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Japanese Foreign Policy and Neorealism

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JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY AND NEOREALISM

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this project is to analyze the Japanese Foreign Policy as it has been presented after Japan's defeat after the Second World War, having Neorealism as the theoretical framework. In this sense, the hypothesis presented throughout this work suggests that countries like Japan, even when presented at the international arena as peace loving nations, eventually arm themselves to be able to overcome potential threats. In this regard, for this principle belongs to a Neorealist thinking, the first step taken has been to elaborate more on the nature of this theory with the purpose of linking some theoretical concepts to the specific case of Japan. Furthermore, in order to prove correct the aforementioned hypothesis to the case of Japan, three axes have been taken in terms of foreign policy: the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, and both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The reason of choosing these four states is to provide a broader vision on alliances and threats, considering always that Japan has left the safe zone, it wanted to remain at.

## RESUMEN

El propósito principal de este proyecto es analizar la política exterior japonesa como se ha presentado después de la derrota de Japón en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, teniendo al Neorealismo como marco teórico. En este sentido, la hipótesis presentada a lo largo de este trabajo sugiere que países como Japón, aún cuando se presentan frente la arena internacional como estados pacíficos, eventualmente ven la necesidad de armarse para poder enfrentar potenciales amenazas. Por esto, dado que este principio pertenece a un razonamiento neorrealista, el primer paso es profundizar en la naturaleza de esta teoría, con el propósito de relacionar varios conceptos teóricos al caso específico de Japón. Adicionalmente, con el fin de probar la anteriormente mencionada hipótesis aplicada al caso de Japón, tres ejes han sido tomados, en términos de política exterior: los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, la República Popular de China, y ambas la República de Corea y la República Popular Democrática de Corea. La razón por la cual estos cuatro estados han sido escogidos es la de proveer una visión más amplia de las alianzas y amenazas que este país enfrenta, considerando siempre que Japón ha salido de la zona segura en la que ha buscado permanecer siempre.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Within the international system, states present themselves as actors that interact between each other; nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean they want to create an atmosphere of cooperation. In this context, defense and national security have been ever-present components of politics since the emergence of the modern nation-state.<sup>1</sup> It is a fact that even when states defend a liberalist model, applied for their economy, externally their policies seem more properly explained through neorealism. As it can be exacted from the definition provided in the first part of this work, self-interest is in great part what motivates states to exercise their foreign policy; however, this does not mean that they are not willing to create alliances. The difference between creating them, also described as coordination, towards cooperation –which implies states need to give up some of the possible best outcome- needs to be well understood, in order to realize what actually happens in the international arena. At an anarchic international system, states are focused, above all, on their survival; though ironically, great powers have repeatedly formed alliances and initiated all-out wars that put the very survival of their nations at stake when they feel threatened by another state.<sup>2</sup> The end of the rivalry between the former Soviet Union and the United States created a new order in which states are not paranoiac about capitalism/communism in the same way as before, but dynamics are pretty much the same: when a state feels threatened by one or many states, its government starts thinking in terms strengthening defense and national security. Once said this, the following question needs to be considered: Do states ever feel completely safe and out of the scope of any threaten? Even when the international system has tried to create the best platform possible for states to cooperate, this doesn't meet it is efficient. The existence of all kinds of international organizations and the participations of such a large number of states cannot guarantee that states have reached the point where cooperation is stronger than pursuing their own interests, which is what most states – at least the most powerful ones- do even within those international organizations. National interest evolves, consequently, state's foreign policy keeps reinventing itself and, in the aim or pursuing and exercising them

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<sup>1</sup> Hitoshi Abe, Muneyuki Shindo, and Sadafumi Kawato. *The Government and Politics of Japan*. University of Tokyo Press, 1994, p 101.

<sup>2</sup> Hitoshi Abe, Muneyuki Shindo, and Sadafumi Kawato. *The Government and Politics of Japan*. University of Tokyo Press, 1994, p 101.

respectively, there will always be threats for countries to fear about and prepare themselves to defend, or even attack.

Japan is a suitable example of how states are constantly developing ways of protecting themselves from actual or even possible threats, and furthermore, it also serves as a good example of how states always find the way of developing their defense system, even they have renounce to the right to directly do so.

## **2. WHAT SHAPES JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY?**

Nowadays, it becomes evident that Japan is one of the most peace-loving nations in the world; however, this is not only due to the lessons learned after the Second World War, if the fact that many states have started or actively participated in a war again –even after experiencing the devastating effects of it- is taken into account. Actually, what differentiates Japan from states of the nature aforementioned is that it absolutely fears being exposed to any kind of threats that targets its integrity. If stay under the logic on which Neorealism is based, it becomes easy to suggest that the main reason states feel unsafe is because of the actions, or attitudes, other states may have towards them; in this regard, geographical proximity plays a key role. Although the probabilities for territorial disputes to be originators of a massive war are lower than they were in before the Cold War –meaning nowadays it is more common for inter-state conflicts to develop-, they remain a factor that can trigger a conflict over borders, disputed territories, resource management or any reason that countries with geographical proximity may consider relevant; furthermore, independently of the frequency, these type of conflicts prove to be the hardest to solve, and the most likely to create a regional threat.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, it is important to clarify that Japan has no intention of focusing its foreign policy on aggression to any of the states surrounding it; not only because they have renounced their right to as explained through their Constitution, but also because of the fear that arises from the very fact of belonging to such an hostile region. In other words, it would not be necessary for Japan to be one of the parties responsible of starting a conflict for it to be directly affected, and that is what has precisely

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<sup>3</sup> Within the most long-lasting conflicts we have territorial disputes. Israel and Palestine stands as an accurate example of how setting borders and designating territory can serve as obstacles for reaching peace. In the same way, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has involved the rest of neighboring countries, making it evolve to Israeli – Arab conflict; in which countries like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt have played a relevant role. Conflicts like the Indian – Pakistani, or Sudanese – South Sudanese, also lie on the same art of territorial dispute.

helped the emergence of two reactions at this country, that at the same time complement each other: paranoia for other countries' actions and the necessity to assure their security by other terms.

### **3. NEOREALISM: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Neorealism has been a much criticized theory; however, many authors have come to accept that it does not fail in explaining the interaction of states within the international system in a more accurate way than many other theories; or at least, than the counter position expressed through Neoliberalism. In this aspect, Kenneth Waltz and his work have played a key role in developing a theoretical framework that allows Neorealism to present itself as a theory, rather than only as a hypothesis. Before applying those concepts presented by this theory on the specific case of Japan, it is important to develop some of them and explain their individual importance in explaining the behavior and interaction between states in the international system. Some concepts that are cornerstones of realism, and therefore serve as the axes, around which Neorealism develops, are anarchy, self-help, and power balancing.<sup>4</sup> In the aim of providing a better conceptual framework, the three of those concepts will be further explained.

#### ***3.1. Anarchy***

Anarchy remains a main characteristic of the international system within the frame of Neorealism; explaining that there is a big difference between the ordering principles of the national political structure, and the international political structure. International systems are decentralized and anarchic, while domestic political structures have governmental institution and offices as their concrete counterparts.<sup>5</sup> The first term of a structural definition states the principle by which the system is ordered. Structure is an organizational concept. The prominent characteristic of international politics, however, seems to be the lack of order and of organization.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.32.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.32.

