

Strategic Culture, a Medicine Against Nationalism?

A case study on the effects of nationalism and strategic culture on
conflict in China and Japan

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by

THOMAS LINDERS

Department of Political Science, *Radboud University Nijmegen*

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Supervisor: dr. G. van der Kamp-Alons

Radboud University



“Sweep the snow from your own door step,
don’t worry about the frost on your neighbour’s roof”

— Old Chinese saying

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Abstract

In 1994, Stephen van Evera described under which conditions nationalism can lead to conflict in and between states. Since the Tiananmen Square student protests in 1989, China has been increasingly engaged in nationalistic foreign policy, with its most important and powerful neighbour Japan responding with an equal discourse in response. Contentious issues such as the reunification with Taiwan, the re-emergence of China as a powerful actor in East Asia and territorial disputes in the South China Sea with Japan (and others) stand at the heart of nationalism in the region, which on the basis of Van Evera's theory would lead us to suspect that conflict is highly likely, but so far this threat has been averted through logrolling, suasion and mediation. What can explain this relative calmness?

This thesis aims to contribute to improving Van Evera's theory by firstly, testing its causal assumptions, and secondly, by embedding a theory of strategic culture (as described by Alastair Johnston in 1995) and taking into account the mediating effects of strategic culture on the benign and malign effects of nationalism. This new model, which will be called Van Evera⁺, aims at a better understanding of current Sino-Japanese relations.

Keywords: nationalism, strategic culture, China, Japan, foreign policy, East Asia

Words¹: 33,140

¹ Excluding references

³ The Communist Party reasoned that the Soviet collapse was the result of the failure of the Soviet

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Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CNP	Comprehensive national power
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KMT	Kuomintang of China (Chinese Nationalist Party)
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
MSAR	Macau Special Administrative Region
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OCTS	One country, two systems
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
ROC	Republic of China
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
SAR	Special Administrative Region (China)
SDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWII	World War II

1 Introduction

The Pacific has been relative calm since the end of World War II. Yet, as the centenary of World War I coincides with rising tensions in the most important dyad of the region, many draw an uncomfortable parallel between Germany and France on the one hand and China and Japan on the other. With a growing economic and political clout in the Pacific, China is no longer hiding its capacities and biding its time, likely to have already taken over the US economically or doing so within the decade, while growing its military expenditure dramatically. Its main rival and most important regional economic and military counterweight, Japan, has responded to what it sees as an increasing threat by calling for a change in its ‘pacifist’ constitution, allowing its armed forces to be deployed abroad, while its prime minister Shinzo Abe has been making visits to the Yasukuni shrine, where Japanese World War II war criminals are being honoured. Feelings of unattained statehood and unity, visits to controversial war memorials, denial or white-washing of past war crimes and myth-making about a state’s own glory: all factors that are present in Sino-Japanese relations and factors that increase the likelihood of conflict, according to a theory by Stephen Van Evera, who notes 21 hypotheses in “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War” (1994). Nationalism is seen as essentially war-causing (ibid.: 5), yet surprisingly enough, direct confrontation remains largely absent. How can we explain such absence? Observing a gap in the theory, this thesis will aim to strengthen the theory by including the in Van Evera (1994) implicitly mentioned social constructivist element of strategic culture, which likely plays a substantial role in Chinese and Japanese foreign policy, constraining its policy options and goals and acting as a filter through which they perceive themselves, each other and the world.

1.1 The theoretical puzzle

The Economist recently noted that Xi Jinping abandoned Deng Xiaoping’s “post-Tiananmen dictum”³ of China hiding its capacities and biding its time (*The Economist*, 2014a). Bristling with nationalistic indignation, this new assertiveness has resulted in

³ The Communist Party reasoned that the Soviet collapse was the result of the failure of the Soviet Communist Party to make its citizens richer. Hence, after a violent governmental crackdown on the student protesters at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, a long period of focus on political stability (the post-Tiananmen Dictum) as a precondition for economic prosperity followed, set in by Deng Xiaoping. With success: for almost 25 years, Chinese politics is at relative calmness and its economy grew from being smaller than the British in 1989 to being the second-largest in 2014.

increasing tensions in East Asia, with leaders on both sides of the dyad playing a nationalist card, whipping up Japanophobia and Sinophobia. These nationalist tensions have often been linked to the possibility of conflict in the region, hereby taken the war-causing character of nationalism for granted (cf. Van Evera, 1994: 5). But what role does nationalism actually play in causing war? According to Van Evera (*ibid.*: 8), the primary causes of nationalism leading to war are unattained statehood, stateless nationalisms, the willingness of states to recover national diasporas trapped behind borders, whether or not through annexationist strategies, hegemonistic goals that nationalities pursue toward one another and the oppression of minorities in national states. These variables are on a scale of likelihood: the more variables present, the more likely conflict becomes.

For these proximate causes to operate, Van Evera describes three different groups of factors: structural, political-environmental and perceptual factors. The distribution of different nationalities across an area, the first structural factor, is less relevant for this case study⁴. Of greater concern is the defensibility and legitimacy of borders: stateless or unattained statehood as a cause for war. Perceptual factors break down into past crimes, oppression of minorities now living in states and nationalist self-images and images of others. The latter is a strong source of nationalism: distorted understanding of shared history and the “self-glorifying myth, if it contains claims of cultural superiority, [which] can feed false faith in one’s capacity to defeat and subdue others, causing expansionist wars of optimistic miscalculation” (Van Evera, 1994: 28). In fact, mythmaking is described as the hallmark of nationalism, a phenomenon almost every nationalist movement is engaged in (*ibid.*: 27).

Current Sino-Japanese relations feature many of these proximate and remote variables, and the more variables on this so-called ‘nationalism danger-scale’ are present, the more likely conflict becomes, according to Van Evera. If bilateral ties between Japan and China show these nationalist features of which Van Evera would claim that they would lead to war, why haven’t we seen the eruption of conflict yet? There are tensions between both states beyond any doubt, but it has fallen short of direct confrontation: “The two Asian powers are locked in a struggle that both are careful not to escalate past the point of no return. Given such constraints, the relationship is never as fraught with danger as it seems when things are going poorly, but it is also not a dynamic that can be dramatically improved in any meaningful way” (Carlson, 2014). Given the presence of a large number of Van Evera’s independent variables in the relations between China and

⁴ This thesis aims to look at the interstate effects of nationalism, not so much on intrastate nationalism. Likewise, the variable respect for national minority rights is also no subject of this study.

Japan, how can we explain the absence of war? This thesis will adapt the model of Van Evera by the embedment of strategic culture as an intervening variable to his theory to see whether it can serve to explain why China and Japan have not engaged in violent conflict. Strategic culture acts in that case as a ‘filter’ through which states perceive their ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ (cf. Wendt, 1992). It implies that “security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors” (Katzenstein, 1996b: 2).

What suggests that more explanatory power will be gained by adding strategic culture as a variable? Van Evera seems to be applying an awkward mix of theoretical assumptions: on the one hand, he holds that anarchy is a precondition for war; the acuteness of the security dilemma, and therefore the balance of power, determines whether an anarchic system is violent or peaceful (Van Evera, 1994: 21). At the same time, according to Van Evera, the war-causing variables in nationalism are almost all located at the unit-level (ibid.: 21), letting go of the notion of unitary, black boxed actors. Strategic culture is expected to contribute to a better understanding of Sino-Japanese relations, because different states tend to have different predominant strategic preferences, rooted in the early experiences of the state, but in time influenced by the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characters of both the state and its elites.

It will also be shown that Johnston’s approach to strategic preference construction at state-level will solve the apparent contradiction in Van Evera’s assumptions on nationalism and the causes of war, by arguing that state preferences for either *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik* (its ideational mirror image) are both constructed at the state-level, rather than at the system-level. There is scope for rationality here: strategic culture simplifies reality, ranks preferences or narrows down options, and guides choice by invoking historical choices, analogies, metaphors and precedents. Strategic culture arguably constrains actors in terms of their behaviour, but it does not constitute them. The behaviour a strategic culture produces always lags behind the objective conditions, since the weight of historical experiences and historically rooted strategic preferences constrains responses (Johnston, 1995: 34).

If nationalism is viewed as a distorting factor that should be present in both China and Japan, then there must be a certain ‘filter’ through which China and Japan perceive themselves and the outer world that prevents them from entering into conflict. China’s culturalism (Johnston, 1996: 216-268; Feng, 2007) and Japan’s anti-militarism (Berger, 1996: 317-356) are examples of such strategic culture, which might explain why their policy preferences (constraint) lag behind the objective conditions (a more assertive

neighbour). In fact, Berger argues “cultural beliefs and values act as a distinct national lens to shape perceptions of events and even channel possible societal responses. In this sense, ‘cultures enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and are not merely subjective reflections of concrete ‘objective’ reality’” (Berger, 1998: 9, as cited in Lantis, 2002: 99). Cultural-ideational variables such as the role of historical memory in shaping perceptions and images, the foundations of the modern state, the conduct of relations with the outer world are salient variables in a strategic culture and in fact also in the bilateral relations of both countries today (Whiting, 1989). Katzenstein (1996a) and Berger (1996; 1998) have already explored the source and implications of the anti-militarism culture in post-World War II Japan, while Harrison (1969), Fairbank (1968), Johnston (1996) and especially Feng (2007) offer accounts of the culturalist strategic preference construction that China nurtured during its ‘civilisation era’, and its implications on how it perceives the outside world today. In fact, China exhibits “a tendency for the controlled, politically driven defensive and minimalist use of force that is deeply rooted in the statecraft of ancient strategists and a worldview of relatively complacent superiority” (Johnston, 1996: 1). These secondary sources will help to establish a proper definition of the prevailing strategic cultures.

1.2 Goal of this thesis

The causes of nationalism have been widely studied, but the effects of nationalism, especially on international politics, have been markedly underexplored (Van Evera, 1994: 5). Van Evera’s theory offers many guiding hypotheses of how nationalism can lead to war, yet what is being omitted is how culture interacts with nationalism, ideational factors that implicitly seem to play a role in his theory. It should also be noted that Van Evera wrote his theory in a period when nationalism was on the rise in eastern and southeastern Europe, during and following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. His hypotheses are concentrated mainly on intrastate nationalisms, outlining the influence of unattained statehoods, stateless nationalisms, regional and local intermingling of nationalities and oppression of minority rights. His units of analysis are in addition mainly focused on western and eastern Europe. In the previous section, the saliency of nationalism in Sino-Japanese relations has been emphasised, as well as the presence of a large number of proximate (and remote) causes of war. The goal of this thesis is thus two-fold: (a) to adapt Van Evera (1994) from a model focusing on **intrastate** conflict to

a model that assesses the likelihood of nationalism leading to **interstate** conflict, and (b) to confront and improving his theory with conflicting empirical findings in the case of China and Japan, by the inclusion of strategic culture that act as a filter through which nationalism manifests itself (or not at all) at state level. Strategic culture entails security interests are determined by actors (not by the ordering of the system of states), who respond to cultural factors (Katzenstein, 1996b: 2). While culturalism holds that ‘national character’ determines the nature of a state’s behaviour and makes every case *sui generis*, thus difficult to apply and testable in a broad sense (Desch, 1998: 150), the contribution this thesis aims to make is not so much to show *which* strategic culture (or which values in a strategic culture) tends to dampen the war-causing effects of nationalism, but rather *how* strategic culture intervenes in the relationship between nationalism and war.

Lastly, while there is an extensive collection on Sino-Japanese diplomacy, the dedication to nationalism and its impact on the bilateral ties between Japan and China is limited. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent nationalism contributes to the deterioration (or strategic culture contributes to an improvement) of Sino-Japanese ties. Some apply only an existing theory to a single case, such as the islands disputes between East Asian states (Downs & Saunders, 1998) or neighbourly territorial rows (Chung, 2004). This thesis will proceed with a more holistic approach.

1.3 Research question

The scientific relevance lies not in a theory-theory juxtaposition where two theories expect a different course in Sino-Japanese relations⁵, but rather in the aim to improve an existing model by incorporating a theory of strategic culture (a model which will be referred to as Van Evera⁺). The hypotheses are modelled to test both Van Evera’s original *and* adjusted model. To see how strategic culture filters nationalism in the foreign policies of China and Japan, we firstly have to devise the mechanism of how exactly strategic culture influences or filters foreign policies. Furthermore, we have to disentangle the kind of nationalism and the kind of strategic culture that exist in East Asia, since Van Evera notes that “some types of nationalism are far more dangerous than other types, all types of nationalism are more dangerous under some conditions than under others, and nationalism can even dampen the risk of war under some conditions” (1994: 7). We

⁵ Such enterprises have already been undertaken by e.g. Roy (1994), Smith (2010).

should nevertheless tread carefully here: strategic culture might exist, but not have any measurable behavioural effect – it might only work on a symbolic level. These implications have to be sorted out before any behavioural claims can be made (Johnston, 1995: 55). The likelihood of conflict between Japan and China thus depends both on the intervention of strategic culture, the kind of nationalism exists in both countries, as well as how strong that strategic culture constrains China's and Japan's elite, bringing us to the following research question:

Does strategic culture interact with the benign or malign effects of nationalism on the likelihood of conflict, through either a reinforcing or dampening effect?
Does it provide an explanation for the current Sino-Japanese relations?

1.4 Outline of the thesis

A theoretical framework will follow the introduction to the research question. As mentioned in section 1.3, the theoretical framework includes both Van Evera (1994) and a theory of strategic culture, and consequently a model based on Van Evera and an adjusted model, Van Evera⁺, incorporating strategic culture into Van Evera. Thus first, a general theory of nationalism will be given. It will describe how nationalism plays a role in international relations, under which conditions nationalism is more or less likely to lead to conflict and uncover on which assumptions Van Evera's theory is based. Subsequently, a general introduction on social constructivism follows, outlining its basic set of assumptions, after which the mechanisms behind the construction of strategic cultures and how it constrains actors, as well as a detailed discussion of these relevant concepts will follow. These are then incorporated in a new model.

The theoretical framework is followed by a description of the methodology. Since Van Evera applies his theory mainly in an intrastate context, variables will need to be adjusted to an interstate context. Several hypotheses will be extracted from the combined theory and methodology. The main tool of analysis will be a single case study. The analysis will provide a test of both models, and judging on the outcomes of these tests, a general conclusion will be drawn.

2 Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework will consist of a description of a theory of nationalism, followed by a discussion of Van Evera (1994) on the causal mechanism between the independent variable, nationalism, and the dependent variable, conflict (a model which will be referred to as model Van Evera). Subsequently, a discussion on strategic culture will follow, where the relevant variables will be discussed and embedded in a new model, Van Evera⁺. From the discussion of these two theories, hypotheses will be deduced that enable us to test both model Van Evera, and model Van Evera⁺.

2.1 Nationalism

Nationalism is defined as a political movement with two characteristics, namely that members of the movement give primacy to their own ethnicity or national community, superseding their loyalty to other groups (Van Evera: 6). It is founded on the belief that the central principle of political organization is the nation. Gellner offers, in my view, the best definition: nationalism is “primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983: 1). Heywood notes that nationalism is often linked to widely contrasting ideological traditions. As such, it has been associated with self-determination, to defend traditional institutions and the established social order. More dangerously, it has been used to fuel programmes of war, conquest and imperialism (Heywood, 2007: 143; Zhao, 2000: 1). Nationalism rests on three fundamental propositions. Above all, it assumes that the world is divided in nations with its own unique culture, history and destiny. Secondly, nations are composed of individuals and each individual belongs to a nation. Lastly, each nation is free, autonomous and united to pursue its own goals and ends and is thus the sole social and political source of power (cf. Smith, 1991: 74; Kedourie, 1992: 67).

All nationalists believe that they are part of organic communities in which a higher loyalty and deeper political significance is accorded to the nation than to any other social group or collective body, such as gender, class, religion and language (Heywood, 2007: 150). Ties and loyalties to the nation can be found in every society, endure over time and operate at a very instinctual level. National identity is often historically embedded, “rooted in a common cultural heritage and language that may long predate

statehood or the quest for independence, and are characterized by deep emotional attachments that resemble kinship ties” (ibid. 151). As such, there is often little difference between nationality and ethnicity. Despite the fact that both concepts are often mentioned in the same breath, what clearly distinguishes ethnic groups from nations is that a nation perceives itself as a distinctive political community, and can as such only subjectively defined by its members. An ethnic group may share with nations characteristics like being a communal identity and a sense of cultural pride, what it lacks is a political aspiration (Heywood, 2002: 106).

2.2 Nationalism and war: Van Evera (1994)

Nationalism has frequently been used to fuel programmes of war, conquest and imperialism. The dominant image of nationalism is one that is associated with aggression and militarism. Especially in the run-up of World War I the aggressive face of nationalism became apparent (Heywood, 2007: 163). European imperialism became marked with an ideology of racial and cultural superiority over others. Aggressive and expansionist nationalism is distinguished by its tendency to chauvinism, as nations endow themselves with a specific set of characteristics or qualities that makes them superior to others. In the post-Cold War era, nationalism was seen as a key driver in the conflicts on the Western Balkans, in the face of the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Nationalism offers the prospect of security, self-respect and pride for those that are rendered powerless and isolated. The nationalist feeling is intensified by negative integration, in which ‘the other’ is portrayed as a threat or enemy. Identity and importance of the own nation are drawn together to create a clear distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Heywood, 2007: 164-166). Evidence seems ‘ample’ to conclude that nationalism and conflict should have correlation or even causation. Yet, in order to establish a causal relationship between nationalism and war, we need more than simple common associations between those variables and proceed in a more rigorous fashion. Does nationalism really lead to conflict, and if so, which types are more likely than others, and under what background conditions? Is conflict inevitable or can it be suppressed?

Causes of war, argues Van Evera (1994), are either proximate (to use the World War I analogy: the killing of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo and tensions over territory on the Balkans – ergo, causes that directly affect the odds for war) or remote (again, the

analogy: unsettled conflicts such as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 or the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 – ergo, causes of these proximate causes). Van Evera suggests that “some types of nationalism are far more dangerous than others, all types of nationalism are more dangerous under some conditions than under others, and nationalism can even dampen the risk of war under some conditions” (ibid.: 7).

Proximate causes

Van Evera describes four primary attributes that determine whether the nationalist movement has a high potential for conflict or not (Van Evera, 1994: 10), out of which three are especially relevant for this thesis. The fourth is of less importance to this thesis⁶. These variables create a so-called ‘danger-scale’ and are thus increasing the likelihood that conflict occurs. The more variables have a malign value, the more likely conflict becomes. They are as follows:

- a. Has statehood been attained or not?
- b. Stance towards the national diaspora: if the nation does have a state but some of its members are dispersed or trapped outside of the state’s borders, does it accept continued separation or seek to incorporate them? And does it do so through immigration or territorial expansion?
- c. Stance towards other nations: does it respect the right of other nationalities to national independence?

First and foremost, nationalist movements that are stateless can cause wars of secession in their struggle for freedom. Peace is measured through the nations-to-state ratio, whereby the number of nationalist movements unattained in their statehood is measured against the number of states: the nation-to-state ratio. Van Evera is unclear how statehood is defined: is it either international recognition (external sovereignty) or autonomy over a certain swath of territory (internal sovereignty)? This is an important distinction: while a state can have external sovereignty, it might not enjoy full internal sovereignty – as is the case with Taiwan and China. Statehood is thus to be viewed from

⁶ The fourth proximate cause refers to the degree of national respect for minority rights: is nationalism minority-respecting or minority-oppressing (Van Evera, 1994: 10)? The aim and scope of this thesis is however limited to interstate conflict, and does not look at the potential for civil war as a result of the oppression of domestic minority groups with nationalist aspirations.

two perspectives: not only international recognition is required, but the recognised state must also meet fulfilment or attainment of its internal statehood.

Statehood is also closely related to the stance towards the national diaspora. Is the national ethnic community partially (diaspora-accepting) or entirely to be incorporated into the national state? And if the entire community must be integrated, will the movement accomplish this through immigrationist tactics or territorial expansion (Van Evera, 1994: 12)? Diaspora-accepting and immigrationist nationalisms are less potent for conflict than diaspora-annexing (expansionist), because they settle for partial union. Pan-Germanism and pan-Serbianism are examples of full incorporation of the national diaspora via annexing, expansionist tactics, the most dangerous type of nationalism, because its goals and tactics produce the greatest territorial conflict with their neighbours and the wider region, testimony to World War II and the Yugoslav Wars.

Aside from the stance towards the national diaspora, the stance towards other nations determines whether a movement's (or state's, if attained) nationalism is symmetrical or not: do other nationalities also deserve statehood, or only theirs? The rejection of another's right to statehood fuels conflict and vice versa. Van Evera is rather brief here: aside from the strict division between symmetry and asymmetry, he mentions a few examples of hegemonistic, asymmetrical nationalism, the most rare and violent variety: interbellum Nazi nationalism, fascist nationalism in Mussolini Italy or militarist nationalism in imperial Japan⁷ (Van Evera, 1994: 13). The last factor, the degree of respect for national minority rights is, as argued earlier, of less concern for this thesis, because we look at interstate rather than intrastate conflict.

When we cast these proximate causes into a model, we can draw a matrix on the basis of the score on each of these variables, with each variable having a score of either 0 or 1 (thus assigning equal weight to each)⁸. The more variables are present, the more likely conflict becomes; in case we are able to assign a score to each of the variables, we can see under which conditions conflict is most likely – the higher the score, the more likely conflict becomes. The first variable, the attainment of statehood (label A), is clear-cut in this regard: either statehood is attained (0) or unattained (1). The second variable on the stance towards the national diaspora (B) can be ranked, according to Van Evera,

⁷ Van Evera (1994: 13 [footnote 14]) remarks that aside from nationalism, further claims against neighbours can stem from non-nationalist expansionist political ideologies, hegemonistic religious ideas, safety concerns from the security dilemma, economic greed, et cetera.

⁸ For the variable *Stance towards national diaspora*, the possible scores are trichotomous: 0, 0.5 and 1.

as diaspora-annexing expansionism for total unity, being the most dangerous (1), immigrationist as less potent (0.5) and diaspora-accepting as the most benign type (0). The last variable (C) on the symmetry of nationalism has again two values: asymmetrical nationalism is malign (1), symmetrical benign (0). The resulting matrix can be seen in Table 1. The upper-left boxes indicate the most benign combination of variables and are thus thought to be conflict dampening (with the minimum score of 0). The lower-right boxes are its mirrored extreme: here conflict is most likely (with a maximum score of 3). The score in each box is the sum of the score in each of the columns and rows (A+B+C). For the purpose of assigning labels to a range of scores, and thus distinguishing between low, intermediate and high levels of conflict possibility, the following categorisation will be applied:

- 0 – 0.5: Low potential for conflict (marked in green)
- 1 – 2: Intermediate potential for conflict (marked in orange)
- 2.5 – 3: High potential for conflict (marked in red)

The categorisation serves to be able to better compare both the matrix of Van Evera's model and that of Johnston's model (which will be described in section 2.3), so that we can visualise in which cases strategic culture dampens or fuels nationalism's potential for conflict.

