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Nationalism as a Primary Institution in Northeast Asia

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This paper contrasts and complements earlier work of Buzan and Zhang by offering an English School analysis of East Asia that is limited to the smaller regional scope of Northeast Asia. The paper argues that the inter-state society of Northeast Asia can be categorized as power political in English School theory and analyzes this inter-state society through the lens of primary institutions. In relations that are power political, classical primary institutions embedded in the region's inter-state relations are limited, and in the case of Northeast Asia, no universal, secondary institutions exist to regulate behavior. Therefore the contention put forth is that intersubjective understandings of primary institutions provide a better vehicle for analysis of the region. The claim made in this analysis is that the master primary institution most apparent in Northeast Asia is nationalism, and the derivative primary institution of victimhood nationalism appears most prominent in interstate relations. This analysis thereby expands the theoretical range of primary institutions in international society, while offering an English School perspective on regional relations in Asia.

Keywords English School, nationalism, Northeast Asia, primary institutions, victimhood nationalism

I. Introduction

In 2014, focused on East Asia and the English School of international relations (ES) theory, Buzan and Zhang set out to discover "whether or not international society exists in distinctive form at the regional level and, if it does, how it can be differentiated from, and/or related to, the more commonly discussed global international society" (2014: ix). They made clear they were addressing "two main audiences, who are mainly distinct from each other: those interested in developing English School theory as an approach to the study of international relations; and those interested in

the empirical study of East Asian international relations" (2014: 1). They felt then, and this author believes rightly so, that ES theory has something to offer scholars of East Asia, while East Asia has much to offer ES theory. It is hoped the ensuing analysis can be seen as a complement to their past efforts.

In their edited volume, the framework upon which scholars relied to determine the existence of a distinct international society[1] in East Asia was the ES concept of primary institutions. They concluded there are "two primary institutions distinctive to East Asia: the developmental state and regional production structures" (2014: 209). "The developmental state ought to be considered as a primary institution, first, because of the importance of its recent historical role in East Asia and, second, because—as an ideal type, at least—it represents an important variant on the sort of competition or market-state model that has become widely associated with the Anglo-American economies" (Beeson and Breslin, 2014: 101). There is much to debate about those conclusions. Neither the developmental state nor regional production structures is a traditional primary institution in ES theory and neither had been analyzed in a framework for determining emerging primary institutions (see Falkner and Buzan, 2017; Holsti, 2004; Spandler, 2015 for examples of such analyses). They seem deeply reliant on decisions at the regime level of analysis as opposed to primary institutions that reside at the systemic or structural level of analysis. ES theory traditionally draws conclusions over longer historical timeframes, whereas these institutions have a "recent historical role". Lastly, there seems little to distinguish the developmental state from bureaucratic-authoritarianism, the phenomenon

[1] *International society* refers to the institutionalization of shared interest and identity among states, and puts the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules and institutions at the centre of IR theory. It is therefore a more developed form of international system in which there are rules and institutions that mediate the interaction (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 232).

prevalent in modern South American political theory (see Im, 1987 on the case of South Korea), which is not itself a primary institution.

From an analytical perspective, scope may be the culprit behind this apparent theoretical broadening of primary institutions. The fifteen countries[2] grouped as East Asia in Buzan and Zhang's work are developmentally diverse and have numerous complex relations with one another. Some are regional great powers and others small or middle powers, the latter two types of which have not been subject to much ES analysis. Moreover, some are more closely integrated with or accepting of Western-dominant norms of behavior. This makes finding an institution common to all a difficult task. Rather than diminishing the efforts to find common primary institutions among these states, the ambitious regional breadth provides opportunities to refine the analysis.

The argument presented here is that the scope of East Asia as a region is too broad, and therefore, to better understand regional international society in East Asia, the scope of study must be reduced. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the five, core countries of Northeast Asia: China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan.[3] It further argues that the primary institution most distinctive in Northeast Asia is nationalism. To be more specific, it is a derivative of nationalism: victimhood nationalism. The paper is separated into three major sections after the introduction. The first section will define international society in Northeast Asia. The subsequent section will discuss primary institutions as a framework for analysis in

[2] The fifteen countries were the ten countries of ASEAN—Cambodia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam—and five countries of Northeast Asia—China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan.

[3] This paper makes no normative claim on the so-called one-China policy. The Republic of China (Taiwan) has a functioning government that makes decisions independently of the People's Republic of China, and therefore, for the purposes of this paper is deemed a sovereign state.

ES theory. The third section will argue for victimhood nationalism as a derivative of the master primary institution of nationalism that is specific to Northeast Asia. The final section will conclude the analysis.

II. Defining International Society in Northeast Asia

"The term region carries a meaning that is not only geographic but also geopsychological" (Pempel, 2005: 3). This helps explain why the region of East Asia is highly contested (2005: 25). Membership in regional secondary institutions[4] shows the breadth of possible definitions as these institutions' names also reflect. Older institutions including the East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), and more recent institutions including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, for example, all have varied memberships spanning from Russia in northern Asia to Australia in the southern Pacific, to India in South Asia, and Japan in far eastern Asia. The region is so diverse culturally, linguistically, religiously, politically, and economically, with persistent fragmentation (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 15) that it is necessary to carefully define the region under study.

For this analysis, the region under study is Northeast Asia, which here includes the People's Republic of China (China), Japan, the Democratic

[4] *Secondary institutions* "refers to the institutions talked about in regime theory and by neo-liberal institutionalists. In the inter-state domain they are inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, or regimes. In the transnational domain they are (con)federative bodies such as the umbrella organizations that oversee world football or chess, or peace movements, or banks, or many other lobbying or interest groups" (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 235).

