

Understanding the East Asian Peace

**Informal and formal conflict prevention and peacebuilding in
the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula,
and the South China Sea 1990-2008**

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Mikael Weissmann



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Informal and formal conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, and the South China Sea 1990-2008

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**To
Cecilia and my family**

Abstract

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The overall purpose of this dissertation is to provide an empirical study of the post-Cold War East Asian security setting, with the aim of understanding why there is an East Asian peace. The East Asian peace exists in a region with a history of militarised conflicts, home to many of the world's longest ongoing militarised problems and a number of unresolved critical flashpoints. Thus, the post-Cold War East Asian inter-state peace is a paradox. Despite being a region predicted to be ripe for conflict, there have not only been less wars than expected, but the region also shows several signs of a development towards a more durable peace. The dominant research paradigm – neorealism – has painted a gloomy picture of post-Cold War East Asia, with perpetual conflicts dominating the predictions. Other mainstream international relations theories, too, fail to account fully for the relative peace. One of the greatest problems for mainstream theories, is accounting for peace given East Asia's lack of security organisations or other formalised conflict management mechanisms. Given this paradox/problem, this dissertation sets out to ask "*Why is there a relative peace in the East Asian security setting despite an absence of security organisations or other formalised mechanisms to prevent existing conflicts from escalating into violence?*"

In order to answer this question, the case of East Asian peace is approached by comparing three embedded case studies within the region: the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea, and the Korean nuclear conflict. It explores the full range of informal and formal processes plus the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Mechanisms (CPPBMs) that have been important for the creation of a continuing relative peace in East Asia between 1990 and 2008. The study furthermore focuses on China's role in the three cases, on an empirical basis consisting of interviews conducted with key persons during more than 1.5 years fieldwork in China.

The three cases show that informal processes exist, and that they have furthermore been important for peace, both by preventing conflicts from escalating into war, and by building conditions for a stable longer-term peace. Their impact on the persistence of peace has been traced to a range of different CPPBMs. Returning to the level of the East Asian case, a common feature of many of the identified processes is that they can be understood as aspects or manifestations of the East Asian regionalisation process. Specifically, elite interactions (personal networks, track two diplomacy), back-channel negotiations, economic interdependence and integration, and functional cooperation have together with (China's acceptance of) multilateralism and institutionalisation (of peaceful relations) been of high importance for the relative peace. Whereas formalised conflict management mechanisms and the U.S. presence have also contributed to peace, this dissertation shows their contribution to be much more limited.

Keywords: International relations, Peace, East Asian Peace, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, conflict management, informality, informal processes, regionalisation, regionalism, track two diplomacy, informal networks, personal networks, East Asia, Taiwan Strait, Korean Peninsula, China, Taiwan, North Korea, DPRK, South China Sea, ASEAN, ASEAN-way

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
APCSS	Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
APEC	The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APT	ASEAN+3
ARATS	The Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-ISIS	ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
BCN	Back channel negotiations
CBM	Confidence building measures
CSBM	Confidence and security building measures
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPPBM	Conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
CSCEEEA	The Cross-Strait Cultural, Education, and Economic Exchange Association
CSCMF	Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DMZ	The Demilitarized Zone
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EAC	East Asian Community
EAEC	East Asian Economic Caucus
EAEG	East Asian Economic Group
EASG	East Asian Study Group
EAVG	East Asian Vision Group
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EII	Economic integration and interdependence
EU	European Union
FCMM	Formalised Conflict Management Mechanism
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IISS	The International Institute for Strategic Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Fund
KMT	Kuomintang
MAC	Mainland Affairs Council
NEACD	Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue
NEAT	Network of East Asian Think-Tanks
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PBEC	Pacific Basin Economic Council
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRIO	International Peace Research Institute, Oslo
ROC	Republic of China
RSC	Regional security complex
RSCT	Regional security complex theory
SCS	South China Sea
SCSW	South China Sea Workshops (informal "Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea")
SEF	The Straits Exchange Foundation
SLOC	Sea-lanes of Communication
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Co-operation
TEMM	Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting
TRADP	Tumen River Area Development
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Convention of the Law of the Sea

Part I: Theoretical and methodological framework

1 Introduction

1.1 The paradox of East Asian peace

The East Asian peace exists in a region with a history of militarised conflicts, home to many of the world's longest ongoing militarised problems and a number of unresolved critical flashpoints. Thus, the post-Cold War East Asian inter-state peace is a paradox.¹ Many of these conflicts concern territory and/or national liberation, which according to Holsti's study of armed conflicts and international order from 1648-1989, are the two most common causes of international conflicts (1991). At the same time, East Asia is a region with a high level of intraregional distrust including deeply rooted historical issues. Efforts to create an environment conducive to a durable peace are restricted by the lack of willingness to address underlying problems between actors in the region. Cultural and political barriers have made reconciliation hard, or even impossible. These problems are particularly noticeable in relations between China and Japan and between Japan and Korea and, to some extent, across the Taiwan Strait. In addition, the region is marked by strong nationalist tendencies, in for example China, Japan and Taiwan, and numerous ethnic conflicts (Bertrand 2004; Brown and Ganguly 1997; Ganguly and Macduff 2003; Hughes 1997; Leifer 2000). The rising tide of nationalism has constrained the governments in their external interaction and put pressure on them to keep up a hard position towards each other to appease the domestic audiences, which is particularly obvious in the Taiwan Strait conflict and in Sino-Japanese relations.²

Among scholars of neo-realism, the dominant research paradigm for analyses of the East Asian security setting, a gloomy picture has been painted of East Asia's future in the post-Cold War era and perpetual conflicts have dominated the predictions (e.g. Betts 1993; Buzan and Segal 1994;

¹ East Asia is, in this study, defined as Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, i.e. Mainland China and Taiwan, the two Koreas, Japan and the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN member states are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar/Burma, and Cambodia. Also see "Defining the "East Asian" region" for an in depth discussion regarding the problems with defining a region and the reason behind the definition used in this project.

Taiwan, or the Republic of China which is its official name, has been a de-facto independent state since the exile of the Republic of China government under Chiang Kai-shek in 1949. However, Taiwan is only accepted as a sovereign, independent state by a handful of members of the international community and not by international organisations such as the United Nations. In this study the term "state" is also applied to the political entity of the Republic of China/Taiwan for reasons of simplicity. When a reference is made to a capital of a state, its government is implied.

² This need exist regardless of political system; e.g. in Taiwan with a democratic political system public support is needed for re-election, while on the Mainland with its one-party state system it is important to safe-guard regime survival.

