

Unit-level constructivism: The Japan-Republic of China (Taiwan) can-do-nothing relationship as a case study

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ABSTRACT

In a deviation from the claim of rationalists that international politics is conducted on the basis of rational calculations of predatory actors, international relations, from a constructivist standpoint, are made not only of interests, but also of social identities and social relationships that deeply influence states' respective foreign policies. Unit-level Constructivism argues that social trends, especially trends in public opinion, are a dependent variable when explaining states' foreign overtures. This paper posits that this is not usually the case. It is indeed common to see examples of paradoxes between favorable social identities and perceptions, and estranged foreign policies between two states or entities, such as the Japan-Republic of China (Taiwan) relationship case study. Taiwan feels it is under political house arrest, and presumes that Taipei is trying to court more vigorous Japanese support for a greater degree of independence. Why Tokyo is unable to support Taipei's international bids or upgrade its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, despite favorable social realities in both countries as successive public opinion polls have consistently shown, is the central question which this work seeks to answer in relation to the Unit-level Constructivist perspective. The analytical approach this work seeks to test is constructivism, especially the unit-level constructivist argument epitomized by Peter Katzenstein. The reason for applying unit-level constructivism is to demonstrate that Japanese and Taiwanese respective social identities and domestic politics, which are mutually sympathetic, have not been translated into tangible political gains that could help break Taiwan's house arrest, and therefore to draw the attention to the validity of unit-level constructivism regarding the Taiwan-Japan case study. This paper, however, argues that explaining the paradox between what Taipei expects from Japan in standing by Taiwan in its efforts to gain more international recognition and what Tokyo could do in this direction requires exploring the link between three major variables. The first is the paradox between Taipei's expectations of Japan and of Tokyo's ability to deliver, despite the mutually positive perception between the Taiwanese and Japanese peoples, recalling Katzenstein's (1996) argument here. The second variable is the volatile Sino-Japanese relationship as a barometer to fathom the depth of Tokyo's interaction with Taipei; and the third variable is the U.S. impact on Japan's options towards Taiwan as a geostrategic variable to which unit-level constructivism pays little attention as a major element in studying interstate relationships.

Keywords: Theories of international relations research, unit-level constructivism, geo-politics, social identities, public opinion.

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INTRODUCTION

A growing literature on international relations argues that social identities and trends, such as public opinion, are typically an important part of explaining states' foreign policies, especially in the case of paradoxes between favorable social identities and perceptions, and estranged foreign policies between two states or entities. Amongst these theories is constructivism, especially in its unit-level

form. Originally proposed by Nicholas Greenwood Onuf in the late 1980s as an alternative to rationalist theories, largely discredited for failing to predict the end of the Cold War and widely criticized for their natural science-oriented methodology, constructivism is a post-Cold War socio-political theory (Wendt, 1999; Onuf, 1989). However, constructivism as a "social theory of

international politics” that emphasizes the social construction of world affairs is not a unified theory (Behraves, 2011). It started as systemic constructivism by Alexander Wendt, then was seen as a unit-level concept by Katzenstein (1996), and later as a holistic form of constructivism advocated by Ruggie (1995) and Brown et al. (1998).

As opposed to the claim of rationalists that international politics is conducted on the basis of rational calculations of predatory actors, international relations, from a constructivist standpoint, are made not only of interests, but also of social identities and social relationships that deeply influence states’ respective foreign policies. Accordingly, “the relationship between domestic, social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states” deeply impact their overtures towards each other (Reus-Smit, 2005). This means that international politics from a unit-level constructivist standpoint is a sphere of interaction which is primarily shaped by the actors’ identities and practices (Katzenstein, 1996). Therefore, this work seeks to test the validity of constructivism in its unit-level form by applying Katzenstein’s logic to the paradoxical Taiwan-Japan relationship. The purpose here is to explore whether Katzenstein’s unit-level approach, which emphasizes the states’ domestic socio-political fabric in impacting their respective foreign policies, applies to the Japan-Republic of China (Taiwan)¹ case study.

As unit-level constructivism arguably emphasizes social relationships in the international system, the meaning of material capabilities in terms of power, which governs international politics, is constructed on the basis of social interactions and shared understandings either within the same social fabric or between social structures in different nations (Behraves, 2011; Checkel, 2008; Gourevitch, 2002). Accordingly, what happens *within* unitary state actors consequently impacts positively or negatively what happens *between* them; hence the argument that the positive social relations between the Japanese and Taiwanese peoples should yield a proportionally positive political relationship between the governments of Japan and Taiwan. The central question here is whether the Taiwanese-Japanese can-do-nothing relationship has been defined on the basis of the two sides’ social realities that are well known for their reciprocal positive perception as polls have consistently demonstrated, since such sociological aspects, for unit-level constructivism, do shape interstate relationships.

This work therefore starts from the observation that there is an increasingly widening gap between what Japan can do to help Taiwan see an end to its tantalizingly undecided future, and what Taiwan expects from its former colonial power. Tokyo’s reluctance to endorse Taipei’s attempts to join some of the United Nations’ specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation

Organization (ICAO), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and Taiwan’s dilemma of having to deal with Japan, and with most of the rest of the world, in disguise, lest the People’s Republic of China² would protest in one form or another, has been a major obstacle to a constructive Taiwan-Japan relationship that has been stuck in limbo for four decades now.

Explaining the paradox between what Taipei expects from Japan in standing by Taiwan in its efforts to gain more international recognition and what Tokyo could do in this direction requires exploring the linkage between three major variables. The first is the paradox between Taipei’s expectations of Japan and of Tokyo’s ability to deliver, despite the mutually positive perception between the Taiwanese and Japanese peoples, recalling Katzenstein’s (1996) argument here. The second variable is the volatile Sino-Japanese relationship as a barometer to fathom the depth of Tokyo’s interaction with Taipei; and the third variable is the U.S. impact on Japan’s options towards Taiwan as a geostrategic variable to which unit-level constructivism pays little attention as a major element in studying interstate relationships.

METHODOLOGY

As for the data collection, this paper mainly draws on primary data, especially interviews that were held by this writer from 2008 to 2012 with the Taiwan Interchange Association in Tokyo (ICA)³, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Tokyo, and the Deputy Director General of TECRO in Boston, United States. These interviews are meant to provide an updated official Taiwanese perspective. As primary source data, these interviews are important in revealing Taiwan’s sense of isolation, as well as the Island’s aspirations to end its house arrest. Moreover, the findings of public opinion polls, conducted between 2007 to 2012 in Taiwan and Japan, are of useful value here, as they provide a diversity of insights about the topic under study.