People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), the Republic of Korea (South Korea), and the Republic of China (Taiwan). This construction is an adoption from Calder and Ye (2010: 3), who claim, "the heart of Northeast Asia's political economy centers around the East China Sea, now plausibly called the Shanghai Circle: major cities in Japan and Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Macao, within three hours' flying time of Shanghai". The region is significant enough for analysis as "the nations of Northeast Asia are by an overwhelming margin the largest economically and the most potent militarily and technologically in the entire East Asian region, which stretches from Burma in the Southwest to Hokkaido in the Northeast" (2010: 5). In addition, these five states have a history of interaction and relations spanning centuries. It is this history in large part that fuels the challenges these states face in their relations.

Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2013) once compared East Asia to the Balkans observing "like the Balkans a century ago, riven by overlapping alliances, loyalties, and hatreds, the strategic environment in East Asia is complex. At least six states or political entities are engaged in territorial disputes with China, three of which are close strategic partners of the United States." He went on to write of a rise in "primitive, almost atavistic nationalisms" and warned that "the idea of armed conflict, which seems contrary to every element of rational self-interest for any nation-state enjoying the benefits of such unprecedented regional economic dynamism, has now become a terrifying, almost normal part of the regional conversation". Michael Ng-Quinn focused more closely on Northeast Asia noting, "There have been no rules in Northeast Asia that are both regionally derived and applicable to the whole region…. There has also been no issue of conflict or cooperation within the region requiring the generation of regional rules beyond those of alliances and suzerainty" (in Pempel, 2005: 5). Such pronouncements lead one to conclude in ES terms

that the conditions and type of inter-state society[5] in Northeast Asia may be characterized as power political,[6] which is significantly different from the states of Southeast Asia which show continued cooperation through secondary institutions like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The characterization as power political for Northeast Asia is supported by the fact that three states do not recognize the right of at least one state in the region to exist as a sovereign territory: the constitutions of both South Korea and North Korea do not recognize the other's right to exist, while China and North Korea do not recognize the right of Taiwan to exist. North Korea supports China's position that Taiwan "is an inseparable part of China" (Shin, 2022). Furthermore, South Korea terminated diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1992 when it recognized China, and Japan for its part practices strategic ambiguity (Matsuda, 2021) on Taiwan's right to exist by fully understanding and respecting the stand of the Government of the People's Republic of China, while firmly maintaining its stand under Article 8 of the Postsdam Proclamation.[7] It should be noted as well that Japan's sovereignty as a normal state befitting its power in the international system

[5] *Inter-state society* means the same as international society as defined in footnote 1 but makes clearer that it is restricted to what happens among states. There is a spectrum of types of inter-state society that reflects the level of solidarity among the included states. The levels of solidarity from least solidarity to most include power political, coexistence, co-operative, and convergence (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 232).

[6] *Power political* represents "an international society based largely on enmity and the possibility of war, but where there is also some diplomacy, alliance-making and trade. Survival is the main motive for the states, and no values are necessarily shared. Institutions will be minimal, mostly confined to rules of war, recognition and diplomacy (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 232-233)."

[7] The official position of Japan is stated in the "Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China" of September 29, 1972. Article 8 of the referred to Potsdam Proclamation of 1945 says "the term of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out". The Cairo Declaration of 1943 stated that "all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and The Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China." Formosa is the former name of Taiwan.

is constrained by Article 9 of its imposed constitution which states "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation". This does not question Japan's right to exist, but it does restrict sovereign Japanese activities, a fact the other four states of the region support.

Additionally, no regional multilateral institution can boast all five countries as participating members. North Korea belongs to three security organizations past or present that include China, Japan, and South Korea: the ARF, CSCAP, and the Six-Party Talks. For its part, Taiwan (as Chinese Taipei) belongs to APEC, which does not include North Korea. Taiwan also belongs, as the Republic of China, to the Asian Productivity Organization, where, at the time of this writing, its representative serves as First Vice-Chair, but neither North Korea nor China belong to this organization. Moreover, recent constructions of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership all seem to warrant concerns as to "whether the process is evolving toward less-inclusive, bloc-based 'talking shops' rather than toward a more open, inclusive, and problem-solving regionalism" in East Asia generally (Gill and Green, 2009: 3). Gill and Green (2009: 3) believe "the reality is that Asia's new multilateralism is still at a stage where it is best understood as an extension and intersection of national power and purpose rather than as an objective force in itself."

Furthermore, shows of military strength to intimidate neighbors and cyber attacks are all too common in the region. North and South Korea are still technically at war having signed only an armistice agreement in 1953 to halt the Korean civil war. Major actions this century include the sinking of the South Korean naval corvette *Cheonan* in April 2010 (officially attributed to North Korea by the South Korean government) and North Korea's artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island (South Korean territory) in November of that same year. More recently, South Korea's unification minister stated that the test-firing

of seven missiles by North Korea during one week in September/October of 2022 was to tame the South Korean administration of Yoon Seok-yul (Kwon, 2022). Tensions have reached the point where there are growing calls for South Korea to acquire nuclear weapons as a response (Kang, 2022). North Korea has also threatened Japan with occasional intermediate-range ballistic missiles sent flying over its territory (Choe and Sanger, 2017; BBC, 2017). Such tests cause activation of J-Alert, the Japanese national emergency alert system, which in turn suspends some activities like bullet train routes (Lee, 2022).