Friedberg 1994; Kang 2003a, 2003b; Peou 2002).³ From a neorealist perspective with focus on geopolitics and hard power, the East Asian region is ripe for conflict given its rising great powers, which is predicted to shift the balance of power and create a power vacuum. Several of the most critical conflicts concern territory, which according to neorealist logic are the most difficult one to resolve and the ones most likely to lead to war as such conflicts encourage common realist practices such as alliances, military build up and power balancing (On the realist road to war see Vasquez 1993: ch. 5.). Four of the nine states that are *de facto* nuclear powers (China, Russia, the U.S., and North Korea) and locked into different parts of the volatile security setting. Moreover, there is an emerging threat of nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia (Calder 1996; Grinter 1996; Yuan 2005). The region also illustrates overall high and rapidly increasing military spending (Bracken 1999; Sakamoto 1988; Simons 2001). Still, no violent interstate conflicts have erupted since the end of the Cold War. (Also see "Realism and its relation to the East Asian security setting" in ch. 2.) Also other mainstream International Relations (IR) theories fail to account for the East Asian peace, just as liberal institutionalism and constructivism also have their limitations. The former tend to either give the various institutional arrangements in East Asia more prominence than they deserve, or dismiss them simply because they are so different from the Western ones. Constructivism, on the other hand, tends to give more credit to Asian identity building than it deserves.⁴

One of the greatest problems for mainstream theories are their inability to explain the East Asian peace given East Asia's lack of security organisations or other formalised mechanisms to prevent the existing tensions and disputes from escalating into violence and/or to resolve them and build peace. (A number of good suggestions have been made, but they fail to fully account for the East Asian peace, as will be discussed in "Mainstream theories and the East Asian peace" below.) The East Asian peace nevertheless exists, thus creating a theoretical puzzle. Peace is in this study understood as a concept that goes beyond the absence of organised armed conflict/war. It is acknowledged that there "... is a tremendous variation within the category of "no war" ranging from those actors that are still hostile towards one another but not actively fighting to those that have an integrated web of cooperation and for whom war is unthinkable." (Klein, Goertz et al. 2008: 67). This study separated between the qualitative variation of crisis, unstable peace, stable peace, and durable peace. The concept, its definitions, and the mechanisms behind its realisation will be discussed more in depth in chapter 2 (section 2.1.1).

The regional organisations that exist today have other focuses than peace and security, and emphasise mainly economic growth and cooperation.⁵ The key example is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) which has, since 1989, been a trans-regional forum with focus on

³ For a detailed review of the pessimistic literature regarding post-Cold War East Asia see Kang 2003b: 61-66, esp. footnote 12-17.

⁴ For a review of mainstream International Relations theories see "Review of field - international relations theory and East Asia" in ch. 2. Also see Zha and Hu 2006 ch. 2.

⁵ These include the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) (formerly East Asian Economic Group (EAEG)), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the ASEAN+3, the Chiang Mai Initiative, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Tumen River Area Development (TRADP), and the Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting (TEMM).

promoting sustainable economic growth and multilateral trade.⁶ It has been important for institutional capacity building and the regional confidence building process, including giving major powers such as the U.S. a common platform for dialogues on regional political and economic issues (Hu 2009). Nonetheless, the APEC works on the basis of non-binding commitments and is foremost an Asia-Pacific community building project focused on economics.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) stand out as organisations/frameworks with the promotion of peace and security through preventive diplomacy, dialogue, and confidence building measures (CBM) as part of their goal (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2000, 2001). However, neither can be understood as a security organisation or a formalised conflict prevention mechanism in a stricter sense. The ASEAN has acted as a "soft security organization", although "its members states have deliberately abstained from producing "hard" security arrangements." (Öjendal 2001: 165). Also, even if accepted as a soft security organisation, the ASEAN has limited reach since membership is confined to the Southeast Asian states. The ARF is primarily a forum for security dialogue and confidence building, rather than a security organisation. Although an increased openness to practical security cooperation has developed over time, this type of cooperation remains limited (Haacke 2009). One of the reasons for this limitation is China's scepticism against security cooperation with actors such as the U.S., the European Union (E.U.), India, and Russia. Furthermore, the parties of two of the most critical flashpoints in the region, the Korean nuclear conflict and the Taiwan issue, are not members in either the ARF (North Korea and Taiwan) or the ASEAN (North Korea, China, Taiwan, the United States).⁷

In conclusion, the peace in East Asia is both an empirical paradox and an illustrative case of theoretical weaknesses within the existing IR literature. Thus, to paraphrase I. William Zartman, if theory does not fit the historical data, there is a need for an alternative explanation (2005: 6). This study aims to find such an explanation of the East Asian peace by conducting an in-depth comparative case study, exploring the full range of informal and formal processes and mechanisms behind the East Asian peace in 1990-2008.

In order to understand the East Asian peace, informality is a key concept. Based on the findings of a preliminary study conducted in November 2004 – January 2005, and the findings of previous research on the role of informality in East Asia, the research is guided by the basic presumption that different informal processes and related mechanisms constitute at least part of the explanation (also see "Operationalisation of the research problem" below). This study follows North's differentiation between informal and formal. Informal is self-enforcing constraints such as customs, traditions, conventions, and norms of behaviour, while formal refers to (formal)

⁶ The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation was established in 1989 to facilitate economic growth, prosperity and Asia-Pacific community building. The APEC is operating on the basis of non-binding commitments, open dialogue and equal respect for the views of all participants. No treaty obligations exist and decisions made within APEC are reached by consensus and commitments are made on a voluntary basis. The current members of the APEC is Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong (Hong Kong, China), Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, The Republic of the Philippines, The Russian Federation, Singapore, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Thailand, United States of America, and Vietnam. (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2009).

⁷ For a brief but informative overview of East Asia's institutional architecture including ASEAN, APEC and ARF, see Beeson 2009.

regulations (North 1990, 1991). Drawing on the experience of research on formal and informal economics in the field of IPE and economics, this study accepted that there is no clear division between formal and informal, but it is best seen as a continuum (Lipton 1984 in Guha-Khasnabis, Kanbur et al. 2006a). The concepts of informality and formality, and the role of informality and informal processes in East Asia, will be discussed more in depth in chapter 2 (section 2.2.3).

1.1.1 The Empirical paradox

The East Asian peace has existed since the 1979 Chinese invasion of Vietnam, in reaction to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. Peaceful relations among member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have an even longer history. There have been no major wars among the ASEAN members since the founding of the organisation by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand in 1967. The East Asian peace is neither a consequence of generally peaceful interstate relations, or that regional disputes have been absent after 1979/1967. On the contrary, during the 20th century, there have been a number of major wars in the region. These include the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), the Pacific War (1941-45), the Korean War (1950-53) and the Vietnam War (1960-75). The initial ASEAN members have fought future members of the organisation also after 1967. Indeed, both Vietnam and Cambodia were involved in inter-state wars with other ASEAN members before becoming members in 1995 and 1999 respectively. In the Vietnam War, both Thailand and the Philippines participated. Thailand also had a number of military conflicts with states that were later to become ASEAN members, including Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Before the foundation of ASEAN, numerous active conflicts raged in the vicinity of the founding members.⁸ Indonesia fought for independence against the Netherlands in 1945-49, and again in 1953 and 1960-62. There were hostilities between Malaysia (at the time including Singapore) and Indonesia, the so called "Konfrontasi" in 1958 and 1963-66.⁹ Linked to "Konfrontasi" was the conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines over the inclusion of Sabah in Malaysia. This conflict was critical until the late 1960s, although open military confrontation was avoided (Amer 1998: 35).¹⁰ (For a good review of Southeast Asian disputes, see for example Amer 1998: 41-44; Kivimäki 2001: 8-10.)