Van Evera's danger-scale on the effects of nationalism on conflict

	A ⁰ : Statehood has been attained			A ¹ : Statehood has not been attained		
	B ⁰ : Accepting stance towards diaspora	B ^{0.5} : Immigrationist stance towards diaspora	B ¹ : Annexing stance towards diaspora	B ⁰ : Accepting stance towards diaspora	B ^{0.5} : Immigrationist stance towards diaspora	B ¹ : Annexing stance towards diaspora
C ⁰ : Symmetrical nationalism	0	0.5	1	1	1.5	2
C ¹ : Asymmetrical nationalism	1	1.5	2	2	2.5	3

Table 1: graphic illustration of Van Evera's danger-scale (see Van Evera, 1994). 0 = most benign effects of nationalism on conflict, 3 = most malign effects of nationalism on conflict.

Remote causes

The factors that determine whether the preceding three attributes have benign or malign values (Van Evera, 1994: 15) are categorised into structural, political-environmental and perceptual factors. These are remote causes that in turn are required for the operation of the aforementioned primary attributes, although Van Evera is not entirely clear on this point: his hypotheses seem to suggest that any malign score on a remote cause increases the likelihood of conflict (ibid.: 8-9). It thus at times seems that he takes the proximate causes out of the equation. Nevertheless, he is clear that “the deciding factors and conditions [whether a proximate cause is malign or benign] are grouped [...] into three broad families” (ibid.: 15): the structure, the political environment and perception. The score on the danger-scale is therefore dependent on the presence of these remote causes, which in turn activate the proximate causes. While it could be possible to determine the danger-scale simply by looking at the presence of the proximate causes, this thesis will also test for the presence of the remote causes, and thus test the causality between the remote and proximate causes, subject of the sub-hypothesis. On the basis of his theory, the relation between proximate and remote causes are mapped in Figure 1.

Structural factors break down in three subsets: geographic (the domestic balance of will), demographic (the pattern of ethnic intermingling, which is not relevant for this thesis⁹) and military factors (the defensibility, legitimacy and border correspondence with ethnic groups). The balance of power and will depends on the dynamics between the unattained nationalist movement and the central state, subject to two conditions: the movement must have the strength to reach for statehood, and the central state must have the will to resist such attempt. The stronger the movement’s reaching for statehood or the stronger the will to resist such reaching, the more likely conflict becomes. This creates two safe conditions: attained national statehood, and unattained but unreachable statehood. The two dangerous conditions are their mirror images: unattained but reachable statehoods, or seemingly reachable statehoods (Van Evera, 1994: 16). Whether the central state is willing to resist attempts to reach for statehood depends largely on domestic politics, and to a lesser extent on demographic facts. Van Evera is unclear how domestic politics determines will of resistance¹⁰, while demography largely depends on whether permitting secession would set a precedent for further secessions.

⁹ See footnote 4.

¹⁰ Please see the chapter on the operationalisation for an own interpretation hereof.

The defensibility, legitimacy and border/ethnic correspondence is the second structural factor of relevance for this thesis, and determines the potential for conflict through a primary focus on the extension of anarchy new nation-states create. The defensibility of borders (natural borders, e.g. a natural mountain range or a channel, have a higher defensibility, in the sense that they make a state more difficult to conquer) will make the net impact of nationalism either peaceful or more warlike (Van Evera, 1994: 21). The proneness to war is also determined by the legitimacy of borders: the more legitimacy borders of the new nation state enjoy, the less likely new demands for border changes will arise. Borders that bisect nationalities are especially troublesome, as they might entrap co-ethnics (see previous section). Borders arise in two ways: violent military struggle or cession of sovereignty along the boundaries of administrative units defined by the parent (old) state. Borders resulting from the former align often closer to ethnic lines (as war often leads to ethnic cleansing), while the latter “plants the charge of future conflict by dividing nations and creating diasporas” (ibid.: 22).

The second group of remote causes are related to the political-environmental factors, more specifically the behaviour of neighbouring nations. Past crimes by intermingling nationalities determine the degree of harmony or conflict, especially when they concern mass murder, land theft and population expulsions. They foster respectively diaspora-recovering ideologies, territorial definitions of statehood and diaspora-intolerance. The magnitude of such crimes and its effect on neighbour’s attitudes is a function of a number of factors (ibid.: 23-25), which can also be found in the operationalisation of Van Evera (section 3.3.1).

The last category of remote causes is perhaps the most salient, with the effects of nationalism depending on the beliefs of the nationalist movements. Here myth making comes into play, according to Van Evera “the hallmark of nationalism, practiced by nearly all nationalist movements to some degree”¹¹ (1994: 27). For nations to co-exist peacefully, a common understanding of their mutual history and current conduct and character is required. Myths and distortions of the truth rather tend to increase a nation’s ‘sense of its right’. In its most extreme forms, mythmaking can transform symmetrical

¹¹ For examples of myth making, see Shafer, 1972: 313-342. Van Evera remarks that “myth is not an essential ingredient of nationalism: nationalism can also rest on a group solidarity based on truth, and the effects of nationalism are largely governed by the degree of truthfulness of the beliefs that a given nationalism adopts; as truthfulness diminishes, the risks posed by the nationalism increase” (Van Evera, 1994: 27 [footnote 42])

into asymmetrical nationalism, from self-liberating to hegemonistic nationalism¹². Mythmaking generally exists in three forms: self-glorifying (claims of special virtue, competence, false claims of past beneficence), self-whitewashing (false denial of past wrong-doing against others) and other-maligning (claims of others' cultural inferiority, false blame of other for past crimes and tragedies, or false claims of malign intentions by the other against the nation) (ibid.: 27-28). Of these three forms, whitewashing is the most common, and as with the political-environmental factors, the graver the whitewashed crimes, the graver the contempt for the victims, and in turn, the greater the scope for agitation by the victim state. Denial is not ascribed to unintended ignorance: "if truly great crimes are forgotten, the forgetting is wilful, hence it conveys greater insult. And being wilful, the denial implies a dismissal of the crime's wrongness, which in turn suggests an ominous willingness to repeat it" (ibid.: 29).

The scope and character of mythmaking varies widely among nations and depends on a number of domestic factors (Van Evera, 1994: 30-33). These include the legitimacy of the regime, the scope of demands the state makes on its citizens, the economic conditions of the state and the strength of domestic 'truth squads', such as free media and scientists, who help debunk myths. The role of mythmaking allows us to draw an important conclusion on its effects: "the most dangerous regimes are those that depend on some measure of popular consent, but are narrowly governed by unrepresentative elites. Things are still worse if these governments are poorly institutionalised, are incompetent or corrupt for other reasons, or face overwhelming problems that exceed their governing capacities. Regimes that emerged from a violent struggle, or enjoy only precarious security, are also more likely to retain a struggle-born chauvinist belief-system" (Van Evera, 1994: 33).

On the basis of the preceding discussion on nationalism, where it was suggested that nationalism has bedrock of ideas and theories (Heywood, 2007: 147), core beliefs such as organic communities, perception and identity play a large role as the points of departure in nationalist movement. While Van Evera is generally considered a defensive neorealist (see e.g. Walt, 1998: 31), it is not entirely clear whether his theory on nationalism leading to war subscribes to realism's rational assumptions. These include the state as the primary and unitary actors in the international system, that unit-level variables are subordinate to system-level variables and that the structure of the system, namely anarchy, defines the interests (inherently self-help) and actions of states (see Waltz (1979)

¹² See Van Evera (1990: 47-48) and Mearsheimer (1990: 21) for their discussion on so-called 'hypernationalism'.

for a pioneering treatment of neorealism). It is important to uncover the basic assumptions underpinning nationalism in general and Van Evera's theory in specific. Only by doing so, it is possible to insert the constructivist elements that are supposed to complement his theory. It is hard to see how we can embed these 'black-boxed elements' in a rationalist framework. Since unit-level variables are not deemed to be defining the behaviour of states and the outcomes of international relations and are thus irrelevant, conventional realists rely on system-level variables and structural-material-driven explanations and treat the nation state as given. Van Evera does not dwell very extensively on his basic assumptions of nationalism, other than that it is based on individuals giving primary loyalty to their own ethnic or national community, and they desire their own nation state.

When looking at the dependent variable, the causes of war, we are again presented with a mixed story. Van Evera has argued in earlier work (1984) that war is primarily caused by offensive-defensive considerations: conflict is more likely when conquest is easy or when states have significant offensive capacities or defensive vulnerabilities. Examples of *factual* imbalances in the balance of power, the key factor that drives realism, are rather rare in the course of human history; conflict is usually the result of a misperception of these factors. As such, war is usually the result of a *distorting* domestic factor, such as militarism or hyper-nationalism: "for defensive realists such as Van Evera, war is rarely profitable" (Walt, 1998: 37). From this classification by Walt, we can derive a few basic assumptions, for defensive realists assume that states are primarily interested in surviving in an anarchic structure, guaranteeing their security by forming balancing alliances and taking a defensive posture, such as through retaliatory nuclear force. Anarchy is dampened by the possibility of distinguishing between offensive and defensive weapons, and as such acquire weapons for self-defence without threatening others (ibid.: 31). Nationalism should thus be seen through the eyes of Van Evera as a domestic aberration that leads to miscalculation about the external threats other nations pose, and simultaneously increasing the perception of an easy conquest. Essentially, this is a domestic, unit-level factor, having an effect on a system-level variable.

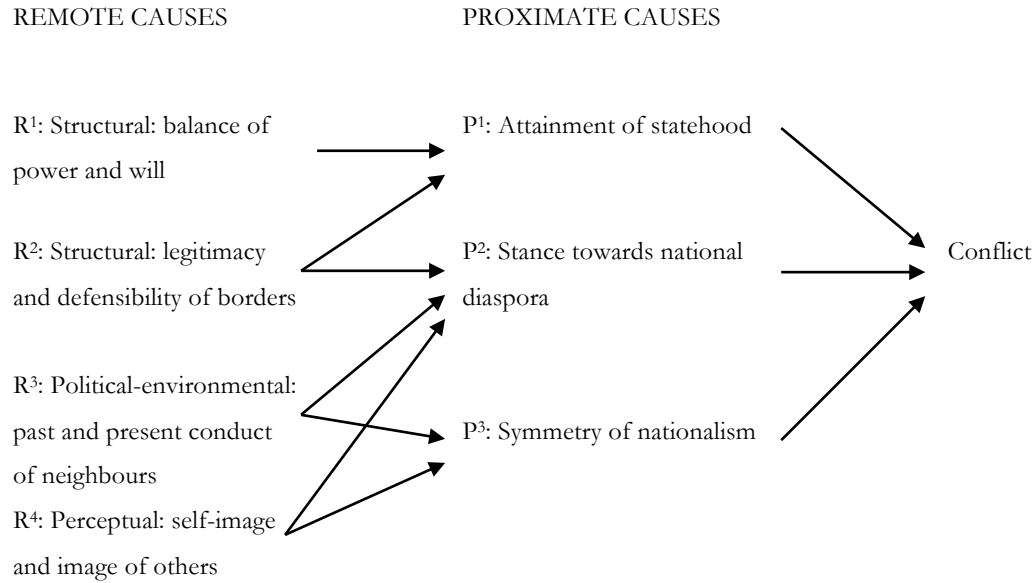


Figure 1: Causal mechanism between remote and proximate causes

The basic model and hypotheses

On the basis of our discussion of the proximate and remote causes, Figure 1 is distilled. Both structural remote causes account for the attainment of statehood and the stance towards the national diaspora, while political-environmental and perceptual remote causes account for the symmetry of nationalism as a proximate cause. The structural factors R^1 and R^2 are related to proximate causes P^1 and P^2 , because the balance of power and will is directly related to whether statehood has been attained or not; an aspiring nationalist movement that has not attained statehood poses a danger when it is confronted with a reluctant central state. Furthermore, borders that are illegitimate, indefensible or those that bisect nationalities or ethnicities can be troublesome for conflict, which will determine whether statehood is felt to be completed or not (P^1) and will activate a certain stance towards the diaspora that is trapped behind those borders (P^2). Remote cause R^3 also accounts for P^2 , since past crimes foster either diaspora-recovering ideologies (in the case of mass murders) or diaspora-intolerance (when populations have been expelled) (Van Evera, 1994: 23). This last cause is also related to P^3 , because past crimes can fuel intolerance towards other nationalities to a level where nationalism is held in an asymmetrical regard towards other nations, especially those that have perpetrated a country or mass murdered a population.

The symmetry of nationalism is largely determined by the respect for the freedom of other nationalities. In the case of R^3 , “past suffering can also spur nations to oppress old tormentors who now live among them as minorities, sparking conflict with these minorities’ home countries” (Van Evera, 1994: 23). Especially mass murder, land

theft and population expulsions are seen as severe crimes that can incentivise the victims to withhold rights (such as to its own nationalism) to the former oppressor. The perception of self and others (R^4) can, in the case of myths and distortions, “expand [the] need to oppress its minorities or conquer its diaspora” (ibid.: 26), and is thus related to P^2 . On the other hand, chauvinist mythmaking, an essential part of this perceptual factor, can lead to other-maligning, which incorporates “claims of others’ cultural inferiority, false blame of others for past crimes and tragedies” and through that, like remote cause R^3 , lead to the activation of proximate cause P^3 . In turn, the proximate causes increase the likelihood of conflict: the more proximate causes present, the more likely conflict becomes.

Figure 1 allows us to get a better understanding of the causal mechanisms in this complex model, and subsequently distil hypotheses from it. We have already seen that the potential of conflict for Van Evera’s basic model depends on the danger-scale, which was drawn in Table 1: the higher the score, the more potential for conflict. The first hypothesis of the basic model is therefore:

Hypothesis 1, model Van Evera:

The higher the score on the danger-scale – the composition of scores on the proximate causes of Van Evera (1994) – the more likely international conflict becomes, and vice versa: the lower the score, the less likely conflict becomes.

As outlined before, we can also formulate a sub-hypothesis from Van Evera’s model:

Sub-hypothesis, model Van Evera:

The more remote causes (R) are present, the more proximate causes (P) are activated.

2.3 Strategic culture: Johnston (1995)

Strategic culture is a theory based on the theoretical assumptions of social constructivism, which rose to prominence out of opposition to the rational assumptions of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism (the *neo’s*). Social constructivism rejects the notion that interests and identities are exogenous and given, but rather that they are endogenous and socially constructed (Ruggie, 1998: 856). To understand the crucial

difference between the rationalist (such as both *neo's*) and reflectivist approaches we need to look at the ontology, “the nature of being [and] types of objects the world is composed of” (Fierke, 2010: 180), that both approaches refer to. For rationalists, the ontology is individualist insofar as their basic unit of analysis is an individual unit, whether that is a human or state; subjects are guided by a ‘logic of consequences’, rational acting that produces an outcome that maximizes the interests of the individual unit. Constructivists, to the contrary, emphasize a social, rather than an individualist, ontology, and as such objects are guided by a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen, 1989): ‘doing the right thing’ becomes more salient than maximizing given preferences (Risse, 2000: 4). Constructivism is not simply the maximization of interests, but a “function of legitimacy, defined by shared values and norms within institutions or other social structures” (Fierke, 2010: 181). Instead of merely being interested in survival, social constructivists see “the interests and identities of states as a highly malleable product of specific historical processes” (Walt, 1998: 40). While rationalists argue that states will act in self interest because the structure of the international system obliges them to, social constructivists point out that intersubjective factors affect states security interests and thus the way they behave when interacting in anarchy.

Johnston's model of strategic culture

Johnston argues that strategic culture is the whole of what states deem appropriate and according to cognitive and normative rules. These rules find their origin in the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics of the state, and under certain conditions, determine their behaviour in foreign policy. Preferences thus differ across geostrategic situations, resources, history, military experience and political beliefs (Ball, 1993: 45). It deems objective variables – technology, polarity, and relative material capabilities – of secondary importance. What makes this notion socially constructive is that the strategic culture gives meaning to these objective variables. Crucially, these preferences are constructed at the *state* rather than the *system* level. He defines culture as consisting of “shared assumptions and decision rules that impose a degree of order on individual and group conceptions of their relationship to their social, organisational and political environment” (Johnston, 1995: 45). Culture has a limiting effect on policy options, and affects the learning process from interaction with the environment of actors. Multiple cultures can exist in a social entity, but usually, there is one dominant culture. A good definition of *strategic* culture is preferably falsifiable: in that way we can

distinguish it from non-strategic culture variables, such as material variables. The best and most complete definition of culture is offered by Johnston, a paraphrase of Geertz's definition of religion as a cultural system (Geertz, 1973: 90):

Strategic culture is an integrated system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and longlasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious. (1995: 46)

Having a conceptualisation of strategic culture, how does it relate to behavioural choices? If strategic culture is to be understood as a system of symbols, it consists firstly of basic assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment: (a) what is the role of war in human affairs? (b) what is the nature of the adversary and the threat that it poses? and (c) what is the efficacy of the use of force? These variables constitute the strategic culture. Despite the fact that the paradigm is a continuum, for the purpose of assigning a score (along the similar lines that have been adopted for determining the danger-scale), each of the basic assumptions can take a dichotomous value, 0 or 1. Since there are three variables, this leads to a 3-point scale, through which a continuum (that theoretically has an endless amount of values) is approximated, be it with the loss of some information (see a consideration on the methodological choices in the conclusion). Later on, in the section where the two theories of Van Evera and Johnston are synthesised, this will lead to a composite index of both the danger-scale of nationalism and the orderliness of the strategic environment (more on this in section 2.4). The score table for Johnston's model is as follows:

Johnston's scale on the orderliness of the strategic environment

	Variable-sum nature of the adversary and threat (0)		Zero-sum nature of the adversary and threat (1)	
	War is an aberration (0)	War is inevitable (1)	War is an aberration (0)	War is inevitable (1)
Force is inefficacious (0)	0	1	1	2
Force is efficacious (1)	1	2	2	3

Table 2: Score table on the orderliness of the strategic environment

The realpolitik end of the paradigm has a value of 3, while the soft idealpolitik end has a score of 0. Additionally, at the operational level, the behaviour, it consists of beliefs about which strategic choices are deemed most efficacious for dealing with the threat environment, defined as the answer to the three-abovementioned questions. The result is a so-called threat paradigm: it determines strategic preferences in a three-dimensional space. The central paradigm can be visualised like this:

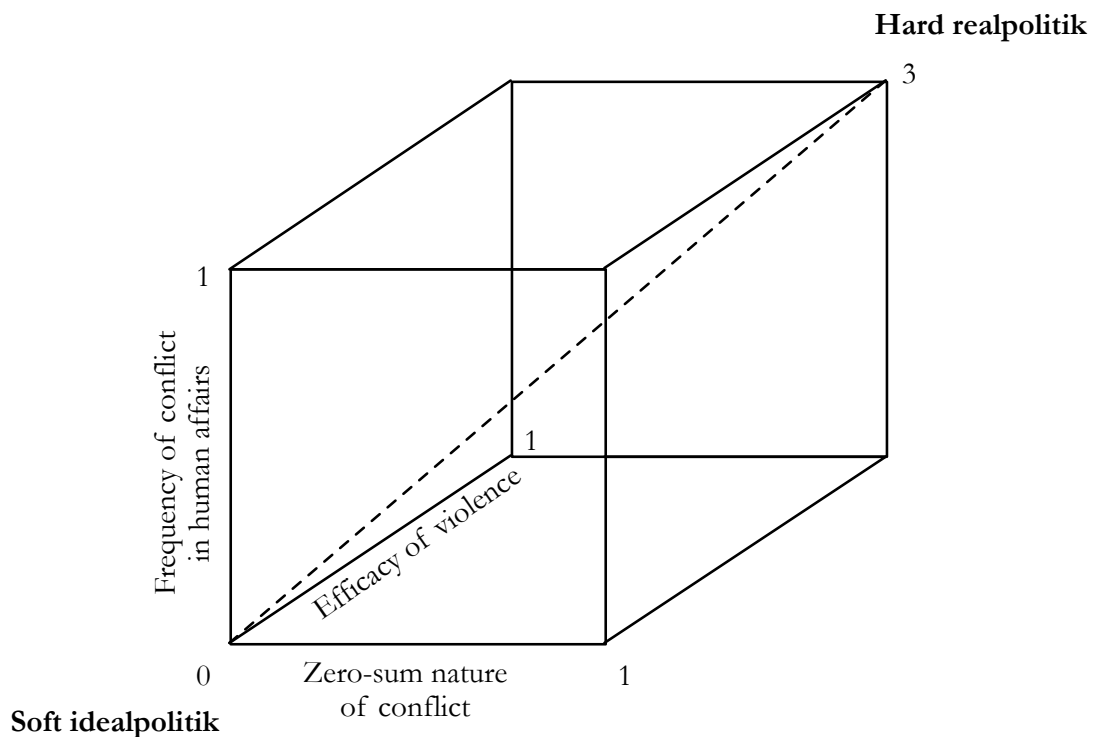


Figure 2: The central paradigm determining the orderliness of the strategic environment. Based on the model of Johnston (1995: 47), but now with scores on all ends of the spectrum.

From this central paradigm, Johnston distils three hypotheses: the higher the frequency of conflict in human affairs, the higher the zero-sum nature of conflict (security has only relative gains and losses) and the higher the efficacy of the use of force, the more strategic preferences will move towards hard realpolitik (see Table 2: a score of 3). The opposite is also true: the lower the score on these variables, the more strategic preferences will move towards a preference for soft idealpolitik (see Table 2: a score of 0).

At this level of preferences over actions, strategic culture directly affects behavioural choice. The empirical referent of strategic culture is therefore a *range* of grand-strategic preferences, consistent and persistent across units of analysis (manifesto's, speeches, etc.) and time (Johnston, 1995: 48). Essentially, since ideational variables are of primary importance, the ranking is not subject to objective (secondary) variables such as technology, threat or organisation. The assumption is that different societies have different strategic cultures and therefore they can assign different weight (rank them differently) to certain strategic preferences. This allows for testing consistency across objects of analysis and differentiation across societies. Additionally, the concept is falsifiable: it allows for testing consistency of preference rankings across objects of analysis (ibid.). In case there is no consistency, it cannot be said that there exists a single strategic culture at a given point in time. In case there is consistency in preference ranking from formative periods up to the period under examination, it can be said that strategic culture exists and persists. Lastly, it makes it easier to isolate the effects of strategic culture from other variables, since the assumption is that a particular strategic culture leads to a preference for a particular strategy, and in this way, predictions about behaviour can be better developed against which predictions from models of choice based on non-strategic culture variables can be tested (ibid.: 48-49). Empirical referents such as symbols and ranked preferences enable us to make analytical observations in texts, documents, doctrines and speeches.