China also tends to show signs of military force. Unauthorized access of Chinese aircraft into the air defense identification zones (ADIZ) of Japan and South Korea in 2018 occurred 638 times and 140 times, respectively (Trent, 2020: 15). Japan has faced such intrusions for more than a decade, while South Korea has seen such activity since 2016 (2020: 15). In 2021, South Korea had more than seventy such intrusions from China (Yonhap, 2022a). Taiwan does not officially release the number of intrusions by Chinese aircraft into its ADIZ but Trent (2020: 15) puts the number of noted occurrences at less than twenty in 2019. However, the conducting of military drills, "China's largest and most provocative ever in the Taiwan Strait" in 2022 appeared to be undertaken to intimidate Taiwan (Gallo, 2022). Japan and South Korea are not immune from accusations of undertaking threatening behavior by their neighbors. South Korea accused Japanese military aircraft of menacing, low altitude flybys in early 2019 (Song, 2019), while South Korea has been regularly accused by North Korea of threatening and destabilizing behavior due to joint military exercises with the United States (see D'Orazio, 2012 for a statistical analysis of North Korean responses from 1998-2010; also Yonhap, 2022b).

Cyber attacks are all too prevalent as well in Northeast Asia. North Korea is "suspected to have launched an average of 1.5 million cyber

attacks per day in 2020 against the South Korean public sector, such as financial and infrastructure sectors" (*The Straits Times*, 2021). It is believed that a specific North Korean advanced persistent threat[8] called Silent Chollima targets South Korean media and government institutions (see Klinger, 2021 for a detailed look at North Korean cyber attacks). According to Valeriano and Maness (2013: 23), in terms of states with the highest number of rival cyber dyads China (6), Japan (3), North Korea (3), and South Korea (2) all made the top-ten list of states with the most rivals (2013: 23). China frequently infiltrates Japan and Taiwan, while "the triad of North Korea, South Korea and Japan show a continued conflict online" (2013: 14). Somewhat surprisingly, for two democratic allies of the United States, the South Korea-Japan rivalry dyad is the fifth most active cyber conflict dyad (2013: 22). These consistent patterns of intimidating behavior and the lack of diplomatic recognition intra-regionally demonstrate quite clearly a power-political inter-state society.

III. Primary Institutions in ES Theory and Northeast Asia

1. Defining Primary Institutions

In ES theory, primary institutions in the international system "are deep

[8] *Advanced persistent threat (APT)* is "an adversary that possesses sophisticated levels of expertise and significant resources which allow it to create opportunities to achieve its objectives by using multiple attack vectors (e.g., cyber, physical, and deception). These objectives typically include establishing and extending footholds within the information technology infrastructure of the targeted organizations for purposes of exfiltrating information, undermining or impeding critical aspects of a mission, program, or organization; or positioning itself to carry out these objectives in the future. The advanced persistent threat: (i) pursues its objectives repeatedly over an extended period of time; (ii) adapts to defenders' efforts to resist it; and (iii) is determined to maintain the level of interaction needed to execute its objectives" (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2011: B-1).

and relatively durable social practices in the sense of being evolved more than designed" that differ from secondary institutions which "are for the most part intergovernmental arrangements consciously designed by states to serve specific functional purposes" (Buzan and Schouenborg, 2018: 26; Buzan, 2014: 17). Primary institutions are "constitutive of both states and international society in that they define the basic character and purpose of any such society," in other words, they "define the social structure of any inter-state society" (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 234). This particular approach to primary institutions is structuralist in nature and follows more classical ES thinking (see Spandler, 2015).

In classical ES thinking, "however differently contrived, international organizations are simply deposits of more fundamental [primary] institutions. They are manifestations and materializations of them" (Navari, 2019: 61). Primary institutions are seen as constitutive and secondary institutions as regulative (Spandler, 2015: 608). Spandler moves away from this classical construction by offering an intersubjective account of institutions, where "institutions are seen as *sets of intersubjectively held meanings*, which are analytically separated from the practice of international actors" [italics in the original] (2015: 606). In this conceptualization, "while institutions are analytically distinct from practice, they are intricately linked to it in a structurationist process: They emerge from interaction and at the same time inform interaction by defining who can count as a legitimate actor and what is perceived as legitimate practice" (2015: 606). In this intersubjective understanding, primary institutions have three predominant roles in international society:

> Primary institutions are constitutive by defining who can count as an actor, how such actorness is acquired, and the basic nature of the relations between those actors…. Apart from informing its basic composition, primary institutions

> can also constitute the scope of an international society as such, and change in primary institutions can lead to an expansion or contraction of established societies, or the emergence of new ones…. Primary institutions also influence the basic interests of actors and, more fundamentally, the kind of rationality actors pursue (2015: 610).

There is some debate within ES literature as to which institutions are constitutive and influence the interests and rationality of actors, and thereby may be considered primary. Useful breakdowns of "candidates for primary institutions" in the ES literature can be found in Buzan (2004: 174) and Schouenborg (2011: 27-29). Classical primary institutions of inter-state systems are considered to be sovereignty, non-intervention, territoriality, diplomacy, international law, war, balance of power and great power management, with nationalism and the market recent additions to this group, and some have begun to promote human rights, democracy, and environmental stewardship as candidates with limited success (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 234).

