

## **Rapprochement between Adversary States in East Asia: China-Vietnam, China-South Korea Diplomatic Normalization in the 1990s**

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Received: 23 October 2017 / Accepted: 30 November 2017 /

Published online: 15 December 2017

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**Abstract** This research deals with the restoration of relations between nations, focusing on the “normalization of diplomatic relations” between two “adversary states” in East Asia. It aims to determine what causes two enemy states to restore their relations; additionally, the possibility of stable peace is expected, as normalization would not only affect the two protagonist states. Therefore, it can be used as a starting point for stable peace among nations. This research considers two cases: China-Vietnam and China-South Korea normalization in the 1990s. Through these cases, the research is expected to determine the causes and processes of securing stable peace in East Asia. First, the process leading to rapprochement in East Asia follows three steps: (1) Unilateral accommodation, (2) Non-political interaction, and (3) Reciprocal restraint. Additionally, the three variables of “weaker state, domestic policy, and the third party” are building blocks that lead states to rapprochement. The weaker state tends to take the initiative of improving relations. Based on the weaker state’s initiative, its domestic policy promotes societal and economic exchanges between countries. Lastly, the third party plays a key role in the process of restoring relations in East Asia.

**Keywords** normalization · rapprochement · cooperation · peace · East Asia · China

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This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (number NRF-2015S1A3A2046903)

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## Introduction

When and how do two adversary states restore their relations? This paper deals with the restoration of relations between nations, focusing on the “normalization of diplomatic relations” between two “adversary states” in East Asia. It aims to determine what causes two enemy states to restore their relations. Additionally, the possibility of stable peace is expected, as normalization would not only affect the two protagonist states. Therefore, it can be used as a starting point for stable, international peace among nations.

In particular, this paper deals with East Asia and uncovers patterns in relations involving China. There have been many studies on the improvement of relations in the post-Cold War era in a structural context, but not many studies exist that determine the specific variables of the process. Charles A. Kupchan, a liberal IR theorist, introduces the types and the process of stable peace in his book, *How Enemies Become Friends* (2010). It can be inferred that East Asian countries are in the first stage of the stable peace process, referred to by Kupchan as rapprochement. However, Kupchan overlooks East Asian cases, so it is difficult to apply his theory to the region. Therefore, the theory should be modified so that the East Asian cases can be assessed.

This paper aims to answer the question “How has the relationship between the hostile countries in East Asia improved?” Furthermore, it attempts to identify the original causes and the process of securing stable peace that Kupchan’s existing theory has not explained. Although there are some limitations of case study methods, this research is meaningful to ask questions to the general theory, explore causal mechanisms and scrutinize overlooked cases in existing theory (George and Bennett, 2005: 21). This research will consider two cases: China-Vietnam and China-South Korea normalization in the 1990s. These two particular cases were chosen for several reasons. First, Vietnam and South Korea were hostile countries that severed diplomatic relations through war with China. Second, the relations between China-Vietnam and China-South Korea are very different in ideologies and geopolitical rivalry, but the processes of normalizing and improving their diplomatic relations in the early 1990s were very similar to one another.

## Existing theory and framework

### The existing theory of rapprochement

There are two different concepts pertaining to the improvement of relations: reconciliation and rapprochement. Reconciliation often focuses on societies divided by ‘intra’-national issues such as racial conflicts, civil wars, ethnic disputes, and religious conflicts (Lederach, 1997; Philips, 1998; Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004). Additionally, ‘inter’-national issues have also been addressed. These issues generally include historical faults that create victims and offenders, and these are often solved through an apology, forgiveness, and compensation. They also refer to war crimes, human rights, and justice (Méndez, 2006; Lind, 2009; Long and Brecke, 2003; Ina, 2011; Shin, 2009).

Rapprochement, on the other hand, is used to explain normalization or the improvement of

relations “between” two countries. Jeong Bae Kim (2012: 205-206) uses rapprochement in the context of President Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, which improved the China-United States relationship. Hans Maretzki (2002: 222, 242) distinguishes between reconciliation and normalization, using the word ‘rapprochement’ as a synonym for normalization. He explains that to ‘normalize’ means to formalize the relation through mutual recognition.

In general, China’s diplomatic normalization in the early 1990s can be easily understood in the post-Cold War context. Also, it is logical that each country’s economic and diplomatic interests promote normalization. Realist theory helps us to better explain and simplify the diplomatic relationship; however, from a structural perspective, each actor’s active autonomy would be underestimated. Therefore, an explanation based solely on interests restricts the potential dynamics of international relations. For these reasons, it is more difficult to scrutinize the process in detail through realism, beyond simplifying the cause and effect.