Caveats

The most important assumption underpinning this thesis is that decision-making elites in different societies make different strategic choices despite being faced with the same or similar strategic circumstances and choices. Strategic culture would then be a possible explaining variable for the difference in such behaviour. There are however some caveats

and Johnston warns us for jumping to conclusions on the basis of the possibility of a priori differences in the content of strategic cultures across societies (Johnston, 1995: 55).

The first caveat concerns the role of symbols. Some have argued that strategic culture only operates at symbolic level (see for example Luckham, 1984: 1-2): regardless of the different strategic culture languages used, states' body languages are essentially similar, while others argue that symbolic discourse does have an influence on behavioural choice. Secondly, strategic culture may exist, but different states may still share a similar strategic culture. While structural conditions and historical and cultural experiences still vary among these states, "they share a common process of identity creation, despite differences in regime-type, historical experience, level of economic development, geography, etc." (Johnston, 1995: 56). It could thus be that strategic culture is a salient state-level variable in explaining the behaviour of states, while we do not observe different operational behaviour among these states. We might therefore mistakenly assume strategic culture does not play a role.

What are the arguments for possible disjuncture between an idealised strategic culture and operational choice? Symbols have broadly three major related purposes: (a) autocommunication, which reinforces the sense of decision-makers that they are competent and legitimate, (b) official language, which is to undermine an evaluative, constructive and open decision-making process, and (c) the creation and perpetuation of a sense of in-group solidarity directed at would-be adversaries. Autocommunication "presents an idealised ahistorical story of how strategic actors supposedly do behave, creating for decision-makers a representation of how they should behave in managing national security" (Luke, 1989: 214, as cited in Johnston, 1995: 56). Declaratory doctrines in that case merely represents what the decision-makers *wish* their decisions to look like, rather than what their actual operational behaviour is. This has a profound implication: "from the autocommunication perspective, then, there are no reasons to expect that symbols, *myths*, and symbolic strategies have any effect on the behaviour of the group. As long as idealised strategies are aimed only at reinforcing self-perceptions of competence and authority held by decision elites, there are no particular reasons why the behaviour of the group cannot be generated by other processes" (Johnston, 1995: 57, emphasis added).

The second use of symbols by decision-makers is as 'official language' to other members of the group, in order to exclude alternative strategies being considered, to

undermine any challenge to their authority, to mobilise support for their decisions and to maintain hegemony in the entire decision making process. In some sense, this is resounding groupthink, a phenomenon described by Janis¹³ (1972). Official language use of symbols serves the same function as other symbols of authority, such as uniforms, religious clothing and formal titles (Bourdieu 1991: 58, as cited in Johnston, 1995: 57). The net effect is the creation of an ideology that justifies the hegemony of the strategic decision makers, such as security intellectuals, military policy makers and arms manufacturers. This understanding of symbols therefore suggests, “the boundaries of strategic debate will be set by their language, logic and conceptual categories. Thus, in contrast to the autocommunication literature, this argument suggests that strategic languages and symbols ought to constrain behaviour measurably” (Johnston, 1995: 58). It is the language of the decision-making elite here that sets and constrains the behaviour of a state.

The third and last use of symbols is related to the “creation and perpetuation of a sense of in-group solidarity directed at would-be adversaries (Johnston, 1995: 58). For a political community to exist as a rhetorical community, it needs an underscoring of the uniqueness of the community through shared myths and languages. This emphasis and deepening of an identity, contrasting the ‘Self’ from the ‘Other’ seems to resonate with the concept of the modern nation, which is, according to Hobsbawm (1983), a community that shares symbols, a language and history. Nationalism is the political enterprise that aims to let the political community congregate with the nation. Political nationalism is the top-down enterprise by a political elite that tries to legitimise its actions. According to Campbell and Levine “the more the language of a group’s strategic discourse creates distance between the values of the in-group and those of the ‘other’, that is, the more the adversary is dehumanised, the more legitimate are any and all actions, particularly coercive ones, directed at the adversary” (1968: 552, as cited in Johnston, 1995: 59). Otherwise objectionable behaviour can become acceptable in case the elite can rename them in the linguistically correct way. This is when professed values and actual behaviour can be reconciled: a resolution of cognitive dissonance, as well as public justification (Johnston, 1995: 59). Strategic symbols and myths are in that case used as a means to justify, or at least obscure, the discrepancy between values and

¹³ Groupthink is considered to be the phenomenon that occurs when a group commits a policy failure due to group pressures, that prevents to consider policy alternatives and takes irrational actions that dehumanises other groups. The insulation of a group, the lack of rules for decision-making and a common background among decision-makers is thought to promote such an environment (Janis, 1972: 9).

operational behaviour: “any and all choices framed in the language of the idealised level of strategy will appear more legitimate and authoritative” (ibid.).

The second caveat is the possibility that, despite the fact that strategic cultures do have an actual and measurable effect on behaviour, the variation of this effect among groups of states is limited or absent. According to social-psychological literature, every group tends to create in-group-out-group tensions in order to construct a group identity – a common process to most states (Mercer, 1995; Druckman, 1994: 47-48; Ross, 1993: 11-12 and 40, as cited in Johnston, 1995: 60). The more intense in-group identification, the easier it becomes to dehumanise other groups, and thus the easier it is to identify them as potential threats – it can be argued that in this case, states tend to move up on the extremes in the three-dimensional model of Johnston and are thus more likely to prefer hard realpolitik strategic preferences. The other side of the medal is that the weaker in-group identification, the more states are likely to be influenced by idealpolitik. It is this thought on which literature on the democratic peace theory hinges: liberal democracies do not fight each other, because they have weak in-group identification as they share certain characteristics. Non-democracies become in that case legitimate targets of violence.

The above has interesting implications: Johnston deems structural conditions (balance of power, material capabilities, polarity, etc.) of secondary importance. When we try to determine the strategic preferences of states, we must look at the ranking of preferences, which is a function of a state’s position in the three-dimensional model. This, in turn, is dependent on the intensity of in-group identification by that state. Strategic preferences are then indirectly related with in-group identification, and following this logic, there are two ideal types of strategic culture (Johnston, 1995: 61): the idealpolitik extreme, shared by a democratic community of states, and a realpolitik extreme, shared by those states outside of this group. This also reveals the apparent durability of self-help realpolitik behaviour, since state formation (which as a common process among states promotes in-group identification and out-group dehumanisation) biases against the realpolitik spectrum of the central paradigm. Yet contrary to (neo) realists, realpolitik and self-help behaviour is fundamentally *ideationally* according to Johnston, and *not* the product of anarchy. Realpolitik or idealpolitik – both are constructed at the state-level.

2.4 Embedding strategic culture in Van Evera (1994)

As stated earlier, it is this thesis' purpose to complement Van Evera's theory with a theory of strategic culture, in an effort to increase its explanatory power. Earlier, Van Evera's basic assumptions on nationalism and on the causes of war were uncovered, which presented us with a mixed story: on the one hand, he looks at state-level variables that plant the seeds for conflict (arguing that (hyper) nationalism is a domestic aberration with an effect on the interstate level), but on the other hand considers the acuteness of the security dilemma to be the main determinant for either peaceful or violent anarchy. Anarchy is also a precondition for international war, which makes it a necessary but not sufficient condition, and the more anarchy is extended (that is, more states), the higher the risk of war. Fragmentation can make states more difficult to conquer (in case the new state is bordered by natural borders) or easier. Homogeneity – ethnical/national uniformity – does thus not seem to play a role in determining whether a new state will be less internally or externally warlike, nor does the size of a country's territory or population make a country more secure (against nuclear attacks, for example, producing a second strike possibility). What we can conclude from this is that anarchy is a necessary condition for international war¹⁴, and state-level war-making variables are sufficient conditions for war¹⁵.

Yet Van Evera seems to argue that the security dilemma and therefore the balance of power, not state-level variables, determines whether anarchy is warlike or not: "some anarchies are relatively peaceful, others more violent. The acuteness of the security dilemma is a key factor governing the answer" (Van Evera, 1994: 21). One might argue that Van Evera's theory and hypotheses are focused mainly on intrastate variables, such as local or regional ethnic intermingling, oppression of minorities and stateless nationalisms, but there is no reason to assume that nationalism cannot spill over borders: "once the public has been mobilized through nationalistic appeals, elites can become trapped in their own rhetoric and choose to pursue risky security strategies rather than jeopardize their rule by not fulfilling popular nationalist demands" (Downs and Saunders, 1998: 115). As such, nationalism can increase the likelihood of international conflict, not simply aggravate ethnic tensions within a state. Mainly the security dilemma

¹⁴ If there is international war, there must be anarchy, but the absence of anarchy implies no international war.

¹⁵ If there are state-level war-making variables, war should occur in case there is anarchy, but the absence of these state-level conditions does not imply no international war though.

is responsible for potential conflict, as other states might misinterpret nationalist myths that are otherwise merely aimed at a domestic audience (*ibid.*).

Exactly because nationalism is composed out of so many elements that are at the state level – ethnicity, (national) identity, shared history, myths and symbols – it is hard to discover the system-level mechanism that ties nationalism to violent conflict. This is the primary reason why the constructivist, state-level variable of strategic culture will be incorporated into Van Evera (1994), leading to a new model, Van Evera⁺. For it is Johnston who argues that *realpolitik*, a central concept in neorealist theory that stipulates that international politics is primarily driven by power and material capabilities and not moral values or ideas, does not have an objective cause, but an ideational cause. As outlined on the previous page, preferences for both *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik* are constructed at the state-level.

This solves the apparent contradiction between Van Evera's necessary and sufficient conditions for international war. International war is then more likely when states are situated in the higher extremes of Johnston's model, when they thus have a high belief in the efficacy of force, when the us-them division is maximised (producing a stark vision of a threatening external world) and when security is considered a zero-sum game (there are only relative gains: the security of one leads to the insecurity of others). Crucially, the structure of the system (anarchy) does not force states to the *realpolitik* side of Johnston's model, but this is rather a result of the intensity of in-group identification. *Realpolitik* is thus ideationally created at the state-level, not objectively at the system-level.

When we combine these, the conditions when nationalism can drive international war are then as follows: states fulfil as many proximate (through remote) causes as possible, combined with a position in the higher extremes of Johnston's model, which means that the state is exerting strong in-group identification. Both Van Evera's and Johnston's scale have a maximum score of 3: this will ensure that both indices get an equal weight – not implying that Johnston's strategic culture should weigh more than Van Evera since this claim would not find any foundation in the literature. This leads to a maximum score on the composite index of 6, which is shown in Figure 3. When both Japan and China fulfil the nationalist criteria and share a strategic preference for *realpolitik*, international war becomes very likely (a maximum score). Strategic culture in that case is then reinforcing rather than constraining actor's behaviour: rather the world is seen as a threatening environment, and only relative gains are possible in security. On

the basis of Table 1 and Table 2, we can create the composite score Table 3. The higher the score, the more likely conflict becomes, as a result of the danger-scale of nationalism, taking into account the mediating effects of strategic culture. Because the danger-scale of nationalism has seven possible values (0 – 3 with an interval of .5), and strategic preference has four possible values (0 – 3, with an interval of 1), there are in theory twenty-four possible combinations:

Effects of nationalism on conflict (score determined in Table 1)

		Low potential (0 – 0.5)	Intermediate potential (1 – 2)	High potential (2.5 – 3)
Strategic preference (score determined in Table 2)	Idealpolitik (0)	0 – 0.5**	1 – 2	2.5 – 3*
	Moderate idealpolitik (1)	1 – 1.5	2 – 3	3.5 – 4
	Moderate realpolitik (2)	2 – 2.5	3 – 4	4.5 – 5
	Realpolitik (3)	3 – 3.5***	4 – 5	5.5 – 6

Table 3: Determination table for the effects of nationalism filtered through strategic culture.

Whereas in Table 1, we expected a strong likelihood of conflict at the scores of 2.5 to 3, this scale ranges from 0 – 6 (as the sum of both scales), thus taking into account the mediating effects of strategic culture: for example high conflict potential nationalism (2.5 – 3, marked with one asterisk) was at the upper end of the scale in Table 1, but in combination with idealpolitik (thus a 0 on strategic preferences), it is now an average score in the upper-right corner of Table 3. Realpolitik reinforces every form of nationalism more strongly than any other strategic preference, even very benign nationalism (0 – 0.5, marked with two asterisks) from a highly unlikely (0) to a less-than-average chance of conflict (3 – 3.5, marked with three asterisks). On the other hand, idealpolitik in combination with a high conflict potential of nationalism now only results in a score of 2.5 – 3 (marked with one asterisk) on a scale of 0 – 6, thus leading to a moderate chance of conflict. How scores on Van Evera's danger-scale can 'move' along the composite index with strategic culture as a dampening or reinforcing filter can be visualised by the following two scales:

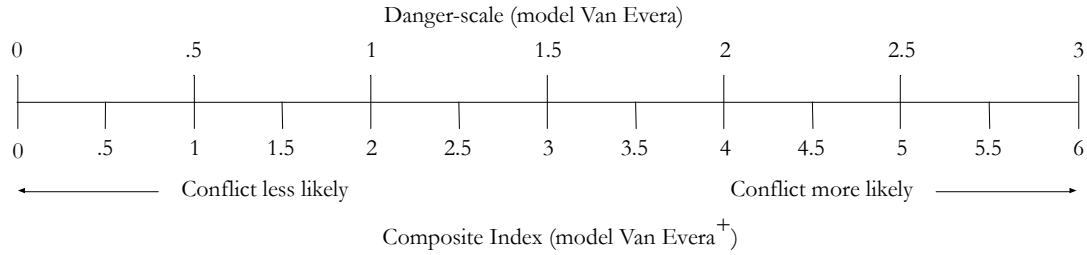


Figure 3: Danger-scale (above, scale 0-3) and composite index (below, scale 0-6) compared.

One can see here that e.g. somewhat malign nationalism (2) combined with moderate idealpolitik (1) leads to a score of 3, which is less bellicose than the initial expected effect of nationalism without strategic culture acting as a filter on the left-to-right orientation. We can also observe that the effects of strategic culture are more reinforcing to the lower ends than to the higher ends of the danger scale (see, e.g., the distance between 1 (danger scale) and 4 (composite index)) while the effects are more mediating to the higher ends of the danger scale than to the lower end (see, e.g., the distance between 2.5 (danger-scale) and 3 (composite index)). This is in line with our expectations: in the case of benign nationalism and hard realpolitik preferences, we expect a more strong transformation than when both are already in line with each other (malign nationalism with hard realpolitik). In the latter case, we cannot really speak of a ‘filter’ anymore, since there is basically nothing left to filter; the values that would be filtered are already more or less in line with the values that the filter would produce.

The least bellicose combination is idealpolitik in combination with very benign nationalism (upper-left corner in Table 3, score 0 – 0.5, marked in green), the most being realpolitik with very malign nationalism (lower-right corner in Table 3, score 5.5 – 6 marked in red). Even if the malign variables in Van Evera’s theory are present, a strategic culture in the lower ends of the paradigm (thus a low score on Johnston’s scale) is assumed to constrain the actor’s behaviour in acting upon those malign variables, as threats can be managed through trade-offs, logrolling and suasion. Conversely, states that position themselves at the higher (realpolitik) end of the paradigm, it is expected of strategic culture to have a reinforcing effect in the presence of the malign variables on nationalism. It is nevertheless difficult to analyse the exact contributing effect of strategic culture, as it is inherently troublesome to isolate specific effects in social sciences, especially when those effects are reinforcing each other (whether it is to the benign end or the malign end).

Of primary interest, then, are the cases where we expect a malign effect on the prospects of war, if we would follow Van Evera's logic, but where strategic culture influences the ranking of strategic preferences towards accommodationist tactics and therefore constrains behaviour towards the out-group, affecting the perception of external threats. When we look at the causal relations, the combination of Van Evera and Johnston leads to the definitive Figure 5 that will be used for testing the research question. The most interesting cases are those when China and/or Japan initially position themselves in the upper-left or lower-right corners of the score table of Van Evera (see points of departure of both arrows in Figure 4), but with strategic culture as a filter vertically move towards respectively a higher conflict or a lower conflict potential (as indicated by the direction of the arrows). These cases will then provide evidence that strategic culture does indeed influence the conflict potential of nationalism.

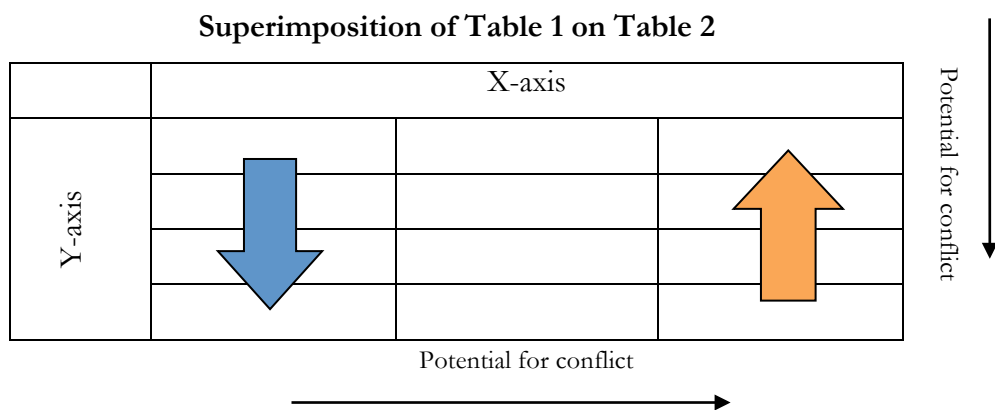


Figure 4: Superimposition of Table 1 on Table 2. Cases that provide evidence strategic culture increases (see blue arrow, moving from benign nationalism to moderate nationalism through a realpolitik strategic culture) or dampens the potential for conflict (see orange arrow, moving from malign nationalism to moderate nationalism through a idealpolitik strategic culture).

For our specific case study, our basic assumption is visualised by the orange arrow: we initially expect a high potential for conflict when we look at Van Evera's model (a score of 2.5 or 3 on the danger-scale), but due to the strategic culture filter, the potential is dampened (which is the case when we move along the orange arrow). In case we can empirically observe such move, we can explain Sino-Japanese behaviour. Since we expect and thus want to test that strategic culture filters the score on the danger-scale (model Van Evera⁺), we should formulate a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2, model Van Evera⁺:

The stronger the preference for realpolitik, the stronger the reinforcement of nationalism, therefore the higher the likelihood of conflict, and vice versa.

An offensive strategic culture will be conducive to the prospects of war, while a defensive strategic culture is expected to dampen the war proneness of the variables in Van Evera's theory, mostly through cognitive filters that serve to shape the image of the external threats in the minds of the decision-making elite. The following chapter will outline the operationalisation of the concepts that are included in these hypotheses. This is especially important since we need to adapt Van Evera's model on two accounts: firstly, 'translate' his model from an intrastate model to a interstate model, and secondly, to include strategic culture as an interacting variable.

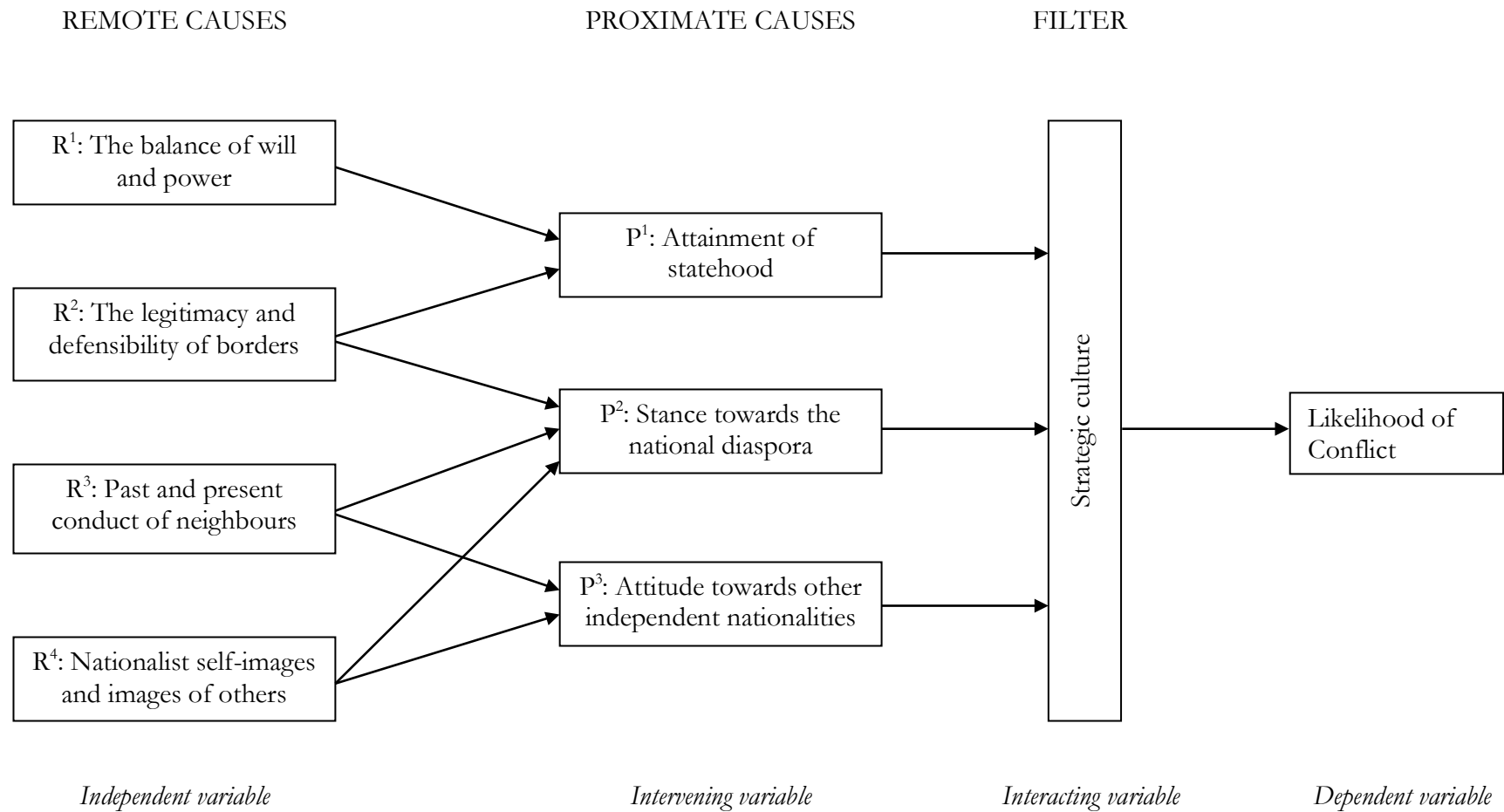


Figure 5: The adjusted model Van Evera⁺.