However, the key distinction for this analysis is which of these primary institutions can constitute an inter-state society that is power political. By definition, the behavior of states in a region considered power political rests upon the primary institutions of recognition, diplomacy, and the rules of war (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 233). If these institutions are weak or fail, can any other primary institution exist? Those that require a higher level of cooperation — international law, balance of power, great power management, non-intervention, human rights, democracy, and environmental stewardship — may not exist in a regional society defined as power political, especially if secondary institutions inclusive of all regional members do not exist.

Therefore, an inter-state society with no secondary institutions of

universal membership requires a concept of primary institutions that can bypass this constitutive-regulative relationship between institutions, meaning one must rely on intersubjective understandings of primary institutions. In such a case, like this case of Northeast Asia, one needs a primary institution recognized in the ES literature that fulfills the three roles outlined above, lacks some if not all of what Knudsen (2019: 33) describes as the six "fundamental institutions that make international society and its basic qualities of order and justice possible,"[9] and yet still has a constitutive role in an inter-state society that is power political. That primary institution may be nationalism.

2. Nationalism as a Primary Institution

Nationalism as a primary institution is not easily defined. Bull and Watson's (1984) edited volume mentions various kinds of nationalism including Arab, Jewish, Sudanese, Indian, post-colonial, and pre-war European, while never defining the term nationalism. The Primary Institutions Database[10] also never defines nationalism, though it lists it as a primary institution in the UN family of international organizations,

[9] The six fundamental institutions are (mutual recognition of) sovereignty, the balance of power, diplomacy, international law, great power management, and war (understood as a set of shared expectations, principles, and practices concerning how the use of force can, and cannot, take place in international society) (Knudsen, 2019: 31).

[10] The Primary Institutions Database is the "the first database of primary and secondary institutions of global international society and the European, Middle Eastern, and East Asian regional international societies." It contains four documents by Altin Naz Sunay analyzing primary institutions found in the documentation and charters of secondary institutions. The four documents are: "Primary Institutions and International Organisations: UN Family," "United Nations Institutions", "References to Primary Institutions: European Intergovernmental Organisations," "English School Primary Institutions and Asian Intergovernmental Organisations," and "Primary Institutions in the Middle East: Study of IGO Charters." Available online at https://www.englishschoolir.net/primary-institutions-database.

European intergovernmental organizations, and in the primary institutions of the Middle East. The one striking feature of the primary institution of nationalism in the UN family and in European IGOs is its coupling of nationalism with citizenship of a sovereign territory. An example of an implied coupling would be Article 15(2) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which states, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality" (Sunay, 2008: 218); an example of denoted coupling would be the six instances of nationalism in European IGOs that use the term "nationals of any Member State" or some derivation thereof (see Sunay, [2008?]c: 160). Sunay (2008: 6) suggests that "rule of law" may "be something to look at under nationalism or democracy. Issues to do with (equal) protection by the law, right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals, and entitlement to a fair and public hearing by and independent and impartial tribunal," which implies a coupling as well.

However, when analyzing organizations in the Middle East, Sunay ([2008?]b: 3) writes of Pan-Arabism: "This proved to be the most reoccurring additional primary institution in the context of ME. In the IGO charters, references were made to common history, culture, religion, language as well as common well-being, welfare, future, interests and aspirations. These documents used uniting terms, such as 'Arab public opinion', 'Arab nation' or 'Arab people'." Of organizations promoting Pan-Islam he writes: "At times, they mentioned common belief and religion as a 'factor for rapprochement and solidarity' between countries. However, in most other cases serving the Islamic cause and preserving Islamic values were set to be the predominant objectives of the IGO itself ('promote Islamic solidarity', 'safeguarding the ... values drawn from Islam', 'in the service of Islamic objectives', 'preserve Islamic ... values')" (Sunay, [2008?]b: 3).

It is obvious that Middle Eastern organizations have a different concep-

tion than the Western or European idea of coupling nationalism with citizenship. There is no mention of sovereignty or state in the Middle Eastern interpretations; instead, they tend toward the idea that we may equate to community. In comparative terms, this is important for a look at Northeast Asia. As Northeast Asia has no secondary institutions with universal membership, there is no opportunity for its states to agree on the coupling of nationalism to citizenship or sovereignty (throughout the region), as negotiated at the United Nations or within the European Union. It is more appropriate then to follow the Middle Eastern interpretation of nationalism as loosely equated to community. Nonetheless, Middle Eastern states still have managed to negotiate nationalism into the documents of secondary institutions, showing consensus in their regional inter-state society. Even so, this need not be a conundrum when viewing Northeast Asian state relations. Northeast Asian relations as well can be seen from the nationalism-as-community perspective, if some caveats are understood.

Firstly, the argument by Buzan and Zhang (2014) regarding the developmental state as a primary institution was meant for inter-state society in ES parlance; this means at the regional systemic level of interaction (i.e. interaction among leaders of states representing their states) and not at the world society level where individual citizens reside. To stay true to the project of Buzan and Zhang, and yet expand on their work, we must also stay at the inter-state level of analysis and not be swayed by the extensive literature produced on nationalistic feelings among the citizen populations of the various states. Of course we must remember that leaders are not immune from the pressures of nationalism applied by their constituents, but these are secondary to the analysis of state actions by leaders. Secondly, it is important to remember that community-based primary institutions have no normative connotations and are neutral, and therefore they may not equate to positive relations among the states. In the case of the Middle

East, it seems states have coalesced in some positive fashion around Arab nationalism and have included it in the charters of secondary institutions. This is certainly not the case for any regional notion of nationalism in Northeast Asia, a concept in the region that seems to drive states away from cooperative consensus.

