrastructure building; (d) support the state-led development model and advocate for mutual benefits for the partners involved in the ODA process, including donors and recipients, which leads to the last point – (e) their reluctance to introduce political conditionality to the funds and resources they provide as a part of their ODA activities.

³⁰⁷ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2018. “*GeoBook: ODA by sector - bilateral commitments by donor and recipient*”. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

Map 3: Top 10 Recipients of Total DAC Countries (2016)



Source: OECD DAC, 2017.

Taking a look at the distribution patterns employed by all DAC donors may shed light on the choices Korea has made in regards to its ODA operation. For instance, both India and Vietnam are featured as the main recipients of the DAC aid. Social infrastructure attracts the biggest portion of assistance coming from the “exclusive donor club”. Education, Health and Population and Economic infrastructure are practically equal in terms of their importance as the target areas for ODA allocation with 18,6% and 18,2% of total DAC assistance being directed towards projects that fall under those categories respectively. “Other social infrastructure” is not far behind, however, attracting as much as 15,5% of the “traditional” donors’ aid.

Unsurprisingly, South of Sahara is reported as the main benefactor of DAC

aid (22,8%) followed by South and Central Asia (11,8%) and Middle East and North Africa (10,4%). In addition, the least developed states are the recipients of 23,1% of funds coming in from the DAC donors.

Thus, it can potentially be hypothesized that Korea is making an attempt to balance between its Asian regional interests and internationally set agendas to build a positive image as a generous and altruistic donor, although further research is necessary to confirm such an observation.

Japan's and South Korea's engagement in Central Asia

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Tokyo has been consistently featured as one of the top 5 largest individual foreign aid donors to Central Asia. In fact, four out of the five Central Asian republics have been selected by the Japanese government and were paid special attention to as main target countries of Japan's ODA. More specifically, the government of Japan has formulated individual Country Assistance Programs for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan³⁰⁸, which, according to Japan's ODA Charter, have become major recipient countries of Japanese aid³⁰⁹. As explained by the MOFA, the essential considerations in selection of the target states that have received this exclusive treatment on the part of the Japanese government include the total amount of Japanese aid disbursed, the strategic importance of the potential benefactor, their

³⁰⁸ For example: poverty, HIV/AIDS, peace building, reconstruction, and governance.

³⁰⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2017. "Country Assistance Programs For Respective Countries". <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/assistance/country.html>.

needs related to global development concerns, regional balance, and recipient country's policies and procedures³¹⁰. While Uzbekistan's and Kazakhstan's respective CAPs were drafted and adopted in 2006, official documents pertaining to Japan's development activities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were formulated in 2009.

Upon evaluating the major development projects Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) – the body that overlooks the country's ODA activities – has prioritized in each of the Central Asian states, it becomes clear that Japan, indeed, uses individual-based approach when dealing with its aid benefactors. To be more specific, it can be seen from the table below that Tajikistan is primarily a recipient of grant aid, while Uzbekistan is a benefactor of the Japanese loans³¹¹. The region specific data provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does support this observation³¹².

³¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2018. "Country Assistance Programs". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/assistance/program.html>.

³¹¹ See the table below.

³¹² For details see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2015. "Kazakhstan". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/000142564.pdf>;
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2015. "Uzbekistan". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/000142570.pdf>;
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2015. "Kyrgyzstan". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/000142565.pdf>;
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2015. "Tajikistan". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/000142566.pdf>;
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2015. "Turkmenistan". Accessed May 29. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/000142568.pdf>.

Recent major JICA projects in Central Asia (as of 2018)³¹³

Country	Type of assistance	Sector	Project outline	Period
Kyrgyzstan	Technical cooperation	Agriculture/Rural Development	Project for Market Oriented Milk Production in Chuy Province	2017-22
			Project for dissemination of “One Village One Product” (OVOP) Issyk-Kul Model to other regions of the country	2017-20
			The Project for Development of the Rural Business with Forest Products in the Kyrgyz Republic	2015-19
			The Project for Promotion of Exportable Vegetable Seed Production	2013-18
		Capacity Building	Project for Human Resource Development for Diversification of Economic Sectors through the Kyrgyz Republic-Japan Center for Human Development	2016-21
			Project on Improvement of Human Resource Development System of State Tax Service of the Kyrgyz Republic	2017-20

³¹³ All data is adopted from <https://www.jica.go.jp> unless stated otherwise.