DISCUSSION

Taiwan’s temporary status has lingered for almost forty years now, as the Taiwanese have yearned to become a recognized nation since Taipei was expelled from the United Nations in October 1971 and replaced by the People’s Republic of China, which inherited Taiwan’s veto power on the U.N. Security Council. But Taiwan is still not recognized as a sovereign nation by most of the world, except for a handful of nations in Latin America and small countries like Fiji in the Pacific. The Taiwanese have

¹ Republic of China (ROC) will be referred to heretofore as Taiwan.

² The People’s Republic of China (PRC) will be referred to heretofore as China.
³ This interview took place at ICA headquarters in Tokyo, with the Director and his Assistant of the Taiwan Interchange Association (ICA), respectively Mr. Fujimoto Tokuji and Mr. Tomohiko Murakami, in Tokyo.

officially used “Chinese Taipei” or “Tai-Peng-Jin-Ma Tax Zone” for Taiwan’s participation in the Olympics, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and APEC (Shulong, 2011). For four decades, airport customs officers in most capitals have confused the Republic of China passports for those of the People’s Republic of China. Taiwan is also grouped as a part of China in global gatherings and forums, such as film festivals. During most international sports events, including the Olympics, for instance, Taiwanese athletes are only allowed to use the title Chinese Taipei instead of Taiwan (ibid).

But Taiwan has never accepted the status of living under a four-decade house arrest imposed by the People’s Republic of China (Winkler, 2012). The idea of Taiwan seeking to become more assertive in its foreign policy is not new. In the 1999 Democratic Progressive Party White Paper on Foreign Policy for the 21st Century, it is stated for example that “Taiwan is unfairly excluded from many international organizations” (The Democratic Progressive Party White Paper on Foreign Policy for the 21st Century, November 28, 1999). The paper also recommends that because Taiwan is “an important member in the international community, [it] should commit itself, as a sovereign nation, to abide by the U.N. Charter and various international conventions, and to exercise its proper rights and obligations by contributing to world peace and development” (ibid).

Public opinion polls have found that “not only the Taiwan government, but also the people and society of Taiwan, regard international space and international participation, including participation in non-governmental organizations, as a fundamental interest to them” (Shulong, 2011). What is called “the international space for Taiwan” has been a subject of discussion between the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese for a while now, but given the delicate and sensitive nature of such a political issue, little outcome has trickled down from these discussions. Till now, “the Mainland Foreign Affairs Ministries can only follow the old rules on ‘Taiwan international space/participation’ issues, which have caused Taiwan’s unhappiness” and frustration (ibid), which was clearly felt by Taiwan’s Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Tokyo during my interview with them in 2008⁴.

The challenge for Taiwan, however, is not only to continue trying to assert itself in the international space and push for U.N. membership, but also to persuade its closest allies, namely Japan, to support at least Taipei’s successive but unsuccessful bids for membership in international political and humanitarian forums, and to show more vigor in supporting Taipei’s wish for more international recognition. Tokyo has been at the epicenter of Taiwan’s still temporary status, and could play a decisive role in helping Taiwan end its long house arrest, as the Taiwanese wish (Fouse, 2004; Bush, 2011). But

Japan’s double-track interaction with China and Taiwan, and its special relationship with the United States have governed the rules of engagement between Taipei and Tokyo, leaving Taiwan “at the intersection of much of the geopolitical wrangling between China, Japan and the United States” (Teo, 2012). And this is in contrast not only with Taipei’s expectations, but also with the ostensible mutual affinity between the Taiwanese and Japanese peoples; a variable that should be decisive, from a unit-level constructivist perspective, in the foreign policy decision-making process in Japan.

The complex combination of strategic, political and economic calculations of each of the parties involved in the Taiwan issue has resulted in a political deadlock across the Taiwan Strait; a Taiwan seeking to interact with the outside world, including its closest allies, and a China using its overwhelming diplomatic machine to successfully impose a political and diplomatic house arrest on the island. Indeed, “Taiwan [has]face[d] a much larger and more rapidly growing opponent that has succeeded in convincing the United Nations, all major countries, and most international organizations to accept its claim to sovereignty over Taiwan” (Noble, 2005).

Taiwan’s current president Ma Ying-jeou himself argued in his doctoral dissertation, which he wrote in the early 1980s, that the Beijing-Taipei relationship was built on a zero-sum rivalry. Richard C. Bush from the Foreign Policy Research Institute corroborates the win-lose relationship between the PRC and Taiwan. He says that while Taiwan has kept asserting “its claim of sovereignty and sought to expand its international space, Beijing [has] built up its military capabilities and imposed a diplomatic quarantine on Taipei,” that is a diplomatic and political house arrest (Bush, 2011). In the meantime, Japan has allegedly “failed” to live up to Taipei’s expectations for more vigorous support to gain further international recognition through a series of attempts, such as Taiwan’s successive United Nations membership applications since 1993.

It is worth recalling that Japan-Taiwan relations have been conducted unofficially by Taiwan’s Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO), which is almost the exact equivalent of any other embassy, performing diplomatic functions, such as issuing all kinds of visas⁵, and this is in accordance with what is called “the 1972 System” when Japan de-recognized Taiwan, following the 1971 U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758. As for bilateral trade and academic interests between Taiwan and Japan, they are handled by ostensibly private associations, which are staffed by government officials. They include Japan’s Taiwan Interchange Association (ICA), with its headquarters in Tokyo, and its representative offices in Taipei and Kaohsiung, and the Association of East Asian Relations (EARA), which is based in Taipei and has offices and branches in Tokyo, Osaka, Yokohama, Fukuoka, and Naha. Given the

⁴Interview with TECRO, September 19, 2008.

⁵ ibid.

significance of the services which these associations provide to students and businessmen from both countries, Takihara, during my interview with the ICA General Affairs Department, summarized the major functions of the Interchange Association in the following:

As you know, in 1972 Japan and China normalized diplomatic relations, and at the same time Japan and Taiwan lost official diplomatic relations. As you can see on the brochure, before the war Japan colonized Taiwan, and even in 1972 there were still active trade relations and a lot of people traveling between Taiwan and Japan. To maintain such a relationship the Interchange Association was established under an agreement between Taiwan and Japan. In particular we provide protection to Japanese expatriates in Taiwan *and issue visas to them*. We issue visas to Taiwanese, too, but they are quite few. We also take care of Japanese ships when they have to call at a Taiwan port in emergencies such as typhoons, and when they need sea rescue. We offer scholarships mainly for graduate students and encourage people who try to study Japanese. And we invite people from Taiwan and send Japanese to Taiwan on various occasions. We promote exchange of technology and trade (Interview with ICA, September 9, 2008).