“International politics, in contrast, has been called "politics in the absence of government." International organizations do exist, and in ever-growing numbers. Supranational agents able to act effectively, however, either themselves acquire some of the attributes and capabilities of states, as did the medieval papacy in the era of Innocent III, or they soon reveal their inability to act in important ways except with the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the principal states concerned with the matters at hand. Whatever elements of authority emerge internationally are barely once removed from the capability that provides the foundation for the appearance of those elements. Authority quickly reduces to a particular expression of capability. In the absence of agents with system-wide authority, formal relations of super and subordination fail to develop.”<sup>7</sup>

### **3.2 Self-Help**

“States are in anarchy, principle of action is self-help.”<sup>8</sup> States cannot trust each other; therefore, they have their own defense as a major priority. They cannot trust some other state on providing them for all of their security; for example, if State “A” puts its security in the hands of State “B”, there will be a point where State’s A self- interests will be more urgent to treat than those of State’s B, or they could even be contrary. Eventually, every state ends up taking care of its own security; in this regard, Japan will serve as an excellent example further on.

### **3.3 Balancing of Power**

When it comes to analyze the concept of Balance of Power, there is no explanation more accurate than the one provided by Waltz in his book *Theory of International Politics*. It was already mentioned that the international system is anarchic; however, the theory of the balance of power explains how states interact within it. First of all, it is important to consider that “states are unitary actors who seek their own preservation (at a minimum) or who drive for universal domination (at a maximum).”<sup>9</sup> For any of both purposes, balance of power is necessary; States are more likely to survive and not be parties of any major conflict if they have the same amount

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz. *Anarchy and its Consequences*. p 32.

<sup>8</sup> Sagan, S. D. and K. N. Waltz (1995). *The spread of nuclear weapons : a debate*. New York, W.W. Norton. p 1.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley), 1979, p 118

of power that its neighbours. If they are less powerful, other states will perceive them as weak; while if they are more powerful, other states will consider it a threaten and will get prepared for deterrence or defense in case they are needed. In this sense, Waltz recognizes two ways in which states can increase their capabilities: first refers to internal efforts, such as increasing economic capability, increase military size, or develop better military strategies; second refers to external efforts, by building alliances.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Waltz affirms that: “Balance-of-power politics prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.”<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. JAPAN SEEN FROM A NEOREALST PERSPECTIVE

It is a fact that some elements keep changing and evolving at the international system; however, this does not really change itself as a whole. There are big changes, as Waltz says, in the means of transportation, communication, and war fighting; which strongly affect the way states interact, influence or even affect others.<sup>12</sup> Not diminishing the importance of the first two elements mentioned, the way countries exercise their foreign policy is strongly shaped by the way war fighting evolves throughout time, for it is strongly related to power exercise, and as a consequence, national security and interests. In this regard, Japan plays an indisputably important role in an era that has been the scenario of the most drastic changes within international security measures. In relation, Waltz expresses:

“In modern history, or perhaps in all of history, the introduction of nuclear weaponry was the greatest of such changes. Yet in the nuclear era, international politics remains a self-help arena. Nuclear weapons decisively change how some states provide for their own and possibly for others’ security; but nuclear weapons have not altered the anarchic structure of the international political system.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley), 1979, Pg 118

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley), 1979, Pg 121

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.1

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.1

Having the incursion of nuclear weaponry considered as one of the most significant alterations of the international system, it becomes necessary to discuss what are some of the consequences that its use brought to the way countries interact. First of all, it is in place to mention that the measure in which countries feel safe in relation to their similar others escalated to another level after the Second World War. It is a reality nowadays that states feel safer under the possession of nuclear armament; furthermore, they see in that an effective way of setting limits to their enemies action. Evidence is abundant to prove that, indeed, having military arsenals that include nuclear weapons has helped states to create an atmosphere of stability that was not as clear before they started arming themselves in a nuclear way. Following this logic, it is important to mention that, although the United States remains the most powerful country in the system, when considering nuclear capabilities, this can be claimed to have a multi-polar nature. For this reason, competition presents a different facet between countries; these are not tangibly competing against each other to eliminate enemies, but rather they are plunged into a competition of increasing their nuclear arsenals, and consequently, their national security.

“Competition in multi-polar systems is more complicated than competition in bipolar ones because uncertainties about the comparative capabilities of states multiply as numbers grow, and because estimates of the cohesiveness and strength of coalitions are hard to make.”<sup>14</sup>

It has been frequently claimed that the possession of nuclear arsenals have taken the international system to stand on the cliff to a disaster never seen before. But, as Waltz would say, it helps creating a balance of power, and “the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system.”<sup>15</sup> In this regard, it becomes easy to understand that the ultimate goal of states is not necessarily to make use of these weapons, but rather to put themselves at the same level of power of those countries that have acquire them first. States arm themselves when feel they are in a zone of threaten; mistrust and fear impulse most of their actions, and the necessity of feeling protected to confront those threats leads to them acquiring arms –not only or necessarily nuclear weapons-. Based on this, the case of Japan will be

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.1

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.126

analyzed, by, at the same time, studying its alliances, its approaches towards security, and its performance at the international scenario.

Having said that, the vital importance of analyzing the case of Japan lies in four main premises: First, it is the only country that has experienced the devastating effects of being the target of a nuclear attack; second, has formally renounced its right to go to war; third, as a consequence, has put its security in other state's hand, and fourth, has proven to be in the necessity to change the third one, and therefore affect the second one. As following, all four of these points will be developed.

## **5. THE UNITED STATES: AN ALLY AND A SHIELD**

When the Second World War was over, the situation did not only change for the defeated nations, meaning Germany, Italy and Japan, but for the international order itself. Neorealism affirms that the nature of the international systems always remains the same; what does change is who is playing what role within it. There is always the presence of the most prominent powers in it, and after World War II it was the United States turn, for having been the main responsible of the victory of the Allies. This country, undoubtedly, drawing on its immense economic power, but most of all, its military leadership, established the political structure known as the Pax Americana among the capitalist democracies.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, this was too exclusive to be considerate the reality of the whole globe. After this big scale war, for the fortune of human kind and nations, there has never been the presence of such a big broken out conflict, though, when talking about risk caused by rivalries, the Cold War has been the closest to create a similar catastrophe. And although the Cold War managed to polarize almost the whole globe, there were other conflicts going on that contribute to the evolution that the international order was presenting. With these precedents and with the Asian region not precisely being the most powerful one, Japan's foreign policy lost its autonomy,-at the same time leaving behind the aggressive and expansionist character that predominated in its actions for so long- and it had no more choice that succumbing under the willing of the United States.

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<sup>16</sup> Hitoshi Abe, Muneyuki Shindo, and Sadafumi Kawato. *The Government and Politics of Japan*. University of Tokyo Press, 1994, p 101.

In order to understand the turn that Japan's foreign policy gave, it is necessary to mention Article 9 of its Constitution, also known as the Peace Constitution and redacted under American occupation, which states as follows:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat to use of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”<sup>17</sup>

History proves that the creation of this Constitution was the formal expression that accompanied the actual desire of Japan to never again put its people in the position of being the target of devastating attacks from countries like the United States, which determination of using nuclear bombs devastated the Japanese population. By letting the Americans being responsible of the reemergence of Japan and deciding the future that this nation would have as a new democracy, both countries started one of the most long-lasting security alliances in modern history. Alliances were the only option left for Japan to defend and protect itself, in a moment where it was not allowed to develop its own military force. Moreover, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security was signed in Washington on January 19, 1960, which establishes that both parties assumed an obligation to assist each other in case of armed attack on territories under Japanese administration; it was understood, though, that Japan could not come to the defense of the United States because it was constitutionally forbidden to send armed forces overseas.<sup>18</sup>

Although authors from both the United States and Japan have looked to describe the relations between both countries as one very stable, this has not necessarily being the case. Security has undoubtedly shape this relation; this automatically implies that because both states feel their security is threatened, they form an alliance to diminish the risks. Nonetheless, this does not mean that they would stop pursuing their self-interest above all things.