		Disaster Risk Reduction	Project for Capacity Development for Road Disaster Prevention Management	2016-19
	Grant Aid	Capacity Building	The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship	Annual (2014-17)
		Transportation	The Project for Improvement of Workshops for Road Maintenance Equipment	2017
			The Project for Improvement of Equipment of the Manas International Airport	2015
		Disaster Risk Reduction	The Project for Avalanche Protection on Bishkek-Osh Road	2017
	Loan	Transportation	The International Main Roads Improvement Project	2015
Tajikistan	Technical Cooperation	Transportation	Project for Improvement of Air Navigation Services in Tajikistan	2016-18
		Water Resources	The Project for Strengthening the Water Service Management of Pyanj and Khamadoni Vodokanals	2017-2020
		Disaster Risk Reduction	The Project for Capacity Development for Road Disaster Management in the Republic of Tajikistan	2017-20

		Health	The Project for improving maternal and child health care system in Khatlon Oblast Phase 2	2017-21
	Grant Aid	Transportation	The Project for Improvement of Dushanbe International Airport (Phase2)	2017
			The Project for Improvement of Substations in Dushanbe	2017
			The Project for Improvement of Equipment for Road Maintenance in Sughd Region and the Eastern Part of Khatlon Region	2016
			The Project for Improvement of Dushanbe International Airport	2014
		Food security	The food security project for underprivileged farmers	2012
		Capacity building	The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (three year circle)	2016
			The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship	Annually (2014-17)

		Peace-building	The Project for Livelihood Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-Border Areas/2014.3[Khatlon Region (Tajikistan), Takhar Province, Kunduz Province (Afghanistan)]	2014-17
			The Project for Promoting Cross-Border Cooperation through Effective Management of Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan	2015
Uzbekistan	Technical cooperation	Capacity building	Project for Capacity Development of Business Persons and Networking through Uzbekistan-Japan Center for Human Resource Development	2015-20
			The Technical Cooperation for Strengthening of CCGT Training Center	2016-18
		Economic infrastructure	Project for Establishment of the Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) Operation and Maintenance Training Center	2015-19
		Health	Project for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Disease	2018-22

	Grant Aid	Capacity building	The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship	Annually (2014-16)
			The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (three-year cycle)	2016
	Loan	Economic infrastructure	Electric Power Sector Capacity Development Project	2015
			Amu-Bukhara Irrigation System Rehabilitation Project	2015
			Tashkent Thermal Power Cogeneration Plant Construction Project	2015
			Turakurgan Thermal Power Station Construction Project	2014
			The Navoi Thermal Power Station Modernization Project	2013
			Karshi-Termez Railway Electrification Project	2012
			The Talimarjan Thermal Power Station Extension Project	2010

Moreover, as the country-specific ODA disbursement papers provided by JICA clearly illustrate, Japan's priority state in the region in terms of conducting development related operations has without a doubt been none other but Uzbekistan. As such, the volume of aid Tokyo is providing to this Central Asian state has been on the rise exceeding that of Korea's – the second largest individual ODA provider to Uzbekistan as of 2016 – by about US\$150 million³¹⁴. At the same time, major aid cuts to Kazakhstan have made Japan lose its position among the country's top donors. The available data on Japan's engagement with both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan shows a relative consistency in regards to the amount of funds the largest Asian donor allocates to its recipients in terms of ODA. As such, Tokyo has been supporting the continuous trend of serving as one of the top aid providers to both countries over the years.

At the same time, the primary benefactors of Korean aid in Central Asia over the first couple of decades after the end of the Cold War have been Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan³¹⁵. In fact, KOICA opened offices in both states in the beginning of 1990s – shortly after the Soviet Union collapse. When looking at the list of major recently implemented or planned projects in the Central Asian region financed by KOICA, however, it becomes quite clear that Uzbekistan remains to be the major benefactor of the Korean aid, while major ODA projects in Kazakhstan sponsored by the Korean aid flows have stopped nearly a decade

³¹⁴ Japan's aid flow to Uzbekistan in 2015-2016 was 7 times larger than that of Korea. For more information, see "Organisation For Economic Co-Operation And Development". 2018. *Oecd.Org*. <http://www.oecd.org>.

³¹⁵ Korea International Cooperation Agency. 2011. "Korea International Cooperation Agency: 20 Years Of KOICA 1991-2010". http://www.koica.go.kr/upload/pr/annual/20anniversary_eng.pdf.

ago. The OECD data reflects the drop in the amount of aid Kazakhstan received from South Korea, which could be explained by the former's own stable economic situation and its position as the most economically advanced Central Asian state³¹⁶. An interesting point to bring up is the fact that in the past few years, Kyrgyzstan stepped into the spotlight of Korea's attention. Since 2013, Seoul has been on the track of increasing its donor involvement in the country by rising its aid to Kyrgyzstan by tenfold. While the total amount of contributions received by Bishkek is not comparable in size to those of Tashkent, which remains to be Seoul's primary recipient, the rise in Korea's aid to both of those geographical locations are similar if scaled.