The less than positive aspects of community-based nationalisms have been dealt with by others previously. Writing on the expansion of international society and international law, Brownlie (1984: 369) noted the potential consequences of community-based nationalistic thought when he wrote, "At least Vattel and his contemporaries formulated the principle, which is the structural principle of state relations, of the equality of states. It is international law and the procedures for peaceful settlement which can do much to prevent equality from amounting merely to an anarchy of obdurate nationalisms and theocracies." Dore (1984: 410) took up the concept of incompatible values and stated, "What is really at issue here is the distinction not between values and interests, but between universal values/interests like territory or opportunities for trade (one can safely assume that for all states the more of them the better) and idiosyncratic values/interests which some states have and others do not depending on their 'culture'". Both Brownlie and Dore implied that international law, territory, and by extension citizenship are universal values or systemic institutions that provide rationality to thought and action, while culture and "obdurate nationalisms" are irrational and particularistic. Not noted in either statement is how these universal values are rooted in Western European thought.

On the other hand, Benedict Anderson (1983: 6) in his popular work, *Imagined Communities*, defines the nation as "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." This leaves open the possibility of broad interpretations of nationalism that can encompass both communities of comradeship and ideas of a

legalistic sovereign state (1983: 7). In ES literature, Mayall (1990: 2), who is closely associated with nationalism as a primary institution writes, "there are clearly many kinds of nationalism, but the national idea itself is not unclear. It holds that the world is (or should be) divided into nations and that the nation is the only proper basis for a sovereign state and the ultimate source of governmental authority." He, like Anderson, leaves room for interpretation and room for what some ES scholars refer to as derivative institutions, those that derive from a master primary institution. Nationalism runs strong in East Asia, but it has varying interpretations dependent on the state and its constituents. This is no different in the smaller region of Northeast Asia. However, as this smaller region is power political, where recognition of sovereignty and by extension citizenship of some states is in question, an intersubjective understanding of nationalism promoting a community appears more appropriate as a vehicle of analysis.

3. Primary Institutions in Northeast Asia

Buzan and Zhang (2014: 226) claim the "primary institutions of the expanding European international society, ranging from sovereign equality and territoriality, to diplomacy and international law, provided the institutional foundation for the new normative order in East Asia." They go on to say, "Taken at face value, it seems indisputable that the Western-global international society triumphed in East Asia" (2014: 226). This may be the case for the states of Southeast Asia, but this would by definition give them an inter-state classification of coexistence, which includes the primary institutions of balance of power, sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, great power management, war and international law (2014: 233), of which they have some. Again, the scope of the analysis seems problematic. Within the fifteen states of East Asia, the ten Southeast Asian states have an inter-

state society of coexistence and the five states of Northeast Asia an inter-state society of power political. Therefore the number and level of primary institutions will differ.

For Northeast Asia, one could argue that the recognition of sovereign equality can be seen in the relationship of each individual state of the region and the global structure of states—they all do enjoy mutual diplomatic recognition by some states in the system if not all—but recognition of sovereign equality is not the case intra-regionally where three of the states are not recognized as having sovereign equality. By extension, if these states do not recognize sovereign equality and continue kinetic and cyber operations of threatening behavior for intimidation, has diplomacy been accepted as a primary institution in the region? In ES terms, the most rudimentary level of inter-state society is power political, where institutions "are mostly confined to rules of war, recognition, and diplomacy" (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 233). Therefore, by definition diplomacy and war are both given in a power political society, and as such seem to lose any significance as a primary institution in such an environment. Diplomacy certainly is practiced between some states of the region, but only China has diplomatic recognition of North Korea. None of Taiwan's neighbors affords it diplomatic recognition as a sovereign entity, which seems to negate formal diplomacy as the practice of this institution is predicated on recognition. Additionally, as noted earlier there is no secondary institution to which all Northeast Asian states belong, which makes one wonder whether recognition and diplomacy are constitutive of the region. As for the rules of war, the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island by North Korea in 2010, as well as China's continued threats of invasion against Taiwan if that state declares its independence, attests to the lack of consensus on the composition of this institution in the region.

Primary institutions can be difficult to deduce when regional interstate society is characterized by power-political behavior. The Primary Institutions Database does list "support for (common) culture and education" as a possible unique regional primary institution for East Asia. Article 6.a (para5.) of the ASEAN+3[11] *Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation 28 November 1999* states the members "agreed to strengthen regional cooperation in projecting an Asian point of view to the rest of the world… focusing on the strengths and virtues of East Asian cultures" (see Sunay, [2008?] a: 110). This seems to indicate a community-based interpretation in culture and education. Stretching the concept of primary institutions Sunay ([2008?] a: 116) notes that Article 5 of the *Chairman's Statement, the First Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum* of 1994 states "Bearing in mind the importance of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Meeting welcomed the continuation of US-DPRK negotiation and endorsed the early resumption of inter-Korean dialogue." In conjunction, he lists "Conflict (inter-Korea)" as a possible new primary institution. However, the statement refers to the United States, which is not a Northeast Asian state and, as noted earlier, the ARF does not include Taiwan as a member state, so it would be difficult to conclude this is a realistic primary institution for the region of Northeast Asia. Interestingly, the Primary Institutions Database does not list nationalism as a primary institution in East Asia, though support for a common culture and education could be interpreted as a derivative institution of nationalism. Nonetheless, this paper argues that nationalism may be the logical choice for a primary institution in the region.

11 ASEAN+3 members include the ten states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well as China, Japan, and South Korea.