In regard to Southeast Asia, Kivimäki has observed that the area of ASEAN has been and continues to be full of "conflict potential" (2001: 10). The same disputes have continued to exist also during the "long peace", including "several unsettled territorial disputes between Malaysia and Singapore (Pedra Branca), Indonesia and Malaysia (Sipadan and Ligitan), Indonesia and the Philippines (Miatan Islands), Malaysia and the Philippines (Sabah)..." (Kivimäki 2001: 10-11). The high conflict potential of the unresolved territorial disputes in Southeast Asia is highlighted by the fact several of them did in fact militarise, but still did not develop into war (Kivimäki 2001).

In Northeast Asia, the conflicts on the Korean peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait are still critical. On the Korean Peninsula, the risk of war was imminent in 1990-2008, and still is. In the

⁸ Brunei Darussalam joined the ASEAN on 8 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2009b).

⁹ The Malaysian and Indonesian governments declared an end to the conflict on 28 May 1966, and signed a formal peace treaty on 11 August the same year. (Van der Bijl 2007).

¹⁰ The Philippine claim to Sabah goes back to 1946, but there were no advancements until the Philippines officially filed its claims in June 1962 (Samad and Bakar 1992: 555-58).

Taiwan case, the conflict level has varied, but the fear, or risk, of Chinese military actions, including a possible full-scale invasion, has always been present. There are also overlapping territorial claims between Japan, China and Taiwan regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands in the East China Sea. The intensity of this dispute generally co-varies with the political relations between China and Japan, which are troublesome due to, in the view of the Chinese, the Japanese failure to apologise for historical atrocities. There are also territorial disputes between Japan and South Korea over Takeshima/Dokdo in the Sea of Japan.

In the South China Sea, which was seen as one of the regions' most critical areas in the 1990s, there are overlapping claims over the Paracel Islands by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam and over the Spratly Islands by China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Catley and Keliat 1997; Kivimäki 2002a; Kivimäki 2002b; Kwa and Skogan 2007: esp. ch. 4-5; Mak 2008; Odgaard 1999; To 1995). An agreement has been reached, stating that the conflict should be resolved peacefully, but so far the underlying incompatibilities have not been resolved.

1.1.2 Mainstream theories and the East Asian peace

Mainstream theories of international relations can not fully account for the East Asian peace. A number of specific, albeit not fully convincing, explanation have been put forward ("Peace" and "East Asian peace" is henceforth used interchangeably). It has been argued, among realists, that the current peace is due to the U.S. hegemonic power in the region (e.g. Ross 2003; Tow, Trood et al. 1997. Also see Gurtov 2002: ch. 7). Others point to changes in China's foreign policy and its struggle to be perceived as a responsible rising power. From being big power oriented in its foreign policy during the Cold War, China has since 1990, for the first time, tried to cultivate deep and comprehensive relationships with its neighbours (Kang 2007; Medeiros and Fravel 2003; Zha and Hu 2006). A third group argues that the East Asian peace is a result of the regional focus on economic growth and interdependence. This argument has taken two distinct forms. Firstly, liberal scholars like Goldstein (2007) trace the link between economic interdependence and peace, while Tønnesson has argued that the main explanation for the East Asian peace "would seem to be that a growing number of national leaders have come to prioritize economic growth and good relations with the USA over more diverse or provocative aims." (2008: 10). These are all good suggestions, but cannot fully explain the complex dynamics of the East Asian security setting.¹¹

Further alternative explanations of particular interest for this study are made by constructivist scholars focusing on East Asia (For constructivist interpretations of the East Asian peace see e.g. Acharya 2001; Kivimäki 2001, 2008a, 2008b). They claim that peace is caused by the interconnectedness between states and the informal personal networks between regional elites, such as government officials and leaders (see "Informality in East Asia" in chapter 2). Sometimes the concept "soft regionalism" or "soft institutionalisation" is used to capture these processes. This is closely linked to the so-called "ASEAN-way". The "ASEAN-way" is a unique diplomatic style that emphasizes "...an informal and incremental approach to co-operation through the habit of consultation and dialogue, while limiting to a minimum the level of institutionalization..." (Katsumata 2003a: 106). (Also see chapter 2.) In a similar way, claims have been made that

¹¹ The term "East Asian security setting" is here used to emphasise the study's focus on the security dynamics of the East Asian region. It is geographically the same thing as East Asia and the two terms are thus used interchangeably.

peace can, at least partially, be explained by the impact of informal processes within different formal structures, including so called track two frameworks and informal networks of individuals and collectives, or other informal processes in East Asia (Acharya 1991; Kivimäki 2001; Swanström 2002; Weissmann 2005, 2008. Also Dittmer, Fukui et al. 2000; Kwok and Tjosvold 1998. However, more specifically how this contributes to peace has not yet been fully explored.

Another problem with most research on East Asian security is that it makes a sharp distinction between Southeast and Northeast Asia. (A good examples of the separation is the research on the ASEAN as a potential security community Acharya 1991, 2001; Chau 2008) This separation is not consistent with the dynamic processes presently reshaping the broader East Asia. When attempts are made to bridge the gap between Northeast and Southeast Asia, emphasis is often placed on economic relations (Breslin, Hughes et al. 2002; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003), on the so called ASEAN + 3 and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Katsumata 2006; Stubbs 2002). There is a limited number of exceptions studies taking the whole East Asian region into account (e.g. Buzan and Segal 1994; Calder and Fukuyama 2008; Dupont 2001; Pempel 2005b; Zha and Hu 2006; Öjendal 1997).

One problem with most general theories, which limit their applicability to the East Asian security setting, is their inherent Western bias. Most theories are based on North Atlantic, mainly European, experiences, dynamics, and logics. In most cases they were also developed by Western scholars. The Western experience during the 1930s has for example provided many of the concepts, images, and metaphors dominating the post-World War II discourse of American foreign policy (Layne 2008). As Kang has argued, it is the Eurocentric nature of IR theory that is the key cause of the discrepancy between actual events and theoretical insights (2003b). In particular, liberal institutional approaches, emphasising the role of regional organisations, are hardly applicable to East Asia. These theories are often using the European experience as a benchmark for how regional integration ought to be and how a durable peace should be achieved (Adler and Barnett 1998b; Deutsch, Burrell et al. 1957; Haas 1975). The preference for formality and formal institutions goes beyond liberalism, and is evident in other approaches to international relations and peace and security studies (see e.g. Abad 2004 on conflict prevention in East Asia; Green and Gill 2009 on multilateralism). To focus primarily on formality does not fit the East Asian security setting well. Indeed, the region lacks the supposedly required institutions and mechanisms to ensure a durable peace, and informality and consensus building is an inherent feature of regional culture and politics. Area focused research on Asia does take the informal aspects into account, but not the peace dimension. (See "Informality in East Asia" in chapter 2.) Consequently, when identifying the processes behind the East Asian peace in this study, emphasis is on developing a picture and understanding, as complete as possible, of the processes and mechanisms behind the peace in East Asia – be they formal or informal.