Major recent KOICA projects in Central Asia (as of 2018)³¹⁷

Country	Sector	Project outline	Budget	Period
Kazakhstan	Industry and Energy	Establishment of a Master Plan for Tourism Promotion and Development in Kazakhstan	\$US 1 million	2007-08
Turkmenistan	Education	Project for Capacity Building of the Gas Vocational Training Center in Mary Province, Turkmenistan	\$US 5.9 million	2014-18

³¹⁶ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2018. "Creditor Reporting System". <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

³¹⁷ All data is adopted from <http://www.koica.go.kr> unless stated otherwise.

Uzbekistan	Education	Project for Policy Consulting on Empowerment of Uzbekistan Technical Vocational Education Training and Pilot Project	\$US 8.5 million	2014-17
		Project for Capacity Building of Vocational Training Education in Samarkand Region of Uzbekistan	\$US 6.4 million	2013-17
		Project for Capacity Building of Vocational center in Tashkent ³¹⁸	\$US 4 million	2007-11
	Healthcare	Program for Capacity Building of Infectious Diseases Control in Uzbekistan	\$US 6 million	2013-17
		Project for Capacity Building of Uzbekistan Pediatric Hospital's Medical Personnel	\$USD 7 million	2015-20
	Governance	The Project for Construction of an innovative geographic information technology training center for urban planning in Uzbekistan	\$US 1.5 million	2011-13

An important fact to emphasize is that Uzbekistan has been recently selected as one of the 24 ODA priority partner-countries the South Korean government announced in 2015³¹⁹. In accordance with this, Tashkent received

³¹⁸ Korean International Cooperation Agency. n.d. "Middle East And Central Asia". Accessed May 29. http://www.koica.go.kr/english/countries/middle_east_cis/index.html.

³¹⁹ Korea Official Development Assistance. n.d. "Country Partnership Strategy". Accessed May 29. <http://www.odakorea.go.kr/eng.policy.CountryPartnershipStrategy.do>.

the due attention upon the establishment of the Country Partnership Strategy of the Republic of Korea for the Republic of Uzbekistan 2016-2020. According to the chosen plan of action, the strategic direction of Uzbek-Korean development partnership rests on three priority areas for cooperation and support carefully selected based on Uzbekistan's needs: education, water management and health, and public administration.

The main objective of Korea's development cooperation in Uzbekistan is to assist the latter on its path to realizing the Strategy for Development of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 and subsequently achieve its Vision 2030³²⁰ through improving (a) human resource development as a source of better competitiveness; (b) water management and healthcare as a mean to increase national welfare; (c) e-government and public administration systems for improved government capacity. Despite the general favoritism of social infrastructure, Korea's involvement in Uzbekistan primarily targets projects and purposes related to economic infrastructure in general and transportation and communications more specifically³²¹.

To ensure effective execution of the proposed strategy, ROK is to allocate as much as the minimum of 70% of its bilateral aid to priority cooperation areas (PCA). Successful implementation of the course of action as specified by the document, which goes in line with Korea's overall aid policy, is also ensured by ROK's commitment to support balance in aid, to align its donor activity in the

³²⁰ Uzbekistan's development strategy to transition to an industrialized, upper middle-income state by 2030. For more see, "Uzbekistan Vision 2030".

³²¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2018. "GeoBook: ODA by sector - bilateral commitments by donor and recipient". <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

country with Uzbekistan's domestic policies and strategies, and to improve synergies between ODA and other sources of development funding, including those provided by the private sector.

The analysis revealed that the aid related rhetoric employed by the two actors have been consistent with their respective general foreign policy outlooks towards Central Asia. As seen from the above-presented data, Japan and South Korea both are considered to be major aid providers for Central Asia and despite their aid structures having some similarities – both countries are members of the Organization for OECD DAC, which means their ODA meets certain mutual requirements – their aid disbursement patterns have numerous distinct features.

Conclusion

The presented research was conducted to inquire about the formulation and implementation of Japan's and South Korea's respective foreign policies through the case of their relations with Central Asia. The study has advanced the argument that examining actors' identities plays a crucial role in comprehending the foreign policy formulations and foreign policy actions. Moreover, applying the critical constructivist lense to the analysis of the chosen case study provides interesting insights into the mutually constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity through evaluating the discursive construction of identity that takes place within a specific social and political context.

The study puts forward the argument that the Japanese and South Korean respective perceptions of "Self" have been crucial factors that have influenced their policies towards Central Asian "Other". Therefore, the research focuses on how the existing discourses on Central Asian "Other" came about and in what ways have these formulations been related to the Japanese and South Korean identities.