IV. Nationalism as a Primary Institution in Northeast Asia

1. A Framework of Analysis for Nationalism as an Intersubjective Primary Institution

Current methods of analyzing whether an institution can be categorized as a primary institution are varied. Some rely heavily on a constitutive-regulative relationship between primary and secondary institutions. The Primary Institutions Database is one case in point. The Database is an analysis of charters and other institutional documentation that have specifically mentioned a primary institution or a derivative of a primary institution in a produced text. Holsti (2004: 18), focusing more on normative or constructivist processes than regulative functions, claims that international institutions are "the context within which the games of international politics are played. They represent patterned (typical) actions and interactions of states, the norms, rules, and principles that guide (or fail to guide) them, and the major ideas and beliefs of a historical era." He puts forth three criteria that establish the existence of an institution:

> An international institution comprises or is indicated by: 1) patterned *practices*, or practices that are routinized, typical, and recurrent.... 2) Institutions are based, usually, on coherent sets of *ideas and/or beliefs* that describe the needs for the common practices and point out how certain social goals can be achieved through them.... 3) Institutions reflect *norms*, and they include rules and etiquette [italics in the original].

Falkner and Buzan (2017: 136) seem to combine various methods and offer an approach which includes process tracing the emergence of an idea, noting the creation of secondary institutions reflecting the underlying norm

of the primary institution, and noting "observable and significant patterns of behavior by states in accordance with the core norm".

As Northeast Asia is an inter-state society that is power political with no secondary institutions, any method that relies in whole or substantially in part on secondary institution creation or regulative function can be discarded as inappropriate. Much like Holsti has provided three criteria for determining the existence of institutions, Spandler (2015: 610) provides three roles for primary institutions using an intersubjective understanding. By merging these concepts, we can purport three general criteria that mark an intersubjective primary institution in a power-political society: 1) Institutions are constitutive practices that set the basic nature of relations between the actors; 2) Institutions are a coherent set of ideas and/or beliefs that constitute the scope of an international society; and 3) Institutions reflect norms and influence the rationality actors pursue. Using these three criteria, we can analyze whether nationalism, and in the case of Northeast Asia, its derivative victimhood nationalism is a primary institution of this particular international society.

2. Victimhood Nationalism as a Primary Institution

Victimhood nationalism is a derivative of nationalism, meaning it is one type of nationalism. In line with Mayall's (1990) recognition of multiple nationalisms, it is prudent to not treat nationalism as an end-all as a primary institution. Buzan (2004: 175) notes how Holsti and Reus-Smit "address explicitly the question of hierarchy among primary institutions" with their look at foundational institutions and constitutional structures, respectively. Buzan goes on to develop his own "nested hierarchy of international institutions" composed of master and derivative primary institutions (2004: 184). The structure of a nested hierarchy presents a

convenient taxonomy to differentiate among the multiple nationalisms found in international society. Interestingly, Buzan (2004: 184) does list nationalism as a master primary institution, but his derivative institutions are self-determination, popular sovereignty, and democracy, all institutions that couple nationalism to citizenship in some way, belying a Western-European perspective to his approach. I suggest that multiple types of nationalism should be found in this nested hierarchy of nationalism as a master primary institution. Some specific derivatives should be pan-Arabism of the Middle-East, Bolivarianism or Panhispanism of Latin America, victimhood nationalism of Central Europe (manifested between Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Germany), victimhood nationalism found in relation to Israel, and victimhood nationalism of Northeast Asia.

Victimhood nationalism is the view held by a national people that they are hereditary victims of a wrong and this view works to justify the attempt of the powers that be to mobilize the general public for national projects (Lim, 2007). It presents a simplistic dualism of one national people as victim and another as their victimizer. For example, in Northeast Asia, South Korea was the victim of Japanese imperial aggression. Therefore, from the perspective of South Koreans, South Koreans are the victims, and the Japanese are perpetually the victimizers. The duality of victimhood nationalism resides in the belief of the individual or the community. Therefore, Japan for example does not see itself as a perpetrator or victimizer of South Koreans; it is the South Koreans only embracing this duality and holding that view of the Japanese. In ES terms, the perspective is held by Koreans within an imagined community in the interhuman domain (e.g. at the individual or group level of human beings) and then manifested through elites and actions in the inter-state society domain, or at the state level of analysis.

Importantly, "The epistemological binary of collective guilt and collective

innocence facilitates victimhood as a historical culture" (Lim, 2010: 1). It is therefore derived from intersubjective meaning and is intimately linked to the idea of historical grievance, yet for some it seems to take this grievance one step further. Lim (2007) writes:

> At a certain stage of development, victimhood nationalism intends to justify nationalism and occasionally past victims may transform themselves into future victimizers in time. That is the irony of victimhood nationalism. It is through victimhood nationalism that the state power of Israel and Armenia, whose people were the victims of the Holocaust and a racial massacre perpetrated by Turks, are trying to justify their acts of using violence against Palestinians and Azerbaijanians, respectively.

In turn, former victimizers can become victims. As an example of this phenomenon, Lim (2010: 2) states, "Very often it is not difficult to find tropes of victimhood nationalism among nations such as Germany and Japan, which in turn strengthens the victimhood nationalism among victims." For the Japanese, being the world's first victim of an atomic bomb and a victim of North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens provides the Japanese a collective mental space in which to claim they are the victim, which "underlies the Japanese's denial or silence over their atrocities perpetrated against their colonies and enemies" (Lim 2007). According to Lim (2007), it thereby "appears that the victimhood nationalism held by the two countries makes them antagonize each other — but they are actually accomplices in that they work to reinforce each other's position." To clarify, they both have a different perspective of their own victimhood nationalism that occurs within the same binary relationship of South Korea-Japan. In this regard, "the nationalist imagination can be fed only in transnational space" (Lim, 2010: 1; Lim, 2012: 418). Therefore, if Lim (2007) is correct that "the

national conflicts among East Asian countries originated in this antagonistic complicity of victimhood nationalism", then the states of Northeast Asian inter-state society must have behavior that reflects victimhood nationalism.