3 Methodology

Before we can look at the empirical data, this chapter will provide a more thorough account of the used methodology. Firstly, the research design will be discussed, after which the variables in the theory will be operationalised.

3.1 Research design

In order to assess the likelihood of violent conflict between Japan and China we have to adjust¹⁶ and test Van Evera's model (for which purpose there is hypothesis 1), notwithstanding the fact that we have adapted his theory on several key points, in an effort to increase its scope and explanatory power. This adapted model, which has been labelled Van Evera⁺, will be used to test sub-hypotheses 2. If the adjusted model attains a better explanation of the current Sino-Japanese relations, we can conclude that the introduction of strategic culture into the theory of Van Evera has produced in the worst case a better understanding of Sino-Japanese relations, in the best case a better theory altogether (it being able to explain a wider range of cases).

The research is set up as following: firstly, we need to determine the basic assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment in both China and Japan in order to, in turn, determine their position in the central paradigm of Johnston (our 0-3 scale of Table 2). There is a need to firstly test for the presence and congruence of a certain ranking of strategic preferences, whether this ranking is the persistent (between the period of interest and the original formative period of the strategic culture) and then to test for the effect on behaviour. Chinese and Japanese strategic culture has been dealt with by Johnston (1996), Scobell (2002), Feng (2007), Katzenstein (1996a) and Berger (1996). The applied methodology (both identifying the relevant variables and assigning dichotomous values to each of them) is however unique to this thesis, so it remains necessary to include an own interpretation of this literature. When we have a score on this scale, we can proceed to determine the score on the danger-scale of Van Evera. The composite score of these two will eventually determine the likelihood of conflict.

¹⁶ Van Evera applies his theory mainly to *intrastate* conflict, while we are looking specifically at *interstate* conflict.

When can we say that strategic culture plays a role in filtering a nationalist foreign policy? Firstly, it needs to be shown that China and Japan indeed profess the kind of nationalism that Van Evera deems dangerous (hypothesis 1). Our interest lies with the cases in which there is a high probability of war according to Van Evera, while on the basis of an idealpolitik strategic culture, we would expect a dampening effect (hypothesis 2). These are the situations in the upper-right corner of Table 3. Here the interacting effect of strategic culture is more clearly visible than in the cases where both variables are reinforcing each other in either direction (due to the problems related to the isolation of these effects). As case studies often rely on contextual evidence, it prompts the need for a multiplicity of sources of evidence, which involves long chains of causal relations (Gerring, 2007: 173). This thesis will therefore employ the process tracing technique, which helps us to unravel long causal chains. Single-case studies run the risk of a lack of variance on the dependent variable (in this case, conflict), while there is also the risk of indeterminacy in the face of more than one possible explanation (George & Bennett, 2005: 32). Using process tracing on a variety of hypotheses will help to reduce the risk of leaving out variables that might compromise the validity of this research (ibid.: 80).

3.2 Case selection

The primary goal of this thesis is to improve the model of Van Evera. He has focused his units of analysis mainly on western and eastern Europe, plus applied his model mainly to intrastate conflict, which is also not extremely surprising, since nationalism and civil wars fought for independence dominated south-eastern and eastern Europe at the time he wrote his article (1994), following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nationalism has been a dominate force ever since the French Revolution, when the concept of the nation state was born, and rose to extreme levels before and during World War II. Yet the impact of nationalism on the likelihood of war remains understudied (cf. Van Evera, 1994: 5), as well as lacking an application to East Asia. The enterprise of adapting his model is required when we see a contradiction between empirical data and the theory in East Asia.

This need also arises from another spatial point of view: while most political science research is both quantitative (especially in the United States) and has an overly focus on western societies (whether it is the welfare state, democracy, elections or national strategy), surprisingly little research is done on China and Japan. In “When China Rules the World”, Martin Jacques (2012) argues that China will have an increasing

impact in daily life, but often we fail to grasp the greater implications of that development. Japan and China currently occupy the second and third place in the ranking of the world's largest economies, and thus their relationship is not only politically important, but also economically.

The case can also be considered a good test of the assumption that strategic culture actually does influence an agent's behaviour. Japan, in fact, is seen as the watershed test case for this assumption, since one could plausibly make the case that its antimilitarist strategic culture and pacifist normative foreign policy, which is even codified in its constitution, actually does constrain its behaviour. Katzenstein (1996a) has produced a number of books that employ a sociological approach, sympathetic to concepts such as history, norms and culture, in explaining the evolution of Japan's security policy. It should however be noted that his book does not systematically refute policy alternatives, such as the US pressure on that policy, a common realist argumentation (Kohno, 1997: 403). Lacking a truly vigorous attempt to understand the significance of strategic culture in East Asia, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of that significance.

3.3 Operationalization

Unit of Analysis

Literature on strategic culture is surprisingly vague on the objects of analysis when determining the ranking of strategic preferences. How can we discover the ranked preferences? Johnston (1995: 49-50) argues that basically anything goes: writings, debates, thoughts and words of *culture-bearing units*, such as strategists, military leaders and national security elites; weapon designs and deployments; war plans; images of war and peace portrayed in various media; military ceremonies and war literature. Elites play the most important role in the common historical narrative, while political institutions and coalitions greatly affect foreign policy behaviour (Klein, 1991: 3). This is obviously an extensive list of objects. He has gone around this by analysing a sample of these objects of the period that he wanted to study, and comparing it with a sample from a past period. The underlying assumption in the theory is that should there be congruence in preference rankings between both samples, then strategic culture exists and persists across historical time. The longer this congruence persists, the stronger the constraint on actor's behaviour and the more persistent the strategic culture.

Berger (1993; 1996) and Katzenstein (1996a) for Japan, and Johnston (1996) and Feng (2007) for China have all provided an extensive record on the respective strategic cultures – there is no need to re-examine the ideational content of these cultures, so this thesis will use secondary literature for that purpose. In order to gauge the influence these strategic culture have as filters in foreign policy of both states, we do need to determine the period of time under study. The principle turning point in Chinese domestic and foreign policy was in 1989, when the Tiananmen Square protests broke out. That year, public views on China in Japan also radically and negatively changed¹⁷ (Smith, 2010: 237). At that time, there was a need to reassert the legitimacy of the Chinese leadership, and as the CCP's official ideology lost credibility, nationalism took the place of the official ideology, as a coalescing force in the turbulent post-Tiananmen years (Zhao, 1998: 288). Since that moment, the Chinese government has increasingly relied on nationalism as a source of legitimacy (Friedberg, 1993: 13-15; Whiting, 1995: 316; Shambaugh, 1996: 204-209, as cited in Downs and Saunders, 1998: 115), with parallelised Japanese responses of nationalist vigour, such as calls for a revision of the pacifist constitution and sensitive visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. This could be reason to assume that the prospects for conflict have increased, if we follow Van Evera's theory.

The period under examination will therefore span from 1989 until now, but will especially look at the foreign policy crises that presented a challenge for policy makers on both sides of the East China sea, spurring mutual responses from both states: the territorial disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in 1990 and 1996 (see e.g. Downs and Saunders, 1998: 116), the third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995 and 1996¹⁸, the Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi and Abe¹⁹, and the nationalisation of the Senkaku islands by the Japanese government in 2012, the latter of which presents “the most serious [situation] for Sino-Japanese relations in the post-war period in terms of the risk of militarised conflict” (Hughes, 2013). When we look at all foreign policy crises since 1989, these have provoked the most intense reactions with a reliance on nationalism, creating a challenge for especially defensive strategic cultures.

¹⁷ Whereas in 1980, 78.6 per cent of Japanese respondents in a government opinion poll responded that they felt ‘friendly’ towards China, that figure dropped to 51.6 per cent right after the Tiananmen Square (Smith, 2010: 237). Today, it stands at a record-low 9 per cent (Genron NPO, 2014).

¹⁸ It will be argued in the discussion on the hypotheses why Taiwan is a salient issue in Sino-Japanese relations.

¹⁹ Yasukuni Shrine visits are so-called “flashpoints for widespread, if often ill-informed, international misgivings about Japan’s foreign policies” (Calder, 2006: 133), which is the reason why they have been included in the observed cases.

They are therefore considered to be hard cases: if strategic culture filtered nationalism in these cases, it must also be the case for the less intense moments in foreign policy.

3.3.1 Van Evera: nationalism and war

There are a number of variables in Van Evera's theory that require further operationalization, in order to make them better measurable and observable, if present. Some causes of war are proximate, while others are remote, and some types of nationalism are more dangerous than others, and certain conditions tend to increase the war-proneness of nationalism more than other conditions (Van Evera, 1994: 7). It thus makes sense to first clarify the proximate causes, and then turn to the remote causes. The operationalised variables will be cast into the new model Van Evera⁺, ergo taking into account the embedment of strategic culture as has been done in the theoretical framework.

There are structural, political-environmental and perceptual factors that cause the proximate causes, although Van Evera is inconsequent in his views on the function that remote causes have: they are defined as "causes of the immediate causes and conditions required for their operation", while the hypotheses that follow seem to imply that they, by themselves, increase the risk of war, taking the proximate causes out of the equation (Van Evera, 1994: 8-9). The little context Van Evera provides requires us to make some assumptions: the proximate causes create a danger-scale, whereas remote causes do not necessarily. The immediate causes cannot exist without having at least one of the remote causes. The sub-hypothesis will focus on whether the presence of remote causes influences the presence of proximate causes. It should be noted that each proximate cause is presumed to have multiple remote causes, and thus there might be a necessary-sufficient condition construction at play. This thesis will however not shed light on this relation. Rather, the scientific significance of this thesis will be to test the causality as such, while the possible necessary-sufficient condition distinction is recommended in the section on further suggested research in the conclusion of this thesis. The second hypothesis relies on the presence of proximate causes, which is subject to a separate test, so it is not dependent on the outcomes of the test of the sub-hypothesis.

Proximate causes of war

The primary proximate causes of nationalism leading to war are:

1. Is national statehood attained or unattained?
2. Attitude toward the national diaspora: is partial or total national unity pursued?
Are immigrationist or expansionist tactics used?
3. Attitude toward other independent nationalities: tolerant or hegemonistic?

These three attributes create a so-called nationalism ‘danger-scale’ (ibid.: 14). In case all these conditions are have malign effects, they multiply the chances of war.

The first attribute is operationalised by Van Evera as the ‘nation-to-state ratio’, which is the proportion of nationalist movements that struggle for national freedom, but remain unfulfilled in statehood in a certain region. Since we are looking at the relations between two nation-states that enjoy international recognition and sovereignty, we need to slightly adjust this variable. Statehood is generally considered to be the monopoly of force over a territory and its population, exercising a continuous organisation and possessing a compulsory jurisdiction, the famous definition by Max Weber (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982: 2). The lack of effective control over a certain territory, other than the territory of other recognised sovereign state, would therefore indicate a situation of limited or unattained (full) statehood. The most striking example of such a situation is that of contested territories such as breakaway regions or mutual claims to by multiple (state) entities. The operationalisation therefore is whether a state does or does not have territorial disputes over areas in which it lacks the type of control as described by Weber. In that situation, we can reasonably claim that a sovereign state has not attained full statehood.

The second attribute is the attitude towards the national diaspora. A diaspora is necessarily the part of the national population, bound together by culture, language, religion and/or ethnicity, living outside of the borders of the (kin) state. Van Evera distinguishes the stance towards the national diaspora between partial or total unity, the latter being divided between immigrationist and expansionist tactics. With regards to partial unity, Van Evera remarks that states in pursuing such unity typically leave the overseas communities “to their own political devices” (1994: 12). We can thus argue that partial unity tends to take the form of flexibility in the governance of certain territories, through a high degree of autonomy, self-governance, own tax revenues, a locally run police force, a different electoral system, an own civil law code, et cetera. On the danger scale, this leads to a score of 0. Total unity is the mirror image of that: the intention is to

incorporate the diaspora into the central state with the intention of ruling the territory from a centralised unit, such as the central government of the state. The second component of this variable concerns the tactics that are being used to incorporate the diaspora, which can take two values: immigrationist (score 0.5) or expansionist (score 1). The former will be operationalised as means that seeks to peacefully encourage the diaspora to move from the territory outside to the inside of the nation state. Hereby no border changes are pursued to include that diaspora. Again, expansionist tactics are the mirror image of immigrationist policies: border changes are actively pursued to include the ‘trapped’ diaspora behind the current borders of the nation state.

The third attribute concerns the attitude towards other diaspora, which can take the values of either ‘tolerance’ or ‘hegemony’. Nationalism is either symmetric in that it regards all nationalities as having an endowment for statehood, or asymmetric, in that other nationalities are denied such right. Van Evera is rather summarily on this point. The most extreme form of hegemonistic nationalism is inherently militarist and war causing, providing examples of interwar Nazi nationalism, fascist Mussolini nationalism and militarist Japanese nationalism. The distinction between tolerant and hegemonistic nationalism then lies in tolerant nationalism being more inward looking, providing an instrument for internal cohesion and social order (“self-liberating”, see Van Evera, 1994: 26), while hegemonistic nationalism is a means to rally a nation behind a strife for conquest of other nationalities that are primarily aimed at the external environment – namely preventing the existence or creation of other (aspiring) nationalities. One could argue that tolerant nationalism is inclusionary, in that it grants equal rights to other nationalities, while hegemonistic is exclusionary. For the sake of measurement, it will be argued that tolerant nationalism produces favourable views of the neighbouring nationalities among the population (more than 75 per cent of the population holds such views), while hegemonistic nationalism will produce negative views of the other neighbouring nationalities, an admixture of uncertainty, mistrust and antipathy (less than 25 per cent of the population holds favourable views) (cf. Nelson, 1998: 315).

Remote causes of war

The remote causes consist of structural, political-environmental and perceptual factors. The former, in turn, breaks down in geographic, demographic and military factors. The primary concern of the geographic factor has to do with the domestic balance of power and of will, where the movement must have the strength to reach for statehood, and the

central state the will to resist such an attempt (Van Evera, 1994: 16). Again, we need to adjust this variable to suit it for interstate conflict. In the case of sovereign states, the movement and the central state are already more or less congruent, so that it is not so much a separate movement that strives for statehood, but rather the hardliners in the government of the state that drive nationalism in their foreign policies. These hardliners can be considered a movement, as they give primacy to their national area or ethnicity, but they are not stateless; they rather have a sense of incomplete statehood – for the aforementioned reasons under the proximate cause of statehood attainment. “The will of the central state is largely governed by its domestic politics” (ibid.: 17), and thus the factor can be operationalised as “the will of the state depends on whether domestic politics actively opposes nationalist policies, passively allows nationalism to flourish, or even promote such policies”. Opposition and passive or active support should be interpreted here as being cognitive safeguards, public opinion, taboos, acclaim to those ideas in policymaking elites, insulation of those that are opposed to nationalism, et cetera. It is here where the inclusion of the social constructivist framework of strategic culture plays a large role, since it is expected that strategic culture constrains the policy options of the domestic political scene. Strong in-group identification will be conducive to nationalist policies, while weak in-group identification will put less emphasis on the ‘uniqueness’ of societies that is inherently embedded in nationalism.

The second relevant structural factor for this thesis concerns the defensibility, legitimacy and ethnic border correspondence. Especially natural borders such as mountain ranges, seas or canals help strengthening the legitimacy and defensibility of borders. Borders that lack such recognition are usually subject to overlapping/mutual claims by other sovereign states. The legitimacy of borders should thus be measured if and how many other states make overlapping claims to certain territorial areas. What also matters is the justification that is being given to these claims: borders of historical homeland, land inhabited by the national diaspora or an area that enjoys widespread international recognition by other sovereign states is more legitimate than borders that are the result of land theft, armistice or wartime expropriation, or inherited administrative border drawing by a central government (such as is the case in much of the former Soviet Union). Defensibility of borders largely depends on whether natural borders such as rivers, canals, mountain ranges or sea (straits) are congruent with national borders, which in that case makes borders more defensible. This variable is thus

operationalised as the origin of how borders were created, on what basis the claims are being made and whether natural borders align with national borders.

The second group of remote causes concern political and environmental factors: what was the behaviour of neighbours, what is their behaviour now? Harmony between neighbouring or intermingled nationalities depends partly on past conduct vis-à-vis each other, whereby the magnitude of the crimes tends to influence the attitude towards the national diaspora. The graver the crimes of the aggressor state, the more diaspora-annexing attitude the victim state will adopt (Van Evera, 1994: 23). The most gravest crimes are mass murder, land theft and population expulsion: the former conduces diaspora-recovering ideologies, while the latter two feed diaspora-intolerance. Whether these past crimes play a role in causing war nowadays “is a function, in part, of whether these crimes are remembered, and whether victims can attach responsibility for crimes to groups that are still present. [...] This, in turn, is a matter of interpretation: who committed the crime in question? Can inherited blame be attached to any present group?” (ibid.: 24). The proneness is furthermore dependent on apologies and contrition shown for past crimes. We expect less conflict in case the aggressor state takes responsibility for its own malign conduct, through apology speeches, official statements, war reparations and/or a shared understanding of the past with the victim state. Lastly, the coincidence of power and victimhood contributes to the danger nationalism can pose. The most dangerous combination is when those that in power coincide with those that are aggrieved by past crimes: this brings together both a motive and the capacity to act on the grief. It will thus depend whether victim state is more powerful – Van Evera is unclear how power is exactly measured, but for the purpose of measurement we assume material capabilities – than the aggressor state for the danger to be maximised. Current conduct, lastly, focuses more on the respect towards minority rights, which is again at best a marginal part of this research.

The last remote cause is related to perceptual factors: nationalist self-images and images of others. The theory argues that myths distort truth and can expand a nation’s sense of right (Van Evera, 1994: 26). Relations are particularly bad if images diverge in self-justifying directions, leading to the whitewashing and glorification of own behaviour and the maligning of others. A lack of a shared, honest understanding of history, self-criticism and self-reflection is largely the result of chauvinist mythmaking, the hallmark of nationalism (see Van Evera, 1994: 27). We can observe myths in a number of units of analysis: history teaching, literature and statements by political elites. Myths can be

measured by a divergence of own images and the truth, with the most extreme divergence being a self-justifying direction. We can observe several purposes of myths: self-whitewashing, self-glorifying and other-maligning (for a full definition, refer to the theoretical framework). Firstly, since we have established a ranking on the graveness of crimes (see previous page), we can also determine the gravity of denial of certain crimes: the graver the crime that is being denied, the stronger the contempt for the victims humanity (ibid.: 29). Secondly, self-glorifying myths can be measured by looking at the bestowing of oneself of special virtue (the right to rule others), competence and whether one views complaints by others against them as expressions of ungrateful malice (ibid.: 28). Lastly, for measuring other-maligning we can draw important lessons from Johnston in that the intensity of in-group identification helps to estrange/dehumanise the other. This can be observed through instilling claims of the others' cultural inferiority, false blame for past crimes and tragedies and false claims of malign intentions against the self by the other.

Whether myths are also receptive to the targeted audience depends firstly on the legitimacy of the regime, measured by a regime's representativeness, its competence and its efficiency. Representativeness is measured against whether the governing elites are reflective of the ethnic, linguistic and racial composition of the population they represent, competence is measured in terms of the level of corruption and institutionalisation of the regime, and lastly efficiency will depend on the way a regime copes with large societal challenges, such as social and economic collapse or crises. Secondly, the scope of demands posed by the regime also determines the reception of myths by the audience, which is measured against whether a state is at war or not, the level of external threat, and the democratic level of the regime (for which the Freedom House Index 2015 will be used). Thirdly, in the face of economic collapse, mythmaking can take a scapegoating direction, when downturn is blamed on external factors. Collapse can either be economic recession (two quarters of GDP shrinkage, Shiskin, 1974: 222), or when the economy undergoes a sustained slowdown of growth (year-on-year decreases). Here the source will be statistical data from the World Bank. Lastly, receptiveness depends on the independence of evaluative instruments, which is a function of free speech and free press traditions. Again, the Freedom House Index 2015 will be employed for measuring this variable. The variables that are relevant for the receptiveness can be summarised as follows:

Variable	Indicator	Source
Legitimacy of the regime	Ethnic composition, level of corruption and institutionalisation, regime efficiency	Multiple, inter alia the Corruption Perception Index
Scope of demands	State of war, external threats and democratic level of the regime	Freedom House Index 2015
Economic collapse	Two quarters of GDP shrinkage or sustained slowdown of growth	World Bank
Independence of evaluative instruments	Level of free speech and free press	Freedom House Index 2015

Table 4: Overview of the variables that determine the receptiveness to mythmaking

3.3.2 Johnston: strategic culture

There are three elements that determine the orderliness of the threat environment: the role of conflict in human affairs, about the nature of the adversary and the threat that it poses, and about the efficacy of the use of force (Johnston, 1995: 46). The first element concerns the view by the state whether conflict is an aberration from the norm, perhaps even as a crime, or as an inevitability, an occurrence beyond rational control and perhaps even desirable way of settling international differences (cf. Howard, 1984: 90). Essentially, Johnston questions himself here whether states prefer diplomacy to conflict as a means to settle their disputes with other states, or vice versa. For that to occur, states must rank their strategic preferences accordingly: force is only to be used as a last resort, when “a process of political give-and-take [has] stalemated, leaving no other choice but coercion” (Johnston, 1996: 235). How are we supposed to measure this? Just war theory might offer a way out. If war is an aberration in human affairs, then all wars must be an aberration, which means that no war can be justified along norms of human behaviour. It would nevertheless be wrong not to defend oneself in the case of another one’s aggression. Ergo, when a state prefers diplomacy to war, then it must view any war of aggression as unjust (or ‘illegal war’ as it would be under international law), while justifying self-defensive war (‘legal’ war). In other words, just war (i.e. self-defensive war) would be used as a last resort (ibid.).