This research therefore begins with liberalism theory in order to focus on the actor and determine the dynamics of the international realm; this would not be possible using realist theory. Liberalism considers cooperation and peace among countries possible, so normalization is regarded as a form of broader cooperation in this paper. Many liberal theories contend that the main cause of cooperation between countries is increasing interdependency. For example, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1987) state that after the Cold War, increasing economic interdependency forced nations to cooperate with one another. As such, institutions can also raise the possibility of cooperation (Krasner, 1982; Doyle, 1986; Russett and Oneal, 2001; Moravcsik, 1997). Robert Axelrod, in *The Evolution of Cooperation*, focuses on the conditions and strategies of cooperation. Also, Charles A. Kupchan tries to generalize the process of stable peace. Kupchan’s research goes beyond simply listing the causes by revealing the process and mechanism by which stable peace is achieved.

This paper aims to determine the patterns for restoring relations and the process of reaching rapprochement. To accomplish this, the research focuses on the framework established by Charles Kupchan, which would compensate for the limitations of realism and liberalism. Additionally, as his research specifically dealt with relationships between enemy countries, it would be useful to apply this to countries that have previously experienced war in East Asia.

In his book, *How Enemies Become Friends*, Kupchan (2010) tries to generalize the sequential process between two countries to improve their relations and finally secure stable peace. He maintains that the onset of stable peace depends on the presence of three main conditions: institutionalized restraint, compatible social orders, and cultural commonality. According to Kupchan, there are also three main types of stable peace: rapprochement, security community, and union. As parties move from rapprochement to security community to union, stable peace deepens and matures. Stable peace emerges through a sequential process and this process consists of four distinct phases: (1) Unilateral accommodation → (2) Reciprocal restraint → (3) Societal integration → (4) Generation of new political narratives.

In applying this framework to East Asian countries, it can be inferred that they are not a security community or union. However, these countries have already reached the stage of rapprochement, which is the first step towards stable peace. Therefore, this paper will examine how adversaries in East Asia embarked upon the process of rapprochement by looking into the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1990s.

## Application and modification

Although the liberal theory of rapprochement is very useful in that it specifically deals with the relationship between hostile countries and focuses on the process, it has some limitations. First, rapprochement in East Asian countries does not follow this theory's typical process. While it is understood that Kupchan's theory did not intend to cover East Asian countries, it can still be viewed as a limitation in that the cases are biased toward Western countries.

In addition, this theory focuses on describing the process and does not precisely reveal causality. As such, the liberal theory of rapprochement is successful in theorizing the process itself, but causal relationships are not clear and each phase is much too isolated. It should be noted that these limitations were indicated by Kupchan himself in *How Enemies Become Friends*.

Finally, the existing liberal theory of rapprochement examined historical cases in which countries were on comparable levels, and this does not reflect the real world. The historical cases, which include relationships among the United States-Great Britain right after independence, Norway-Sweden in the early 20th century, and Brazil-Argentina in the 1980s, are analyzed without considering the complex realities of asymmetric features and the presence of a third party. However, these points are critical in East Asia, which means that the existing theory must be modified reflecting the reality of the international world.

Therefore, this research will examine East Asian cases based on the existing liberal theory of rapprochement, and additionally, suggest a modified model to compensate for the limitations mentioned above. There are three main points modified, as shown in Figure 1. First the number of stages is reduced from 4 to 3, and the names of each stage have been modified: (1) Unilateral Initiative → (2) Nonpolitical Interaction → (3) Reciprocal Restraint. Second, the causes of each phase are suggested as 'weaker country, domestic policy, the third party,' and causality is clarified. Finally, while each phase in the existing liberal theory is regarded as segmental, the phases in the modified theory build upon each other and eventually lead to rapprochement.