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<sup>17</sup> Hitoshi Abe, Muneyuki Shindo, and Sadafumi Kawato. *The Government and Politics of Japan*. University of Tokyo Press, 1994, p 102.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . *Japan: A country Study*. Washington DC, 1992. p 388



First of all, it is important to mention that the alliance between American and Japanese cannot be seen as an unbalanced one, where the United States results as the strong one. It is a fact that Japan was facing a terrible position after the Second World War was over, but, in the same way, it has to be acknowledged that it recovered from it as only few states have. In this context, it becomes evident that not only that the United States had to be in charge of Japan's security after its own initiative of making Japan quit their arms, but quickly the Americans started seeing in Japan as their best, and powerful –not in terms of arms- ally in Asia. Japan's economy started experiencing an outstanding growth, which gave it back his important role at the international level, just in other terms. This was something that the U.S could not afford to ignore. “Japan- United States relations improved enormously in the 1970s and 1980s, as the two societies and economies became increasingly intertwined. In 1990 their combined gross national product (GNP) totaled about one third of the world's GNP.”<sup>19</sup> It is not the purpose of this section to deeply describe the economic relations that both countries sustained, but rather to focus in the political and security relations that had to overcome ups and downs that their economic relations faced.

As mentioned before, and as both the United States and Japan seemed to fully understand, the security alliance would always have priority over economic and other disputes. Therefore, even if Americans and Japanese had experiment some distancing in different points of history, they have also proven to stick together when security matters have merit it. The Soviet Union serves as a good axis to analyze this. There is no need to go into the rivalry between The United States and the Soviet Union in any depth, but it is necessary to mention that its presence in Europe and Asia was a threaten for both Japanese and American.

“In the late 1980s, the breakup of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and the growing preoccupation of Soviet leaders with massive internal political and economic difficulties forced the Japanese and United States governments to reassess their longstanding alliance against the Soviet threat”<sup>20</sup>

It is important to mention that not only the United States perceived socialist Soviet Union as a geographical enemy, but so did Japan following its new democratic tradition, especially

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 384

<sup>20</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 385

when the Soviets started expanding their sphere of influences to East Asia, specifically Vietnam. In the same way, the Soviet Union perceived Japan and the United States as a threat to its purpose of expanding; therefore, it positioned forces against them in the Pacific. In relation to this, Japanese and Americans stressed that “until Moscow followed its moderation in Europe with major demobilization and reductions in its forces positioned against the United States and Japan in the Pacific, Washington and Tokyo needed to remain militarily prepared and vigilant.”<sup>21</sup> This, as aforementioned, was also an alert state towards Vietnam, and of course the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea); which could result as potentially disrupted forces.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, some United States officials noted that the alliance helped keep Japan’s potential military power in check and under the supervision of the United States.<sup>23</sup> The rapidity with which Japan’s economy was growing was, undeniably, a matter of concern for the United States, since they knew Japan had what was necessary to get away of American hands. Although Japan and the United States were just as affected of the leadership that the Soviet Union was acquiring in the region, the United States started to also feel threatened by the economic growth that Japan was experimenting. In spite of this, Japan kept considering the United States as the principal guardian of their external security; but it has to be taken into consideration that there has always been pressure exercised by the Japanese left-wing against military dependence on the United States, especially in regards to American military bases functioning in Japanese territory. In these terms, the alliance between both countries continued, but it was more evident than ever before it was maintained as a coordination of efforts and shared interest. Both states were aware of their strengthen, but so were they of the strengthen of the other one. Notwithstanding, things were about to change for both countries.

When the Soviet Union sunk, so did the idea built around Socialism. For this reason, as it has happened in every chapter of American history related to foreign policy, the United States was in the search of its new enemy. This, of course, affected the relation existent between Washington and Tokyo; as it is logical, if East Asia was not anymore number one in the list of critical regions for the U.S., Japan was immediately also left behind in some extent. “The political issues between the two countries were essentially security-related and derived from

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<sup>21</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 386

<sup>22</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 386

<sup>23</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 386

efforts by the United States to induce Japan to contribute more to its own defense and to regional security.”<sup>24</sup> The United States saw itself in the position to attend other issues in different regions; during the 1980s the American interest would be concentrated in the Middle East, for what it needed Japan to be more self-sufficient in the East Asian region. The United States found itself in the position, where it needed –and therefore requested– Japan to increase their military expenditure; and at the same time, Japan felt the necessity to look for protection independence, since the United State was absolutely still trying to defend its own interest, but somewhere else. For this reason, Japan –in spite of the clear constitutional obstacle and a pacifist general thinking and public opinion– decided to accelerate the buildup of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF).<sup>25</sup>

It is important to stress that Japan was –and still is– considered as the best ally the United States could have in the whole Asian region; however, the course of events just highlighted the necessity for both countries to separately attend their foreign issues. Once again, Neorealism emphasizes that elites pursue their own interests, and that these interests are often defined in terms of keeping power.<sup>26</sup> Having the United States precisely pursuing that, Japan had to develop what is known nowadays as a comprehensive security and defense strategy to safeguard peace; policy under which Japan sought to place its relations with the U.S on a new footing –one of close cooperation but on a more reciprocal and autonomous basis, and on a global scale.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, Japan starts presenting itself as a rather peace-loving power to the world, and exercises and assures its security by creating goodwill. For Japan:

“The answer lies in several responses: a demonstration of a more open home market (a willingness to take as well as give), greater real participation in multilateral institutions, a continued reassurance that Japan is not a military threat, and a large effort to participate in humanitarian activities around the world to demonstrate that Japan is a benevolent power.”<sup>28</sup>

It is hard to imagine a scenario where Japan has the intention to return to the militarism that characterized its foreign policy during the 1930s, but it is also hard to imagine any country

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<sup>24</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 389

<sup>25</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 390

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.173

<sup>27</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 390

<sup>28</sup> Edward J. Lincoln. Japan’s New Global Role. Washington DC, 1993, p 14

not falling the natural course of international relations and their dynamics that does not need to defend itself and that is willing to present itself as undefended, despite of being considered a power as Japan is. The Japanese have truly proved to be disciplined in the sense that they have not violated what is stipulated in the Constitution, in order to exercise their security matters. In relation to this, the best example is the deployment of Peacekeeping Operations, of course under the United Nations mandate, that count on a vast number of Japanese personnel. This step, taken in 1992, does not necessarily lead to eventual alteration of the constitution, since Japan is not attacking any country, but rather participating in different activities related to the re-establishment of peace in the name of the international community.<sup>29</sup> If Japan maintains its role in the international arena as a nation that never fails to engage in humanitarian activities, and keeps providing contributions for natural disaster reliefs, public health and education work in developing countries, refugee work, and food and medical assistance to the victims of conflict through the world, as it has been doing until now; many would claim that Japan would not have the necessity to consider going to conventional militarism. However, this would definitely not be enough to prevent a possible crisis in the Korean Peninsula, situation that will be described in other section.