As the Japanese official made it clear, ICA is performing the key function of an embassy. But they usually refrain from calling a spade a spade lest they should provoke a diplomatic row with Beijing. Mr. Takihara said: "Actually they are not embassies, because we don't have diplomatic relations. But *they work like an embassy*"⁶. Dr. Xi Li from TECRO, however, called their representative office in Tokyo an outright "embassy" during my interview with him on September 19, 2008 at their headquarters. He also went further to call Taiwan a *de facto* "independent" country.

Regarding Japan's official position, Tokyo has been notably sympathetic to Taiwan's anxiety about its undecided future (Hughes, 1997). The Japanese managed during the 1970s de-recognition process to evade a clear stand regarding Taiwan's future through a policy of strategic ambiguity (Benson and Niou, 2001). "Japan never naturally assumed Taiwan to be a part of China, according to the official view of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and has tended to interpret the 1972 system more loosely than China" does (Matsuda, 2008). The 1972 Japan-Taiwan new kind of unofficial relationship maintained Tokyo's prerogative to "retain extensive economic relations with the island and handle intergovernmental relations through an ostensibly private sector body staffed by *government officials*" (Clough, 1978).

The depth and diversity of trade exchange between Japan and Taiwan represent the profound partnership between the two parties. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) stated in January 2012 that "Taiwan is an important region that Japan has close economic relations with and frequent mutual visits of people...the Government of Japan expects the continued and steady development of cooperative working relations between Japan and Taiwan"⁷. Indeed, Japan does have a deep-seated interest in maintaining strong economic exchanges with the island. After all, Taiwan's per-capita GDP (PPP) increased from 1995 to 2010 by roughly 130% from \$15,704 to \$35,604, which makes Taiwan the twentieth-richest country on a per-capita basis, ahead of Japan itself (Petri et al., 2011). Moreover, Taiwan's total trade with its major trading partners, especially with Japan, has doubled in the last decade, reaching \$535 billion in 2010 alone. In 2009, Taiwan ranked eleventh among the world's top trading nations, and it accounted for 2 percent of total world merchandise trade (ibid). This has allowed the island economy to amass the fourth-largest foreign reserve account in the world, behind only China, Japan, and Russia" (ibid), which has made Taiwan a major pivot in East Asian trade and an engine of the region's economic growth.

Japan too is Taiwan's largest trading partner (International Business News, August 14, 2012). It is Taipei's third exporting partner, after the PRC and the United States, with 6.6% of the island's exports going to Japan, as "Taiwan's growth model has been heavily dependent on industrial trade and exports because exports generate about 70% of the island's GDP growth" (Asia Economic Monitor, Asian Regional Integration Center, Asian Development Bank, December 2011). According to trade statistics released by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), bilateral trade between Japan and Taiwan showed double-digit growth in 2008, with Japan's exports to Taiwan expanding by 17.1% to reach U.S. \$16.3 billion, and imports from Taiwan increasing by 6.1% to reach U.S. \$7.1 billion (Sui, 2011). The Japanese sold 25.5% of all the transportation vehicles Japan exports to Taiwan for the value of U.S. \$17.1 billion, the largest portion of Japan's \$68.4 billion of total exports for the month of April 2008 (TECRO Economic Division September 2008). Therefore, Japan has had a good reason to further invest in trade with a Taiwan that managed to transform itself from an agricultural economy in the 1950s and 60s to a manufacturer of basic consumer goods and electronics in the 1970s and 80s (Petri et al., 2011). Taiwan is now a high-tech powerhouse, making most of the world's laptops, such as Acer, and many of its smart phones (ibid).

The September 2011 Taiwan-Japan Investment Arrangement stated that "Japan is our second largest

⁶ Interview with the Director and his Assistant of the Taiwan Interchange Association-ICA, Tokyo, September 8, 2008.

⁷ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2012, Accessed at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/whats/2012/index1.html>.

trading partner and one of the major sources of our foreign direct investment and technology” (Taiwan-Japan Investment Arrangement under the Global Business Strategies 2012). Statistics show that the amount of bilateral trade between Japan and Taiwan is approximately 70 billion dollars” (ibid). Since 1972, Japanese direct investment in the island has amounted to 16.3 billion dollars (ibid), and according to the recent Taiwan-Japan Investment Arrangement, “Taiwanese investors and their investments in Japan shall be accorded treatment no less favorable than the treatment accorded in like circumstances to Japanese investors with respect to investment activities (national treatment)” (Asia Economic Monitor, Asian Regional Integration Center, Asian Development Bank. December 2011).

In general, Taiwan and Japan have continued to interact in nearly all non-governmental ways possible. In good times, such as last year, more than 2.5 million people traveled last year from one nation to the other. In bad times also, the case of the Taiwanese support of Japan during the devastating Japanese earthquake and Tsunami of March 2011 was a good example of cooperation between the two sides. Shortly after the disaster, Taiwan’s President Ma Ying-jeou expressed condolences to Japan and provided \$3.3 million in aid (Tsai, 2012).

In return, the Taiwanese have expected a reciprocal show of sympathy, be it human, political, or diplomatic. Besides trade, cultural offices in Japan and people-to-people mutually positive appreciation, Taiwan’s expectations run higher than what Japan has delivered so far. The 2008 interview with the Special Assistant to the Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) and the Deputy Director of the Political Division of TECRO revealed a deep sense of isolation on the part of Taipei which had had great expectations that Japan would support more vigorously Taiwan’s successive but hardly successful attempts to assert itself regionally and internationally.

However, Japan made it clear in its January 2012 statement that Tokyo’s interaction with Taipei would be conducted “in accordance with Japan’s position of maintaining relations with Taiwan as working relations on a non-governmental basis” (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/whats/2012/index1.html>). The gap between what the Taiwanese expect and what Japan can actually offer has been a decisive variable in understanding the Japan factor in Taiwan’s diplomatic house arrest. “Japan has not simply acknowledged the Chinese claim to sovereignty over Taiwan, but has repeatedly affirmed it (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Press secretary, September 30, 2004). The limitations of Japan’s role in the undecided Taiwan status can be demonstrated by Tokyo’s refusal of official visas to two former Taiwanese presidents to visit Japan, for instance.

In 2001 and 2004 Japan refused but eventually allowed the former Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui to visit the

country; but it had to do so under the guise of a litany of reasons, such as respectively for “medical” and “sightseeing” reasons, other than the official outer-face. This perceived Japanese inability or unwillingness to push the envelope in dealing with Taiwan reminds us of what the Director of the Okazaki Institute in Tokyo had said that “Japan, which gave up Taiwan as a result of its defeat in World War II, is in no position to voice its opinion regarding Taiwan’s future disposition or the pros and cons of Taiwan’s independence and probably will not express its views in the future” (Okazaki, 1998).