The nature of the adversary and the threat it poses is conceptualised in a similar regard and takes the value of either zero-sum or variable sum. Zero-sum in general means that the gain of one is the loss of another, while variable sum means that mutual gains (or losses) are possible. States that view international relations as a variable sum game, will generally prefer accommodation and negotiation to confrontation, because

they feel ‘there’s something in it for the both of us’: through cooperation, both states can be better off. The external environment does not inherently have to be threatening in this view. This is essentially the situation in the prisoner’s dilemma where both players expect from each other to remain silent and not plead guilty, so that both get collectively the least sentence. Zero-sum conception of the adversary would mean that one would always assume that the other is not willing to cooperate, and that the own gains should be maximised and the own losses should be minimised. We would thus measure this variable by the inclination of states towards a cooperative course or a confrontational course of action. How to measure such operationalization?

Johnston is not entirely clear on this matter, but since he has already applied his theory to Maoist China, it is worthy to look at his application of the variable in Katzenstein’s edited volume (1996b: 216-268). There Johnston writes that Mao viewed enemies that posed a threat to the moral political order as an explicitly zero-sum contest – measured in the aptness of the enemy to destroy the other’s fundamental values as a class or state. No compromise was possible: negotiation, logrolling or suasion was ruled out in those cases (Johnston, 1996: 225). A military initiative is preferred over a diplomatic initiative, and the threshold for determining which conflicts constitute a threat is low. Rynning (2003: 482) adds that a state has to have “a willingness to regard oneself – and a tradition of doing so – as an actor that regularly engages in direct confrontations that involve the enemy (‘the other’) and that can be resolved with force”.

The last indicator of which the central paradigm is composed is the efficacy of force, where it matters what the perception of the state is with regards to controlling outcomes and eliminate threats by using force. With a strong belief in the efficacy of force, it is viewed that force is eventually necessary to deal with threats, to ensure self-preservation and self-development (Johnston, 1996: 219; 234). It can be measured as the importance policy-making elites attach to force as a means to deal with the threat environment. The views of war in human affairs, the first variable, is in this sense not very different from views on the efficacy of force, but while the former deals with views on the *nature* of conflict (i.e. its origin, and whether states could even refrain from using it or not), the latter is meant to determine to what extent such force is useful for attaining certain ends: whether force comes “at the end of a process of political give-and-take that had stalemated, leaving no other choice but coercion” (Johnston, 1996: 226).

Strategic Culture and Behaviour

While we rely on secondary literature for the ‘content’ of the strategic culture, we still need to determine the scores on each of the variables and determine the relationship between attitude and behaviour. According to Johnston, to measure this relationship, one needs: (1) to test for the presence and congruence of strategic preference rankings across objects of analysis, (2) also doing so across time and (3) to test for the effects of these rankings on politico-military behaviour. For tests (1) and (2) to succeed, we would need to see the same views on the three aforementioned variables both across strategy documents, speeches, doctrines, elites and external threats et cetera, as well as across a prolonged period of time, where the longer that period, the stronger the effects of strategic culture. If such preferences prevail (thus a variable that is slow-to-change) regardless of a variable supposed-to-vary such as a certain strategic choice, test (3) succeeds. Despite the fact that this section will rely on secondary literature, it is important to subject this literature to these tests.

3.3.3 The dependent variable: conflict

Nationalism leads to conflict, according to Van Evera, and thus the last variable that needs an operationalisation is conflict. Van Evera is not explicit on his definition of war or conflict; he refers merely to civil war and interstate (or international) war. Lacking a proper definition, we can look at the examples of wars that were the result of nationalism Van Evera provides us: the Yugoslav Wars from 1991 onward (1994: 18), the Azerbaijan-Armenia War of 1988-1994 (1994: 22), the warfare of Nazi Germany, Mussolini Italy and Imperial Japan during WWII (1994: 13), the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973 (1994: 10). What these conflicts have in common is that they are international and were particularly violent, with at least 10,000 estimated victims in the case of the Yom Kippur war of 1973. The wars described by Van Evera are not exclusively international: the Yugoslav Wars started as a civil war, albeit from which new nation states emerged. Taking a margin in terms of the victims, as Van Evera is not explicit here, the operationalisation of conflict (war) will be an armed violent conflict that claims at least 5,000 victims.

4 Empirical chapter

First follows a test of the original model Van Evera, by testing for the presence of remote and proximate causes to determine China's and Japan's score on the danger-scale. From these results, we can also draw conclusions on the causal relations between both types of causes.

4.1 Test of the model Van Evera

In order to test hypothesis 1 and its sub-hypothesis, we need to look at the presence of the remote and proximate causes, as prescribed in Van Evera's model. Of special empirical interest are the foreign policy crises in this period: the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, crises over the Senkaku²⁰ islands in 1990 and 1996, the 1995 nuclear tests by the PRC, the 2010 trawler incident near the Senkaku islands and their subsequent September 2012 nationalisation by Japan. As these cases show, the thorniest question in Sino-Japanese relations is the sovereignty issue over Senkaku (see Appendix A for a map of the islands). The backdrop of the Senkaku issue concerns the ownership of the islands, which are thought to sit on a richness of mineral resources: Japan's claim is based on *terra nullius*²¹, while China argues that Japan is supposed to hand the islands back over under the Cairo and Potsdam Declarations of respectively 1943 and 1945²². The legal question under international law is whether the islands belonged to China before they were ceded to Japan in 1895 (International Crisis Group, 2013: 2). Following the end of World War II, the US occupied the islands and handed them back to Japan in 1972. The US is part of the conflict as the islands are covered under the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty. A settlement under international law has long been unlikely, as Japan did not acknowledge the existence of a sovereignty dispute, while China does not recognise the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. In 2012, Japan nationalised the islands, only to declare at a regional forum in late 2014 that there indeed was a dispute over the islands. To a lesser extent troubling bilateral relations is the issue of Taiwan, but with Taipei being aligned closely with the US and consequently Japan, the scope for confrontation in the

²⁰ The term Senkaku will be used as the (in Japan used) designation for the disputed islands, without prejudice about its ownership.

²¹ Occupation of a land that has never been subject to the sovereignty of a state

²² These declarations stated that Japan had to return all seized territories through war. Japan was ceded the Senkaku islands in the First Sino-Japanese War as part of the Shimonoseki Treaty.

case of a foreign policy crisis such as the 1995-1996 standoff is considerate, especially in the face of increased political contact between the ROC and Japan (Smith, 2010: 238).

4.1.1 The presence of remote causes

R¹: Balance of will and power

The balance of will and power, the first remote cause, is determined by the conduciveness of domestic politics for nationalism. In 1989, in the face of the collapse of the Soviet Union abroad and calls at home for Western style democratic reform, the Chinese Communist Party dropped its communist ideology in favour of nationalism as the dominant driving force behind its policies, instilling its schools with patriotic education (Zhao, 1998: 288). Slogans such as ‘to get rich’ by ‘practising’ any pragmatic policies were placed at the centre of economic policy for a renewed vision for the future. ‘Nationalism’ was however never endorsed as the official PRC ideology or discourse; it was rather referred to as ‘patriotism’ (*aiguo* in Mandarin, literally ‘loving the state’). Patriotism is seen as love and support for China as a civilisation (‘being Chinese’), distinguishable from the Chinese state or the CCP (ibid.: 290).

Modern Chinese nationalism that has raised its profile since the 1990s is crystallised into three core narratives: the humiliation in remembrance of Japanese occupation, the re-emergence of China as the ‘Middle Kingdom’²³, centre of all and civilization *itself*, and most saliently, the tragic separation of Taiwan from mainland China (Rosecrance, 2013: 148). Ever since Xi Jinping has taken over the top leadership from outgoing president Hu Jintao by the end of 2013, he has promoted “a mélange of political convictions: old-school Marxism, a sentimental repackaging of Mao Zedong, patriotic appeals to a “China Dream” and a striking reverence for ancient tradition, seen as a bedrock of benign social order and loyalty to the state” (Buckley, 2014). The centrepiece of the national rejuvenation he calls the Chinese Dream has been the bolstering of the People’s Liberation Army. Visits to destroyer boats that patrol disputed waters in the South Chinese Sea, the exuberant media coverage in the aftermath of the visit on the build-up of the People’s Liberation Army and the insistence on battle-ready standards and combat preparations are only some of the clear signs that China is flexing its muscles and preparing for a more assertive role in the region (Wong, 2012). The main

²³ Phonetically, the Mandarin word for China is *Zhōngguó*, with *Zhōng* meaning “central” or “middle” and *guó* “state” or “nation”. Combined, they are often translated as Middle Kingdom or Central Kingdom.

theme of Chinese nationalism, according to a Chinese scholar, is ‘anti-Japan’, and thanks to the rapid rise of social media and internet, Chinese citizens now go as far as to hold Beijing accountable “to act in line with statements made during times of high public pressure. [...] This in turn emboldens belligerent voices and constricts the space for diplomacy” (International Crisis Group, 2013: 17-18). It is therefore clear that the type of nationalism that is being promoted is state-led, and not just reflective of a handful of hardliners in the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the principal decision-making body in China. In fact, nationalism is seen as a key determinant of the legitimacy of the CCP, like its unifying anti-Japanese nationalist banner was seen as the ultimate weapon against the invasion of the Imperial Army of Japan during WWII (Rose, 2000: 171; Zhao, 2000: 24). It was not the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek, but the CCP of Mao Zedong that protected China against Japan, a historical feat from which the CCP to this day continues to derive its legitimacy. Takahara draws attention on the general principle in Chinese politics that “a leader without a solid power base cannot improve ties with Japan. The Chinese leadership uses nationalist fervour to compensate for a deficit in legitimacy, and to unite the party and the nation, and Japan is a familiar target, especially for the hawks in the military and the propaganda department” (Takahara, 2014). In other words, being beholden at home by nationalist voices, both are unable to do significant compromises on their conflicting claims. We can thus reasonably conclude from the state-led nature of Chinese nationalism, that the political environment in China is conducive to nationalist sentiment, with R^1 therefore present²⁴.

For Japan, the picture is slightly different. There nationalism differs from its Chinese counterpart in many aspects, although it shares some similarities. World War II has had a profound impact on Japanese national thinking. Post-war nationalism, especially professed by the Japanese right-wing Liberal Democratic Party, which has been in power since 1955, save for a brief 11-month period in the ‘90s and between 2009 and 2012, is crystallised into five core narratives (Preston, 2010: 203):

- ❖ Resentment at the West for its mid-19th century imperialism;
- ❖ Resentment at the US, as it allegedly destroyed the Japanese nation’s essence through the occupation from 1945 until 1952;
- ❖ The correctness of intention during the Asia-Pacific theatre of World War II;

²⁴ The test for the presence of remote causes is primarily to test the sub-hypothesis, to assess whether more remote causes lead to more proximate causes. The scores on the proximate causes will eventually be used to determine the score on Van Evera’s danger-scale.

- ❖ A denial of criticism of the behaviour of the Imperial Japanese Forces during this war;
- ❖ Racial insistence on the exceptionalism of the Japanese people, in ethnic and cultural sense.

This policy has led to a number of developments that infuriated neighbouring countries, such as the frequent revisions of history textbook, aimed at watering down atrocities such as the Nanking Massacre in 1937 where many Chinese perished at the hands of Imperial Army of Japan, or Korean ‘comfort women’ the Japanese soldiers had, but which Korea regards as sex slaves, but also debates on reinstating the historical flag and anthem of Imperial Japan, or prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, where among others 14 class A war criminals lay decorated (ibid.). World War II is typically seen in Japan as a war that liberated East Asia from Western imperialism, much to the irritation of those countries that suffered from Japanese occupation rather than felt liberated, most notably Korea²⁵ and China.

However, in contrast to China, nationalism is much more the product of a certain political strand in the Japanese political landscape, namely the rightists, who are mostly in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Other than in China, the scattering of this ideology across the political landscape is largely the result of a more pluralistic political system, where multiple parties and thus political discourses compete for power, but not all discourses are inherently nationalistic. It is the rightists who generally have favourable views of patriotism and self-sacrifice being enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine (where Class A war heroes are honoured), contrary to Japanese leftists (Shibuichi, 2005: 199). LDP’s efforts to instil a sense of patriotism in the 90s were met with fierce opposition, cynicism and indifference (Rose, 2000: 173). The rise of the neo-nationalists in that period, who advocated a ‘correct’ instead of ‘masochistic’ version of history, was “outfaced by a barrage of criticism which appeared in the popular monthly journals” (ibid.: 175). It can thus be argued that China scores positively on the first remote factor, while Japan scores negatively.

²⁵ During World War II Korea was still one unified country. Its successor states, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, still harbour resentment at Japanese conduct during World War II.

R²: The legitimacy and defensibility of borders

The legitimacy and defensibility of borders is the second remote cause. Particularly China has many disputes with its direct neighbours, but in bilateral aspects two issues stand out: the Senkaku islands, and the status of Taiwan. The origins of Chinese nationalism in resistance against the territorial compromises it had to do to Western powers in the mid-19th century make it that China's elites put intense symbolic value in questions of sovereignty and territorial integrity (Downs & Saunders, 1998: 118). Nationalism is credited with aggravating the issue of territorial sovereignty, with the Senkaku dispute, due to Japan's brutal aggression between 1937 and 1945, running deeper in the psyche of China than any other territorial dispute bar Taiwan. Through patriotic education and nationalism it has aimed to justify assertive action towards its claim.

Three crises since 1989 have emerged with regards to the sovereignty of the Senkakus. In 1990 and 1996 right-wing groups in Japan reasserted claims to the islands by building and recognised two lighthouses as 'official navigation marks' (ibid.: 128; 134). In the run-up to both crises, the CCP aroused patriotism and anti-Japanese sentiments among its citizens that make a fierce response to this assertiveness required. When the Japanese government nationalised the Senkaku islands²⁶ in September 2012, months of communication about its intentions to China failed to bridge the differences in the views on Japan's rationale to purchase the islands. In Japan, the issue was framed as the transfer of ownership from a private party to the government, not considering it to be a change in the status quo. For Beijing, the very fact that the islands had a (Japanese) private owner was unacceptable in the first place, while the denial by Japan that this gave rise to a dispute further added to the tensions. Yet the timing by the Japanese leadership awkwardly seems to indicate that Japan is very much aware of the sensitivity of the issue, as the purchase was completed just before China saw its once-in-a-decade change in leadership, avoiding a punch in the face of its new leaders (International Crisis Group, 2013: 7).

In an immediate response, China began to undertake "combination punches, that bore the hallmarks of a well-planned campaign with multi-agency coordination and high-level decision-making" (ibid.: 10), which consisted of efforts to create overlapping administration: Beijing announced territorial sea baselines around the islands, placing it under Chinese administration. Hitherto it had refrained from making such claims, but the

²⁶ For matters of convenience, henceforth both designations Senkaku and Diaoyu will be used interchangeably, which does not reflect the author's opinion on the sovereignty issue. Where one reads Senkaku, one could read Diaoyu, and vice versa.

International Crisis Group claims it had done so to avoid appearing expansionist. China had been too soft in 1990 and 1996, whose failure to stand up to defend territorial claims led to public criticism, negatively impacting the regime (Downs & Saunders, 1998: 126), and time was therefore running out before Japan would cement its claims to the islands, causing China to show what the ICG calls ‘reactive assertiveness’: “Beijing uses an action by another party as justification to push back hard and change the facts on the ground in its favour” (International Crisis Group, 2013: 13). When it comes to competing claims in the East China Sea with neighbours Vietnam and the Philippines, it has employed similar tactics. Such strategy befits Scobell’s earlier theory about the justness of war in the eyes of China’s elites, namely that every war China fights is inherently self-defensive. On the one hand, it has a desire to defend its maritime claims, while on the other, it tries to maintain a policy of peaceful development (ibid.: 15). Indeed, “the handling of the [Senkaku/Diaoyu] dispute is seen as a factor impacting on the legitimacy of Chinese and Japanese central governments in domestic politics and on their foreign relations in the international arena” (Pan, 2007: 72).

The other territorial dispute that is of saliency is Taiwan. The official version of the PRC is that Taiwan has been part of China since ancient times. Yet during the imperial era of China, Taiwan was a territory over which the Qing dynasty did not have much sway in a cultural sense, did not play a significant role in ‘culturalist’ China, when the Qing dynasty adopted a *laissez faire* policy towards Taiwan, hoping one day it would “mend their ways and enter ‘civilised society’” (Hughes, 1997: 5). It did not even appear as a province in the constitution until 1925. However, with the rise of the nationalists in China early 20th century, “the search for a nationalist foundation of state power and sovereignty began. It was in this context that Taiwan began to feature in a list of territories claimed to have been lost by the ‘Chinese nation’” (ibid.). The claim to Taiwan really gained importance after World War II, when Japan, in the face of a terrible loss, had to hand back all occupied territories, including those during the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War (when it ceded Taiwan). The tragic separation of Taiwan from mainland China is, according to Rosecrance (2013: 148), one of the three core narratives in which Chinese nationalism is crystallised. It is thus questionable whether Taiwan forms part of the historical homeland of China: “it was only at the time of the Cairo Conference [1943] that the CCP began to identify Taiwan as part of the Chinese nation” (Hughes, 1997: 13). Taiwan, being an island, also does not conform to the classification ‘natural border’. On international recognition of China’s claim to Taiwan, the story is complex: both the PRC

and the ROC claim sovereignty over entire mainland China – the international consensus is currently that the PRC has the most legitimate claim to make, but this consensus is partly through force: any country wishing to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC, has to accept the One-China Principle that the PRC has sovereignty over both mainland *and* Taiwanese China. In practice, countries that wish to maintain relations with the PRC have to sever those with the ROC. Few countries recognise the sovereignty of the ROC over Taiwan, in most cases simply because the ROC itself is even not striving for such. It is thus hard to determine how widely recognised China's sovereignty over Taiwan is, but for the sake of measurement we will use the principle of One-China as the determinant, which clearly favours the PRC's claim over the ROC's claim.

When we look closer at the operationalisation of this variable – the congruence of national and natural borders, the origin of claims and the basis of the claims – we can conclude that all score relatively low in terms of defensibility and legitimacy in the case of the Senkakus and relatively high for Taiwan, providing a mixed score for the scope of conflict. The Senkakus are uninhabited, thus form no part of the historical homeland and the claims of either of the countries do not enjoy widely recognised international recognition. They are furthermore islands and thus constitute no natural border, and the borders are disputed as a result of war expropriation. In all aspects, the legitimacy and defensibility of both China's and Japan's claims to the Senkakus are low. For Taiwan, the picture is slightly more mixed: it is not the historical homeland of China, national and natural borders are not congruent, but the PRC does enjoy – notwithstanding the earlier mentioned reservations in this regard – international recognition over Taiwan's sovereignty to some extent. Overall, the legitimacy and defensibility remains weak. Both countries therefore have R^2 present in their nationalism.

R³: Past and present conduct of neighbours

The third variable – past and present conduct of neighbours – is a prominent factor in Sino-Japanese relations²⁷. The past conduct that vexes bilateral relations mostly is the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, when China ceded vassalage over the Korean peninsula, as well as Penghu, the Liaodong Peninsula and crucially to understand today's animosity, the Senkaku and Taiwan, and the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45,

²⁷ See for example He (2007), Preston (2010) and Qiu (2006) for a discussion on the role of history and memory in modern Sino-Japanese relations; Kaufman (2010) for Chinese perception of the international order following its "Century of Humiliation". For a specific discussion on the role of Japanese history text book revisions, refer to Nozaki (2002).

when Japan occupied Manchuria (already in 1931) and launched a full-scale invasion on the mainland of China. An array of wartime atrocities stand out: (a) land theft: the seizure of Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands to Japan in 1895 (b) mass murder: the Nanking Massacre in 1937. Further adding to the potential of present reverberation of this conduct is the fact that powerful hereditary political families typically rule Japan. The Mori faction of the LDP, to which Shinzo Abe belongs, has strong connection to Japan's wartime leadership: he is the grandson of Nobusuke Kishi, member of Hideki Tojo's wartime cabinet (Calder, 2006: 133). Such links between past perpetrators and present leaders makes it easier for the victims – the Chinese – to attach inherited blame to present ruling groups. The rise of China's political and economic clout in the past decade has prompted it to point Japan more clearly to its responsibilities to come to grips with its own wartime past and to respond to provocations – China is no longer biding its time to avoid appearing confrontational (cf. International Crisis Group, 2013: 18). In conclusion, current behaviour by both states has not brought harmony over past animosity. The graveness of the crimes adds to the frustration: mass murder (Nanking) and land theft (Manchuria, Taiwan and the Senkakus). Japan's current elite has familial ties to wartime figures, and China is increasingly positioning itself in a combination of power and victimhood. Combined, these variables lead to the conclusion that both Japan and China have remote cause R^3 present in their nationalism.

R⁴: Nationalist self-images and images of others

The last remote variable focuses on a perceptual factor: what are China's and Japan's images of themselves and each other? Do these images diverge into self-justifying directions, resulting in whitewashing and self-glorification? In Sino-Japanese relations, mythmaking is omnipresent and is largely the result of both the troubled history China and Japan share since roughly Japan's Meiji Restoration in 1868, and the fact that this issue has been skirted for years. Yanan He (2007: 23) argues that “national mythmaking is the main obstacle to solving the history issue because it tends to emphasize a country's own virtues and victimhood while whitewashing its wrongdoings done to others and also ignoring others' suffering”. Myths “inculcate a sense of innate superiority, inflame mutual hatred and fear, and as a result, worsen mutual misperception and justify bellicose policy demands” in Sino-Japanese relations (ibid.: 3). History plays a big part in how the states see each other nowadays: “Japan's history of military aggression against China in the first half of the twentieth century (and its failure to make amends) is a persistent theme that

emerges repeatedly” (Smith, 2010: 235-236). Atrocities committed 70 years ago continue to reverberate in Chinese society: “From a popular Chinese point of view, there are still numerous unsolved historical issues [...] there is a consensus that the Japanese government has failed to resolve historical issues with its neighbouring countries, which has become an excuse for the Chinese to display openly their antagonism against the Japanese” (Qiu, 2006: 29). The Chinese government has gone to lengths to influence Chinese perception of Japan’s aggression – exactly because the CCP derives its legitimacy from the heroic resistance against Japan (Rose, 2000: 171; Zhao, 2000: 24). Here it practises “patriotic education”, with a tight grip on history textbooks to preserve its own legitimacy and unified identity among the Chinese people (Qiu, 2006: 41, Zhao, 1998). A stunning 93 per cent of surveyed respondents in China in 1996 responded that Japan’s attitude over the past invasion constituted the biggest obstacle in the development of bilateral relations (Qiu, 2006: 41).