By Japan looking for some military independence, it did not stop believing that the United States was his best ally in the whole world. Therefore, the Japanese saw as a priority to keep defending its best interests in the American politics scenario, and managed to direct American efforts to Japanese efforts. As a consequence, at the end of the 1980s Japanese politicians where asking each other: “We have Carter and Reagan. Now who can buy Bush?”<sup>30</sup> It is well known that politics in the United States obey to the intentions that a specific lobby, or more, may have; however, the great influence that the Japanese lobby exercised has widely been overshadowed by similar organizations, just to mention some, the Jewish and even the Arab ones. Facts like that:

“Japan has been the largest spender on identifiable lobbying activity in Washington since 1984. [...] by 1988, Japanese entities were spending a conservatively estimated 310

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<sup>29</sup> Edward J. Lincoln. *Japan's New Global Role*. Washington DC, 1993, p 14

<sup>30</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 221

million dollar a year, not including advertising, in shaping and guiding the overall American decision-making system. This spending has continued to escalate rapidly.”<sup>31</sup>

have been widely ignored; adding that most Americans believe their government is still in a position to shape Japan and its policies but that it simply has not found the right formula.<sup>32</sup> The self-sufficiency that the United State was once expecting from Japan became something real, and the Japanese government became also really good at looking for their self-interest, and even sometimes turned to the Americans for a better accomplishment of them. But as said before, Japan is not the only country that uses lobbying to get concrete results, so, in this sense, it is important to specify what makes it different than the rest of lobbies: “Japan has become increasingly sophisticated in using its direct investments and American technological and financial dependencies on Japan to shape the U.S political climate.”<sup>33</sup> This is the bargaining chip that even Israelis, who count on one of the most effective lobbies worldwide, do not have; for as much as Japan has benefited from economic close ties with the United States, so has this country from technological advances that Japan has developed faster than any other nation. In this regard, many could argue that there is not a necessary connection between economic relations and security and political matters; however, Neorealism allows us to see that alliances –as ephemeral, unstable, and selfish as they can be- just work as long as the parties maintain their self-interest covered. In fact, as Waltz would sustain: “In a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gains to political interest.”<sup>34</sup> For this reason, it does not matter if, in this case, Japan is using economic and technological measures to accomplish its political purposes because what the United States receives in both areas is considered to be critical. Looking at the following example will help understand better this reasoning:

“The classic case was the Toshiba machine flap in 1987 and 1988. Toshiba beat what appeared to be a clear majority in the U.S. Congress that wanted to impose tough sanctions against it for the shipment of submarine propellers-making equipment to the Soviets. By using a combination of grass-roots politicking and Washington lobbying, Toshiba was able to escape with only minor damage. Whether it was wise to penalize

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<sup>31</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 222

<sup>32</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 221

<sup>33</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 232

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p 107.

Toshiba or not it beside the point. Toshiba, backed by the rest of Japan's influence network and coached by some of Washington's top political experts, was able to identify companies, plant managers, suppliers, and other Americans who would suffer if Toshiba were penalized"<sup>35</sup>

As a conclusion, we can say that the relations between the United States and Japan have strongly evolved throughout the years, and –when looking from a Neorealist perspective- it is not necessarily an interaction that puts one of the parties in disadvantage; especially Japan as many would think. Although after the Second World War Japan could not afford to isolate from the United States, the evident relation of interdependence created during the 40s has been affected by many changes. Nowadays, we can still observe that security issues are a big priority for both states; nonetheless, they solve them in a more equitable base. It is important that states do not decide to do it so, as liberalism for example would sustain; on the other side, states want to avoid as much as possible to depend on some other state to accomplish their best interests. However, this does not mean that they do not interact with each other, in the case they where cooperation can lead them to accomplish their ultimate goal. And, if so, it is important to mention that any goal is valid, as well as any measure is valid, to accomplish the cooperation from the other part. As Waltz states:

“One must wonder whether economic interdependence is more effect than cause. Internally, interdependence becomes so close that integration is the proper word to describe it. Interdependence becomes integration because internally the expectation that peace will prevail and order will be preserved is high. Externally, goods and capital flow freely where peace among countries appears to be reliably established. Interdependence, like integration, depends on other conditions. It is more a dependent than an independent variable. States, if they can afford to, shy away from becoming excessively dependent on goods and resources that may be denied them in crisis and wars. States take measures, such as Japan's managed trade, to avoid excessive dependence on others.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 222

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p.8

Japan and the United States still have many strategic points, where both of them need the involvement of the other. A good example is the possibility of the Korean Peninsula to succumb to the possibility of a crisis, that would highly threaten Japan's security; or, in the same way, a rapprochement from Americans and Chinese, or Russians, which would definitely preoccupy Japan. Under the administration of Barak Obama, it has been expressed several times the necessity from his country to come closer together with both nations, meaning that there is always the possibility for the United States to be opened for cooperation with Russia and China if that increases the chances for it to accomplish its objectives, even if that puts Japan in an uncomfortable situation. It is important to consider that it has happened before in the history of U.S – Japan relations that both countries have turned to a third country that puts the alliance in risk. However, that is the way countries interact in the international system, and self-interest will always prevail. Finally, there are many ways to explain why the United States, when being the most powerful country, has had trouble to maintain Japan's policies under its control; first it must be considered that the traditional instruments that the U.S once used to cajole and prod Japan have declined in their effectiveness, while the Japan's ability to inverse those action has increased exponentially.<sup>37</sup> Second:

“To manage the Americans, the Japanese have promoted the development of an impressive intellectual and political edifice in the United States. Although other nations have also played the influence game, Japan's is the broadest, most sustained, and most richly endowed effort the Americans have witnessed.”<sup>38</sup>

Third, and probably most importantly, the Japanese government has learned immensely important lessons after the Second World War was over about how to deal with the rest of the world without a military option, as the vast majority of countries do; therefore, it has realized that its relation to the United States can also be fruitful for them, as long as the U.S is conscious of how much it needs Japan on its side.

## **6. JAPAN AND CHINA'S NEVER ENDING STRUGGLE**

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<sup>37</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 222

<sup>38</sup> William J. Holstein. *The Japanese Power Game: What it means for Americans*. New York, 1990, p 222

Japan and China have always exercised influence on each other; even long before existing as the modern states we know nowadays. However, “the priority that policy toward China has commanded in Japanese foreign affairs has varied over time.”<sup>39</sup> There are a very large number of aspects that define the nature of the relation between these states; nevertheless, for this paper, only those related to security will be taken into account.

First of all, it is important to consider that after the Second World War, China’s perception of Japan is mostly shaped after the Japanese’s close relation to the United States. Although China and Japan have more cultural proximity than Japan will ever have to the United States, in terms of ideology and political system Japan was expected to see China with rivalry, just as the United States would see any communist country. Nevertheless, proving Neorealism right once more, in what regards to regional stability, both China and Japan have successfully left their disparities aside and pursued their common interest; taking into account that it has been within their best interest and capabilities to do so. A good example to support this idea is the drifting apart that the Soviet Union experienced with China, in spite of their ideological proximity, and the way China found the necessity to see an ally in Japan and do not allow the Soviets to predominate in the region. “The growth of Soviet military power in East Asia in the early 1980s prompted them [the Chinese] to consult with Japan more frequently on security issues and to pursue parallel foreign policies designed to check Soviet influence and promote regional stability.”<sup>40</sup> Japan, as well as China, felt uncomfortable with Soviet presence in the Asian region, which historically has been a sphere of influence principally for the Chinese. But this fear only intensified when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, event that directly affected the Persian Gulf oils supply routes and affected both countries; which were experiencing vast industrialization and economic growth.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the influence of the Soviet Union became a threat for Chinese and Japanese when it increased its military presence throughout the continent, especially in Vietnam.<sup>42</sup>

“In response, Japan and China adopted strikingly complementary foreign policies, designed to isolate the Soviet Union and its allies politically and to promote regional

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<sup>39</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 303