Therefore, though the argument about Japan’s limited leverage in the Taiwan standstill is rather controversial (Hagström, 2005), it is true that the gap between Japan’s official position with respect to Taiwan’s standing and that of Japanese public opinion has been a matter that is worth examining from a political theory standpoint, notably social theories in international relations. As unit-level constructivism argues that the relationship between domestic social identities of states, besides the trade and financial complementarity mentioned above, deeply impact their respective foreign policies (Reus-Smit, 2002), one may wonder whether the favorable Japanese social support of Taiwan’s political aspirations has influenced Tokyo’s political posture vis-à-vis Taipei. What Katzenstein (1996) calls the “under-attended determinants of national security policy”, that is the cultural-institutional dialectical influence of policy, seem to have little impact on Japan’s policy towards Taiwan’s international aspirations, Japan’s positive public opinion notwithstanding.

Almost 80% of the Japanese said in December 2012 they were fond of Taiwan, according to the results of a survey by the Ministry of Economic Affairs digital media development center, (Chiao-wen and Huang, *Focus Taiwan News Channel*, Accessed May 16, 2013). The survey also showed that 79.6% of the Japanese like Taiwan. It also found that Taiwan’s overall image and commercial brands are well received in Japan. “Taiwan’s National Palace Museum (32%) is the most popular attraction among Japanese people, followed by Taipei 101 tower (31%) and night markets (29%), Taiwan’s cuisine, the hospitality of Taiwanese people, local specialties and Taiwan’s tea were the most favorite features among Japanese” (ibid).

During my interview with TECRO, I was told that Japan’s official silence regarding Taiwan’s 40-year ambiguous standing has been incompatible with Japanese public support of Taiwan’s struggle to break what this paper calls Taipei’s diplomatic house arrest imposed on the island by China’s overwhelming diplomatic machine. The Japanese public opinion perception of Taiwan, as a 2001 Mainichi poll showed, was very positive. The poll asked a group of Japanese to identify countries most friendly to Japan. Taiwan came third just after the United States and South Korea (Advertising Department of the *Mainichi* Newspapers,

November 2001). In addition, the 1997 Nikkei Research Inc. poll found that 64.3% of the Japanese people regarded Taiwan as an “independent” state, and only 25.3% believed the island was part of China (*The Nikkei Business Daily Newspaper*, June 15, 1997). Seven years later, another poll conducted by the Social Environmental Research Center (September 2002:17-20) in 2004 showed incremental support among the Japanese people for an independent Taiwan. Only 14.7% of those who were polled supported the idea that “Taiwan is a part of China”. 40.8% in Japan supported Taiwan’s aspiration that the world, mainly Japan and the United States, would accept that “Taiwan and China are each one country on each side of the Taiwan Strait” as former Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian put it in September 2002 in a telecast to the annual conference of the World Federation of Taiwanese Associations meeting in Tokyo (International Committee for Human Rights in Taiwan, International edition September 2002).

A more recent public opinion survey commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taiwan last May reveals that 89.1% of the people feel that achieving an equal status and proper dignity in the international community is important, and 83.5% of those polled feel that strengthening Taiwan’s relations with Japan is important (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan) May 7 to 8, 2013, accessed at the Ministry official website on September 22, 2013). Moreover, in an opinion survey taken in Taiwan in 2011, more than half of those polled, 52%, listed Japan as their favorite country, while only 8% preferred the U.S., and 5% chose China. “The Taiwanese admire their large Asian neighbor’s cultural traditions, successful economy, and shared democratic values” (Bosco, 2011).

The people-to-people interaction and their positive mutual perception in Taiwan and Japan have added to the complexity of the paradox between what the former expects and what the latter can do. After all, Taiwan is less than 175 miles west of Japan’s southernmost island of Ishigaki; further, there is the long colonial history between the two sides, which is still perceived positively by a large portion of the Taiwanese population (Faola, 2006), the older Taiwanese generation less favorable attitude towards Japan notwithstanding (Tsai, 2012).

During Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan, the Island’s economic infrastructure was substantially transformed, and Japanese became the language of education, together with significant parts of its cultural apparatus (Ping-hui and Wang, 2006). Japan built schools, roads, and hospitals. Today, a large portion of Taiwan’s political elite was educated in Japan, the Japanese language is largely understood in Taiwan, and there remains a large group of Taiwanese who even delight in speaking Japanese (ibid). Moreover, Taiwan’s Presidential Office Building, which was built by Japan, stands as a symbol of the strong bond between the Japanese and the Taiwanese. Japanese historical structures have been

preserved and declared among the island’s national treasures. Taiwan and Japan exchange a record of 2.3 million tourists each year (Faola, 2006). A national policy adviser to former Taiwanese president Chen Shui-Bian revealed in 2005 how strong the Taiwan-Japan connection was and how much the Japanese had invested in the island. He said: “The Japanese built universities, roads, and other infrastructure. They educated us, they turned us into a more modern society...we welcome Japan becoming more involved again in Taiwan” (ibid). Words like “more” and “again” clearly reflect Taiwan’s increasing expectations from Japan to do more to stand by Taipei in its continuing efforts to assert itself internationally.

More recently, describing Japan as a “friend” in March 2011 during Japan’s Fukushima disaster, President Ma reminded the Taiwanese people that a “true friend gives help in the most needed time” (Tsai, 2012). “With a population of only about 23 million people, the Taiwanese people raised \$190 million for disaster relief, topping all other nations in the world as the largest donor” (ibid), thus testifying to the strong Taiwanese-Japanese bond. Even when a Japanese government does not respond positively to Taiwan’s good gestures, “the Japanese people became more active in demonstrating their fondness for their poorly-treated neighbor to the south. Many Japanese people expressed their anger regarding their government’s ingratitude, and some even raised money to post messages of thanks in Taiwan’s major newspapers and on TV news channels” (ibid).

Paradoxically, as the relationship between the Taiwanese and Japanese peoples is one of a close-knit bond, the interaction between the governments of Japan and Taiwan has not reflected the people-to-people affinity, which runs against the basic argument of the unit-level constructivism about the important causal role of domestic social structure in foreign policies of unitary state actors (Behraves, 2011). As the positive people-to-people interaction between the Taiwanese and the Japanese has not been proportionally translated into political gains for Taiwan, it has not helped Taipei a great deal break its forty-year house arrest. The relationship between the governments of Japan and Taiwan has remained ambiguously distant. Taipei has found itself in a diplomatic bottleneck, and has attempted, especially since the 1989 Tiananmen Square episode, to break the political siege on the Island imposed by Beijing. Since then, though Taipei’s attempts at breaking out of its four-decade isolation have gone through many ups and downs, Taiwanese intentions and the desire to garner increasing international recognition is more telling than the actual outcomes of those attempts. Taiwan’s effort to open up contacts with the outside world have not ironically been supported by its closest allies, including those presumed allies that would theoretically protect the island militarily in the event of a Chinese invasion. Matsuda says that “the Japanese had [always] felt an

obligation toward Taiwan since severing diplomatic relations" in 1972 (Matsuda, 2008), but Japan has failed to support even Taipei's bid for membership in the U.N. humanitarian agencies and in regional forums that discuss the Taiwan Strait security perils.