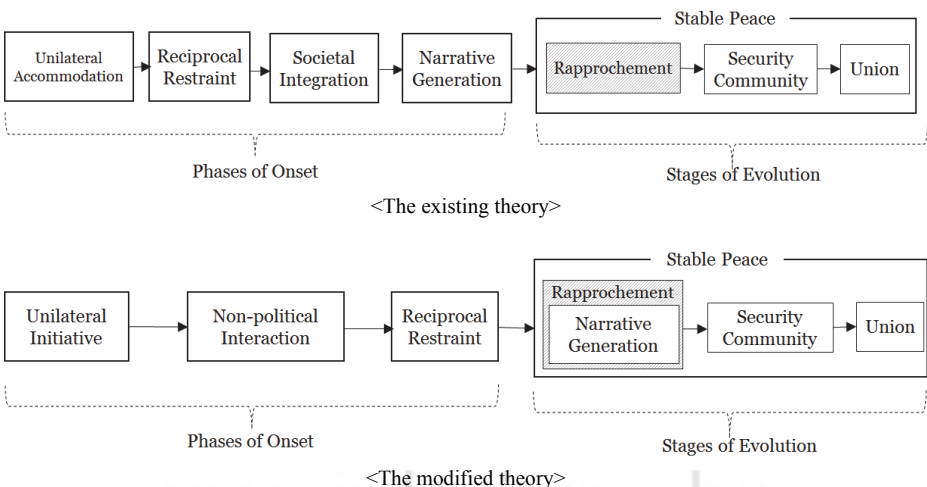


Fig. 1 Comparison between the existing theory and the modified theory

The first phase is called the “Unilateral Initiative” and begins when the weaker state takes the initiative to improve relations in East Asia. Not only does the weaker state’s initiative play a key role here, but the weaker state will then continuously attempt to improve such relations and this finally leads to normalization between the two countries. The first stage of China-ROK relations began in 1973, and the first stage for China-Vietnam began in 1985. Vietnam and South Korea made efforts to improve their relationship with China despite China’s passive reaction, and this exemplifies the main difference between the existing and modified theories. The preponderant state often anchors the zone of peace in the existing theory. Also, the first phase of ‘Unilateral Accommodation’ begins amid peril, which means a state facing an array of threats against which it has insufficient resources attempts to improve its strategic environment by seeking to befriend one of its adversaries (Kupchan, 2010: 37). However, it was not necessary to overcome insufficient resources in East Asia at that time; therefore, it could not be referred to as a strategic accommodation.

The second phase of improving relations is “Non-political Interaction”. The second phase of China-ROK relations started in 1979, and that of China-Vietnam in 1987. In this phase, domestic policy establishes the foundation to promote nonpolitical interaction between two countries. In this sense, the two countries have already carried out social and economic exchanges long before the formal normalization. The existing and modified theories share the idea that civil society and private enterprises mainly take action in this phase while government officials are the main actors in the first phase. The ‘Societal Integration’ in the existing theory features a government that describes the target country as a friendly nation to obtain the support of the general public and seeks to integrate society. However, the societal integration of domestic countries in East Asia did not exist despite their interactions; this was possible based on the domestic policy of the weaker state.

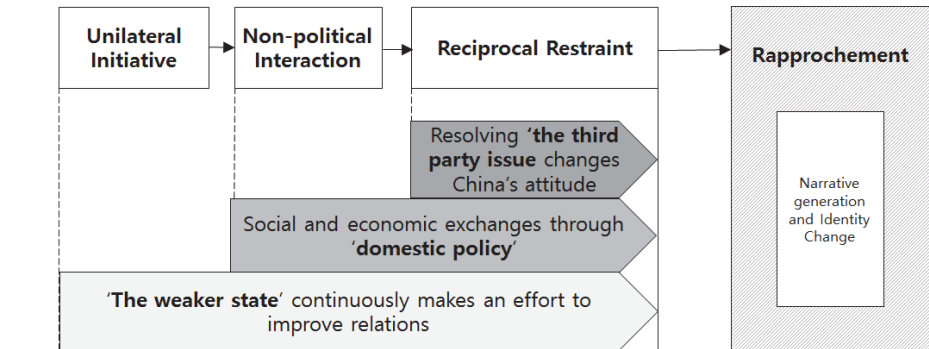
The third and final phase before diplomatic normalization in East Asia is called “Reciprocal Restraint”. The final phase of China-ROK relation occurred in 1990, and that of China-Vietnam occurred from 1991 to the day of normalization. It was not until China changed its passive position that this phase was reached, and the most important factor to make this possible was the ‘third country factor,’ which includes North Korea, Taiwan, and Cambodia. It is said that each country induces mutual restraint in order to grasp the good intentions of the other in the existing theory. Also, while reciprocal restraint is the middle stage of improving relations in the existing theory, reciprocal restraint in East Asia is the final stage of normalization.

The “Narrative Generation and Identity Change”, which was the fourth phase of the existing liberal theory, seems to begin only after rapprochement in East Asian cases. According to Kupchan, this phase begins at the elite level, with officials altering the language they use to refer to the partner state and exaggerating shared values and historical bonds. However, this was naturally possible after the two countries agreed to normalize relations in East Asia. For example, two months after the normalization of diplomatic relations between Korea and China in October 1992, the press released the ‘Korea-China joint press statement.’<sup>1</sup> This is because the formal language system that refers to the other has changed following normalization and new discourses could be formed. This phase is considered to be a step following rapprochement, so it does not apply to this case study.