<sup>40</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 397

<sup>41</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 398

<sup>42</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 398



stability. In Southeast Asia, both countries provided strong diplomatic backing for the efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to bring about a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. Japan cut off all economic aid to Vietnam and provided substantial economic assistance to Thailand to help with resettling Indochinese refugees. China was a key supporter of Thailand and of the Cambodian resistance groups. In Southeast Asia, both nations backed the condemnation of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, refused to recognize the Soviet-backed Kabul regime, and sought through diplomatic and economic means to bolster Pakistan. In Northeast Asia, Japan and China sought to moderate the behavior of their Korean partners – South Korea and North Korea, respectively- to reduce tensions. In 1983 both China and Japan strongly criticized the Soviet proposal to redeploy some of their European- based SS – 20 missiles to Asia.”<sup>43</sup>

In this regard, if history would have stopped in the 1980s, it could be stated that Japan and China established close cooperation and coordination ties, and had the best interest on staying allies. However, it is important to analyze the real nature of the alliance between both countries. There is nothing that States fear more than having their integrity attacked, which implies that they would make anything possible to prevent this from happening. On a general basis –of course there are exceptions- states, just as human beings, have a memory that leads them to avoid repeating experiences from the past; in relation to this, it is important to mention that enough wars took place between China and Japan in the past. Additionally, the atmosphere of Southeast Asia at that moment could not lead to any better ending if both countries would not decide to jointly counteract the spread of the Soviets in the region. But once the common threat disappeared, mostly due to the reasons exposed before and to the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the interaction between Japan and China went back to normal and they both turned to their allies, which were not called so by default like in the case of both of these countries.

“Japanese leaders – like West European and United States leaders- were careful not to isolate China, and continued trade and other relations generally consistent with the policies of other industrialized democracies. But they also followed the United States lead in limiting economic relations notably advantageous to China.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 398

<sup>44</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 398

Notwithstanding, just as China is a state that Japan has to be alert of, is China the responsible of the United States feeling the same necessity. Before deepening on this relation, it is important to consider two facts: First, China and the United States have perceived each other as potential threats throughout history; ideologically speaking, both countries have considered each other as a reason of paranoia, and are globally considered the heads of two rival blocs. Second, despite how different the U.S is from China –not only domestically, but also internationally- both governments have proven to be aware of how strategically important is for them to form an alliance in relation to certain topics. This inevitably causes that the way the United States approaches to China does not always depends on or considers the interest of Japan as a priority. Some occasions in the past help supporting the fact that the United States cannot afford just having Japan as an ally in the region; therefore it has found itself in the necessity of coming closer to South Korea, many countries in the South East Asia region, and even China. Japan's position to the United States' action in this sense can be understood by the following example:

“In July 1971, the Japanese government was surprised by Nixon's dramatic announcement of his forthcoming visit to the People's Republic of China. Many Japanese were chagrined by the failure of the United States to consult in advance with Japan before making such a fundamental change in foreign policy.”<sup>45</sup>

Undoubtedly, this marks a point of inflexion in the relations between Tokyo and Washington, which until now were experiencing no major problems. However, what is relevant to this part of the paper is how the United States getting closer to China had an effect in making Japan get closer to China, too; by setting a precedent in which self-interest, balance of power and anarchy end up shaping a state's behavior more than other factors.

An aspect that is worth of mention is that Japan and China have, for several times in history, grown apart and then come closer together again; examples that support this are the Tiananmen Square incident in Beijing in 1989, as well as how the Chinese have managed the situation with Taiwan and Tibet, respectively. But it is also important to mention that, in spite of all the instability that these incidents may cause, states at the end find themselves creating

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<sup>45</sup> Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden . Japan: A country Study. Washington DC, 1992. p 399

alliances that prove to be temporarily useful, and there is always the possibility on the table for them to end and begin again. This, show us that the international arena works under a dynamic of self-help, and that states will do anything they need to fulfill their interest; it does not matter if this are long or short-lasting.

It is no within the goals of this paper to give a historical description of the relations between these two countries, but rather to explain how having so geographically close an state like China, has contributed to the decision Japan has taken of turning to a strengthening of its military situation.

To describe the way Japan and China interact, it is necessary first to understand that the constant changes of position these two states have experienced are because they do not voluntarily want to cooperate with each other; but rather they have found each other in the position where they have to. The United States has played a crucial role in this, but even without its presence, Chinese and Japanese have extremely different postures in relation to their foreign policies. In the same way, they do not have the same interests always within the Asian region, which has definitely led to moments of big instability. A good example is the Korean War when:

“A Chinese volunteer force prevented UN forces under the leadership of the United States from claiming victory in the Korean War, which could have resulted in the unification of the peninsula by South Korea. It also is probable that without the U.S. defense commitment, Taiwan would have been taken over by the PRC.<sup>46</sup>

In this context, Japan’s insecurity towards China –responsible of what many authors call the ‘remilitarization’ of Japan- relies on two main facts: the fear Japan has of China going against it, taking into account it is a more powerful country, and the immense growth China has been experiencing, as well as how this could affect within the region.

Japan was a key contributor to the take off of China’s economic development; in fact: “toward the end of the 1970s, China expressed readiness to accept direct loans from the Japanese government on concessionary terms to finance various projects in key sectors of the Chinese

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<sup>46</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century, Washington DC, 2003, p 97

economy. This marked a fundamental change in relations between Japan and China.”<sup>47</sup> The Japanese, who based their economy on liberal principles, and whose economic growth was so prosperous that they could afford providing development cooperation throughout the region, did not feel comfortable with China’s economy shooting up. Furthermore, the aid provided by the Japanese government did not only come in the form of loans, but also through the Official Development Agency, letting Japan extend their sphere of influence based on development. And even when this type of aid is directed to useful projects –and taking into account that development aid has served Japan very well as a bargaining chip with many other states- the following has become a subject of discussion in Japan:

“In essence, it asserts that Japan should stop giving large amounts of ODA to China for three reasons: First, giving China economic assistance is tantamount to subsidizing the massive buildup of its military sector, which increasingly is becoming a threat to Japan’s security. Second, China gives assistance to many other developing countries, and there is no need to assist any country that can afford to assist others. Third, China does not appreciate Japan’s assistance.”<sup>48</sup>

All three reasons are issues the Japanese government is aware of; nevertheless, cutting off aid to China would definitely not put Japan in a better position. First of all, although many of the aid provided by Japan has been designated to military spend, this must not be misunderstood, in the sense that China would still be able to develop their military force without Japan’s aid. Additionally, it is no within the Japanese general behavior to deny assistance to any country; in this case, China evidently still needs to develop more, for it would not go according to Japanese foreign policy to cancel it in the case of China. If we go beyond this, we can see that there is evidently a *mis-appreciation* from China towards Japan’s financial and development assistance. And the fact that China does not approach to Japan in the same way it does to other allies puts Japan in a situation where it knows it has to be prepared to any unexpected change of policy. Best example of how China keeps teasing Japan is the islands issue, where both claim them. In the case a conflict would break because of those islands, Japan is obviously less prepared than

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<sup>47</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century, Washington DC, 2003, p 98

<sup>48</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century, Washington DC, 2003, p 101-102

China to fight a territorial war. In this regard, China has abused Japan's fear for even getting close to such a situation, and therefore, does not really see Japan as much of a menace, unless the United States would be strongly involved. Consequently, a Japanese change of policy, and the possible nuclearization of its defense system, would undoubtedly change China's perception on Japan.