To be more specific, the presented work adopts two main case studies as the crucial part of the provided examination on their foreign policies within the Central Asian context: Central Asia plus Japan dialogue and Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum, as well as their interactions with the region, which are reflected in their ODA policies towards the region.

The key argument, which this study raises, is that both Tokyo's and Seoul's

approaches to dealing with the region are bound up with the sense of national identities these actors have and represent products of inherently different locally shared perspectives on what role their respective countries play in the world politics and what purpose they are pursuing. The work utilizes a method of discourse analysis to broaden and deepen the current understanding of the phenomena. More precisely, the dissertation: 1) evaluates the produced and reproduced representations of the Japanese and South Korean national identities, which the national governments form and disseminate, in this case, through their foreign policy discourses; and 2) examines the ways how these images make the modes of interaction with Central Asia possible. The analytical process consisted of analyzing discourses surrounding the questions of inquiry. The chosen strategy revealed the interconnectedness of the official texts and the broader social settings they were produced and reproduced in.

The approach adopted in this study sets it apart from the literature that relies on the rationalist perspective, which sees identities and interests as exogenously given. The employed lense does not solely emphasize the established relations between different states in world politics that negotiate their interests and positions through interaction, but rather stresses the importance of state identity-formation and state identity-development processes that are the products of these interactions with others. Such understanding of the phenomena allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the meanings of the existing concepts are related to the transformations in actors' identities and of what effects these shifts have on the actors' foreign policies. It is for these reasons why this research aimed at

shedding light on the discourses surrounding the Self-representations of Japan and South Korea traced in the related foreign policy concepts vis-a-vis Central Asia, which are in accordance with the vision of the political elites of the time. To make the discussion mentioned above more clear and applicable to a specific context, the shifts in South Korean concept of “middle power”, which the national leaders use to represent the country, have been reflected in the related transformations in South Korean political practices, such as its ODA activities in and cooperation schemes with the Central Asian republics.

The dissertation provided several theoretical insights. Firstly, identity is not a stable concept. Indeed, Tokyo’s and Seoul’s respected foreign policy discourses were proven to be prone to multiple changes over time marking the significant reconstructions of the countries’ identities.

Agents actively involved in the domestic political scene, such as governmental officials, play their role in the development of a state identity, however, their conscious efforts cannot be seen outside of the societal settings these actors exist in, as well as wider discursive reality where they operate.

As illustrated by the South Korean example, every piece of the puzzle contributes to the transformations of identity under specific conditions and shows its complexity. The interactions of these elements make it possible for new transfigurations to occur, given that a discourse is hard to maintain once they start changing. New circumstances and new discursive constructions make it possible for other variables in this web of relations to transform as well, therefore, they confirm the principle of their mutual constituency.

Secondly, “Others” are active participants in the process of identity construction. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 3, Japan perceives Central Asia as an Other, which leads it to establish the key features of its self-constructed identity and select in what features the two agents diverge. The last point rests on the assumption that no single interaction between the actors in world politics can be adopted and analyzed as the only contribution factors that plays an important role in identity construction. As such, the study analyzes Japan’s and South Korean Self within the Central Asian context. If a larger set of relationships and a number of other discourses are to become the subjects of analysis, the probability of identifying several Others who hold different degrees of Otherness and perform divergent roles in identity formation is very plausible. It is important to be careful when analyzing these articulations to acknowledge Otherness in a different guise.

The analysis performed in this work has shown the deeply reflexive nature of the process of identity-construction and identity-transformation, during which the agent in mind identifies and defines the important features for its identity, and also produces a reaction.

Dissecting this process requires a careful and detailed look within, and in this specific case of a political actor the reflexive process can be evaluation one’s behavior in the international community. The principle of post-structuralism in regards to socialization as an essential part of identity construction need to be emphasized.

Given the fact that there is no endogenously formed and sustained identity

actors possess, it is through the process of interactions between different agents how they come to learn about their own identity and equip themselves to be able to assess questions pertaining to their existence.

The selected case studies presented an interesting and insightful avenue for inquiry, as well as illustrated the relevance of and support for applying critical constructivism and utilizing the post-structuralist method of analysis. Discourse analysis to method utilized in this work, allowed to take a closer look to the relevant texts and identify their place in the wider context Japan and South Korea find themselves in.

It is important to note that the data that was collected for the purpose of this research has not been exhausted and presents an opportunity for future academic inquiry. The main contribution of this work is the construction of a solid foundation for further research on Japan's and South Korea's engagements with Central Asia. The work has discovered a few interesting points, which are worth looking into further. For instance, this study could be expanded and deepened by including the relevant discourses found in the Central Asian context. Investigating Central Asia's perspective on its relations with Japan and South Korea would enrich the existing findings and shed light on the observed developments in Japan-CA and South Korea-CA relations.

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