Even in a democratic country like Japan, where governmental control over education is far less strict, major history textbook revisions since 1945 have mired China in agitation, as the Japanese government was instrumental in changing various passages about the descriptions of wartime events, watering down atrocities or even omitting certain issues, such as the ‘comfort women’, crimes committed during the occupation of Korea between 1910 and 1945 and China between 1937 and 1945 (Nozaki, 2002: 605-610). Japan’s former prime ministers Nakasone, Hashimoto, Koizumi and current prime minister Shinzo Abe have all visited the Yasukuni Shrine during their tenure, where, among others, 14 “class A” Japanese war criminals are honoured (those convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression). China, Taiwan and South Korea all consider the visits, whether they private or official, a glorification of past Japanese militarism, and have consistently responded fiercely to each visit. Two months after the most recent visit by Abe, an official Chinese news portal released a game that allowed visitors to shoot Japanese war criminals, exactly those honoured at Yasukuni (Feng, 2014). A 2014 survey by Genron NPO, a Japanese think-tank, found that Japan’s “lack of a proper apology and remorse over the history of invasion of China” was ranked secondly in reasons for negative impressions among the Chinese respondents.

Backchannels in bilateral diplomacy, depending heavily on individuals and thus vulnerable to politics, have also eroded under recent leadership in both countries, which has effectively “deprived the two countries of a discreet means to avoid

misunderstanding and foster trust” (International Crisis Group, 2013: 33). For example, Hiromu Nonaka, a powerful force in the LDP in Japan and important ‘pipe’ in backchannel diplomacy, whom China put a lot of faith in his mediation skills, was unable to dissuade former Prime Minister Koizumi to visit Yasukuni, changing “China’s view on shelving the [Senkaku] dispute [...]” (ibid.: 33) (an issue often closely linked to the history issue) and spurring it to erode Japanese administration over the islands. The system of mutual trust largely relied – in absence of multilateral institutions – on personality-driven efforts, such as those undertaken by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, when they established diplomatic relations with Japan in 1972, or Deng Xiaoping, who negotiated the ‘Treaty of Peace and Friendship’ in 1978. Any leader after Deng Xiaoping has proven less successful in maintaining good Sino-Japanese relations: advocating strong ties carries a great political risk, demanding strong and bold leadership (ibid: 25). Jiang Zemin launched the campaign of patriotic education focused on China’s suffering from and triumph over Japan in World War II. His successor, Hu Jintao, could not prevent Shinzo Abe from visiting Yasukuni, despite private promises to refrain from such actions. Despite the fact that relations seemed to have thawed following the first top-level meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum (organised by the APEC) in November 2014, only a month later, on December 13th 2014, Xi Jinping led the first state commemoration of the Nanking massacre. According to the Chinese government, 300,000 civilians were killed here by Japan’s troops in 1937, yet some Japanese politicians and nationalists even deny the occurrence of a massacre (BBC News, 2014b). The Nanjing Massacre came to mind first when Chinese respondents were asked about what came to mind when they thought about Japan in 35.3 per cent of the cases (Genron NPO, 2014).

Receptiveness of mythmaking

Whether these myths are also receptive to the targeted audience depends on legitimacy, representativeness, the scope of demands and economic climate. Chinese leadership faces the staunch task of combating widespread corruption that drive attention from external threats to domestic unrest²⁸, its highly meritocratic and authoritarian leadership lacks representativeness, its economy is slowing down from unsustainable levels²⁹ (and its iron grip on media prevents it from functioning as an evaluative instrument against

²⁸ China scored a 36 out of 100 points on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2014, ranked 100/175 globally (Transparency International, 2014).

²⁹ GDP growth showed a decline from 10.6% in 2010 to 7.4% in 2014 (World Bank, 2014).

myths³⁰, all of which are indicators that the Chinese public might be highly receptive to mythmaking. Japan has been suffering from economic stagnation for over 20 years now (World Bank, 2014), but its more democratic regime³¹ (than China) has helped to maintain a low public receptiveness to myths and to root out their persistence: “such regimes are usually more legitimate and are free-speech tolerant; hence they can develop evaluative instruments to weed out nationalist myth” (Van Evera, 1994: 33). A group of prominent Japanese historians recently called on the Abe government to face up to Japan’s wartime past (Japan Times, 2015). Indeed, calls for revision of a constitution that the political elite sees as unfair to Japan and unjustly constraining its armed forces are met with popular resistance. Its highly institutionalised politics and low level of corruption³² ensures competent governance. Japan boasts free media³³, it should however be noted that its government-sponsored history textbook revisions in self-justifying and whitewashing directions, indicate an anomaly in Van Evera’s prediction that independent evaluative instruments help to refute myths (thus providing input for further research on this causal mechanism). While Japan thus shows self-justifying mythmaking, its public is expected to be far less receptive than their Chinese counterparts.

We can thus conclude that self-images diverge not so much into the most extreme end of the spectrum (self-glorification), but they do tend to diverge into self-denying and whitewashing directions. Japan denial of its wartime atrocities is rooted in its view of the Asian conquest by the Empire of Japan as a ‘liberation war’, that freed East Asian nations from enslavement of Western colonialism (Duara, 2001: 111). The absence of proper channels and multilateral institutions to create mutual trust and to avoid misunderstanding about each other’s behaviour and intentions precludes the emergence of a shared understanding of history. The nature of the crimes that are being denied, as described in the discussion on the previous variable, strengthens the contempt for the victims’ humanity (cf. Van Evera, 1994: 29). Nevertheless, we should differentiate in the receptiveness to myths in both societies: the Chinese public is far more likely to be affronted by Japan’s denial of wartime atrocities than the Japanese public is of its own politicians. R^4 is therefore present in Chinese nationalism, but not in Japanese nationalism. In total, we therefore have in China and Japanese nationalism respectively four and two remote causes present:

³⁰ Media in China is classified as *Not Free* according to Freedom House (2015a).

³¹ Japan is classified as *Free*, whereas China is classified as *Not Free* (Freedom House, 2015a; 2015b).

³² Japan scored a 76 out of 100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2014, ranked 15/175 globally (Transparency International, 2014).

³³ Media in Japan is classified as *Free* (Freedom House, 2015b).

Remote cause	China	Japan
R ¹ : Balance between will and power	1	0
R ² : Defensibility and legitimacy of borders	1	1
R ³ : Past and present conduct of neighbours	1	1
R ⁴ : Nationalist self-images and images of others	1	0
Total	4	2

Table 5: Overview of the presence of the remote causes.

4.1.2 The presence of proximate causes

P¹: Attainment of statehood

The first proximate cause is the attainment of statehood, where it matters whether a state has full and effective control over the territories it claims (so-called internal sovereignty). Whereas China earlier mainly focused on its territorial claims on the mainland³⁴ and with Taiwan, since 1989 it has been extending its ‘core interests’ of state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and domestic stability to its maritime claims, while not straying from the path of what it calls ‘peaceful development’. In the case of Taiwan, this is clearly not the case, since the Republic of China has been effectively controlling the island since 1949: it has the monopoly of force, exercises a continuous organisation and possesses compulsory jurisdiction. The Senkaku islands also present a case where we can speak of disputed territory, and in fact the Japanese government currently administers the islands and even maintains two lighthouses that operate as auxiliaries for maritime vessels. Japanese jurisdiction applies. Our earlier operationalisation is herewith met: both China and Japan have (mutual) territorial disputes where at least either of them lacks effective control.

³⁴ Most notably with Tibet, Xinjiang and India. Tibet and Xinjiang constitute the outer southwestern and western regions of China with significant ethnic minority populations. With India it has fought a war over a territorial dispute over Himalayan areas in 1962, which is still causing problems in the bilateral relations between China and India. There is little progress in this regard: in the most recent presidential visit of Narendra Modi to China, the issue did not feature on the agenda. Later, the leaders agreed to find a ‘fair resolution’. There are two disputed areas: Aksai Chin, which India claims as part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, but which is currently administered by China as part of the region of Xinjiang. With regards to the other area, Arunachal Pradesh the roles are exactly switched: China claims the region as part of Tibet (known as Zangnan or South Tibet), while India administers the territory as part of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

P²: Stance towards national diaspora

The second attribute of nationalism in question is the attitude toward the national diaspora, where three different levels and corresponding scores apply (see operationalisation). Of concern here is the diaspora trapped behind national borders. Japan currently does not have significant parts of its population located outside of Japan. It is very benign towards those that are: it is not actively pursuing diaspora policies, whether in an accepting, immigrationist or expansionist fashion. It is therefore safe to say that Japan scores a 0 on P².

China does have a significant part of what it claims to be their population trapped behind borders, namely in Taiwan. Van Evera himself already makes an implicit mention of the nature of this policy towards unification with Taiwan: “The Chinese state has historically left the overseas Chinese to their own political devices” (1994: 12). For Taiwan, Hughes (1997: 47) claims, the same is true: Taiwan will be given the status of Special Administrative Region (SAR). According to the late Deng Xiaoping in 1983, Taiwan would govern its own governmental, judicial and military systems, while it would get a number of reserved seats in the PRC’s central government. It would, on the other hand, relinquish its sovereignty to the PRC. Taipei was quick to dismiss this idea as a tactic to undermine Taiwanese solidarity (ibid.: 47). Even an enhanced form of ‘one country, two systems’ (OCTS, the configuration the PRC currently uses to govern its relations with Hong Kong (HKSAR) and Macau (MSAR), its two SARs) has been given less prominence in the recent years (Jacques, 2012: 318). The recent upheaval in Hong Kong, following the grasp for more influence by the CCP in the political leadership of the autonomous city, will probably be looked upon with hawkish eyes by the Kuomintang: currently offered solutions for Taiwan’s autonomy within the PRC may not provide guarantees for the future.

Cooney (1997) also claims that Taiwan is not Hong Kong and that the system cannot be applied one-on-one: OCTS would have been designed to deal with the inheritance of a colonial or authoritarian regime, not with a *de facto* independent liberal democracy, and can thus not deliver. Cooney takes the Basic Law of Hong Kong and applies it to Taiwan, concluding that political and societal life would drastically change in Taiwan if the OCTS model would be applied. Wang and Liu (2004: 580) also conclude that it is the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), the highest decision-making body in China, which ultimately interprets HKSAR’s Basic Law. When the national government released a White Paper in June 2014, the official government newspaper People’s Daily

reminded Hong Kong that “patriotism to the country” should be important to residents of the city (BBC, 2014a). The following September, massive protests broke out over Beijing’s interference with what Hong Kong residents saw as autonomous democratic processes. While Taiwan would be allowed to retain its own military force, China would prohibit the purchase of foreign arms (Taiwan would thus rely on its own production of arms). Moreover, its conduct of foreign affairs will not extend beyond the economic, cultural and social sphere under the premise that it must comply with its status as local government (*ibid.*). Lastly, its electoral system for the presidency and legislators would cease to exist, considering the current complex electoral arrangements for the election of the legislative bodies and chief executive in Hong Kong and Macau (*ibid.*: 581), which are in the case of Hong Kong, as mentioned earlier, even subject of debate, as Beijing is striving for increased influence in the process. This combination of factors make it therefore unlikely that Taiwan will accept China’s proposals without any concessions from Beijing.

On the other hand, if the CCP would concede too much in an alternative model offered to Taiwan, the fear of disintegration, as Hong Kong, Macau and possibly Tibet and Xinjiang would make similar demands for a revision of their relationship with Beijing, would always be lurking in the back (*ibid.*: 548). Given that the CCP’s primary political goal is Chinese unity (Jacques, 2012), it finds itself in a position where it has not much concrete but total unity to offer to the Taiwanese government, if necessary by force. In fact, it has already forced Taiwan to accept its reunification proposal by isolating Taiwan internationally (not least because of the One China-policy³⁵), but also backed up its claim with the threat of military force (Wang & Liu, 2004: 568). The PRC hopes that with such loss of economic and political manoeuvring space, the ROC will eventually come to the negotiating table. As Lee in 1995, then president of the ROC, visited the US, China started eight-months-long military exercises in waters close to Taiwan, which collectively became popularly known as the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis and which prompted strong international condemnations.

In short, while the PRC in principle offers a solution that would leave Taiwan to its own political devices under the banner of OCTS, such conclusion would be flawed in a number of aspects: (1) Taiwan would not be able to keep its current electoral system; (2) it would lose its power to conduct foreign affairs and significantly reduce its military capabilities and (3) recent tensions in Hong Kong, plus the interpretive power of Basic

³⁵ The PRC has furthermore downgraded Taiwan’s status in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and block its bid to enter the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Law lying with the PSC in Beijing, legislative and judicial autonomy is not guaranteed. Partial unity is therefore an unlikely permanent settlement in Beijing-Taipei relations. While a military invasion (which would fall in Van Evera's category of hypernationalism, such as displayed by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and to a lesser extent, Serbia in the 1990s) would almost certainly lead to an escalation between China and the United States, an unlikely scenario for as long as the US remains the dominant player in the Pacific and East Asia, expansionist diaspora tactics that aims to unsettle borders is not ruled out completely. Taking our operationalisation to hand, China does indeed pursue to incorporate both Taiwan's population and territory into its national borders. In 1995, this led to the eruption of state conflict, but China quickly realised that this would harm its increasing economic ties with the ROC. Therefore it can be concluded that China does indeed score a 1 on P²: total unity through expansionist tactics: Taiwan would be governed with strong centralised features, and its incorporation, though so far largely peacefully, bar the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, is pursued through expansionist tactics.

P³: Symmetry of nationalism

The third and last proximate variable looks at the symmetry of Chinese and Japanese nationalism. Though the operationalisation does not exactly measure the extent to which either of the state's public would deny the existence of one another, but at best approaches to measure such sentiments by looking at the favourability towards one another, what matters here is public opinion: do Chinese and Japanese hold favourable or antagonistic views of one another? The recent figures of Japanese public views of China holding unfavourable views following the Senkaku islands incident³⁶ jumped from 78.3 to 84 per cent (International Crisis Group, 2013: 22). Pew Research Center found that it was a mere 5 per cent that held favourable views (Pew Global, 2013). These falling numbers is part of a longstanding trend: in 2005 32 per cent felt warmly towards China, in 2004 38 per cent and in 2001 48 per cent (Calder, 2006: 134). Before the Tiananmen Square protests, this figure was 75 per cent. Calder argues "the dramatic hardening of

³⁶ A Chinese fishing trawler collided on September 7, 2010 with two Japanese patrol boats in disputed waters, which inclined Japan to arrest the crew of the Chinese vessel. This prompted a strong reaction from China, who demanded the immediate release of the crew, but also restated its historical claims to the islands. The Japanese government released the entire crew on September 29, 2010, but nevertheless "Beijing suspended intergovernmental talks on matters such as coal, joint gas development in the East China Sea and aviation rights, curtailed Chinese tourism to Japan, and cancelled several Sino-Japanese official and non-official exchanges." (Hagström, 2012: 273).

sentiment toward China is clearly a reaction to anti-Japanese demonstrations in China³⁷, as well as to China's military actions, including the nuclear submarine intrusion into Japanese waters in November 2004" (ibid.). It is clear that Tiananmen Square and the Senkaku island dispute have sharply and negatively affected popular views of one another.

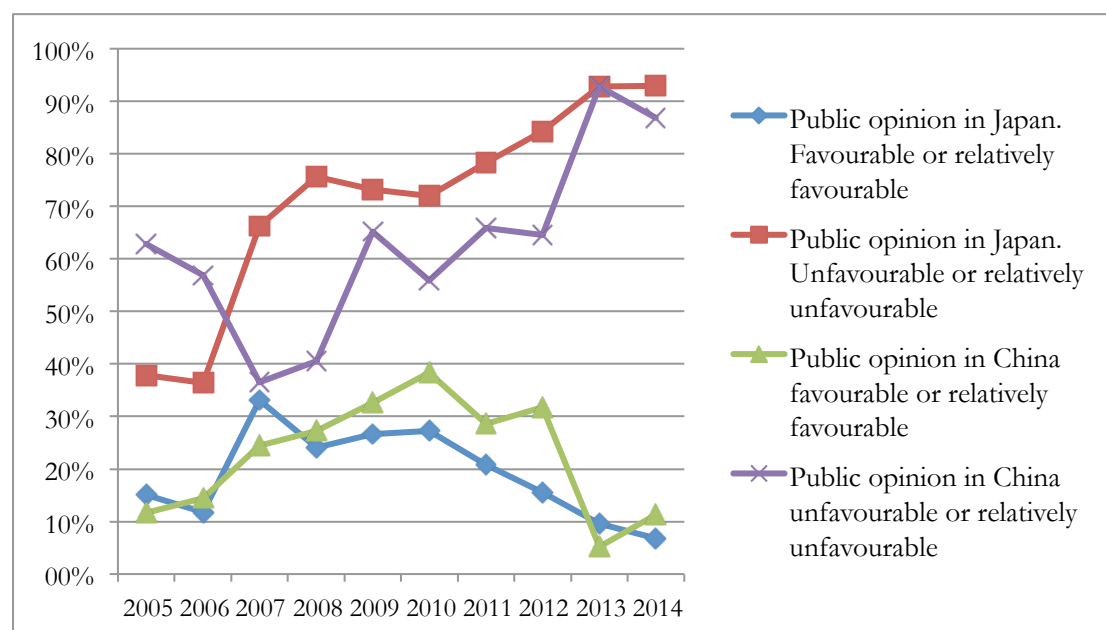


Figure 6: Year-on-year trends of public opinion in China and Japan (Genron NPO, 2014).

This sharp decline in opinion was especially visible in China (see Figure 6), where the year-on-year change between 2012 and 2013 on those holding negative views was 28.3 per cent points.

Even more worryingly is that Genron NPO, a Japanese think-tank, found in September 2014 that the “percentage of those who are optimistic that peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity can be attained came to only 7.8 per cent among Japanese and 16.5 per cent among Chinese”. 90.1 and 92.8 per cent of respondents in respectively Japan and China held unfavourable views of each other. This is a very pessimistic view on the future bilateral relations between China and Japan. More than half of the respondents in China (53 per cent) foresaw military confrontation with Japan as inevitable, compared with 29 per cent among the Japanese (Genron NPO, 2014). It also notes “as the basic understanding between the two countries' peoples remains immature, fears about each other's country are continuously growing”. The percentage of Japanese

³⁷ Such as those following prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine or incidents around the Senkaku islands.

who “described China as a *hegemony-seeking* country came to 22.6 per cent, as against the year-before figure of 23.0 per cent [...] Nearly 40 per cent of the Chinese respondents described Japan as a *hegemony-seeking* country, 36.7 per cent, a nationalist country, 37.5 per cent, and a militarist country, 36.5 per cent.” (ibid., emphasis added). While these numbers have not reach the majoritarian threshold, Genron NPO does notice a worrying trend in the last 10 years upwards in the polling data, towards views of China and Japan that are increasingly hegemonistic and nationalistic.

All of these negative sentiments are partly owing to the tragic experiences the East Asian people endured during World War II, but ever more so due to the earlier mentioned patriotic education. The very source of legitimacy of the CCP is and has been the resistance against Imperial Japan between 1937-1945, at a time when the Chinese nationalists failed to do so. Japan is a neighbour that is (in some sense justified) easy to blame, an image to create a common enemy, and especially to divert attention away from domestic issues (whether it is corruption or human rights abuses) or economic hardship (as the Chinese economy is cooling down, and a shift is to be made from investment-heavy industry to domestic consumption). Japanese elites, especially those from the powerful and ruling LDP, need a credible threat in order to free the country from the yoke of their pacifist constitution, and become a ‘normal power’. Given that it is for a large part the state-led nationalism that contributes to these sentiments, it seems that both countries are therefore satisfied with such strong negative public opinions at least for now, as long as the status quo does not tilt towards war.

While there is evidence that many people in both countries to view each other as being militaristic and nationalistic, seeking hegemony, it is unclear whether this would indicate that either one of them would deny each other’s statehood, although Van Evera (1994: 13) does point out that it is especially hegemonistic nationalism that is asymmetrical of nature. The majority of the population might not share those strong sentiments, but it is on the rise in the last few years, to dangerous levels in especially China, where over 40 per cent of respondents indicated that Japan is hegemonistic. Moreover, more than 9 out of 10 respondents in each country have unfavourable views of the other. This is a public animosity that goes almost unparalleled across dyads in the world. These figures clearly meet our earlier operationalisation where more than 75 per cent of the public opinion should hold unfavourable views of each other for nationalism to be asymmetrical. It should be noted that unfavourable views are a rather weak measurement for this variable; ‘unfavourable’ and ‘denial of the right of existence’ are not

the same thing. Nevertheless, given that 23 and 40 per cent of respectively Japanese and Chinese respondents indicate that the other is hegemonistic, it could be argued that there is a degree of asymmetry in Chinese and Japanese nationalism. As a result, both Japan and China score a 1 on P³.

Cumulative scores

Therefore generally we can describe Chinese nationalism, with a score of 2.5 on the danger-scale, as highly potential for conflict. First of all, it meets all remote causes, in the face of a political climate conducive to nationalism, the lack of defensibility and legitimacy of its contested borders with Taiwan and Japan, and World War II, which continues to shape its relations with its neighbours, most saliently Japan. These factors are complemented with a strong image of victimisation, coalescing with a sharp increase of power, and, in turn, assertiveness. These variables activate, through different mechanism, detrimental effects on the danger-scale. Not only has it not attained its full statehood yet, due to the territorial disputes with Taiwan and Japan over the Senkaku islands, it also finds a large part of its diaspora trapped behind national (be it internationally contested) borders, with which it is increasingly eager to reunify, peacefully or through coercive means. In the face of its growing economic and political clout, it is no longer hiding its contempt for Japan's failure to come to grips with its wrongdoing during WWII, but increasingly uses *Japanophobia* to coerce it into an apology and to hide its own domestic issues.

Japanese nationalism has less potential for conflict. Its population remains in overwhelming numbers in favour of its pacifist constitution. Japanese elites, especially from the ruling LDP class, are prone to whitewashing and mythmaking, exemplified by their visits to Yasukuni Shrine and history textbook revisions. Yet "myths flourish most when elites need them most, when *opposition* to myths is weakest, and when *publics* are most myth-receptive" (Van Evera, 1994: 30, emphasis added). LDP enjoys formidable opposition to mythmaking from Japanese academia and from the Diet, the Japanese legislative chamber. Japanese are also far less receptive to self-justifying myths than the Chinese, having almost consistently resisted constitutional revision. The effects on the proximate causes are therefore also weaker (a danger-scale score of 2). The results of this second test can be summarised as follows:

Proximate cause	China	Japan
P ¹ : Attainment of statehood	1	1
P ² : Stance towards the national diaspora	0.5	0
P ³ : Attitude towards other independent nationalities	1	1
Total score on the danger-scale	2.5	2

Table 6: Overview of the presence of proximate causes.