Indeed, in Taiwan's "Request for the Inclusion of a Supplementary Item in the Agenda" of the United Nations General Assembly's sixty-third session in September 2008, for instance, there were only 16 signatories which endorsed Taipei's application for membership in some humanitarian U.N. agencies already mentioned. Japan was not on the list of the nations that supported this Taiwanese move, leading to Taiwanese disappointment, as my interview with TECRO clearly demonstrated. For the Japanese, however, the issue is more complicated than people-to-people affinity or Taiwan's sentimental perception of its historical relationship with Japan. The question here for Tokyo is how to reconcile a balanced relationship with both Beijing and Taipei. The Beijing-Taipei equation has always been governed by the paradox between how the two capitals interpret the status quo. While "political leaders in Taiwan insist on interpreting the 'status quo' dynamically, leaders in China ominously vow that they will pay any price to prevent the permanent alienation of Taiwan from China" (Noble, 2005).

The Taiwanese have seemed to be under no illusions that their international momentum has been shrinking in the 21st century. As Taiwan lost many multinational electronics companies to mainland China over the last decade of the 20th century, it is clear that Taipei is now facing "a much larger and more rapidly growing opponent that has succeeded in convincing the United Nations, all major countries, and most international organizations to accept its claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. Indeed, Taiwan's base of diplomatic and political support is narrow and dwindling" (Noble, 2005). The most recent example of the erosion of Taipei's diplomatic support was Gambia's last week decision to derecognize Taiwan for the sake of "the nation's strategic interest", leaving Taipei with just twenty two small and remote countries that still recognize the island. Gambia's decision was a shock for Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "We were shocked and regretted the decision", Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Ko told a news conference on Friday on November 15, 2013, according to The Australian Paper ("Taiwan 'shocked' at Gambia's decision", accessed on November 15, 2013 at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/taiwan-shocked-at-gambias-decision/story-fn3dxix6-1226761324928>).

Therefore, as the Taiwanese understand that the current geopolitical momentum is not in Taipei's favor, they are looking to their historical and strategic ally in the region- Japan. But the Japanese, at this unfavorable geopolitical moment for the Taiwanese, have refrained even from returning friendly Taiwanese gestures in times of Japanese hardships, such as natural disasters. In

response to Taiwan's outstanding support during the March 2011 Fukushima disaster, for instance, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed his gratitude for the support Japan had received from the international community by publicizing thankful messages on major international newspapers, including some in the U.S., England, South Korea and China. Taiwan, however, did not receive similar treatment. Moreover, in March 2012, during the one-year commemoration of the Japanese Earthquake in Tokyo, Taiwan was humiliated by Prime Minister Noda, as the representative from Taipei was not invited to present bouquets at the ceremony, despite Taiwan's historic support during the Fukushima disaster.

Showing perceived ungratefulness to Taiwanese support and refusing visas to Taiwanese former presidents are only a few examples which clearly demonstrate that the Japanese would not sacrifice their trade interests and the region's security well being for a full diplomatic relationship with a Taiwan that is under political house arrest for four decades now (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Press secretary, September 30, 2008). It is becoming crystal clear that Japan would not afford to offend China for trade and geostrategic calculations, the deep and special relationship between Japanese and Taiwanese social fabrics and common identities notwithstanding. Beijing has continually blackmailed countries that show support for any Taiwanese diplomatic move; and under such overwhelming pressure from China, Japan has little choice but to maintain some distance with Taiwan. It is clear that Japan's dilemma is becoming more and more conspicuous, especially when the Japanese think in terms of business rather than through the lenses of their historical and moral obligations towards a sympathetic Taiwanese population, a variable that the unit-level constructivism has downgraded in comparison with the commonly strong social fabric and people to people affinity.

The Japanese reluctance to support Taiwan's bids to reach to the outside world has been a matter of policy that is the product of strategic Japanese calculations, which indeed contradicts the unit-level constructivist standpoint of the decisive role of common social identities and trends in impacting foreign policies of state actors (Raymond, 2011; Garrison, 2003; Katzenstein, 1996). For the unit-level constructivism, using of social structure in the analysis of international relations is an alternative to what neorealism and neoliberalism can offer in this regard (Adler, 2005), and this work has sought to demonstrate that relying solely on the social identity variable in addressing international relations has its own shortcomings because it simply does not apply to the Taiwan-Japan case study because it downgrades the geostrategic factor in states' interaction. For Constructivism, "structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces and identities and interests of purposive actors are

constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Bozdaglioglu, 2007). Therefore, constructivism rests on the inter-subjective dimension of human action” (Ronen, 2000), rather than on pragmatic and realistic dimensions, such as trade interests considerations.

The Sino-Nipponese trade and strategic relationship is the second major variable this paper uses to explain either Japan’s reluctance or limitations to support Taiwan’s bid to break its diplomatic house arrest. As China looms heavily over the Taiwanese-Japanese relationship, Tokyo’s keeping distance from Taipei is justifiable from a Japanese point of view (Noble, 2005). Strategically and economically, China has grown tremendously over the past three decades; paradoxically Taiwan has become more and more isolated. Since August 16, 2010, China’s economy has become the second largest economy in the world after that of the United States. For the first time Tokyo recognized that Japan’s economy was valued at about \$1.28 trillion in the second quarter, slightly below China’s \$1.33 trillion. Japan’s economy grew 0.4% in the quarter while China’s grew by more than 10% (Wines, 2010).

The new economic stake in East Asia has dramatically increased Japan’s vested interest in promoting an already interdependent economic relationship with China (Kahler and Kastner, 2011). According to statistics released by China’s Ministry of Commerce, the Sino-Nippon two-way trade has climbed by a consistently annual rate of 13.8% since 1993; and since then Japan has become China’s biggest exporter. As for Japanese investment in China, figures published by China’s Ministry of Commerce show that Japan’s investment in the PRC had surged by 49.6% year-on-year in 2011, while investment in manufacturing rose by 78.3% during the same period, according to a recent white paper from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China (*China Daily*, July 2, 2012). The first five months of 2012 saw Japanese investment in China increase to \$3.22 billion, up by 16.6% from the previous year, according to the same source of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (ibid).