## **7. THE FEAR OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

In terms of geopolitics and security, the Korean Peninsula remains the most critical region for Japanese security. And although this is not a reality that only started to develop in recent times, but rather has been going on and changing for more than a thousand years; nowadays the threat that instability in this region presents has been a cause for Japanese paranoia. In this part of the essay, the options that Japan has to deal with the always existent possibility of a crisis in the Korean Peninsula will be analyzed, taking also into account the influence that other actors, such as the United States, exercise. For example:

“During the cold war, all the major powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, and China—were aware that the outbreak of another war in the Korean Peninsula could ignite a third world war; therefore, they dealt with the peninsula cautiously. In a sense, the cold war ensured the status quo. South and North Korea competed against each other to improve their relative standing in the international community, with the full backing of their respective allies.”<sup>49</sup>

As mentioned before, both Korea and Japan have had ongoing relations for long ago; in fact, after Japan occupied the Peninsula it was a whole challenge for its politicians to try to establish diplomatic relations with both Korea, when they could always play the card of past occupation. However, nowadays, we can see that North Korea has remained more of an issue to Japan than South Korea, for the last mentioned and Japan have one threat to deal with in

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<sup>49</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 76

common, being this, precisely, North Korea and its advanced military resources. Nevertheless, North Korea's willingness to continue with its military and nuclear program is not the only obstacle that make relations with Japan difficult to come to normality; for this reason, other factors will be analyzed first, in the aim of creating a broader scenario.

“North Korea's stunning admission in 2002 of its past abduction of many innocent Japanese and its clandestine development of nuclear weapons reminded the Japanese people of the stark reality that the divided Korean Peninsula remains a serious challenge to the security of Japan.”<sup>50</sup>

After the Second World War was over, and as stated throughout this paper, Japan had a major change in its foreign policy and decided that pursuing friendly and stable relations with all countries was in its best interest. Though, it is also important to remember that even if states establish relations between each other, this does not mean they would always prefer to defend their own interests, even if that affects or deteriorates the relation they have with determinate country. In the case of Japan, we can see that some issues have remained unresolved in relation to its neighbours; North Korea and the abduction of Japanese citizens is one of the best examples. And although it remains a priority for Japan to contribute and assure the stability in the Korean Peninsula, it has encountered many difficulties in coming to better terms with North Korea because of this matter. Taking into account that “in part because of North Korea's refusal to address squarely the issue of its abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s, no progress was achieved throughout the 1990s,”<sup>51</sup> it has also delayed the possible achievement of instability in the Peninsula. And starting from the point that Japan fears, probably more than any other state, a possible breakout of war in the Peninsula, it needs to be explained why it has not being able to leave aside the abduction issue to fully normalize its relations with the DPRK.

As Yutaka Kawashima, former vice president of Foreign Affairs of Japan, states, the abduction issue has several unique features:

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<sup>50</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 73

<sup>51</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 81

“First, the abduction of innocent foreign nationals by a state agent—and the possible killing of some of them—could be regarded as *casus belli* under traditional international law. Because it could lead to war, and because the perpetrating state is likely to be severely condemned by the international community, such crimes have seldom been committed.”<sup>52</sup>

In this regard, if it would not be for the fact that military retaliation obviously was out of the question for Japan, abduction of citizens would make any state – in possibilities to- take military actions in response to such a crime. Such actions would possibly start a crisis in the Korean Peninsula –which does not seem an ideal scenario for Japan of nowadays- but that is probably what any state would react like in a similar situation. In this context, Japan has been in the necessity to always look for options to engage North Korea “in such a way that it would realize that resolving the abduction issue was in its own interest.”<sup>53</sup> It is important to mention that the United States and South Korea have also found itself in the same position of finding a bargaining chip they can use to make North Korea realize it needed to quit being a threat to the region, and even the world. One initiative that serves as an example to show the recurrent efforts of Americans, Japanese, and South Koreans is the following:

“In the event, in the mid-1990s, KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) was founded jointly by the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan to implement the light-water project, and it became an important forum for engaging North Korea. The ROK agreed to bear roughly three-quarters of the construction costs of the reactor, while Japan expressed its readiness to contribute roughly U.S.\$1 billion. Initially it was argued that by the time the project was completed, the peninsula would be united, and therefore the project would not entail a loss of money for the ROK. It is not clear whether that argument had any impact on the ROK’s decision-making.”<sup>54</sup>

But despite of this efforts, North Korea did not fixed in its totally the abduction issue –as Japan it expected, neither did it stop its nuclear program as the United States, Japan, South Korea

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<sup>52</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 81

<sup>53</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 82

<sup>54</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 79

and the rest of the world it wanted. In this point it is necessary to examine what would actually mean for North Korea to possess a nuclear arsenal? A report carried out by the Department of Defense of the United States correctly developed an hypothesis based on North Korea's army empowering itself with Weapons of Mass Destruction being the perfect instigator for another war in the Peninsula, which could be even more disastrous than the Korean War. Additionally, this report suggested that "the possession of weapons of mass destruction by North Korea could disrupt the precarious balance of power in the peninsula."<sup>55</sup> It has been mentioned before at this paper the importance of balance of power, for there to put states at the same level of power and, consequently, reduce the risk for a conflict to break out; therefore, for North Korea to have Weapons of Mass Destruction also meant for it to create an unbalance of power in relation to South Korea, and of course Japan, that only counts with the right to defend itself in case other state would attack its territory. However, there is no way to exercise defense in response to a Nuclear attack, unless it is also based on the use of nuclear weapon, creating a conflict of an scale the international community has never experienced before in history. This is why Japan, as much as possible, has avoided coming to any kind of disagreement with North Korea that could lead to an escalation of already existent tensions; nonetheless, this has not been the same attitude North Korea has been having towards Japan. Indeed, "in 1998 North Korea conducted a test launch of a Taepodong missile over Japan, igniting serious alarm among the Japanese."<sup>56</sup> This action mostly led to three important reactions from the Japanese: first, they found themselves in the necessity of enforcing its alliance to the Americans and the South Koreans more than ever before; second, they realized the necessity of finding a way to -at least temporarily- control the North Koreans; and third, they started considering developing their own defense security system, in case North Korea would actually attack them.

In relation to the first one, there have always been two scenarios possible. For the first one, although every time less and less viable, if North Korea decides to give up its development of Weapons of Mass destruction and eventually to get rid of the arsenal they already have developed and ready to be used; then Japan, in alliance with the United States and South Korea would pursue more than ever before to improve their respective relations to the DPRK. This

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<sup>55</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 80

<sup>56</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 79



would, logically, have different implications for each of the 3 allies, but in general terms we could say that -in the best case scenario- it would benefit everyone with instability. For the second scenario, which is more realistic and is actually part of what has been happening until now, North Korea will persist along its provocative path, and Japan, the U.S. and South Korea would have to take steps to ensure their security and contain the threat.<sup>57</sup> Referring to the alliance created between these three states, the report aforementioned sustained the following:

“In fact, the most commendable achievement with regard to the security of the peninsula in the 1990s was the close consultation and cooperation among the three countries in grappling with the newly emerging challenges of WMD development by North Korea. Before that, there had been no such endeavor among the three, partly because the security situation was more predictable during the cold war and because the political climate in both Japan and the ROK was not ripe for such a close tripartite working relationship.”<sup>58</sup>

In relation to the second topic to be treated, which makes allusion to Japan having to temporarily find the way to control North Korea’s action, it is necessary to elaborate on the assistance provided by Japan. It is not a secret that North Korean people have been affronting a food crisis for long enough to have hundreds of thousands to die of starvation; as it is not a secret that the dynastic-authoritarian government has had as a priority the military spend over any other kind of necessities the population may have. In this context, Japan has provided the North Korean Government with uncountable assistance, but this has been perceived in many different ways. First, there has always been the fear present that giving financial assistance to North Korea’s government had the risk of it spending it for its military, in which case Japan would be subsidizing those efforts that, at the end, threaten it and the whole region. On the other side, Japan managed to notice that:

“food assistance could serve a strategic interest as well, because it would reduce the possibility of a major upheaval in the North triggered by the deteriorating food supply

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<sup>57</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 80

<sup>58</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 79-80

and of ensuing chaos in the peninsula. It would be safer to avoid such an event if at all possible.”<sup>59</sup>

Going even deeper than that, Japan realized that providing assistance to North Korea would not only increase the possibilities for its government to be willing to treat the abduction issue, but; furthermore, it would for the first time give the DPRK a reason for them to have something to lose if they keep provoking Japan. This, but no means, restores the balance of power between both of them, but temporarily creates a relation where both benefit if they stay in good terms. In this point, and before treating the third topic, it is important to mention what would be the possible scenarios under which North Korea would consider necessary to directly attack Japan. As Kawashima states: “Because of the two nations’ history, and geographical proximity, developments on the Korean Peninsula always touch a raw nerve in Japan. In that, the Korean issue is unique in Japanese foreign policy.”<sup>60</sup> This is important because, before analyzing the direct threats to Japan, it must be bear in mind that:

“There is a possibility that North Korea is trying to reach out in some bizarre way to the rest of the world, notably to the United States for a guarantee of survival and to Japan for massive economic assistance. Once again, the stakes for South Korea, the United States, and Japan in maintaining their solidarity are very high.”<sup>61</sup>

But even for the same reason, Japan could be the perfect target for North Korea to attack in case t wants to go against the United States, and even against the West; in the sense Japan is much more perceived as western. However, the most logical explanation of why would North Korea not stop provoking Japan –and South Korea in the same nature- is that it counts on the military force to make a country that cannot use force feel intimidated, and even more after the experiences Japan has already gone through during the Second World War. There is no more realist behavior than menacing a neighboring country with the purpose of assuring a state’s survival and that’s exactly what the North Koreans have chosen as the main component of their foreign policy towards Japan, a state that is key in providing North Korea with food and

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<sup>59</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 83

<sup>60</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 73

<sup>61</sup> Yutaka Kawashima. *Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for the Twenty-First Century*, Washington DC, 2003, p 74

assistance, and that also happens to be scared of what could happen. This, although has worked for the DPRK until now, may seem to change with the new desire for Japan to use nuclear technology as a mechanism of defense, which is precisely the third point, but a whole section will be dedicated to this topic at section number 9.

## **8. WHY HAS THE DEMOCRATIC PEACE THEORY FAILED IN EXPLAINING JAPAN?**

The end of the Cold war is historically also presented as the start of a new democratic wave. In this sense, many hypothesis and theories started to be developed, with the purpose of explaining the new way states, as democracies, interact to each other within the international system. Nevertheless, Japan is an example of early democratization, as a consequence of its defeat by the United States and the Allies, already after the Second World War. Accordingly, Japan resulted from this war as a totally despondent nation, which had no more option but to surrender under the United States intention of shaping Japan's national system. Therefore, the United States created a democracy very similar to the one that characterizes their national system, trusting that in this context Japan would be definitely taken out from the list of potential enemies and threats. For this reason, the action taken by the United States can be seen as an attempt to prove that democratic peace could be not only real, but applicable even after really extreme cases such as the Second World War, and the role Japan played within it. According to Michael W. Doyle, democracies do not fight other democracies and although:

“No one should argue that such wars are impossible; but preliminary evidence does appear to indicate that there exists a significant predisposition against warfare between liberal states. Indeed, threats of war also have been regarded as illegitimate”.<sup>62</sup>

And in this sense, after becoming a very liberal democracy, it could be assumed that Japan had –and still has- nothing to fear about, at least in relation to those countries that were the protagonists to cause their vanquish, which were also democracies. This paper has not as its main purpose to explain what democratic peace theory is composed of, but it rather looks for

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<sup>62</sup> Michael W. Doyle. Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, *Philosophy and Foreign Affairs*, 12 (3), Summer 1983, p 213

explaining why it is not, at least in the case of Japan, enough to assure why this country, even when nowadays it is still one of the most peace-loving nations in the globe, things may be getting really close to a change; always starting from a neorealist perspective.

Democratic peace theory has been broadly accepted and taken by scholars in order to explain the dynamics of international politics in relation to war and peace. In spite of having so much in favor, the democratic peace theory cannot be used as a general and irrefutable explanation to countries' behavior, taking into account that calling a state a democracy could be extremely broad. Doyle, for example, suggests a co-relation between liberalism and democracy; in other words, those democracies he sustains would not be likely to go to war should have a the following liberties and rights guaranteed:

“Liberalism calls for freedom from arbitrary authority, often called "negative freedom," which includes freedom of conscience, a free press and free speech, equality under the law, and the right to hold, and therefore to exchange, property without fear of arbitrary seizure [...] Such social and economic rights as equality of opportunity in education and rights to health care and employment, necessary for effective self-expression and participation, are thus among liberal rights. A third liberal right, democratic participation or representation, is necessary to guarantee the other two.”<sup>63</sup>

However, democracy is one of the concepts that is most out to interpretation; and defining it is not included as the core of this section, but rather pointing out that because democracy is not something that can be specifically described, the democratic peace theory loses its value as something that can effectively describe the nature of states behavior towards war and peace.

It is also important to consider that not only states which political system counts with all the elements above described -that could be recognized as part of a democratic way of government- can be considered democracies. On the other side, is it possible to call a democracy a country which has a government form based on some of them? What about countries that have just one of these characteristics? Let's take Pakistan as an example. It is a matter of fact that this state

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<sup>63</sup> Michael W. Doyle. Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, *Philosophy and Foreign Affairs*, 12 (3), Summer 1983, p 206-207

has gone through government forms that contradict the principles of democracy and that belong to a dictatorial nature; however, it is also true that in the past decades Pakistan has constituted itself as a federal republic, including within their national political elements characteristics of democracies. For this reason, Pakistani people are entitled to the right of universal suffrage, for all those citizens that are 18 years old and older, with the purpose of electing their president.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the Prime Minister is elected by the National Assembly –political practice that characterizes democracies all over the globe -, and there are reserved parliamentary seats for women and non-Muslim population; which can be labeled as a representative practice. If applying a definition of democracy –where it is only having suffrage guaranteed, regularly realized and free of manipulation- and considering that democracy means literally the government of the people, then Pakistan could be seen as a democracy; possibly not the strongest established, but still a democratic government elected by the people. Of course, there will be theories that provide a broader description of what democracy is, or should be, for which Pakistan would not qualify; though, the former situation is presented as a valid argument to sustain that one of the weaknesses of the democratic peace theory is that the definition of the term democracy is a subject of interpretation. Continuing with the example, assuming that democracies, of whatever kind they are, are not willing, or at least less likely, to go to war with other democracies, the conflict within India and Pakistan deserves being mentioned. As Musarat Amin and Rizwan Nasser suggest at their paper *Democratic Peace Theory: An Explanation of Peace and conflict Between Pakistan and India*, the tensions these two countries have diminished as a consequence of Pakistan's slow turn to democracy; for supporting this argument, both authors use the absence of war like those that happened throughout the history of these neighboring states. In fact, both authors suggest that when Pakistan has been under a non-democratic government, tension between it and India has been stronger; nonetheless, this hypothesis is too general and, obviously, ignoring some major aspects of the relation between both countries. There is always the possibility for any of these two countries to start a war against the other, if one of their main interests would be involved; even India has proven to be close to start another conflict – in spite of being considered a pretty consolidated democracy, according to the authors' definition-. Therefore, it is important to mention that, the real reason why they have not let a conflict break out is because a balance of power has been reached

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<sup>64</sup> CIA Factbook. Pakistan. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>

especially as a cause of both countries possessing nuclear weapons; which neorealist authors have repeatedly proved to be accurate to what has been happening at the international arena since the nuclear era started. States' generalized conduct suggests that whenever they feel threatened, they arm themselves. Also in this case, India and Pakistan serve as examples of countries having really big military expenditure, due to its conflict situation. Additionally, states in similar situation form strong alliances –in this case it is not even necessary to go deep into how India and Pakistan have looked for involvement of Russia, China, the United States, the United Kingdom and more as allies- just as a way to secure their destiny if a conflict actually breaks out. And this is very similar to what has been happening to Japan. Despite it is a democratic and peace-loving nation, and although the vast majority, if not all, of the states in the world perceive it as so, it is not free of being target of conflict. As Waltz states: “Conformity of countries to a prescribed political form may eliminate some of the causes of war; it cannot eliminate all of them”. The democratic peace thesis will hold only if all off the causes of war lie inside of states.”