Implications for hypothesis 1

All proximate and remote variables then considered, the danger-scale scores of China and Japan are respectively 2.5 and 2. According to our earlier categorisation, this has a high (Chinese nationalism) and moderate (Japanese nationalism) potential for conflict.

The score of China of 2.5 on a maximum of 3 puts the state at the (self-assigned) categorisation of highly potential for conflict, while Japan scores 2, with an intermediate/moderate potential. Our initial expectation that Van Evera's model could not explain the absence of conflict between the two countries looks herewith confirmed: the intermediate to high presence of proximate causes seems to suggest conflict is either foreseeable or already present, but the empirical analysis of current Sino-Japanese relations suggest other variables are at work explaining the relative calmness between the two states.

It should however be noted that the scores on the danger-scale do not give direct reason to expect outright, full-scale and clearly visible conflict or even war; rather we would expect small-scale eruptions of tensions or even violent conflict, and indeed, occasional flare-ups in this regard have occurred. The 2010 trawler incident around the Senkaku islands, China's response to both Taiwan's presidential visit to the US in 1995 (ostensibly moving away from the One-China Policy) and the nationalisation of the Senkaku islands by Japan are testimony to the fact that conflict is a lurking factor in the bilateral relations. Yet these threats to peace have almost consistently been managed through mediation, logrolling or suasion (cf. Johnston, 1996: 225): such was the case for the 2010 trawler incident and the 2012 nationalisation of the Senkaku islands, as well as the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. If Van Evera's model would hold, it is likely that the danger-scale scores are not on such a level that we would expect civil or international war that would claim at least 5,000 victims. Nevertheless, according to our earlier classification, we expected a high potential in the case of a score of 2.5. Therefore, for an alternative explanation for the lack of (or at least mediation of the potential for) conflict,

this thesis has suggested the alternative model Van Evera⁺, which claims that despite the highly potential scores for conflict, its potential is mediated through strategic culture, subject of sub-hypotheses 2.

Implications for the sub-hypothesis

The relation between remote and proximate causes of Van Evera's theory is subject of sub-hypothesis, since Van Evera is not clear on the relationship between remote and proximate causes. Given that we have tested for both types of causes in the previous sections of this chapter, we can draw some tentative conclusions on this relationship. Table 7 shows an overview of present and absent variables and the total score on the danger-scale. Note that all remote causes and proximate causes are present in the case of China. Japan, to the contrary, has neither all remote, nor all proximate causes present.

		China	Japan
Remote causes			
Remote causes	R ¹ : Balance between will and power	1	0
	R ² : Defensibility and legitimacy of borders	1	1
	R ³ : Past and present conduct of neighbours	1	1
	R ⁴ : Nationalist self-images and images of others	1	0
Total number of remote causes present		4	2
Proximate causes			
Proximate causes	P ¹ : Attainment of statehood	1	1
	P ² : Stance towards national diaspora	0.5	0
	P ³ : Symmetry of nationalism	1	1
Total number of proximate causes present (danger-scale)		2.5	2

Table 7: Overview of the presence of proximate and remote causes

With four respectively three remote causes present in Chinese and Japanese nationalism resulting in a danger-scale score of 2.5 and 2, one can conclude that the more remote causes are present, the more proximate causes are present. It should however be noted that some variables may be only sufficient or necessary conditions, as mentioned earlier. It could thus be that some remote variables have to exist in conjunction in order to lead to the proximate cause. We have seen earlier that on the basis of Van Evera's literature, all proximate causes had one or more remote causes. It has nevertheless been argued

earlier why a test that should give conclusive evidence on this relation falls outside of the scope of this research; it is however a valuable subject for further research, as mentioned in the concluding chapter. If we go back to Figure 1, we can conclude on the basis of Table 7 that the following causalities have been proven (marked in green), while the others have not (marked in red). The causality is only established in case both China and Japan score both a 1 or both a 0 on the remote cause, and both a 1 or both a 0 for the corresponding proximate cause.

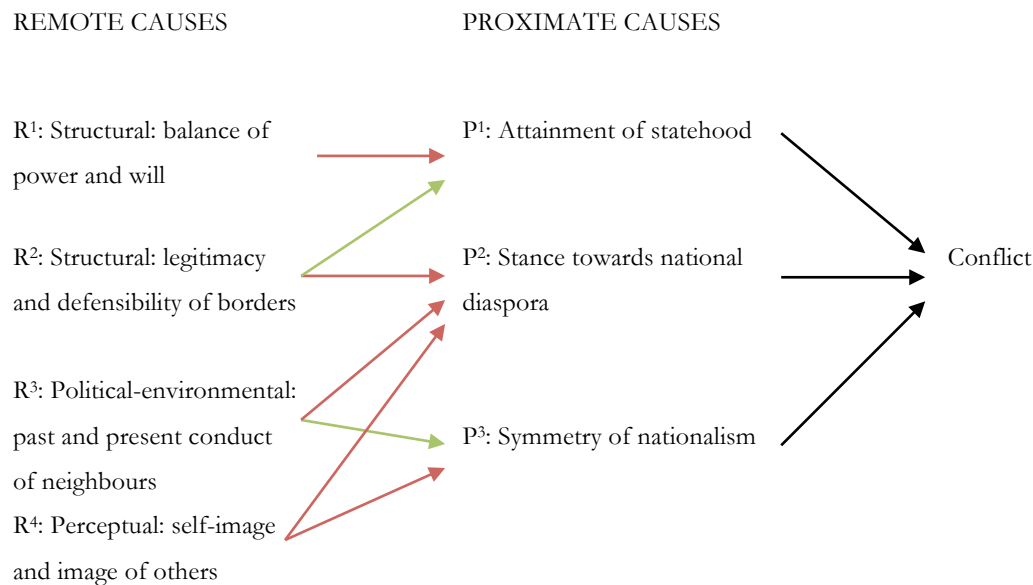


Figure 7: Overview of the causality proven as a result of the test of model Van Evera

4.2 Test of the model Van Evera⁺

In this second part of the analysis, the revised model Van Evera⁺ will be tested. Since it is not the primary aim in this thesis to review earlier work on Chinese and Japanese strategic culture, this section will rely on secondary literature to determine the scores on each of the relevant variables. In the case of China, its strategic culture has been described by Johnston (1996) himself, Scobell (2002), Feng (2007) and (to a lesser extent) Jacques (2012). For Japan, important academic contributions have been made by Berger (1993; 1996; 1998), Katzenstein (1996a) and Morgan (2003). Ball (1993) has made important contributions to an empirical analysis of the strategic culture in a wider Asia-Pacific context. Some have based their methodology on Johnston (1995), so that the empirical findings fit the methodological framework as it has been laid out in the

previous chapter. For others who have not, their data will be interpreted along the set methodology.

4.2.1 Assumptions about the strategic environment in China

Chinese strategic culture has been a popular subject among academia, since it challenges claims made by mainstream realists who argue that cultural realpolitik is epiphenomenal, a product of the logic of anarchy (Johnston, 1996: 217). Various authors have described the origins of Chinese strategic culture as *culturalism*³⁸ with its roots in Confucianism, the most important philosophical discourse in Chinese thought for the last 2,000 years. Culturalism translated itself into a belief in Confucian values of *de* (virtue), *ren* (benevolence) and *yi* (righteousness) as guiding norms for the ordering of both the domestic society and security strategy, and thus, foreign policy (Zhang, 2002: 73). Benevolence and another virtue, *li* (propriety), function as limitations and regulations of power, being put into practice through leading by moral example. The golden rule is therefore not to do unto others what you would not like them to do unto you, or, as an old Chinese saying goes, ‘sweep the snow from in front of your own house, don’t worry about the frost on your neighbour’s roof’. Expansion and conquest are as a result largely absent from the Confucian narrative, and it is here where China’s insistence on non-interference in internal affairs in bodies such as the UN finds its origin.

What does this say about the strategic culture that prevails in China? According to the conceptualisation that we have set in the previous chapter, for a strategic culture to be present, its ranking of strategic preferences needs to be persistent across time and space. What do the aforementioned authors say about this? According to Zhang (2002: 78), Confucianism *under normal circumstances* prefers non-violent over violent courses of action when it concerns the relations with ‘barbarians’, which then, as it is now, refers to anything that is not considered to be culturally Chinese. In the horizontal nature of the anarchic Westphalian system, Chinese leaders advocate the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and sovereignty. There are, according to Zhang, two tendencies in China’s strategic culture:

³⁸ The term ‘culturalism’ should be understood as “the belief that China was a cultural community whose boundaries were determined by the knowledge and practices of principles expressed through China’s elite cultural tradition; that this community was unique and unrivalled because it was the world’s only true civilisation; that it was properly governed by an emperor who held absolute authority over his subjects, consisting of all those participating in the civilisation; and that the political authority of the emperor and his officials rested in principle on superior cultural attainments, especially learning and a capacity to govern by *moral example*” (Townsend, 1992: 109-110, emphasis added).

On the one hand, there is a clear-cut tendency towards pursuit of the CNP⁴¹, driven by the calculation on the present domestic and international situations (mainly the relatively weak power endowment of China vis-à-vis major powers of the West), the memories of humiliating history in the early modern era, and the influences of ancient strategists' emphasis on the CNP. On the other, in the course of pursuing the CNP, China has been exerting restraints on using force and this restriction will certainly be continued so long as China is still weak compared with Western powers. (Zhang, 2002: 82)

That China is pursuing more technological, economical and military power, but abiding its time in insufficient presence of it, is not particularly pointing in the direction that this is an ideationally created preference – as such, the overlap with realists is substantial when one says that states try to maximise their material capabilities, when and wherever capable. Despite the professed values by Chinese elites, what happens at the *operational* level?

Johnston argues that a schism between professed and operational behaviour is possible under certain circumstances. More promising in this regard therefore is Scobell's notion of a "Cult of Defense, whereby Chinese elites believe strongly that their country's strategic culture is pacifist, non-expansionist, and purely defensive but at the same time able to justify virtually any use of force – including offensive and pre-emptive strikes – as defensive in nature" (2002: 3). Johnston namely argues along similar lines that Chinese strategic culture has not been clear-cut culturalist at the operational level: while a set of strategic preferences has persisted across time and objects of analysis well into the Maoist era, it has been in pursuit of not one but two sets of preferences: a *cultural* realpolitik strategic culture across different interstate systems, regime types, levels of technology and threat environment, with an eye for relative capabilities, and a Confucian-Mencian set with strong emphasis on values such as benevolence, righteousness and virtue (Johnston, 1996: 219).

For Johnston and Scobell, Chinese strategic culture is about two cultures: hard realpolitik preferences (to be found in the canon of Chinese military writing, the *Seven Military Classics*) which readily serves to explain factual behaviour, while the soft

⁴¹ The Comprehensive National Power (CNP), referred to by Zhang as "the combined overall conditions and strengths in a country in various areas, including economic strength, scientific and technological level" (2002: 82).

idealpolitik preferences (to be found in Confucian-Mencian writings) mainly serve as a legitimisation of leadership and to reduce cognitive dissonance (see also Dittmer, 1997: 193). Johnston refers to this as a parabellum strategic culture (1996: 217), which holds that China is prone to use force in foreign policy crises, that these crises were all territorial disputes and seen as “high-value conflicts, partly because of a historical sensitivity to threats to the territorial integrity of the state” (ibid.: 252), that even political/diplomatic crises are framed as high-level threats, and force seen as the legitimate response. Its elites are thus “more apt to view a wide range of disputes in zero-sum terms, thus establishing a low threshold for determining what conflicts constituted a clear threat to the security of the state” (ibid.).

In other words, what from the outside looks like a very accommodationist strategic culture, is in fact on an operational level much more antagonistic. The two sets stand on equal footing, with the latter being the idealised discourse. It underscores his theory that the Chinese elites use myths and symbols as an idealised picture of how their behaviour should look like, what Johnston referred to as autocommunicative use of symbols – it is exactly here Scobell and Johnston meet. For it is also Scobell who argues that Chinese leaders like to believe they adhere to Confucian values of strategic behaviour, but at the same time justify the use of force as defensive means to maintain China’s national security. He furthermore contends that with the use of these symbols, China’s elites seem to legitimise their actions, in order to reconcile the contradictions between professed values (Confucianism) and actual behaviour (the defensive use of force). Indeed, this is what Johnston describes as the third purpose of the elite’s use of symbols: a resolution of cognitive dissonance and public justification for certain behavioural choices (Johnston, 1996: 59). In order to test for China’s views on the orderliness of the external environment, we need to look beyond symbolic behaviour and rather proceed in a more rigorous fashion by testing for the three variables of Johnston’s model, by looking at actual behaviour – we assume that there is a schism between both discourses.

Role of conflict in human affairs

Firstly, any war that China has fought is considered to be a just war by its elites; it views any of its wars necessarily as befitting the dictum of strict self-defence: the aggressor is always the oppressed fighting its oppressors, and inherently it has depleted all peaceful means before it resorts to force. Scobell argues that “sincerely held beliefs [in and of Confucian values] are essentially negated, or rather twisted by its assumptions that any

war is just and any military action is defensive, even when it is offensive in nature” (2002: 4). It justifies for such behaviour mainly through linguistic devices, in order to reconcile contradictions between professed values and actual behaviour, both to resolve cognitive dissolution as well as to provide a public justification for these behavioural choices (cf. Johnston, 1995: 59). All violence is framed as self-defensive in that there is a preference for second strike, because to “strike the enemy [...] without specific provocation would be to give it the sympathy of world opinion and would tar the just side with the politically damaging label of *aggressor*” (ibid.: 250, emphasis in original). It will use these threats or attacks as pretexts to change an unfavourable status quo to its advantage. I disagree with Johnston that this would imply that China would see conflict necessarily as a inevitability: while preferring a diplomatic solution, it would defend itself, but not unnecessary provoke in an offensive manner – but it would change the status quo if it would be given the chance to do so without being labelled as the aggressor (a just war). What matters for this variable are China’s *views*, not so much its operational *behaviour* towards war. If a state views a self-defensive war as a just war, then it prefers diplomacy to war. Ergo, war in human affairs is an aberration (score 0 on the first variable).

Zero-sum nature of conflict: nature of the adversary and threat it poses

Secondly, the most important aspect in Chinese civilisation is unity. The empire is so vast and so diverse, that unity has become a core value on which no compromise is possible (Scobell, 2002: 11). Reunification with Taiwan, whose separation has been the largest obstacle to full unity, has become “virtually a religious quest” (Davis, 1990: 157). Its civilisation has been through turmoil, invasion, rupture and many revolutions and civil wars for the last 2,000 years, yet “the lines of continuity have remained resilient, persistent and ultimately predominant, superimposing themselves for the most part in the Chinese mind over the interruptions and breaks” (Jacques, 2012: 246). Unity among Chinese is derived from a sense of culture, race and civilisation, a powerful force that keeps together a widely fragmented (by custom, ethnicity, geography, economic development and climate), yet enormous population of over 1.3 billion people. The state is lending authority and legitimacy for keeping that unity in an almost paternalistic way. It is fierce to defend what is seems as attacks on its unity, which has become a core value, even if they are mere threats to its integrity. China perceives even crises as high-level threats, in that it sees itself surrounded by threats to its integrity, both in the domestic and foreign sphere: it has “a pathological fear of division and instability” (Jacques, 2012:

260). Its core focus on unity, but also its domestic sweeping crackdown on corruption and internal stability is emblematic of this anxiety. Whether it is the Mongols during the Qing dynasty or American hegemony in the Pacific in the present era, China often had very little staunch friends, perhaps also because it didn't saw other nations as equals, but rather as barbarians, as *the* only civilisation. Johnston (1996: 223) writes that "since the adversary was a threat to the moral political order, the contest was explicitly zero-sum: the enemy could not be won over but had to be destroyed". The nature of its adversaries is thus in many cases zero-sum (score 1 on the second variable).

Efficacy of the use of force

Thirdly, China's elites see threats everywhere in its neighbourhood, both domestic and international. Contrary to the deeply held Confucian beliefs in the elite's minds, when confronted with crises, China's leadership is predisposed to deploy force (Scobell, 2002: 4). The last strategic constant justifying external use of force is what is labelled by the People's Liberation Army as *active defence*, including pre-emptive strikes, or in the words of Deng Xiaoping *defensive offensives*: "active defence is not merely defence per se, but includes defensive offensives. Active defence includes our going out, so that if we are attacked we will certainly counter attack" (Zhou, 1995: 46, as cited in Scobell, 2002: 13). Johnston subscribes to this notion as part of the concept of 'absolute flexibility', a careful approach to relative capabilities, seizing the opportunity to shift from defensive to offensive strategy only when the relative balance of composite capabilities shifts in China's favour (Johnston, 1996: 239). China's Defence White Papers of 1998, the first of their kind, also mention 'active defense' as a core strategy for its external relations (Scobell, 2002). The White Papers of 2015 – the ninth since 1998 – have reiterated this view (Xinhua, 2015). While the principle doctrine of the Chinese People's Liberation Army remains unchanged – winning local wars on the basis of informationisation⁴² – the strategy now outlines, contrary to earlier White Papers, "a greater Chinese naval presence farther from the People's Republic's shores" (Gady, 2015). Its air force will widen its scope to include "offensive operations as well as defense of China's territory" (Lubold, 2015). The paper essentially is reflective of the notion that China is increasing comfortable in projecting power outside of its immediate surroundings, "openly admitting that it seeks and is relentlessly pursuing de facto dominance in the Western Hemisphere" (ibid.).

⁴² A strategy based on network-centric warfare and increased reliance on battlefield intelligence (Gady, 2015).

China is for the aforementioned reason of self-defence as pretext for change in the status quo confident about the efficacy of the use of force (score 1 on the third variable). ‘Absolute flexibility’ is also a term “more politically palatable [...] arousing righteous indignation among masses and soldiers [or attracting] sympathetic support from external sources” (ibid.: 249). There is a “deeply rooted persistent and relatively consistent set of assumptions about the strategic environment” (ibid.) in China, which means we can derive grand strategic preference rankings from that paradigm. All variables accumulated, Chinese strategic culture is at the operational level a moderate *realpolitik* (2). Summarised, this leads to the following score on the strategic culture of China:

Assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment	Score
Role of conflict in human affairs	0
Zero-sum nature of conflict	1
Efficacy of the use of force	1
Total score	2

Table 8: Overview of the assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment in China.

4.2.2 Assumptions about the strategic environment in Japan

Japan had always refused, unlike China’s tributary neighbours, to be sucked into a Sinocentric world order. Whereas Chinese exceptionalism consisted of being the only true civilisation, the Japanese saw themselves as having a uniquely racial and cultural purity. China tried to ‘transform those that came to the Middle Kingdom’ to Confucian values, while Japan declined to expand its benefits to those born outside of its sacred ancestral bonds (Van Wolferen, 1989: 13) and thus has a much more ethnical definition of its nation. Much of this is related to the insecurities that the island nation brought, fearful of neighbourly domination (Kissinger, 2012: 78). WWII had a profound impact on the development of mainstream ideologies in Japan. Contrary to Germany though, the Japanese elite was not purged, there was no clear break with the regime that was largely responsible for the outbreak of the war (including the crimes committed during them) and consequently, no systematic examination of the war events among the elite or

the masses (Seraphim, 2006)⁴³, which laid the foundations of modern Japanese nationalism.

Nevertheless, in the post-war years, Japan adopted an almost unique constitution, as it renounced war forever and reduced its armed forces to strictly self-defensive forces. Their pacifist turn shows that domestic politics can determine the security policy of states and create cultures of antimilitarism, as is the case in Japan (cf. Berger, 1998; see also Katzenstein, 1996a). In fact, Japan's pacifist-oriented foreign policy is a salient source of "Japan's inclination to deference and restraint in the bilateral relationship with China" (Drifte, 2003: 6). The security umbrella of the United States is a strong incentive to maintain a mere self-defensive force, yet judging on the popular backlash Prime Minister Abe, who enjoys widespread general support, recently faced when he announced plans to revise the constitution and remove the clause that prohibits Japan to deploy its forces abroad and to renounce war forever, indicates broad societal acceptance of the pacifist nature of Japanese foreign policy (*The Economist*, 2014b, see also Roy, 1994: 151).

The critical formative period of Japan's current strategic culture was during the ideological and political battles of the late 1940s and 1950s, when the new national identity became inextricably intertwined with defence and national security choices (Berger, 1996: 329). When we look at Japan's view on the role of conflict in human affairs, it should be emphasised that Japan did not seek "to develop military capabilities commensurate with [its] burgeoning economic power [...] they were profoundly ambivalent about any increase in military power, even when the opportunity was thrust upon them" (ibid.: 320) by the United States, resisting even calls for an increase in self-reliance and for example the creation of a multilateral nuclear force. The ambivalence towards military power runs far deeper than merely a free ride on the US security umbrella, argues also Katzenstein (1993: 86), who claims that what matters for foreign policy choices is embedded in domestic structures and by a normative context that defines appropriate behaviour. Due to its geographical situation and its reliance on raw materials import, there is "a far-reaching consensus [...] that, where possible, the country's very substantial economic vulnerability [...] should be reduced" (ibid.: 87). Japan's military defence lacks many features that any military that is suspicious towards its threat environment would have: mobilisation plans, a military court system,

⁴³ Seraphim (2006) explicitly makes a comparison with Germany, which made the period of fascism 'exceptional', allowing it to be judged and disconnected from its pre-fascist polity. Japan kept its emperor, which made it more difficult to make comparisons with that pre-fascist polity.

emergency legislation and a civil defence system (Sigur, 1975: 193, as cited in Katzenstein, 1993: 97). Its Self-Defence Forces (SDF) does not have rules for engaging an enemy. Public opinion is seen as a strong determinant of Japan's security policy, and it is popular demonstration (but also political confrontation and changes in government) that will emerge "when major new policy initiatives violating existing norms and values are proposed" (Berger, 1996: 329).

Despite the fact that the public is generally much more now than in the 1950s in favour now of a reinterpretation of its pacifist article 9 of the constitution, which forswears war as a sovereign right of the nation, foreign deployment of troops and does not recognise the right of belligerency, national security is still ranked very low as a priority for Japan's citizens; there is no appetite for amending the constitution at this point (Katzenstein, 1993: 104). Roy (1994: 151) goes as far as saying that "rather than an 'economic superpower', Japan is really an incomplete major power", lacking a true military of its own. That posture has changed little since the end of the Cold War, when the debate shifted towards the question whether and in what form Japan should participate in international peacekeeping missions⁴⁴ (Berger, 1996: 344; Katzenstein, 1993: 102-103) – which is hitherto still limited to the supply of supportive, non-combatant staff. This therefore leads to the conclusion that Japan considers conflict to be an aberration in human affairs (score 0).