In return, China’s second-biggest trading partner was Japan in 2011, coming after only the U.S., with \$345 billion worth of goods going back and forth, and representing 9% of China’s overall trade (Global Trade Atlas, Trade Data International 2012). A figure of \$345 billion is more than all the trade combined China does with Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa, and the U.K. For Japan, China is Japan’s largest trading partner. China accounted for 21% of Japan’s exports and imports in 2011, making China and Japan “highly complementary to each other in their economic growth and their economic, technical and trade cooperation” (*China Daily*, August 20, 2010).

Therefore, given the depth and the strategic interconnectedness of the Sino-Japanese economic and trade exchange, besides other geopolitical considerations

Japan has avoided making a dramatic move towards Taiwan, knowing that such a policy twist would reverberate neither in the region nor in the world at large. The Japanese-Taiwanese relationship cannot be isolated from its regional and world context, as the sensitivity and complexity of the Taiwan issue for the PRC is a major variable that has ruled the Sino-Japanese relationship, and Japan’s commitment to the 1972 “One-China” principle has always driven the interaction between the second and third largest economies in the world. The PRC reactions to Taiwan’s über-ambitious foreign policy bids have been characterized with vigor and resolve, such as China’s response in August 1993 when Taipei applied for U.N. membership. Then Beijing restated its old-new policy in its 1993 white paper on *The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China*, wherein it was stated that:

“Unfortunately, from the 1990s, Lee Teng-hui, the leader of the Taiwan authorities, has progressively betrayed the One-China Principle, striving to promote a separatist policy with ‘two Chinas at the core, going so far as to openly describe the cross-Straits relations as ‘state to state relations, or at least special state to state relations’. This action has seriously...jeopardized peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region...The struggle between the Chinese government and the separatist forces headed by Lee Teng-hui finds its concentrated expression in the question of whether to persevere in the One-China Principle or to create ‘two Chinas’ or ‘One-China, one Taiwan’. (Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, PRC, *The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China*, Beijing, 1993).

The PRC has continually reminded Taiwan, Japan and the United States, of Beijing’s old-new stand that it would use force to abort any official Taiwanese declaration of independence. China regards Taiwan not only as a domestic affair, but also as a question of national honor since Sun Yat-sen’s 1919 pledge to return the island to the “embrace” of the motherland. “Chinese national leaders since Sun Yat-sen have all considered the “loss” [of Taiwan] a national humiliation and hence recovery of the island a sacred national mission” (Hsiao, 1983:28). China has not failed to remind all the parties concerned that there is a ceiling to its patience with Taiwan’s attempt to seek to upgrade its relationship with its East Asian neighbors to a full diplomatic rank. Since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Beijing has consistently asserted, time and again, that China would “never” tolerate any “separatist act” from Taipei. This was also clear in China’s February 2005 Anti-Secession Law.

The 2005 Anti-Secession law was adopted in reaction to the American-Japanese Security Consultative Committee (SCC) declaration on February 19, 2005 that

Taiwan was now a “*common security concern*” between Washington and Tokyo. The so called ‘2 + 2’⁸ statements set the foundation of a common future strategy between the United States and Japan, marking the Taiwan issue a point of “convergence of bilateral, regional, and global interests” for both Washington and Tokyo (Przystup and Saunders, 2006); a convergence which goes beyond their bilateral relationship to extend to a regional security environment that has been characterized by the uncertain implications of the rise of China as a potential or a perceived threat to the U.S.-dominated status quo in East Asia. Although the focus of this work is the Taiwan-Japan case study, one cannot ignore pointing out to the fact that again the unit-level constructivism has had little to say about how social identities can explain the interaction between a rising China that is accused of a penchant to challenge a regional status quo largely dominated by the United States.

However, the unit-level constructivism has been relatively vindicated by a few examples of the Taiwanese-Japanese mutual social affinity having an impact on the political, yet unofficial, exchange between the two nations. It is worth noting that common social identities and domestic political factors in both Taiwan and Japan were indeed behind some occasional Japanese trends of dealing with Taiwan directly. A number of Japanese officials, such as Tokyo’s rightist governor Shintaro Ishihara and other Japanese government officials, visited Taiwan in the aftermath of the terrible 1999 earthquake, which could have triggered a serious diplomatic row between China and Japan had it not been for the humanitarian cover of the earthquake context of those Japanese visits to Taipei. More recently, on April 14, 2012 former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori visited Taiwan for a tree planting ceremony in the southern city of Tainan. A total of 200 cherry blossom seedlings from both Taiwan and Japan were planted in a park commemorating friendly ties between the two peoples, as well as the people of Japan’s gratitude for assistance provided by Taiwan following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that struck the northeastern part of the country. Yet, that is clearly not enough from a Taiwanese standpoint (Interview with Xi Li, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Tokyo in 2008 and currently in Boston; Japan Today, “Taiwan ex-president scraps plans for Japan visit”, May 01, 2013, <http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/taiwan-ex-president-scraps-plans-for-japan-visit>).

Japan has clearly disappointed Taiwan’s expectations of more vigorous support in breaking the Island’s forty-year diplomatic house arrest, despite the mutual affinity between their social fabrics, to recall the Unit-level

Constructivist argument. It is important to remember that Tokyo has “banned higher level officials from meeting with Taiwanese officials and scrupulously avoided any display on Japanese soil of symbols of sovereignty of the Republic of China” (Noble, 2005). Tokyo failed to endorse Taipei’s old-new attempts to join the United Nations initiated by Taiwan’s former President Lee Teng-hui, who took over in the late 1980s.

In 1993 and 1995 Taiwan formally requested the United Nations to consider “the exceptional situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan in the international context, based on the principle of universality and in accordance with the established model of parallel representation of divided countries at the United Nations,” such as North Korea and South Korea or East and West Germany (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China in Taiwan). Taiwan implicitly sought a sovereign state status next to China, as long as no solution could be found between the two sides. But Taipei failed to garner enough diplomatic support for its bid even from its closest allies, namely Japan and the United States (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China in Taiwan accessed at <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/enofficial>).

Although Taiwan’s U.N. campaign since 1993 has been futile, Taipei has sought to raise international attention to the issue of Taiwan’s unfair exclusion, which this article calls Taiwan’s diplomatic house arrest. But the Taiwanese hoped they would at least be allowed to enter a number of functional and humanitarian U.N. agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Again, Japan did not deliver what Taiwan expected in terms of political support in the United Nations, Japan being the largest benefactor of the United Nations and its affiliates notwithstanding. Indeed, this is the crux of the matter as to why Japan has refrained from supporting Taiwan’s bids even to draw attention to its diplomatic house arrest. Japan’s special relationship with the United States is a factor to be considered when trying to answer such a question. Japanese politicians are often accused of simply following in Washington’s footsteps, supporting the U.S. in all sorts of policies... *with little regard for domestic public opinion*” (Calvo, 2012). This is of course in contrast with Katzenstein’s argument that states’ foreign policies largely depend on their respective social identities and fabrics, hence reflecting public opinion trends. It seems here that unit-level constructivism has paid little attention to the variable of strategic and security dependence in foreign policy making. Japan, its favorable social identity and public opinion towards Taiwan notwithstanding, cannot take a major foreign policy twist vis-à-vis Taipei independently of the United States position because it has become clear that for Tokyo the US-Japan alliance is more important than mutual affinity between the Japanese and Taiwanese social fabrics and identities as the unit-level constructivist view advances.