1.1.3 A relative peace

Most analyses of the East Asian security setting focus on conflict rather than peace, thereby emphasising the negative rather than the positive developments. They tend to lean towards a realist reading of the features and dynamics of East Asia, thus focusing on the risk of war and the high level of regional insecurity (See e.g. Peou 2002 for a review of recent security studies on the Asia-Pacific region.). When peace is included, such studies tend to apply a negative definition, thereby defining peace as the absence of war. Nevertheless, a closer look at the region reveals many positive signs of peace also beyond the absence of war. Although the main issues of

conflict may be shaped by Cold War thinking, an underlying peacebuilding process has concurrently transformed inter-state relations. When the dynamics of the East Asian security setting are analysed through peace-sensitive lenses that allow seeing beyond the status of the main issues of conflict, a very different picture appears; East Asia indeed enjoys a "relative peace", both in terms of quality and stability.

For example, all China's land border disputes with its Southeast Asian neighbours have been resolved. The key maritime flashpoint in the South China Sea has been mitigated and consensus has been reached among the parties to resolve the dispute peacefully.¹² The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan issue have been prevented from escalating into violence. Sino-Japanese relations are still verbally tense, but none of the parties are interested in escalating the tensions and making violent conflict more plausible. On a more general level, China has tried to develop positive relations with South Korea and Japan, as well as with Taiwan. This approach has been relatively successful at least in the economic sphere. In regards to Sino-Southeast Asian relations, the Chinese "good neighbourliness" policy initiated in the mid 1980s, together with its diplomatic recognition of Indonesia in 1990 and its decision not to devalue its currency during the 1997 financial crisis, has been central in facilitating positive inter-state relations in East Asia (Ho and Ku 2005; Zha and Hu 2006). After the September 11 attacks in 2001, Sino-ASEAN relations received a push forward by the tougher American stance in the region, which created a perceived need in both the ASEAN and China to build closer ties and cultivate their relationship (Öjendal 2004: 29-30).

In addition, the East Asian regionalisation process has pushed the economic integration to very high levels, which has resulted in the signing of free trade agreements between China, Japan, South Korea, and the ASEAN. What has been of paramount importance for the progression of peaceful relations across East Asia is the pan-regional vision of building an "East Asian Community" (EAC), which has been a driving force during the 2000s. (On the development towards an East Asian Community, see e.g. Curley and Thomas 2007.) The idea goes back to the 1999, when East Asian leaders agreed to create the East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) with the aim to find a way to collectively develop the East Asian region. In their 2001 final report the members "...noted that they aimed to "offer a common vision for East Asia that reflects the rapidly changing regional and global environment, as well as provide direction for future cooperation among East Asian nations"." (Curley and Thomas 2007: 2) Four years later, at the conclusion of the 2003 BALI Summit the 13 ASEAN+3 members called for the establishment of an EAC (Curley and Thomas 2007: 3). The Chinese mainstream opinion is that if such a community is to be realised, it

"should be a comprehensive cooperation mechanism that comes out of a gradual process of regional economic, political, and security cooperation. The process would start with an economic community; expand to political security social, and cultural areas; and finally end up with a regional community that covers cooperation among regional members on all major dimensions."
(Wu 2009: 59)

¹² This has been agreed in the 2002 "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" between China and the ASEAN member states.

This said, there both more optimistic and pessimistic views can be identified. Optimists believe in benefits that an regional community can be established as a result of deepening interdependence, a growing sense of shared identity, and emerging shared norms (Wu 2009: 59). Pessimists argue that there the EAC process will be complicated and risk freezing as a result of differences in opinion in different East Asian states, in particular concerning the possible participation of non-Asian states such as Australia and New Zealand, and as a result of a perceived opposition from Washington (Wu 2009: 59).

Also diplomatic relations and intergovernmental ties have been enhanced. The ASEAN+3 (or the APT) process between the ASEAN states, Japan, China, and South Korea is an obvious example of this development (Tanaka 2007a; Terada 2003). The positive diplomatic developments can be traced back to the initiation of "ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations" initiated after the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1991, when China expressed a keen interest in developing its cooperation with ASEAN for mutual benefit. The relations were elevated to a higher level in 2003, when China acceded into the "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia" and the declaration of a "Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity" was signed by China and the ASEAN members (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2009a).

In conclusion, the East Asian security setting is not only experiencing less war than expected, but also shows several signs of a development towards a more durable peace. Positive relations have proliferated and brought about a growing regional integration and cooperation. Many efforts have been made toward the creation of perceived common interests as part of the mutual goal of economic growth and prosperity in East Asia.

In sum, when taking into consideration aspects of positive peace, the East Asian security setting shows many signs of an existing relative peace in the region that transcends the simple absence of war. Peace is, in this context, encompassing more than its negative definition, i.e. "no war". Indeed, peace is seen as a continuum that ranges from situations of "no war" to situations of "durable peace" in which war is unthinkable. The observation of "relative peace" in East Asia owes to the fact that there is more peace than expected given the security setting. The level of peace in East Asia is thereby argued to be qualitatively higher than the minimum criteria of no war, but it has not yet reached a stage where it is possible to talk about a durable peace according to established definitions (see "Defining peace" in chapter 2).

Peace, and the peace in East Asia is no exception, is thus to be understood as a concept addressing inter-group relations (here states). The observation of a relative peace in East Asia is founded on a separation between negative and positive inter-group relations. Indeed, negative inter-state relations have concurred with the proliferation of positive relations throughout the post-Cold War period. In this study, it is argued that this proliferation is an important peacebuilding process, which at least in theory has the potential of transforming inter-state relations, i.e. moving the conflict towards a more stable peace. The theoretical logics behind this reasoning will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2.

1.2 Purpose, research problem, and research questions

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to provide an empirical study of the East Asian security setting, with the aim of understanding why there is an East Asian peace. The particular purpose is to provide a detailed and empirically based study of China's role in the East Asian security

setting, including three case studies. Through the case studies, an understanding of the range of informal and formal processes and their related conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms can be developed, which in turn facilitates the understanding of why there has been an relative peace in East Asia since the end of the Cold War.