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<sup>1</sup> Chosun-ilbo, “China-South Korea joint press statement”, Oct 1, 1992

It should be emphasized that East Asian countries reached the point of rapprochement by building upon each variable, unlike with the segmental explanation of each stage in the existing theory. From the first step to the last moment, the weaker countries continuously showed their willingness to improve relations. As a result, the domestic policies of the weak countries helped non-political exchanges with China to be achieved in the second phase. As the two countries' relations became closer with non-political exchanges, it was the third-party issue that allowed China to decisively change its position and finally decide to normalize its political diplomatic relations. This is shown in Figure 2.



**Fig. 2** Mechanism for improving relations in East Asia

## Analysis of East Asian cases

### Unilateral Initiative: Continuous initiative of the weaker state

In the “Unilateral Initiative” phase, the first stage to rapprochement between two hostile countries in East Asia, the relatively weaker country is more active in improving relations. Vietnam and South Korea, which were relatively weak countries, are consistently active in improving relations with China. Therefore, not only has the unilateral leadership of the weaker countries become an important turning point in the relationship between the two countries, but they have also actively continued to make an effort to improve relations.

The relationship between China and Vietnam began to show signs of progress as early as 1985. On Vietnam’s 40th anniversary on September 2, President of China Li Xiannian sent a congratulatory message to the President of Vietnam. Also, the Vietnam delegation attended the Guangzhou trade fair (Yu, 2012: 464). However, China has refused to request formal talks with Vietnam since then (Womack, 2006: 207). This reveals that China’s foreign policy toward Vietnam in the 1980s was very hostile.

On the other hand, unlike the hostile policies of China throughout the 1980s, Vietnam has been actively working to improve relations with China since 1985. From the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, Vietnam shifted from the ‘Pro-Soviet Union Policy’ to ‘parallel diplomacy’ with other countries like China. At this time, Vietnam had been striving to restore

friendly relations with China, keeping an eye on China's attitude for about 10 years (黃胜偉 2001: 12). Vietnam recognized the traditional Sino-centrism of China through the China-Vietnam war in 1979, and learned how to coexist with China despite ongoing threats. Moreover, as China-Soviet Union relations changed favorably and Eastern European socialist countries collapsed in the 1980s, Vietnam would have had to rethink its foreign policy toward China (Yu 2012: 459). According to Mio Tadashi (1989), first, in 1985, public criticism against China was greatly subsided, and the Vietnamese leadership and the state media rarely used languages such as 'Chinese expansionism' or 'China hegemony.' Second, articles about China invading border regions or territorial bombing decreased. After Nguyen Van Linh was inaugurated as general secretary of the communist party at the end of 1986, articles about military impulse near the border gradually decreased and completely disappeared by the end of 1987. Third, Vietnam's attitude toward the political resolution of the Cambodian problem suddenly became flexible. At a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the three Indochina countries held in Phnom Penh in August 1985, Vietnam issued a statement announcing the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia by 1990.

"Vietnamese volunteer forces will conclude their total withdrawal by 1990. In case these withdrawals are taken advantage of to undermine the peace and security of Kampuchea, the governments of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam will consult each other and take appropriate measures."<sup>2</sup>

Previously, Vietnam had considered withdrawing if the threat from China no longer existed. When compared to this ideology, the total declaration of withdrawal must have been a big change in Vietnam's policy (Yu, 2012: 466-467). Vietnam showed a willingness to improve relations with China by deciding to withdraw Cambodian troops.

In China-South Korea relations, Korean president Park Chung Hee first showed his intentions to improve relations with socialist countries by announcing 'Special Statement on Foreign Policy for Peace and Unification (Declaration of the 6.23)' in 1973. There is a saying in the Declaration of the 6.23 that, "The Republic of Korea will open the door to all nations under the principle of reciprocity and urges that nations with different ideologies and systems open our doors to us." This means that even though the social systems are different, Korea would cooperate with the socialist countries under the principle of reciprocity and equality. At the same time, 'Northeast Asia Division 2' was newly established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and this division was placed in charge of China (Yoon, 2012: 17). This is also a sign of the government's commitment to improving relations with China.

Korea had been keeping a close eye on all diplomatic issues in order to improve relations with China. Meanwhile, in January of 1979, a Korean cargo ship that passed through the South China Sea discovered a Chinese fisherman who was drifting and was aboard a ship and entered Incheon Port. Korea asked China how they could repatriate the fisherman through the Consulate general in Hong Kong, wondering what China's response would be. However, China did not respond as expected. Nevertheless, Korea continuously tried to improve their relationship with China. For example, Korean President Chun Doo-Hwan visited the United States and asked for

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<sup>2</sup> 'Communique of the Eleventh Conference of the Foreign Ministers of Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam, issued at Phnom Penh on 16 August 1985'. Included in Documents on the Kampuchean problem, 1979-1985 (Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.), pp.188-189. See Womack(2006)

help in trading with China in 1981, saying “China is a friend of United States, and a friend of a friend is not an enemy.”