3. An Analysis of Victimhood Nationalism in Northeast Asia

In Northeast Asia, modern nationalism and its derivative victimhood nationalism are anchored by the imperial stretch of Japan which ran from the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 until the end of World War II in 1945. With the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, China ceded the territory of Taiwan to Japan in perpetuity and recognized the total independence of Korea. Having dealt China a humiliating blow, Japan was now free to annex the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in 1895 and free to contemplate imperial designs toward Korea. Eventually, Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and remained as a colonizer until 1945. The lengthy timeframe of more than a century within which modern nationalism has flourished indicates this is not a recent phenomenon, but like other ES primary institutions it has a longer historical timeline. Nonetheless, the most recent manifestations of nationalism in the region may be some of the most threatening yet.

For Fukuyama (2007: 38), speaking of developments unfolding in Northeast Asia, "the most troubling development is not North Korea's development of nuclear weapons — a serious problem about which much has been written — but the upsurge of nationalism in the three main countries of the region: China, South Korea, and Japan." Fukuyama's perspective supports the hereditary nature of historical culture when he writes that "those who have been the most assertive in pushing a nationalist agenda (e.g., the campaign that collected some 22 million signatures in China to keep Japan out of the UN Security Council, or those opposing U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula and promoting

an accommodation with North Korea) tend to be younger people who did not directly experience either the Pacific War or the Korean War" (2007: 38).

Ku (2016) makes clear that relations between Japan and South Korea oscillate between reconciliation and tension. Behavior by political elites and media coverage influencing public perceptions of the historical perception gap (he does not use the word victimhood) are what fuel the cycle. He uses a framework of centripetal and centrifugal force to analyze South Korea-Japan mutual perceptions from 1998-2015. One example from his study is Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, where fourteen class-A war criminals are buried. Such visits from high-ranking Japanese politicians always spark an immediate diplomatic outcry from South Korea and China (see McCurry, 2022; Reuters, 2021b; Reuters, 2021a; Yoshida and Aoki, 2013). Ku (2016: 68) also looks at the visit by South Korean President Lee Myung-bak to Dokdo/Takeshima in 2012, when Lee needed to boost sagging domestic popularity. He notes that after Lee's visit, Fuji TV, TBS, and NHK all stopped showing Korean dramas on television, in 2012, 2014, and 2015 respectively. In fact, since 2012, Asaba (2022: 1) says "Korea fatigue" in Japan is the "new normal" with two-thirds of Japanese surveyed in 2020 saying they do not have "a feeling of friendship" with Korea and four-fifths saying relations with South Korea are "not amicable". Yoshida and Toriumi (2022: 112) note that during the 48th general election for the lower house in Japan (September 28 to October 23, 2017) 18.1 percent of all political tweets through Twitter were of anti-Korean sentiment. Such domestic surveys indicate to elites that accommodating diplomatic postures or initiatives may have negative domestic repercussions and therefore diplomatic challenges to a neighbor's behavior may be more politically advantageous.

In his look at textbook controversies in Northeast Asia, Lim (2022: c7, para3) states "the national history textbook conflict in East Asia is not a

question of 'right or wrong' to be proven by objective facts but is precisely the inevitable collision of conflicting nationalisms. Historical facts in those textbooks may be said to be constructed by the nationalist episteme." Ku (2016: 61) notes how the April 2001 approval of a nationalistic history textbook in Japan "triggered harsh South Korean and Chinese protests." Such condemnations from South Korea's officialdom and North Korea continue now (see Ahn, 2022; Yonhap, 2021; NBC News, 2005 for some examples). The same cycle of publishing a book and receiving an official rebuke diplomatically also occurs each year Japan releases a defense white paper that claims Dokdo/Takeshima as territory of Japan (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022; Cho, 2021 as examples). Other historical claims also get official rebukes. In 2002, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences under its "Northeast Project" tried to recast history and claim Goguryeo as a part of Chinese territory and history, when most contemporary historians would consider Goguryeo under Korea's Three Kingdoms Period (Washburn, 2013). The Chinese ambassador was summoned in Seoul for an official rebuke. A recurrence in 2011 reignited the controversy. By 2012, nearly three quarters of South Koreans polled saw China as a military threat (Washburn, 2013). Official diplomatic rebukes have now become habitual interstate behavior expected by elites and layman alike.

Myers (2010: 131-140) provides an excellent account of how the North Korean regime views Japan and the United States, two enemies from which it draws feelings of victimhood. In North Korean propaganda, all "Japs" are "inherently rapacious" and "like the 'Japs,' the Yankees are condemned as an inherently evil race that can never change, a race with which Koreans must *forever* be on hostile terms" [italics in the original]. The United States is held in disregard in large part to propaganda involving U.S. bombing campaigns and massacres, perpetrated by United States forces or not, during the Korean War (2010: 136). Myers (2010: 151-162) goes on to explain

how North Korea will forever see South Korea as a Yankee colony and therefore the animosity against the United States can stretch to its vassal state South Korea. This helps explain the heated rhetoric of condemnation from North Korea whenever South Korea and the United States hold joint military drills.