As mentioned above, this research concerns an empirical paradox: why has there been, and continues to be, a relative peace in post-Cold War East Asia, despite the many factors pointing in the direction of military conflict, and the absence of any security organisation or other formalised mechanisms to prevent conflict escalation and/or build peace. This leads to the research problem addressed in this study:

Why is there a relative peace in the East Asian security setting despite an absence of security organisations or other formalised mechanisms to prevent existing conflicts from escalating into violence?

To answer this question, this study investigates the possible existence of other, more informal, processes and related mechanisms that can help explain the East Asian peace.

A process is understood as a flexible concept. It refers to different aspects of ongoing interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions, which are observed and studied through their social, political and cultural effect, with the aim of finding the underlying patterns and dynamics. In this study, processes are any form of continuing inter-personal or inter-collective interactions that is relevant for understanding why there is a relative peace in East Asia. The collectives in this study are mainly states, but can also be other groups and institutions at the sub-state or international level. Mechanisms, on the other hand, indicate routine. Mechanisms make it possible to trace the role and impact of the processes on the level of peace, i.e. answering the "how" question. This generally means identifying and tracing different conflict management mechanisms. In the context of this study, it is the different conflict prevention and peace building mechanisms that are in focus.¹³ Processes and mechanisms can be both informal and formal (See "Informality and formality" in chapter 2 for a discussion and definition of informal – formal.).

A case-study based research approach is used to identify, categorise, and develop an understanding of the processes and the interrelated conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms that have been important for the creation of a continuing relative peace in East Asia. This includes both processes and mechanisms that have been conducive for peace over the long term, as well as the prevention of escalation, and the management of existing conflicts and tensions. More specifically, this study develops an understanding of the role and impact of cross-border interactions that transcends formal conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. The study thus takes an inclusive approach, exploring processes ranging from the more formalised ones, such as the ARF and the six-party talks, through semi-formal track two frameworks, to purely informal processes such as personal networks. Within the East Asian case study, three embedded cases are analysed: the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea, and the Korean nuclear conflict. The study is limited to the period 1990 to spring 2008.

¹³ Also the concepts of crisis management and conflict resolution will be used in will be used in this study, see "Realising peace: conflict prevention and peacebuilding" in chapter 2.

The study focuses on China's role in the East Asian security setting, and in the three embedded cases. Thus, there is a selection bias that entails a risk that the possible role of other actors becomes neglected. However, efforts have been made to ensure that no factors are overlooked. For example, the role of the U.S. has been included, as the U.S. often is perceived as playing a major role for East Asian peace. Nevertheless, the perhaps most problematic result of this selection bias is that the role of Japan is largely left out.

Though Japan is important for the overarching structural dynamics in the East Asian security setting, it is deemed as being less important for the peace paradox as it has not altered its structural position. The structural position of China has on the other hand been changing since the end of the Cold War, which regardless of perspective taken on the perception of a rising China as a threat have fundamental impact of the regional security dynamics. Thus, it is the China-end of the East Asian peace that will be studied in this dissertation. In addition, it would not have been possible, within the time frame of this project, to collect the needed empirical material, or conduct the required in-depth analyses for an identification and understanding of the processes behind the East Asian peace if more than one regional great power had been included. Indeed, such a study would have rendered the empirical analyses too shallow. (See "Embedded case study design" below.)

The potential limitations derived from the restricted focus on China's role should, however, not be overestimated. China is a rising big power in the region, and its behaviours and actions are important for both peace and war in East Asia. Indeed, China is either a party or a central actor in most of the key flashpoints in the region, not least the ones perceived most likely to develop into violent conflicts with wide-ranging implication for the whole of East Asia (including the three cases in this study). China is important also at the sub-regional levels, given its position as a key actor with influence in both the Southeast and Northeast Asian security settings. Its historical role across the region is indisputable, not least given the unchallenged dominance over East Asia exercised by the Middle Kingdom until the mid-nineteenth century. China's role is also central for the dynamics and developments in the post-Cold War East Asian security setting. This can, not least, be seen in the bulk of literature on the rise of China (e.g. Brown 2000; Christensen 2006b; Cooney and Sato 2008; Keller and Rawski 2007; Ross and Zhu 2008; Shambaugh 2005; Wang and Kokobun 2004; Xiao and Lin 2009; Zhao and Liu 2008). In conclusion, understanding the role of China and ensuring its inclusion in the analysis is paramount to understanding the East Asian security setting and the East Asian peace.

1.2.1 Operationalisation of the research problem

In order to make the research problem researchable, it will be operationalised in the form of a number of research questions. To be able to understand why this peace has been developed and sustained, there is a need to understand both what the processes that can help explain the relative peace are, and how these processes have been able to prevent negative relations in the region from escalating into military confrontations/war and contributed to the progression of positive relations thereby building conditions for peace. In theoretical terms, there is a need to understand the conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms. To be able to understand the East Asian peace, it is not enough to be able to identify the processes and mechanisms. There is also a need to show that the processes have had an impact of the variation in the quality level of peace, that is that the processes have had an actual peace impact. Thus, the research problem is operationalised into three research questions:

1. What processes can help explain the relative peace?
2. To what extent have the processes had a positive peace impact on the security setting?¹⁴
3. What are the conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms through which the processes have a positive impact?

The first question concerns identifying, mapping and categorising processes. The second question is asked to ensure that the identified processes have a meaningful impact on peace. To limit the investigation to what the processes are and how they have worked as conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms, may lead to an identification and inclusion of processes and mechanisms with limited actual relevance for the East Asian peace. The third question concerns the "how question", i.e. tracing the mechanisms that are at work between the actual processes and the outcome (peace) to ensure that it is not only a spurious correlation. To begin with, these three questions are asked separately in the three cases. Thereafter, the same questions are asked concerning the overall East Asian case. Efforts are made to ensure that the possible synergy effects between different processes are included. That is, the empirical analyses are sensitive for combined effects of clusters of processes.

The underlying presumption in this study is that different informal processes, and interrelated mechanisms, constitute at least part of the explanation for the East Asian peace. This presumption is based on findings in existing research and a preliminary study on the East Asian peace conducted in China November 2004 - January 2005. Some research focusing on peace and conflict, points to the importance of informality and informal processes, such as informal networks (Dittmer, Fukui et al. 2000; Hwang 2006; Kwok and Tjosvold 1998; Swanström 2002; Weissmann 2005, 2008). Nonetheless, the impact of informality and informal processes with regard to peace/conflict has not been well researched and no in-depth empirical or theoretical examination has been undertaken. Hence, the underlying dynamics are either unknown, or "insider-knowledge", which points to the need for an exploratory study. The importance of informality and informal processes is generally understood by East Asian policy makers and

¹⁴ Peace impact is understood as "...to include those outcomes (intentional or unintentional) that foster and support those sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation, of violent conflict." (Bush 1998: 19).

strategic thinkers who emphasises the role and importance of informality in East Asian relations. It has also been confirmed in preliminary interviews conducted in Beijing and Sweden.¹⁵

When looking beyond studies focusing specifically on peace/conflict, the importance of informality and informal processes is widely acknowledged. The Asian states are enmeshed in informal and personalised networks in all spheres (Carlson and Suh 2004; Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Katzenstein 1997a). In the political sphere, informality is a significant feature, both on inter- and intra-state level.¹⁶ In the economic sphere, the regional integration process was for long essentially made up by informal business networks and spontaneous economic interactions among, in particular, ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, as well as overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia (Zhang 2000, 2003). On the international level, the importance of informality is not only underscored by the regional preference for non-legalistic institutions. Moreover, the pan-regional acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" as the diplomatic norm, and the importance given to inter-personal interaction between leaders also illustrate the role of informality.