### **Non-political Interaction: Social and economic exchanges led by domestic policy**

The second phase is that of “Non-political Interaction.” Social and economic exchanges between two countries began long before the normalization of diplomatic relations; these exchanges could be revitalized based on the domestic policies of each country, especially the domestic policies of the weaker country.

China and Vietnam’s economic policy ‘reform and opening policy,’ and South Korea’s foreign policy ‘Nordpolitik,’ led to social and economic interactions. Through this, Vietnam and Korea could make continuous exchange in non-political fields with China, who hesitated in improving political relations. While this paper focuses on the effects of domestic policy that promote non-political exchanges on diplomatic relations, the existing studies generally deal with domestic political systems like democracy or actors who construct foreign policy. However, these are not the main reasons to study the Chinese cases of improving relations with hostile countries. It was domestic policy, not a system, an actor, or a party’s strategy, that promoted non-political exchanges between countries and had a considerable impact on normalizing diplomatic relations.

In the process of improving relations between China and Vietnam, it could be seen that non-political interactions increased after Vietnam’s economic reform policy, the Doi Moi, was implemented in 1986. Wang Guoping (王國平 2005: 41) said that the purpose of Vietnam’s reform and opening policy since 1986 was to create a friendly environment with the outside world. Indeed, since the implementation of the Doi Moi policy, trade has increased in the Vietnamese and Chinese border regions. As tension around the border area has gradually decreased, trade resumed and minorities living in that area could visit each other. According to a field survey done by Brantly Womack (1994: 505), the availability of ordinary consumer goods in northern Vietnam was transformed between 1985-90 from a serious shortage to an abundance by the normalization of border trade.

Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam officially announced ‘Directive no.118, On Border Trade between Vietnam and China’ in November 1988, which officially allowed people to cross the border between China and Vietnam by paying 7,000dong (about 8CNY, 2USD). With this, the border trade in 1989 increased about 10 times over the past year. Since 1989, the narrow grassy paths that had been used to trade between China and Vietnam have developed into crowded two-lane roads (Womack, 1994: 499). By 1990, Vietnam became the second trading partner of China’s Guangxi Province, second only to Hong Kong. By 1991, The trade volume between Vietnam and Guangxi was even more than the sum of trade volume between Guangxi and 5 countries: Japan, United States, Germany, Singapore, and France.<sup>3</sup>

As the exchanges of people and goods increased, Chinese people living in Vietnam also experienced significant change.<sup>4</sup> The number of Chinese residents in Vietnam increased and

<sup>3</sup> 『广西統計年鑒 1992』 p.376

<sup>4</sup> Zhuang Guotu (莊國土, 2014) maintains in a similar way. The relationship between Southeast Asian countries and China is closely related to the attitudes of Southeast Asian countries to Chinese people living

they recovered their economic power. Traditionally, the Chinese had lived in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta regions the most, and there was a remarkable increase in Chinese population in these areas. In the case of Ho Chi Minh City, the Chinese population increased from 475,739 in 1988 to 500,000 in 1991, and that of the Mekong Delta increased from 233,856 in 1983 to 323,648 in 1989 right after Doi Moi (Kim Hyun jae, 2010: 217).

There has also been a change in language usage toward Chinese residents in Vietnam. In Vietnam, there is a clear distinction between ‘Nguoi Hoa,’ which refers to a Chinese person with Vietnamese nationality, and ‘Hoa Kieu,’ which is a Chinese who does not have Vietnamese nationality. Since Doi Moi was adopted in 1986, the Vietnamese government has officially used the term ‘Nguoi Hoa’ for its Chinese residents. It is a term in which the bloodline, ethnicity, and political attributes are excluded. This meant that the government would like to acknowledge the Chinese living in Vietnam, and that relations between the two countries were improving (Kim Hyun jae, 2010: 198-200).

The non-political exchanges between China and South Korea began in the form of indirect trade through Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, after the implementation of Deng Xiaoping’s reform and opening policy in 1979 (Lee Tae Hwan, 2003: 121). Since the declaration of June 23, 1973, Korea had been making continuous efforts to normalize its diplomatic relations through trying to increase its economic relations with China. However, whenever the South Korean government hastened to achieve diplomatic ties with China, China consistently adhered to the principles of separation of politics and economics, saying that, “There will be a road in any time, when people travel a lot.”

According to the data by KITA (Korea Investment Trade Association), there are records of imports and exports from China and Korea since 1978.<sup>5</sup> This is meaningful because the year 1978 was the start of Chinese economic reform and opening policy. In addition, the growth rate of imports and exports was the largest, 40.1%, in 1979, and 32.8% in 1980, compared to that of 1992 when diplomatic relations normalized and were similar to that of normal years, 19%.