On the nature of threat in terms of zero-sum or variable sum, Japan is very much aware of its own economic vulnerability as a resource-poor, isolated island that is very much reliant on the imports of raw material, but not so militarily⁴⁵. "This historical insularity is alleged to have made the Japanese people inherently inept at power politics, while at the same time strengthening their inclination toward harmony and cooperation" (Berger, 1996: 343). Its military has some capacity for contribution to international peacekeeping missions, but most troops remain earmarked for territorial defence. Japan's most potent threat, China, is one which it sees the need to engage with: "Japan's diplomacy aims at a slow, steady and prolonged process of encouraging China to contribute more to regional stability and prosperity" (Katzenstein & Okawara, 2001: 178). And yet, for its vulnerability it is reliant on two key factors: a continuously growing economy that is increasingly self-reliant, and the security arrangement with the US. With

⁴⁴ Despite the on-going debate, it took Japan nine years to send its first troops to the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, a contingency that was limited to non-combatants: ten unarmed doctors and nurses (Mizokami, 2010).

⁴⁵ The US occupation of Japan after WWII was in fact the first foreign occupation of Japan in its recorded history (Berger, 1996: 330).

the emergence of four new threats by the end of the 90s (a rising China, a bellicose North Korea, the possibility of abandonment by the US and the stagnation of the national economy) it has each time used these to modernise the Japanese military (Samuels, 2011: 4-5). It makes tough choices on defence issues, within constraints, filtered through domestic institutions and domestic debates. The death of wartime emperor Hirohito in 1989 reopened issues of wartime atrocities, but while popular knowledge was deepened, no domestic consensus and debates about history was effectuated in national and international politics (Preston, 2010: 202).

One can broadly draw up three post-war movements, namely leftists, who emphasise that Japan was a victim of scientific-industrialised warfare, right-wing nationalists, who claim that Japan was unjustly punished unilaterally, and ordinary Japanese, who see the aftermath of WWII as a moral message for peace. This cleavage reappears in several issues, most prominently on Japan's guilt, the views on the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings and the significance of the Yasukuni Shrine. Nevertheless, what matters here is how Japan in general has viewed the issue of the nature of its threats, and that is one of benevolence. Despite a renewal of the debate of the SDF's position and role in Japanese society, there is broad agreement that in the face of new threats, it needs above all engagement with them, as it has done by deepening economic ties with China and seeking more multilateralism in the promotion of prosperity and security in the wider region. Even when Shinzo Abe firstly became prime minister in 2006, his first foreign visit was to the PRC, which was considered a diplomatic success. "The character or personal views of political leaders do not necessarily translate into government policy, or the process of such translation is at least not entirely predictable" (Hagström & Jerdén, 2010: 722), which points to a deeper discourse in strategic interests that exists independently of individual leaders. It is for the aforementioned reasons that Japan sees threats as a variable sum (score 0).

On the last variable, belief in force as an efficacious means to attain Japan's ends is also limited. Its force structure "is designed to complement that of US forces in the region, with a heavy focus on defensive weaponry, and little independent capacity for power projection" (Berger, 1993: 127). Its industries are reluctant to commit themselves to arms manufacturing, as business leaders are afraid to create a military-industrial complex – their core business should be creating high-quality consumer goods for a demanding civilian market. Lastly, the "Japanese have been extraordinarily reluctant to allow their armed forces to engage in military planning for fear that, as in the 1930s, the

military might try to engineer an international incident that could drag Japan into a war in Asia” (ibid.: 136). On the other hand, Japan does possess a formidable military, with expenditures of 54.53 billion US dollars in 2011 (SIPRI, 2012), which relatively low at 1.0 per cent of Japan’s GDP, but in absolute terms one of the highest in the world. Its structure, however, is designed to be a strictly defensive force. Therefore, it can be concluded that Japan does not see force as an efficacious means to attain its ends (score 0). This makes the composite score of Japan on the orderliness of the treat environment also 0. Cumulatively, this leads to the following score table:

Assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment in Japan	Score
Role of conflict in human affairs	0
Zero-sum nature of conflict	0
Efficacy of the use of force	0
Total score	0

Table 9: Overview of the assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic environment in Japan.

It should be noted that Japan’s strategic culture is less continuous than the Chinese, as its origins go back only to the 1950s under the aegis of a benevolent US hegemon, and as a result is less strong and rooted in the minds of elites and the people. The benevolence of both the US and China has allowed Japan to develop such anti-militarist culture, which would undergo a profound crisis when that benevolence would end (the former changing or ending the strategic alliance, the latter posing an ever larger threat to Japanese interests), in which case a new political elite could emerge that has a much more progressive view on security (Berger, 1993: 120). Each of the country’s scores will not be weighted on their continuity, but it will be taken into account in the discussion of this thesis, which deals with methodological choices that have been made in this regard.

Implications for hypothesis 2

Given that we now have determined the position on Van Evera’s danger-scale and the strategic culture of Johnston, we can test the second hypothesis: model Van Evera⁺, built on the premise that strategic culture affects the effects of nationalism. Combined with our results from chapter 4.1, we can conclude that China has a score of 2 on strategic culture (moderate realpolitik) and 2.5 on the danger-scale (high potential for conflict).

Japan, on the other hand, scores respectively 0 (idealpolitik) and 2 (intermediate potential for conflict). This then leads to the following scores on the composite index:

Index scores	China	Japan
Van Evera: score on the danger-scale of nationalism (0 – 3)	2.5	2
Johnston: score on the orderliness of the strategic environment (0 – 3)	2	0
Van Evera⁺: composite index (0 – 6)	4.5	2

Table 10: Score table on model Van Evera, the orderliness of the strategic environment and model Van Evera⁺.

The effects of strategic culture on the danger-scale can be made more clearly visible in case we compare both scores on the danger-scale as well as on the composite index, as shown in Figure 8 below.

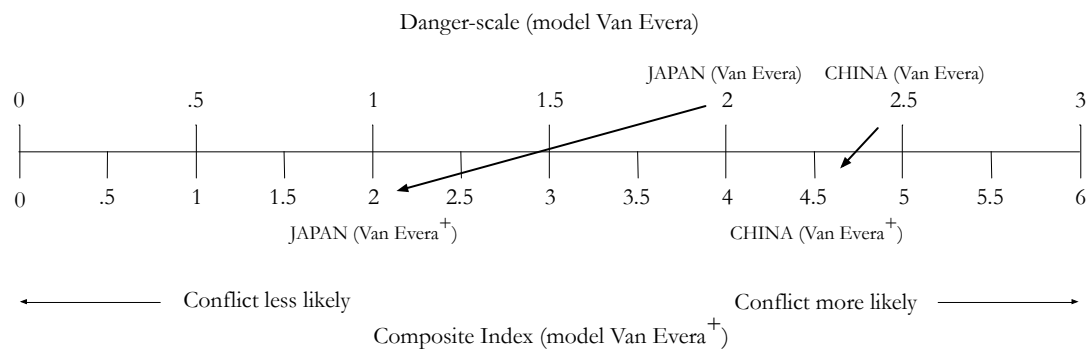


Figure 8: As Figure 3, now shown with the effects of strategic culture on nationalism in model Van Evera⁺.

What we can observe here is that the initial score on the danger-scale of Van Evera (upper-scale) led to relatively moderate to high potentials of war (2.5/3 and 2/3), on the upper end of the spectrum. The composite index, which accumulates the scores on the danger-scale and on the orderliness of the strategic environment (the strategic culture), shows a different picture: in both the case of Japan and China we observe that the likelihood of conflict has decreased in the face of a meliorating strategic culture (respectively from 2/3 to 2/6 and from 2.5/3 to 4.5/6). In the case of China, which was in the lower-right corner of the danger-scale (Table 1), the second-highest possible score, the effect is not as strong as it is in the case of Japan. Idealpolitik (score 0 on the orderliness of the strategic environment) dampens any nationalism, but even in the case of China's moderate realpolitik (2.5), a dampening effect was visible: the composite score

on the risk of conflict is 4.5 on a scale of 6. When both indexes are assigned equal weight as outlined in the methodology, that is about 8 per cent point lower than the initial 2.5 on a scale of 3 in Van Evera⁺ (which would, if measured on the same scale, correspond to a 5 on a scale of 6). For Japan, this effect is even stronger. As the scale shows, for Japan the effect is a wholly 33 per cent point lower. This dramatic decrease is largely owing to Japan's strategic culture at the idealpolitik end of the spectrum (a score of 0 on a scale of 3). Its score on the danger-scale differs only 0.5 point from China's score at 2, but the effects of strategic culture are far stronger, where the difference in the score on strategic culture between the two states is 2.

5 Conclusion

Synopsis

This case study tried to contribute to two theories of international relations in two distinct aims. Firstly, it has tested a hypothesis directly derived from the theory of Van Evera (1994), with an aim to scrutinise the effects of nationalism on the prospects of war in an interstate context. The central tool of measurement *in casu* has been the danger-scale: a set of three variables (proximate causes) on the attainment of statehood, the stance towards the national diaspora and the symmetry of nationalism. These proximate causes are activated by remote causes, which break down in structural, political-environmental and perceptual factors. The theory prescribed that the more proximate causes are present, the greater the prospects for war. The case study that was used for testing this hypothesis is the bilateral relations between China and Japan, two countries that have mired themselves from time to time in nationalist discourses in foreign policy. The sub-hypothesis, complementing hypothesis 1, is closely related to the basic model, namely a test of the relation between Van Evera's remote causes and proximate causes, a causality that he is not clear about. By deriving the causal direction between both causes from his theory and by testing the presence of each of them, tentative conclusions can be drawn on these relations.

The need for testing Van Evera's theory arose from an empirical observation in Sino-Japanese bilateral relations. The current trends in each its respective nationalism shows a large presence of those variables that Van Evera describes. While this indeed occasionally leads to flare-ups, especially in the question of Taiwanese reunification and the sovereignty issue revolving the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, so far the bilateral relations have been spared from violent conflict. This led to the scientific problem: what could explain the relative calmness, in the face of virulent nationalism? A conflicting explanation could be found in Alastair Johnston's theory on strategic culture, which described how a state's assumptions about the orderliness of its strategic environment affect the ranking of strategic preferences in its foreign policy. The theory allowed for the state-level formation of strategic preferences on a spectrum ranging from idealpolitik to realpolitik.

Secondly, this thesis has tried to contribute to theory building by confronting Van Evera's theory with conflicting evidence and adjusting his model on several

accounts. Confronting Van Evera's theory with a theory of strategic culture led to the research question, which was centred on whether the latter interacts with the benign or malign effects of nationalism on conflict, and whether it can provide a better explanation for current Sino-Japanese relations. This model is referred to as Van Evera⁺ (see Figure 5). The underlying assumption of the model was that strategic culture tends to meliorate or aggravate the effects of nationalism, depending on their relative position from each other. The greater the discrepancy between the expectations for conflict between Van Evera's and Johnston's theory, the stronger the mediating effects of strategic culture (in either direction) will be⁴⁶. In order to operationalise the variables, each variable was assigned a value of 0 or 1, which then lead to a score between 0 and 3 on Van Evera's danger-scale (Table 1) and 0 and 3 on Johnston's state assumption about the orderliness of the strategic environment⁴⁷ (Table 2). These scores combined led to the composite index as part of the revised model Van Evera⁺ (Figure 5), and created an index ranging from 0 to 6 (Table 3). Both theories were assigned equal weight when combining them into the composite index. The relative movement along the scales when comparing the danger-scale with the composite index essentially reflects the mediating effects in either direction by strategic culture (Figure 8).

After testing for the presence of remote and proximate causes, a test of the hypotheses allowed to see whether Van Evera could explain current Sino-Japanese relations, whether the presence of more remote causes led to more proximate causes and what the influence of strategic culture was. The scores on both indexes and thus on the composite index allowed us to see the relative mediating effects of strategic culture in Chinese and even more so in Japanese nationalism, both in ameliorating directions. It is thus possible to conclude that strategic culture is an explanation for dampening the relatively malign effects of Chinese and Japanese nationalism.

Reflection on the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 has provided for a test of Van Evera's basic model:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the score on the danger-scale – the composition of scores on the proximate causes of Van Evera (1994) – the more likely

⁴⁶ In the case of benign nationalism and realpolitik strategic preferences, we expect a strong aggravating effect on the prospects of war through strategic culture, and vice versa.

⁴⁷ In the case of 'stance towards national diaspora', a proximate cause in the basic model of Van Evera, the variable could take three values: 0, 0.5 and 1.

international conflict becomes, and vice versa: the lower the score, the less likely conflict becomes.

Despite the relatively high scores of both China (2.5 out of 3) and Japan (2 out of 3) on Van Evera's danger-scale, scores that have been classified as respectively highly conflict-potential and moderately potential, conflict has been largely absent from bilateral relations, notwithstanding occasional flare-ups, as such occurred in for example the Senkaku/Diaoyu territorial dispute. Yet by looking at these flare-ups, we can conclude that these do not constitute war in the way Van Evera understands it (as a civil or inter-state war that claims at least 5,000 victims). China and Japan show signs of animosity and tension that have led to a handful of victims, but they have not declared war on each other. It should however be noted that the chance of conflict *increases* as the danger-scale score increases, and that there is no clear score threshold on which war becomes inevitable. As for the hypothesis, signs point in the direction of rejection, in the sense that one would expect war⁴⁸ on the basis of these scores that have been classified as highly or moderately conflict-potential, but not observe it. The hypothesis is thus rejected.

The sub-hypothesis focused on the relation between the remote and proximate causes and was formulated in the following manner:

Sub-hypothesis: The more remote causes (R) are present, the more proximate causes (P) are activated.

In chapter 4.4, it has been argued that the more remote causes are present, the more proximate causes are present. While such possibility exist, it was not possible to draw definitive conclusions on if and whether each variable was sufficient and or necessary. The definitive conclusion from Table 7 is that (a) the hypothesis should be accepted and (b) that each remote cause causes at least one proximate cause, especially visible in the case of China, where all remote and proximate causes are present. The test of these causes in the previous paragraphs of the empirical analysis has allowed us to draw some tentative conclusions on these relationships between variables. For example, it has been possible in two cases to determine the causality between remote and proximate causes. It

⁴⁸ As violent conflict in a state or between two states that claims at least 5,000 victims.

can thus be argued that the sub-hypothesis can be accepted, and that the more remote causes are present, the more proximate causes are activated.

The second hypothesis forms the backbone of the revised model Van Evera⁺ and is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2: The stronger the preference for realpolitik, the stronger the reinforcement of nationalism, therefore the higher the likelihood of conflict, and vice versa.

The results in Figure 8 could lead us to suspect that the current absence of conflict could find its origin in a mediating effect caused by strategic culture, meliorating the highly and moderately malign (of respectively China and Japan) effects of nationalism. In Japan, this mediation is considerate: in Van Evera⁺ the score has decreased by 33 per cent when compared to model Van Evera. In China, this effect is less great but still present. This owes to the fact that the larger the difference between the danger-scale and the strategic culture scores (China: 0.5; Japan: 2), the stronger the reinforcing or dampening effect on the prospects of war will be. In the case of China, we can thus still expect a moderate chance of conflict, for Japan the moderately malign effects of nationalism seem to have been largely dampened in the face of idealpolitik strategic preferences.

These cases represent our earlier scholarly interest (as visualised in Figure 4): nationalism with malign effects on the prospects of war, but with strategic culture influencing the preferences of the elites, the in-group, towards accommodationist tactics, constraining behaviour towards the out-group. It could however be argued that the observed effect in the case of China is so low, that Van Evera⁺ does not offer a convincing alternative explanation for the relative calmness in Sino-Japanese relations (please see the section on various reflections below).

Consequences for the theories

In conclusion, the hypothesis 1 has been falsified: conflict has been absent despite relatively malign scores on both strands of nationalism; nevertheless one could argue that the classification of scores between 2.5 – 3 as highly potential was an arbitrary, subjective methodological choice, and the consequent expectations were false (thus the hypothesis should be accepted). It has nonetheless been argued that throughout the time period under scrutiny (1989 – 2015), threats and flare-ups have been consistently averted with

little or no human losses, nor significant economic damage and thus far from warfare that claimed more than 5,000 victims. China and Japan have so far prevented themselves from entering one. It should however be noted that both Chinese and Japanese nationalism have been assessed independently. By itself, we should also have expected Chinese aggressiveness and fair Japanese aggressiveness in general towards their neighbours. This thesis has focused on the bilateral relations, since its nationalisms are so strongly directed towards each other – largely owing to the troubled shared history during WWII and before. In order to make a better assessment of the fit of Van Evera's theory, it would be wise to focus on additional dyads, in order to probe whether the rejection of the hypothesis would still hold.

With the second test of the original model, subject of the sub-hypothesis, we have been able to scrutinise the relation between the remote and proximate cause, something that Van Evera has omitted from his own theory. The sub-hypothesis has been accepted, as the results showed that the more remote causes are present, the more proximate causes are present. The validity of this entire model has thus been verified. In addition, this thesis found that two out of seven of the interpreted causal relations between remote and proximate causes have shown to be valid in the case of China and Japan. Because there could be a necessity-sufficiency construction involved here, whereby some remote causes only in conjunction or by themselves lead to some proximate causes, it could be that the relations between both causes are more complex. Further research would thus be needed here to make stronger claims about the exact interrelatedness, by testing with a larger number of cases and applying a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). When it comes to this thesis, it has been proven that the more remote causes are present, the more proximate causes are present. This could be a starting point for such additional research.

When it comes to strategic culture as a theory, it has proven successful to provide a better explanation for Sino-Japanese relations, taking into account various reflections on methodological choices and limits of this research as outlined below. The magnitude of the mediating effects is varying, but present, more so in the case of China than in the case of Japan. It can be seen that the mediating effects are more profound when the discrepancy is larger between the scores on the danger-scale and the assumptions of the strategic environment, as is the case in Japan.

Reflections on the methodological choices and limits of the research

This thesis has been subject to a number of conceptual and methodological choices. First and foremost, these entail the relative loss of information when operationalising the variables in such a way that they took dichotomous values: 0 or 1⁴⁹. Variables were either present (1) or not present (0), with only one variable having three possible values. These large intervals clearly confront the researcher with the choice whether to consider a variable present or not, with little or no choice for a middle ground ('somewhat present', or 'present, but...'). The result has often been a stark choice to omit information that might not have been lost when the intervals had been smaller.

Not only was information reduced to these dichotomous (trichotomous) values, Van Evera's theory has also been further adapted in such a way that its basic model has been stripped from a variable that have been considered of no scholarly interest in this case study (the treatment of national minorities), but which might have been an intrinsic part of Van Evera's model. Its omission might have changed the model in such a manner that it would not predict the same empirical results. This omission was nevertheless deemed justified, not only because the omitted variable is a *remote* and not *proximate* cause, but also since Van Evera states that each of the variables contribute to aggravating nationalism (its the sum that leads to the danger-scale), but none of them are strictly necessary. It is nevertheless valuable to note that the omission of this variable means that the danger-scale could not attain its maximum score/extent in the adjusted model of Van Evera, since only three (and not four) remote causes were scrutinised. The omission was a methodological choice as part of the transformation from a model that is mainly able to predict *intrastate* conflict to a model that can do the same for *interstate* conflict.

A further remark can be made with regards to the final results of both tests. The observed mediating effect in the revised model, in the case of China, is considerably low (at approximately 8 per cent), could be in the margin of error and thus negligible. The danger-scale score can change drastically given the dichotomous values on all but one variables: a different empirical conclusion on one of them would lead to a very different conclusion, since the score would change by 1, or in one case, 0.5. The conclusion that the results are negligible would be inevitable in case Japan would have disproven Van Evera⁺, yet in the results both cases point in the same direction, be it with different magnitude. This observation could lead us to the tentative conclusion that strategic culture indeed has an impact on the effects of nationalism, nevertheless having in mind what is noted above.

⁴⁹ In the case of one proximate variable, the stance towards the national diaspora, it took a trichotomous value: 0, 0.5 or 1, which would still uphold this remark.

The limits of this research also pertain to its applicability on a wider range of cases. It has been noted earlier the salience of variance in culture, political traditions and systems between states in the implications for the assumptions of Johnston's theory of strategic culture: a state behaviour is determined by its culture, and thus each case is *sui generis*, limiting its applicability to a broader range of cases. It is thus hard to say whether this thesis has contributed to *theory building* and thus leading to a broader understanding of the role of strategic culture in nationalism. In some sense, this is related to the case selection. It has been shown how the basic assumptions and the distinct origin of Chinese nationalism challenge popular scholarly understanding of nationalism as a phenomenon that spruced up during the French Revolution of 1789.

It should also be noted that this thesis has worked on the premise that there is no strict division between necessary and sufficient conditions when looking at the relation between the proximate and remote causes. It does not per se influence our data, but it could be valuable to disentangle this causality (see next section for further remarks).

Prospects for further research

This thesis has provided for a few incentives for further research. It has not been in the scope of this research to rely on own research when it comes to unravelling strategic culture in China and Japan. It has been argued before that *culturalism* as a guiding principle in Chinese foreign policy is a phenomenon still widely understudied in international relations and deserves more attention. The academic community has different views on how exactly China perceives the world around itself. In many rhetorical aspects, its elite have been emphasising the humiliation China has suffered since the 1850s, and its contrasting nationalist rhetoric reveal a society that is still struggling to find its identity in a world that China itself helped to drastically change since the 1980s.

As argued earlier, this thesis has not shed light on the nature of the relations between the remote and proximate causes. A valuable line of research would be to investigate whether they are related in a necessary-sufficient condition way. All proximate causes have more than one remote cause, and it could therefore be that proximate causes are only present when certain remote causes exist in conjunction with each other. I have merely focused on the respective presence of both variables. The presence of each of the set of variables has not given enough evidence to draw tentative conclusions on this

relation. This should be possible by involving more cases and applying a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), a small-N approach.

As briefly mentioned in this conclusion already, the test can be applied to other dyads as well. Essentially, each test in this thesis has been applied to each of the states individually. Therefore, the same test could be applied to other dyads, such as the United States and China, another important and defining one in the Pacific, Vietnam and China, South Korea and China or Japan and either of the Koreas, who share an equally troubled (pre) WWII history. Further research in this regard can strengthen claims about the likelihood of conflict in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

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Appendix

A: Map of the East China Sea



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