In addition to understanding why there is a relative peace in East Asia, this study also makes a theoretical contribution. The empirical material in this study will not only be used to address the question of the East Asian peace, but will also facilitate the theoretical understanding of the relationship between informal processes and peace. The author argues that it is useful to generalise from the Asian experience on its own terms. As argued by Amitav Acharya, "If European and North Atlantic regional politics could be turned into international relations theory, why not Asian regional politics?" (Acharya 2004: 162-63). By identifying and understanding the processes and mechanisms behind the relative peace in the East Asian security setting, it will be possible to drawing on these findings enhance our understanding of other security settings that show an absence of security organisations or other formalised conflict management mechanisms. There are also a potential for generalising the findings on the role of (informal) processes- and mechanisms for peace. Since, the East Asian peace is a deviant case that mainstream theories cannot account for, the explanations for this phenomenon will contribute to the development of existing theories on peace, international relations, and security. It will also contribute to theories on conflict management, as an umbrella term for all concepts to prevent, manage, and/or resolve conflict, or building peace. The study will, in particular, contribute with new insights of alternative, in particular informal, processes and mechanisms of importance for building peace and preventing conflicts. These include the role and impact of a range of informal processes, including personal networks, track two diplomacy, elite socialisation, and back-channel negotiations. Finally, the study also adds an explicit peace dimension to East Asian regionalisation.

¹⁵ Preliminary interviews, Beijing China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005; Sweden, Jan 2004 - Jan 2005. The importance of informality and informal processes was confirmed in later interviews and fieldwork undertaken as part of the data collection for this project.

¹⁶ In Japan and the Koreas, the networks are essential for the financial and political stability, and the Chinese bamboo network is the largest investor in Mainland China and owns a lion's share of the business sector in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996). (For in depth discussions on different states in East Asia see Dittmer, Fukui et al. 2000.).

1.3 Defining the "East Asian" region

The term East Asia can have different meanings. At times, the concept is applied to mean the whole Asia-Pacific, including the United States and/or Russia, and at times Australia and/or New Zealand. The German foreign office, on the other hand, defines East Asia as Japan, South and North Korea, Mongolia, and China including Hong Kong and Macao, and Taiwan. As argued by Camilleri, among others, a region is, as any delineation of space, a largely subjective construct (2003: 2). (For an overview of the problem related to defining regions with focus on East Asia see Camilleri 2003; Pempel 2005a.)

Different suggestions have been made on how to best define regions. Michael Haas, drawing on criteria developed by Michael Brecher in the 1960s (Brecher 1963), has identified three key elements when defining regions (what he refers to as "international subsystems"): geographical delimitations, the existence of at least two actors, and a relatively self-contained network of political and military interactions (Haas 1970: 101). Bruce Russett has suggested "economic interdependence", "shared political attitudes and behaviour" and "social and cultural homogeneity" (Russett 1968 in Camilleri 2003: 2), while Raimo Väyrynen has suggested "proximity". In sum, as Samuel S. Kim has concluded, "[t]here is simply no such thing as a "natural region": all regions are socially constructed and politically contested..." (2004: 45).

Camilleri has suggested a separation of two influences when defining a region: "endogenous influences (those emanating from within the region or peculiar to the space encompassed by the region) and exogenous influences (those emanating outside the region or associated with space external to the region)." (2003: 3). When using this frame to define East Asia, the exogenous influence excludes Russia, Mongolia, and the United States from East Asia. Russia is geographically on the margin with the bulk of its population elsewhere. Mongolia is, since long, seen as a part of Central Asia. The United States is excluded as it is not geographically a part of East Asia. The endogenous influences in the construction of East Asia are both historical and more recent. There is a long historical relationship between the different parts of the region. A central feature here is the history of a Sino-centric world order where the "Middle Kingdom" over centuries extended its Confucian civilisation, its written language, and bureaucratic system to Korea, Japan and parts of Southeast Asia (Fairbank, Reischauer et al. 1989. Also see "Interlude: A brief review of China's historical role in East Asia" below.) Since the mid-1980s, East Asia has experienced a market driven regionalisation process, which has occurred despite the lack of government coordination. For example, since the early 1980s, more than 50% of East Asian exports have been intra-regional (Ravenhill 2002). In more recent years, the regional political elites have been trying to catch up with the economic forces by turning the East Asian regionalisation process into a regionalism project (i.e. state driven regionalisation). The APT process, which has institutionalised cooperation between the ten ASEAN members and China, Japan, South Korea, has set the external borders for regional cooperation. North Korea and Taiwan do not participate in this process, but are historically, culturally, and geographically linked to East Asia as defined here. Moreover, they are involved in two of the most critical regional flashpoints. They do not participate in the APT process: North Korea since it is a closed and underdeveloped state with limited relations to the outside world, and Taiwan, since it is not allowed to participate due to its conflict with Mainland China.

East Asia can be seen as consisting of two sub-regions, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is, in this study, defined as the ten ASEAN member states (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, People's Democratic Republic of Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar/Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) (On the ambiguity of Southeast Asia as a region see Öjendal 2001.)¹⁷ Northeast Asia is defined as Mainland China, Taiwan, Japan and the two Koreas. These two sub-regions are in most research treated as two separate parts. Each one has a very different security regime. In the case of Southeast Asia, inter-state relations are often multilateral and generally take place in the ASEAN, which, by some, is seen as an "Asian way" of creating a security community (Acharya 2001). Northeast Asia, on the other hand, is characterised by a pattern of bilateral inter-state relations. This said, the two regions are interlinked economically and, over time, also politically and socio-culturally. They also have an interlinked history of Chinese influence. Furthermore, the two regions share one of the conflicts in focus in this study: the South China Sea conflict, which transcends the sub-regional border.

To conceptualise East Asia as a region is a recent phenomenon (See Alvstam 2001 for a critical historical perspective). Despite the historical interaction, the idea of East Asia as a region did not emerge until the early 1990s when Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir proposed the creation of the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) (later changed to the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC)) (For a good review of how the East Asian concept was constructed and moved from the ASEC to ASEAN+3, see Terada 2003) This suggestion was opposed by the U.S., and eventually undermined by its allies South Korea and Japan. Mahathir's idea found new ground with the formation of APT at the height of the Asian Financial Crisis 1997 (Breslin and Higgott 2000; Higgott and Stubbs 1995; Terada 2003).