In 1988, South Korea implemented its Nordpolitik in earnest and pursued peaceful unification of the two Koreas through peaceful coexistence with socialist countries (Suh, 2006: 373). As a part of this, Korea actively promoted normalization of relations with China. The 7.7 Declaration became the starting point for the North Korean policy, and President Roh Tae-woo’s Nordpolitik has been aggressively promoted since the election.

As President Roh Tae-woo immediately stated after his election, sports exchanges have increased contact with China, which are part of Nordpolitik. China participated in the Seoul Olympic Games held from September 17 to October 2, 1988; this was the first event in which 160 countries from both the East and West participated together since the 76th Olympic Games in Montreal. Beijing was selected as the venue for the 1990 Asian Games, so China was interested in learning about system technology and know-how for competition management during the Seoul Asian Games in 1986. During this time, Chinese technical delegates were dispatched to Seoul to learn technical skills to manage the Asian games (Yoon, 2012: 39-40). According to the memoirs of Qian Qichen, the former Chinese foreign minister, China officially

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in their countries. See Li Guoliang (李國梁) et al. *Chinese People in South East Asia and Trans-nationalism*, Seoul: Hakgobang, 2014. p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> Korea International Trade Association, <http://www.kita.net>

requested to the Olympic Council of Asia to host the 13th Asian Games of 1990 in 1983, and at the same time, sent letters to allow all members of the Olympic Council of Asia including South Korea to enter the competition in China (Qian, 2003: 150-151). That is, China had already set its goal of successfully hosting the 1990 Beijing Asian Games, and had actively participated in the Seoul Asian Games in 1986 and the Seoul Olympics in 1988. At the Beijing Asian Games in September 1990, more than 500 Korean athletes and officers participated.

In addition to indirect trade and sports exchanges, academic conferences also gradually increased. These interactions were not formally arranged by government bureaucrats, but rather through various informal exchanges on the private level. After several informal contacts at the civilian level, on October 20, 1990, the two countries agreed to establish a trade delegation, which was a contract point between two countries and the official representative organizations through KOTRA (Korea Trade Investment Promotion Agency) and CCOIC (China Chamber of International Commerce). According to the agreement, KOTRA in Beijing was established on January 30, 1991, and CCOIC in Seoul was established on April 9 with Xu Dayou (徐大有) as a first chairman.

### **Reciprocal Restraint: The third party issue**

The third phase in East Asia is “Reciprocal Restraint.” This phase occurs right before two countries normalize their diplomatic relations, and ‘the third country’ played a key role in the phase. When the problem of the third country was solved, China, which had not been active in improving relations, changed its position and finally reached reciprocal restraint. The third party between China and Vietnam was Cambodia, and North Korea and Taiwan were the problems between China and Korea.

Fundamentally, international relations begin with bilateral relations, but there are few cases where the relationship is determined by the issues between only two countries. Therefore, there are many international theories related to third parties in international relations (Dittmer, 1981; Hsiung, 1987), and many case studies applying these theories can be found (包宗和 2012; 吳玉山 1997; Hong, 1993; Bedeski, 1995). Most of the literature on triangular relationships have given equal importance to the three countries, and focused on relationship type or action type. In contrast, this paper does not place the three countries as actors with equal importance; the third country will be described as one independent variable to explain the relationship between the first and second countries. Solving problems in the third-party issue led to a change in China’s attitude, which resulted in reciprocal restraint and normalization ensued.

When China and Vietnam had the opportunity to form a new relationship following the Cold War, Cambodia was the most disruptive aspect of their relationship. When the issue of Cambodia was resolved, the normalization of relations between China and Vietnam could be achieved (Ang, 1998: 1123). China wanted to limit Vietnam’s exercise of power and ultimately reduce its power. This has meant denying Vietnam absolute control in Indochina. Therefore, the presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia was a major issue for China (McGregor, 1990: 267).

Since 1985, Vietnam has tried to ease its hostile foreign policy toward China. At the end of the 1980s, however, China and Vietnam faced difficulties in improving their relations due to

conflict in the Spratly Islands. Also, military confrontation continued as the Chinese and Vietnamese regular forces competed for control of mountainous positions along the border throughout the 1980s. China indeed engineered the border conflict to coerce Hanoi to withdraw from Cambodia (Zhang, 2015: 166). At this time, the Vietnamese media tried not to make things worse, saying that territorial disputes should be resolved by negotiation. However, diplomatic issues concerning Cambodia were still at stake. Nguyen Co Thach, Vietnam's foreign minister, and Liu Shuqing (劉述卿), vice foreign minister of China, met each other at the Paris International Conference in July 1989. At this conference, China accepted the proposal of King Sihanouk at that time and claimed a temporary coalition government including Khmer Rouge; however, Vietnam firmly opposed it. The Vietnamese foreign minister has continued to express strong opposition since then, and faced public criticism from the Chinese government and the media (Womack, 2006: 208). In order to alleviate this situation, the deputy foreign minister of Vietnam visited Beijing in January 1990 to express the possibility of narrowing the gap on the Cambodian issue. Around the same time, the delegation of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences visited Hanoi to attend the International Seminar for the 100th anniversary of the birth of President Ho Chi Minh. These exchanges helped ease the strained relations between the two countries.