Historically, “changes in U.S. policy also deeply affected Japanese attitudes toward Taiwan” (Noble, 2005), leading the discussion to the third major variable which this paper

⁸ The U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) is also referred to as the 2+2 Committee because it is composed of the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and their two Japanese counterparts. It is the offspring of the 1956 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America. It stands for the highest level of the American-Japanese military and political cooperation and coordination.

seeks to link to the first two variables, notably the paradox between what Taiwan expects and what Japan can do, and the Sino-Japanese equation in the Japanese-Taiwanese interaction. Ever since the 1951 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and through the 1997 New Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation, Japan has depended for more than half a century now on its alliance with the United States for its security and economic prosperity. For almost sixty years, it is the U.S. that has taken the initiative in laying out security policies in the Asia-Pacific region. "Because Japan's dependence on the U.S. is almost total in the security area and also heavy in the economic field, America [ha]s [been] in a position to be able to exert a decisive influence on that country's international policy" (DiFilippo, 2002). The alliance has clearly distracted from Japan's ability to exert an independent foreign policy not only towards Taiwan, but also with the rest of the world.

That is why Japan's perceived diplomatic impotence to deliver with regard to Taiwan's political ambitions ought to be taken within the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance which has stood for the backbone of Japan's security calculations for the last six decades. With respect to the Japan-Taiwan equation in the East Asian security complex, the U.S.-Japan relationship has been a determining factor in how far Japan can go in its relationship with Taiwan. Since the end of the Second World War, Japan's defense policy has rested on two basic principles (Japan's Defense Agency, May 20, 1957)—first, its peace constitution, and namely Article 9 which prohibits Japan from raising an army or developing offensive weaponry. Second, the security alliance with America is a basic pillar of Japan's defense policy to maintain regional stability for the foreseeable future. And these two principles have had their deep repercussions on the Japan-Taiwan relationship.

Even after the end of the Cold War, Japan has sought to consolidate its old-new alliance with the United States as a hedge against potential Chinese attempts to seek to change the regional order hinging upon the Washington-Tokyo upper hand; and there is no issue that could prompt the Chinese to react politically, economically, and even militarily like the sensitive Taiwan question. After all, "Okinawa, just miles north of Taiwan, is a strategic American deployment point which Tokyo views as a crucial counter-balance to Beijing's encroachment on the Asian stage" (Teo, 2005). And since Taiwan is of strategically critical significance to the United States' regional and global objectives, the future of Taiwan is considerably important to Washington's preponderant position on the East Asian chessboard. A separate, not independent, Taiwan has always been, and is likely to continue to be, a tantalizing wild goose chase to induce a rising China into becoming "responsible and peaceful,"⁹

that is complacent with the American preponderant status quo in East Asia.

As mentioned before, on February 19, 2005, the bilateral Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (SCC) [had] expressed that Taiwan's security was a U.S.-Japanese "common concern," which was an open American-Japanese reiteration of their common commitment to the security of Taiwan and which created the idea of a burgeoning triangular relationship. It was the first time since the 1969 Nixon-Sato Declaration that the US and Japan would commit themselves to a clearly biased posture regarding the Taiwan issue (Kokubun, 1998). But the Taiwan-Japan-US triangular equation is not new. The former Taiwanese president Chen Shubian had said during an interview in March 2006 that the "peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait and security of the Asian Pacific region are the common concerns for not only Taiwan, but also Japan and the United States...*Japan has a requirement and an obligation to come to the defense of Taiwan*" (Faola, 2006). President Chen went even further to call for a "quasi-military alliance" between the United States, Japan, and Taiwan (Ibid). But all of President Chen's expectations did not receive timely and significant support from Taipei's closest allies in the region, namely Japan and the United States, especially during U.S.-China periodic honeymoons, such as during Clinton's presidency from 1992 to 2000, when Taiwan clearly became the forgotten dividing issue between the two parties (Man, *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1998).

The United States has reiterated time and again what President Clinton called during his 1998 state visit to China the "Three No's" Principles on Taiwan," that is Washington does not "support independence for Taiwan, or 'two Chinas', or 'one Taiwan, one China', and we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member of any organization for which statehood is a requirement" (Release of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, July 1998). But given of its geostrategic significance and its cultural and linguistic similarities with the mainland China, Taiwan has always been the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the American political and military calculus. Besides, under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, successive U.S. administrations have been under legal obligation to defend Taiwan even against a blockade, let alone a military assault. So, defending the island could be assured only by supplying Taiwan with all necessary weapons to be able to build a sufficient deterrent. Washington believes that "arms sales improve cross-Strait stability by deterring the mainland from using military force while also giving Taipei the much-needed security it requires to engage the mainland with a diminished fear of attack or coercion" (Wang, 2014)

⁹ Personal Communication: "China and the Future of the World", April 28-29, 2006, Chicago Society, University of Chicago. Among the guest speakers were His Excellency Wang Guangya, former Permanent representative of the

People's Republic of China to the United Nations, Peter W. Rodman, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and Christopher R. Hill, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

But this American posture has been rather malleable and has been largely motivated by Washington's political calculations in East Asia and its dialectical relationship with Beijing. As a matter of fact, playing the Taiwan card if or when Beijing decided to challenge the American order in East Asia, or to question the controversial American military presence in the region, has been effective in pressuring China into changing its posture regarding a wide range of regional and world issues. These considerations have included China's reluctance to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear weapons programs, accommodating the gigantic U.S. economic interests in China, and last but not least enforcing international nonproliferation regimes in the Middle East, especially with respect to the ongoing Iran saga (Wuthnow, 2011). The United States remembers well when China sold medium-range missiles to Pakistan in reaction to President George Bush's 1992 arms package to Taiwan; and it does not seem to be willing this time to see China selling its missile technology and know-how to Iran, testifying once again to the interrelatedness of the Northeast Asian security dynamic.