1.4 Research methodology and methods

1.4.1 Meta-theoretical starting point

This study adheres to a constructivist perspective of the world. According to this view, the basic social order is considered a human product. Society is perceived as constructed, and continuously re-constructed, by human agents. It is also acknowledged that humanity in itself is a product of society and the existing social order. At the same time, it is accepted that society exists as an objective reality.¹⁸ Knowledge and social phenomena are more generally seen as something that cannot be separated from the subject knowing. The two are, not only, being produced through social interactions, but are also in a constant state of revision. Facts are seen as social constructions, as opposed to being given. It is only after a fact has been constructed that its effect on reality can be obtained.

¹⁷ The ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 by the five original member states Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997 and Cambodia in 1999. In this study the term ASEAN refers to all ten members unless otherwise specified. According to the definition used in this study, Timor Leste (East Timor) is excluded from the definition of Southeast Asia since it did not become an independent political entity until 2002. Moreover, it is not involved in any of the key regional flashpoints. Furthermore, it is not a member of the ASEAN or part of the APT process.

¹⁸ The author agrees with Berger and Luckmann's principle of the basic features of social order, i.e. that "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (Berger and Luckmann 1981/1969: 79).

Knowledge and understanding are seen as inherently circular. It can thus be no empirical understanding, nor is it possible to make observations, without having a theoretical framework or pre-understanding that, consciously and/or unconsciously, affect the way we see and attribute meaning to observed phenomenon. At the same time, theory is not necessarily of more importance than empirical understanding. Rather, the relationship between theory and the empirical reality is reciprocal. In the same way as empirical observations are informed by a theoretical pre-understanding, theory cannot be separated from, or escape influence by, the social world it tries to explain and understand.¹⁹

This is inspired by Max Weber's *Verstehen* approach (*verstehen* is best translated as "understanding" or "interpretive understanding"). To understand the East Asian peace, there is a need to go beyond the focus on mechanisms or external causal models (natural science style), and strive for a more fundamental understanding of the motives and values guiding the actors. Hence *verstehen* is suitable as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the empirical paradox of the East Asian peace. This approach facilitates the identification of the processes behind the East Asian peace, and the understanding of how they play a role in, and impact, the relative peace in the region.

This study is also concerned with how different actors make sense of the world around them and how preconceptions affect these perceptions. As mentioned above, understanding is perceived as inherently circular: we cannot fully understand the parts unless we understand the whole and the relationship between the two are reciprocal. A similar circular logic applies to past and present, which can only be understood in the light of the other. Following this logic, peace and conflict in East Asia need to be understood in the light of a deeper understanding of the cultural phenomenon that constitutes the dynamics of the East Asian security setting. Peace, and the processes and mechanisms behind it, are related to, and form parts of, this larger dynamic.

This study follows Hollis and Smith's "level of analysis" argument (1990). According to this, international relations can be explained or understood at different levels of analysis by proceeding, either from system to unit or from unit to system. The relationship between the two is dialectic, and there are structural constraints at all levels, which at the same time are constructed and continuously re-constructed by the agents/units they, in turn, constrain. In this study, the levels identified are the international system, the region, the state, the bureaucracy, and the individual. As the empirical paradox under investigation is inter-state peace, the focus of this study is on the state level. The states are the sovereign units that constitute the international system, and are thus concurrently constrained by it. In addition, the regional level is important. In East Asia, the regional level is best understood as a system separated from, but interlinked with, both the states and the international system. The regional system does create normative constraints for its members, but these constraints are, in turn, created and re-constructed by the member states. Non-state actors are included at all levels, but are expected to be most prominent at the bureaucratic and individual level. These are the levels where the regional non-governmental elites are expected to have most leverage.

¹⁹ This approach is in line with Heidegger's argument that all understanding has a pre-understanding, and everything is understood in a context (*Bedeutenzusammenhang*) (Helenius 1990: ch. 2, esp. pp. 74-85).

1.4.2 A comparative approach

The author positions himself and his research methods in the middle ground between "hard" social sciences such as traditional political science, and "soft" social sciences such as area studies and other context focused disciplines such as anthropology. This middle ground has by some been referred to as the "eclectic centre" of comparative studies (Africa Today 1997; Axline 1994b; Kohli, Evans et al. 1995; Lombaerde, Söderbaum et al. 2010; Payne 1998). Such a middle ground can arguably avoid problems with exaggerated contextualisation or over-generalised or irrelevant theory (Lombaerde, Söderbaum et al. 2010).

More specifically, this study makes a "soft comparison" between three selected case studies within East Asia. A soft comparison uses a fixed analytical framework and contextualised case studies. That is, the case studies are selected beforehand in accordance with the explanatory aim of the study. For example, in this study, the most suitable cases for understanding the East Asian peace have been selected (see "Case selection" below). The case studies are, in turn, systematically analysed and compared. By using pre-defined, contextualised case studies, rather than a framework made up by cases that have been selected randomly or in an *ad hoc* manner, a soft comparison goes beyond merely applying the same framework on a number of cases. A soft comparison can be contrasted with the traditionally used "hard comparison", which apply rigorous method and structured comparisons with a focus on variables. Typical examples of hard comparisons are "structured, focused" comparison (George 1979; George and Bennett 2005: ch. 3; George and McKeown 1985; George and Smoke 1974) and the so called "qualitative comparative analysis" (QCA) (Ragin 1987, 1994).²⁰

It is acknowledged that soft comparisons differ from hard comparison and they do not claim to have the same methodological benefits as traditional "comparative methods" (i.e. hard comparisons) (see e.g. George and Bennett 2005; King, Keohane et al. 1994; Ragin 1987). This said, soft and hard comparisons are both valid forms of comparison. In regards to soft comparisons, certain gains can be made by comparing different cases without necessarily follow the rigorous standards of hard comparisons. Axline argued, in the context of comparative regional analysis, that "comparable case studies" bring their own advantages, even if a traditional hard comparison might be perceived as the most fruitful approach (Axline 1994a: 20).²¹

"If they [the comparable case studies] are carried out within a single analytical framework their ability to contribute to cumulative general knowledge is enhanced. They can go beyond the level of "interpretative" case studies to play role as "theory"-generating and "theory-confirming/infirming" case studies, while at the same time bringing the depth of detailed knowledge that has always been recognized as the special advantage of the case study." (Axline 1994a: 20)

It should be emphasised that in a soft comparison, the case studies are not only "comparable", but specifically selected to fit the context of the study. For example, in this study the Taiwan issue, the Korean nuclear conflict and the conflict in the South China Sea have been selected as they are found to be both the critical and most informative cases for understanding the East Asian peace

²⁰ The literature on comparative case studies is plentiful. In addition to the already mentioned works, see e.g. Collier 1991; Eckstein 1975; Lijphart 1971.