From the beginning of 1989, high-level contact between China and Vietnam was reported. In January, the Vice Foreign Minister of Vietnam visited Beijing and spoke with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. In August, the Foreign Minister of Vietnam and the vice Foreign Minister of China met at a Paris conference to address the Cambodia issue. Although these meetings did not lead to significant improvements in bilateral relations, it was meaningful in that both sides were showing a willingness to improve relations.

However, the uncompromising disagreement over the Cambodia issue was revealed at a high-level meeting between Vietnam and China in September 1990 (Amer, 1999: 73). The meeting was held in Chengdu, Sichuan province in China. This Chengdu meeting is often referred to as the starting point of the China-Vietnam normalization. Vietnam's general secretary Nguyen Van Linh, Prime Minister Do Muoi, an elder statesman of Party Pham Van Dong, and China's Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Feng participated in the Summit. Vietnam and China wrote a Memorandum of agreement on Cambodia at this meeting (Yu, 2012: 470). It was very meaningful that they reached an agreement on Cambodia at the meeting, which is the starting point of establishing official diplomatic relations. They agreed to the extent that the Cambodia issue was to be brought up for international talks after the Summit.

Moreover, it is also worth noting that Nguyen Co Thach, a Vietnamese Foreign Minister at the time, did not attend the Chengdu Summit. As already mentioned, Nguyen Co Thach had been in a violent confrontation with China on the Cambodian issue, so he was excluded from the talks at the request of China (Wurfel, 1999: 150). The issue of Cambodia had to be resolved in order to establish diplomatic relations, so it seemed that China had ruled out the foreign minister of Vietnam. China and Vietnam finally normalized diplomatic relations from November 5-10, 1991, right after The Paris Peace Accords that took place in October.

In the phase of "Reciprocal Restraint" between China and South Korea, North Korea and Taiwan were the key points that needed to be resolved for China to normalize diplomatic relations with South Korea. China and North Korea were very close in that they had been on the same socialist path for 40 years. Also, several realistic burdens have forced China to

maintain a special relationship with North Korea (Kim Doo-hyun, 1992: 99). North Korea actively advised China not to engage in diplomatic ties with South Korea. From October 4-10, 1991, Kim Il Sung visited China, but there was no official briefing or presentation on the talks with Chinese leaders. During the talks, Kim Il Sung stressed brotherly friendship between China and North Korea. He also firmly maintained that China should not establish official relations with South Korea, since North Korea was not in diplomatic ties with the United States or Japan. China said that their relationship with South Korea would not affect North Korea, and would consider enough time to normalize, agreeing with North Korea's position (Lee Sang-Ock, 2002: 140).

Eventually, the Chinese President Yang Shangkun visited North Korea to persuade him from April 13-17, 1992, just before normalizing diplomatic ties with South Korea. *Xinwanbao* (新晚報), a pro-chinese newspaper, reported on April 19 that President Yang informed Kim Il-sung during his visit to Pyongyang that diplomatic relations between Korea and China would be held in the near future; also, this visit was intended to alleviate the shock North Korea would receive and to appease it (*ibid.*, 173-175). The South Korean government was still so worried about North Korea that they wondered if China could deal with North Korea and asked, but China did not seem worried and replied that China could handle it (*ibid.*, 235).

On July 1992, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Chinese ambassador to Pyongyang to inform Kim Yong Nam, Minister of Foreign Affairs in North Korea, that China and South Korea would normalize their relations soon; North Korea resisted this. Therefore, Qian Qichen, China's Foreign minister, secretly visited Pyongyang again and explained the situation. Qian stated the reasons that it was hard to delay normalization with South Korea because of the international situation and economic matters, and assured him it would be advantageous for North Korea as well. This normalization with South Korea is one of the strategies for dealing with Taiwan, and China promised that they would never isolate North Korea and keep a close relationship. Likewise, China continuously met with North Korea and provided sufficient explanations so that North Korea necessarily accepted it. North Korea did not officially remonstrate with the China-ROK normalization after the official announcement, and it was in sharp contrast to North Korea's reaction to the Soviet Union-ROK normalization in September 1990 (*ibid.*, 235-237).