<sup>65</sup> Japan may not be the country to start it; however, that is due to internal security policies. In relation to the aforementioned, as Waltz states, it is also not accurate to say that democracies that perceive one another to be liberal will not fight because liberal democracies have at times prepared for war against other liberal democracies and have sometimes come close to fighting them.<sup>66</sup> According to neorealist theory, it is easier to understand why a war could start than to understand the conditions of peace. In words of Emmanuel Kant, the natural state is the state of war. States tend to always look first for the compliance of their own interests; in this sense, war definitely presents itself as a way of materializing states own interests. It is true that states nowadays do no start wars as they used to, talking about an inter-state nature of conflicts. Nevertheless, there are still many latent conflicts about disputed territories, resources or sovereignty violations that could escalate to a multinational conflict. It is important to point out that whenever we talk about an anarchic world system, we are not referring to a system where countries can do whatever they want and, in this context, attack countries whenever they want. They truly can, if they do not is not because they put cooperation before their own interest, but

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<sup>65</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p 3

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p 3

because they have fear of what attacking a country may imply for their own security, and of course, because the cost of war sometimes doesn't make them get whatever they want.

Finally, this analysis of how democratic theory fails to explain the dynamic of the international system will takes us to better understand Japan's foreign policy towards its allies and potential threats; and by so doing, it will come clear why Japan is pursuing a stronger management of arms, as well as the extension of their defense capabilities. Therefore, it is important to understand that states are always ready to do anything that will assure their survival within the international system, independently of what how democratic, liberal or peace-loving are. As Waltz puts it: "And today if a war that a few have feared were fought by the United States and Japan, many Americans would say that Japan was not a democracy after all, but merely a one-party state."<sup>67</sup>

## 9. JAPAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITION

In general terms, States, as well as people, learn from the past. In this sense, Japan happens to be one of the states that falls into this description. However, in many senses Japan also represents an exception, especially, in terms of security. The Japanese comprehensive and alternative approach to security will be analyzed later on this paper; however, the relation between nuclear weapons, stability and security will be developed now. After Japan was nuclear bombed by the United States, it did not have many more options but to surrender. In this situation, we cannot really talk about balance of power, for Japan did not count on the nuclear arsenal to counterattack the United States. Nevertheless, after many decades and after other countries have nuclear arsenals the topic of balancing power becomes relevant. First, it is important to understand that Japan forever renounced its right to military attack any other country; which means, it is impossible for Japan to start a war, and, in the same way, it becomes very difficult for it to be attacked by any other state. However, although right after the Second World War ended the only interest of the Japanese government was to keep the country from not being attacked again, Japan has proven to be looking for its independence in terms of security.

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<sup>67</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol.25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p 5.

Seeing how Japan reemerged, especially in economic terms, after it was defeated made it obvious that it has the capability to develop nuclear material, just as many other big economies that are willing to do so, or have already done so. For a long time, it has been producing nuclear energy, and besides the incident in Fukushima, the world could believe that Japan's use of nuclear material was peaceful. But even this started to change when, in June 2012, "The upper house of Japan's Diet passed an amendment to the country's Atomic Energy Basic Law to allow the use of nuclear power for 'national security'."<sup>68</sup> Internal controversy developed around the use of those words, proving they were used furtively, for the Japanese public, as well as many Lower House lawmakers had no knowledge about it.<sup>69</sup> There is no doubt that it is just a matter of Japan deciding to do so, in order for it to acquire nuclear power; taking into account that:

"Japan has 30 tons of weapons-grade plutonium and 1,200-1,400 kilograms of enriched uranium, enough to make 15,000 nuclear bombs like the one dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. Tokyo also has state-of-the-art rocket technology for their long-distance delivery and spy satellites. In short, Japan has the world's third-largest nuclear power generation capacity and is also the third-biggest military spender."<sup>70</sup>

The question then should be directed to why Japan is feeling the necessity to count on nuclear power for exercising its defense in case of possible threats. In this regard, three different scenarios will be examined: First, a possible weakening of the protection provided by the United States –together with a natural desire of Japan to look for independence in this area-, second, an increasing rivalry in relation to China, and third, a possible escalation of a conflict in the Korean Peninsula- based on the fact that North Korea has nuclear weapons-. For so doing, a deeper analysis of the relation between Japan and these countries will be made, always staying within the framework of Neorealism and its most important concepts.

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<sup>68</sup> Japan's Nuclear Ambition. The Korea Times. Taken from:  
[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2012/06/137\\_113619.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2012/06/137_113619.html)

<sup>69</sup> Japan's Nuclear Ambition. The Korea Times. Taken from:  
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<sup>70</sup> Japan's Nuclear Ambition. The Korea Times. Taken from:  
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## 10. CONCLUSIONS

For concluding this work, it is necessary to make some comments that help giving closure and value to the hypothesis. First of all, it is important to mention that those concepts that constitute the Neorealist theory that have been taken as theoretical framework throughout this work have proven Neorealism to be a completely verifiable theory once again. The axes of analysis taken – The United States, the People’s Republic of China, and both South and North Korea- have served as the main pieces of a system within which Japan has the necessity of including a military component in their foreign policy even when it has formally renounced to the right to go to war.

Although relations between American and Japanese remain extremely close and non negotiable, Japan cannot trust that the U.S will completely take care of its security, and will eliminate the existence of any threat to Japan’s integrity. In this regard, American foreign policy has sometimes even turned to interests that are not shared by the Japanese, following the principle that states always want to guarantee their best interests. Insecurities have also been raised by the fact that the United States conducts a pretty independent policy towards China, state towards which Japan has not been able to have a definitive policy, and that has, at the same time, turned to those who destabilize the region the most – like North Korea-. Furthermore, Japan and China have had a long story of different ideological paths, at which Japan presents itself as a more Western country than anything else, for what cooperation between both has been rather limited o necessity. Territorial disputes are not an issue of the past between both countries, for what Japan has to keep an eye on China when reformulating its security strategies. Finally, North Korea presents itself as a state whose actions can directly affect Japan. Its nuclear capacity has, at the same time, created the restlessness that has lead the Japanese to consider expanding its defense arsenal towards the same direction.

As it was exposed before, the possibility of even acquiring nuclear weapons for defense is on the table of Japanese politics, which nowadays constitutes the most undeniable proof that Japan’s role at the international arena has experimented a shift towards a more Neorealist attitude. With a new government in charge, expectative should be placed on Japanese Foreign Policy, as this state, slowly but undeniably, shifts towards rearmament moved by a strong sense of fear.

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