China's "Century of Humiliation" is a catalyst for its intersubjective nationalist sentiments and actions. Leslie (2018: 110) believes "perhaps the greatest humiliation suffered by China during this period was its defeat by Japan, namely the First Sino-Japanese War from 1894-1895. This defeat is especially consequential because it shifted the Sino-Japanese relationship from one of equal footing to Japanese superiority." As mentioned earlier, Taiwan was lost to China with the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. Further still, in 1915 the Japanese government submitted "Twenty-One Demands" to Yuan Skikai's warlord government, which were accepted in modified form. This infamy was commemorated as a national holiday in China as "National Humiliation Day". Continued suffering at the hands of the Japanese culminated in the "Rape of Nanjing" in 1937 (2018: 110). The Century of Humiliation came to a close with Japan's surrender at the end of World War II in 1945.

According to Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Chinese dream is one of national rejuvenation and "resolving the Taiwan question to realize China's complete reunification is the shared aspiration of all Chinese people, and is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation" (Xi Jinping, 2017). Kaufman (2011) believes the return of Taiwan to the Chinese mainland may be the only non-negotiable vestige of this humiliation. The Chinese narrative of China as victim during the Century of Humiliation "has become a key legitimizer for CCP rule, because the CCP is portrayed as the only modern Chinese political party that was able to successfully stand up to foreign aggression ... fighting off China's would-be subjugators, including

the Japanese, the KMT army, and the United States in Korea" (Kaufman, 2011).

Diplomatic protests often go back and forth in the China-Japan relationship. Besides official protests over Japanese textbooks (see Reuters, 2016 as an example), the Chinese Foreign Ministry protests on other issues as well, like a Uyghur human rights motion passed by the Japanese parliament which was called "extremely vile in nature" by the Foreign Ministry Spokesman (Reynolds, 2022). Japan has also protested to Russia over military exercises with China off Japanese waters, as it worries of increasing militarization by its neighbor (Yamaguchi, 2022). According to Wan (2012), Chinese officials "can't go wrong by talking tough on Japan," as government elites simultaneously encourage and restrain anti-Japanese protests in the country.

V. Conclusion

This paper has argued that inter-state society in Northeast Asia is power political in ES theoretical terms. As such, many primary institutions considered classical in ES literature may do little to describe relations between states in the region. The difficulty of analysis via primary institutions is compounded by the fact that the region has no secondary institutions with universal membership of all states, which negates the use of a constitutive-regulative framework in analysis of primary institutions. It is therefore suggested that an intersubjective understanding of primary institutions be adopted for analysis of a region characterized by power-political behavior.

The framework of master and derivative primary institutions is utilized to offer nationalism as a master primary institution for the region and victimhood nationalism a derivative institution that heavily influences

state behavior. Although not all actions of states can be scrutinized, the case is made that modern notions of nationalism in the region begin with the First Sino-Japanese War and that Japan's historical legacy of imperial and colonial dominance play a large part in fueling sentiments of victimhood, which can be exploited by political elites and the media in individual states. Diplomatic rebukes linked to historical grievances and feelings of victimhood nationalism are now habitual behavior of states, and it may seem to elites that there is little to gain domestically by being diplomatically accommodating to neighbors. Therefore, it appears that victimhood nationalism has become constitutive of relations between the states and does influence the rationality of actors, thereby fulfilling the requirements of an intersubjective analysis as to whether victimhood nationalism may be a primary institution.

There are likely to be some valid criticisms of this work as it stands. Firstly, the analysis here is meant foremost to complement and expand the theoretical constructs and framework of the English School. Therefore, it spends much time building the foundation of theoretical claims relative to ES scholarship (i.e. Northeast Asia as a power political region, the intersubjective analysis of primary institutions, and derivatives of nationalism) and less time on promoting regional evidentiary support. Pursuant to the first, the second weakness is the focus on the states of China, Japan, and South Korea and less devotion to North Korea and Taiwan. With regards to these two weaknesses, more evidentiary support for individual states and the region are necessary. However, they would significantly expand the scope and length of this paper. Now that a theoretical foundation is built, it is hoped that others can apply it more readily to Northeast Asia or other regions. There is by extension a third weakness. The paper does not make a comparative case to other regions, nor does it make a comparative case against other potential primary institutions that may have a greater effect on Northeast

Asian inter-state relations than victimhood nationalism. Both possible comparative studies would make excellent projects in their own right, but are beyond the scope of this theoretical pursuit. However, as noted above, a derivative of nationalism may be victimhood nationalisms related to Central Europe or Israel, which may open the door for a comparative look between those regions and Northeast Asia. As well, a comparative look at other potential primary institutions in the region of Northeast Asia to determine the most compelling influence on behavior would be interesting, though with the region's power political environment this author currently cannot deduce what those potential institutions may be.

One logical area for expansion of this thesis within ES scholarship is an ES triad framework analysis. Actions attributed to victimhood nationalism, or nationalism more generally, could be analyzed in what structural ES theory calls the domains of interstate societies, transnational societies and interhuman societies. This would open the notion of victimhood nationalism to individuals and business groups within each state's territory and within each state's diaspora for further analysis as a primary institution, as these latter two domains were neglected in this analysis. Even with the weaknesses listed above, it is hoped the current form of this analysis shows the usefulness of ES theory as an analytical tool for Northeast Asia and shows East Asian scholars a new perspective through which to view current relations between states in the region.

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