More recently, after reports that China is very close to acquiring the Russian 4++ generation fighter Su-35S, which would "give China the ability to project military power over a larger portion of Southeast Asia and indeed, most of ASEAN" (Wang, 2014), the issue of the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan has refloated. To counter Beijing's militarization, Washington can theoretically sell its sophisticated F-35 to Taipei; yet such a move would have its strategic repercussions on the US-China relationship not only in Asia, but also in the Middle East as well. But in spite of the various Taiwanese and American sources which "indicate that Taiwan is in urgent need of advanced jet fighters for its self-defense", there is no indication that a procrastinating Obama administration would sell such weaponry to Taiwan without thinking of its possible damage to bilateral ties with China and also to Beijing's cooperation on a range of thorny issues for the American foreign policy, especially the Syrian debacle and the North Korean unpredictable and sometimes bizarre behavior domestically as well as towards its neighbors. This means that the U.S.-China relationship has clearly transcended the bilateral and regional space to an international one, and therefore it is "only by coordinating its U.S. policy with its policy toward Taiwan can Beijing curb the separatist forces on the island" (Jisi, 2005). This means that China's relationship with the United States has had and will continue to have a strength-in-depth impact on the separatist trends in Taiwan. In view of Washington's security leverage on Taipei, it is highly unlikely that the latter could venture into any provocative posture towards Beijing without at least tacit support and reassurance from the United States.

Therefore, because of the already-mentioned geostrategic stakes in the Sino-American relationship, and given the military and political nature of the

Japanese-American relationship, what Japan can really do to help Taiwan break out of its long house arrest is actually very little from a realistic point of view, instead of the unit-level constructivist perspective. Katzenstein contends that states are "intentional and corporate actors whose identities and interests are an important part determined by domestic politics rather than the international system" (Behraves, 2011). And this paper has sought to apply Katzenstein's argument of the determining variable of social factors in impacting foreign policies of states in order to explore the central question about the gap between the Taiwanese-Japanese mutual affinity and the unparalleled political relationship between Tokyo and Taipei.

As a consequence, and from a realistic standpoint, it is highly unlikely at this point that the bilateral Japan-Taiwan relationship will undergo any radical shift independently of the U.S.-Japan strategic calculations of how to counter a potential Chinese hegemonic temptation in East Asia. "Taiwan represents an important part of the American strategic security umbrella of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Australia – which Japan seeks to maintain against its big emerging neighbor"-China (Jisi, 2005).

Since the United States strategically needs China's cooperation on not only East Asian security matters, but also on broader world issues, such as in the Middle East, Japan has very few policy options regarding Taiwan's four-decade political house arrest in view of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. As Washington has consistently maintained the "One China" policy with respect to Taiwan's future status, Tokyo will have little room to help Taiwan with concrete measures in order to end its diplomatic house arrest. As a consequence, Taiwan will highly likely continue to remain confined to its limited international space as an "orphan in the international arena" as the 1999 Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) White Paper on Foreign Policy for the 21st Century put it¹⁰.

It would be safe to argue also that resolving the Taiwan quiz will very likely depend not only on Japan's stand or the Taiwanese-Japanese mutually sympathetic social fabrics, but also on the broader strategic calculations of the U.S.-Japan alliance vis-à-vis China, which again sheds further doubts as to the validity of Katzenstein's unit-level constructivist argument. And as Japan clearly understands, East Asian security cannot be maintained if it differs publicly with the United States on an issue that has become by the force of history and geopolitics too complex to be handled by a unilateral Japanese policy twist towards Taiwan. Soeya Yoshihide largely corroborates that Japan has lacked an active and independent strategy toward Taiwan and that it has mostly cautiously followed the United States (Soeya, 2001). Moreover, Qingxin Ken Wang further corroborates

¹⁰ Accessed on November 12, 2013 at [http://www.taiwandocuments.org/dpp02.htm].

the argument about Japan's difficult dilemma in supporting Taiwan's ambitions, in accordance with its favorable public opinion towards Taiwan, and preserving its alliance with the United States while maintaining a stable relationship with China. Wang said: "while Tokyo's best hope is to see a peaceful resolution of cross-strait conflicts, Tokyo may have to provide logistical support for American military intervention in the event of armed conflicts in the Taiwan Strait even at the risk of triggering a military confrontation with China" (Wang, 2000).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper has applied the unit-level constructivist approach to explain the paradox between Taipei's great expectations from Japan as a former colonizer and a current political and military ally, and Japan's limited margin of maneuvering in trying to help upgrade its interaction with Taiwan, given Japan's dependence on the overall policies of the United States in East Asia. This paper claims that Taiwan feels it is under diplomatic and political house arrest, and presumes that Taipei expects a more vigorous support from its former colony and political ally-Japan, given the mutual affinity between the Taiwanese and Japanese social fabrics and mutually favorable public opinion.

After having demonstrated the link between the three main variables in this work—Japan's role in Taiwan's political house arrest, the Sino-Nippon equation and the Japan-U.S. alliance—and after having applied the unit-level constructivist approach, this paper finds that in view of the complexity of the Taiwan issue and the sensitivity of the question to all sides concerned, and despite the strong overlapping between the Japanese and Taiwanese social factors, Japan alone is highly unlikely to take any unilateral measure or make any dramatic policy shift regarding Taiwan's political status. Given the pragmatic nature of international relations in accordance with neorealist argument as advocated by Kenneth Waltz who argues that states usually interact with each other on the basis of "national interests" and security calculations (Waltz, 1979), it is indeed unlikely that Japan would take any dramatic but counterproductive unilateral turn in its policy toward Taiwan.

As a unilateral Japanese overture towards Taiwan would risk foundering Japan's strategic alliance with the United States and jeopardize Japanese commercial and trade interests with the PRC, it is almost inevitable that Taiwan will come under increasing pressure from Beijing to reunify by fair means or foul. Therefore, this paper concludes that Taiwan may not get the backing it expects from Japan to resist Chinese political pressure in the foreseeable future despite a historically supportive Japanese public opinion, and in disregard to the mutual sympathy between the Taiwanese and Japanese peoples, which questions the validity of the unit-level

constructivist argument. Although constructivism has been the largest recent development in international relations theory, "despite its theoretical significance, it has not yet been systematically applied to the practice of international relations". Constructivists argue that existing realist and liberal frameworks proceed from inadequate theoretical foundations that generate problematic 'lessons' for foreign policy. However, the question of what alternative lessons can be drawn from constructivism remains unanswered.

Nevertheless, this paper assumes that the Taiwan dilemma will always be a regional headache not only for Japan, but also for most regional actors, notably the United States and the PRC. The Taiwan issue can be summed up by what Arthur Waldron from the American Enterprise Institute said during a symposium organized by the Council on Foreign Affairs that "There [was] an expectation that Taiwan was going to disappear. It didn't happen. You know, it is an unwanted child, arguably, but I think that we have to stick by it" (Waldron, 2000). Certainly, Taiwan will not "disappear" overnight, and Taiwan's house arrest will be around for a while, as Japan alone, for a myriad of strategic reasons, cannot offer the help and support the Taiwanese have aspired to.

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