The Taiwan issue was also a major variable preventing China from normalizing its relations with South Korea. This was because Taiwan's independence or departure from China could be the beginning of China's split and could be perceived as a renunciation of Chinese sovereignty, thus threatening the existence of the Communist Party regime. At the 47<sup>th</sup> general meeting of ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) on April 1991, the South Korean government made a statement that China-Taiwan relations and inter-Korea relations are essentially different. It was intended to deny the argument that China-ROK normalization would signify admitting to 'Two Koreas,' which lead to admitting to 'Two Chinas,' and to keep China from worrying (*ibid.*, 129).

Taiwan actively sought to prevent diplomatic normalization between China and South Korea. The Taiwan ambassador, Jin Shuji (金樹基) had tried hard to make friends with many influential people in a wide range of fields including politics, economics, journalism, and academia in South Korea since he was inaugurated in September 1990. As China and South Korea improved their relationship, Taiwan expressed its concern directly and indirectly, but

South Korea set Taiwan at ease (*ibid.*, 177-178). Hearing from Korean media about the normalization between South Korea and China in January 1992, Taiwan asked to meet with the Korean ambassador and ascertain the truth of the interview. In response to this, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an official statement to correct inaccuracies such as the exact date of normalization with China (*ibid.*, 184-185). In the meantime, Taiwan stepped back from One China policy, stating that they could open to possibility to approve two-China until May 1991. A Korean journalist Kim Jin hong visited Taiwan at that time and wrote an article stating that the Taiwanese government seemed to admit to the China-ROK normalization and covertly try finding out about their new relationship with South Korea (*ibid.*, 191).

However, China consistently maintained 'One China,' and South Korea was on board with normalization with China. At the 48<sup>th</sup> general meeting of ESCAP in April 1992, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Korean Foreign Minister Lee Sang-Ock had a one-on-one meeting. Qian suggested that it was time to push ahead with the matter of normalization, but very secretly. He also firmly stated that although South Korea and Taiwan previously had a close relationship, China-ROK normalization should be implemented based on the 'One China' principle (*ibid.*, 168). Then, South Korea unavoidably began to rearrange relations with Taiwan. On August 18, 1992, the South Korea government first notified Taiwan of the China-ROK normalization and Taiwan immediately and strongly opposed to it. On August 21, three days after the first notice, the South Korean government notified Taiwan again that they should break off the diplomatic relations with them and they would normalize relations with China soon. South Korea added that although breaking off relations, they would try to informally maintain the best condition (*ibid.*, 222-228).

Likewise, China had appeased North Korea and made Taiwan discontinue their relations with South Korea in order to keep the 'One China' policy. After that, China and South Korea finally normalized their diplomatic relations on August 24, 1992.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the cases of China-Vietnam and China-South Korea relations; the countries had become enemies due to war, yet reached rapprochement around the same period in the early 1990s. Through these cases, the research attempted to determine the patterns of China's normalization process and supplement the limitations of the existing theory.

From the above analysis, the first step to rapprochement in East Asia is initiated by the weaker countries showing their willingness to improve relations. Additionally, it is more important that weak countries have made efforts to improve their relations 'continuously' until just before reaching a rapprochement. Unlike China, which had always been cold or passive up until the normalization of diplomatic relations, Vietnam and Korea have continuously shown their efforts to improve relations with China. As a result, non-political exchanges with China were achieved through the domestic policies of the weak countries in the second phase. China had always adhered to its policy for separating politics from economics, and kept cautious in improving political relations. However, Vietnam's Doi moi policy and South Korea's Nordpolitik have met with China's Reform and Opening-up policy, leading to non-political interaction. As the relationship between the two countries became closer with increased non-political exchanges,

it was the third-party issue that allowed China to decisively change its position and finally decide to normalize its political diplomatic relations. When the third-party issues were resolved, as with Cambodia, North Korea, and Taiwan, China was able to retain mutual restraint by having a positive attitude in normalizing official relations.

The theoretical implication of this study is that it complemented the limitations of realism, which overlook the detailed process and dynamics of international relations, and that of liberalism, which was biased towards Western countries. Therefore, it is expected to contribute to the establishment of regional IR theory by critically accepting the Western-oriented global theory (Buzan and Waever, 2003). Moreover, it was not explained in only a sequential manner, but variables were added in such a manner that they build upon one another and lead to rapprochement.

There is also an implication for the real political world, in that the study emphasized the role of the weaker countries in power politics. Emphasizing the third country in bilateral relations is also the part that reflects international reality as it is. Finally, this research is expected to help countries in East Asia step forward toward stable peace after rapprochement in the future.

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