²¹ Axline uses the terms "true comparative analysis" (Axline 1994a).

(see "Case selection" below). More specifically, in this study a soft comparison is done by using a single analytical framework across three pre-defined "comparable" cases within the case of East Asia. These three cases will be systematically compared with the aim of developing an understanding of the East Asian peace.

1.4.3 Embedded case study design

In order to develop an understanding of the paradoxical peace in East Asia, a case study approach will be used. More specifically, this study applies what Robert K. Yin refers to as an "embedded case study design" (Yin 2009: 46-53). The reason for choosing this design is that the East Asian security setting is made up by an interlinked web of different inter-state relations, and to them related conflicts, which makes it inappropriate to treat it as a uniform aggregate.

Thus, as "logical subunits" exist (i.e. conflictual inter-state relations that risk escalating into war) it is beneficial to pay attention to the subunits, rather than using a "*holistic design*" in which East Asia is treated as an aggregated unit (Yin 2009: 50). Consequently, within the case of the East Asian security setting, three separate case studies are undertaken on three embedded cases (the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea, and the Korean nuclear conflict) (Yin 2009: 46-53. Also see Merriam 1988). Each of the three case studies is at first treated individually. They are analysed in depth in separate chapters, allowing for each case to speak for itself (chapter 3-5). Thereafter, the cases are contrasted and cross-related to achieve more in-depth insights and enhance the representability and generalisability of the findings (chapter 6) (cf. Merriam 1994: 164-66, 187-88). By contrasting and cross-relating the findings in the three embedded case studies, each with different background and context but at the same time sharing similar dimensions including a relative peace, it is not only possible to make more far-reaching generalisations, but also to contextualise these (Miles and Huberman 1984 in Merriam 1994: 164-65. Also see Eisenhart 1989; Yin 2003, 2004.).²² In this way, it is possible to map the processes more rigorously and reach an understanding regarding the peacebuilding and conflict preventive mechanisms through which these processes impact peace. If the East Asian region would have been analysed as an aggregate, this would not have been achievable.

Using a case study approach is particularly useful since it allows for high levels of conceptual validity, as well as the ability to identify and measure indicators that represent the theoretical concepts in focus, here represented by the processes and conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms that underlie peace (George and Bennett 2005: 19-20). These strengths are needed to correctly identify and categorise the processes and understand the mechanisms behind the peace. Of particular importance is the ability to explain, and in detail explore the causal mechanisms in the cases. This is essential when exploring the identified processes and mechanisms and their role for, and impact on, peace/conflict, especially given the large number of intervening factors that are likely to be at play (George and Bennett 2005: 21). The case study method is also open to unexpected causal mechanisms and explanations, which is an important feature in this study where new explanations for peace are sought (George and Bennett 2005: 21). Finally, case studies are also advantageous in accommodating complex causal relations, such as equifinality,

²² For perspectives on the logic behind and approaches to within-case analyses, see e.g. Collier, Mahoney et al. 2004; George and Bennett 2005: (esp. ch. 8); Mahoney 1999; Mahoney 2003: 360-68.

interaction effects and path dependency (Ragin 1987; Yin 2004, 2009).²³ This is essential in this type of research, in which at least interaction effects, equifinality and multifinality are expected.²⁴

The case studies apply a recursive approach in the data collection, aiming at developing a "thick description" of the relative peace in each respective case. Thus, the case descriptions are not reduced to observable human actions (i.e. "thin description"), but also aim to develop a deeper understanding of the contexts/web of meanings in which the actions and processes exist ("thick description") (Geertz 1973, 1994; Ryle 1971).²⁵ The collection and analysis of the data was done in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other. In the identification of important processes for the relative peace, an inclusive approach was applied since the exclusion of potentially relevant processes is seen as a greater threat to valid inferences than the inclusion of additional processes that may or may not be spurious (George and Bennett 2005: 247). In line with George and Bennett, the exclusion of relevant factors is considered to interfere both with within-case analyses and cross-case comparisons, while the inclusion of an additional factor is "...rather unlikely to lead to spurious inferences as long as sufficient process-tracing evidence is available to test whether the variable plays a causal role." (George and Bennett 2005: 247). In other words, this study tries to develop a picture, as complete as possible, of the processes and mechanisms behind the East Asian peace and their respective complex web of interactions and inter-linkages. There are, of course, limitations to this approach, and this research does not claim to identify all possible causal paths. Nevertheless, it still makes an important contribution by identifying and interpreting central processes and mechanisms behind the East Asian peace.

Process-tracing methods are used to address the question of how and to what extent the identified processes and mechanisms play a role in, and impact, the relative peace. Process tracing is a suitable method given its usefulness in "...obtaining an explanation for deviant cases, those that have outcomes not predicted or explained adequately by existing theories." (George and Bennett 2005: 215. cf. Lijphart 1971: 692). The East Asian peace is such a case, since the outcome (the relative peace) is not predicted or properly explained by existing theories, as was discussed in the introduction. Process tracing, in this case, makes it possible to get closer to the mechanisms or micro foundations behind the East Asian Peace, i.e. the observed phenomenon (George and Bennett 2005).

This study develops an analytical explanation of the three embedded cases, and for the overall East Asian case. This is suitable since the case narratives can be converted into "... analytical causal explanation[s] couched in explicit theoretical forms." (George and Bennett 2005: 211).²⁶ Thus, by using three embedded cases within the East Asian security setting, the benefits of

²³ Equifinality concerns the problem with different causal patterns leading to similar outcomes. Equifinality challenges the common assumption that if there are similar outcomes in several cases, they must have a common cause. (George and Bennett 2005: 161-62)

²⁴ The in-depth understanding granted through the case study design would not be possible if using a multiple-case design. For a discussion on the problem of multi-case studies being too shallow see e.g. Dyer, Gibb et al. 1991.

²⁵ The term "thick description" was introduced by philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1971), and has been adopted and popularised by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (Geertz 1973). More recently, the term has been broadly adopted by qualitative researchers. The concept has, by some, also been used as a way to address the question of how to generalise from findings in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba, for example, have argued that there is a need for a thick description to allow the readers to assess how transferable the findings are to other contexts (1985).

²⁶ Alternatively, a more general explanation will be found, if the data for an analytical explanation is missing (George and Bennett 2005: 211-12).

comparative and single case study designs are combined (Yin 2009). It makes possible the testing of the validity and reliability of the findings by comparing the three embedded cases, and at the same time makes sure that enough attention is paid to the specific context. By comparing the three embedded cases within East Asia, the dilemma of the possible uniqueness of a single case is also reduced.

If similar processes and/or mechanisms are found to be important in several of the cases, it is not unlikely that they will apply more generally in East Asia, but also beyond this specific region. Even if the exact manifestations not necessary are the same, it is plausible that the underlying dynamics have a more general bearing. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the three embedded cases represent different levels of conflict intensity, are experiencing different levels of peace, have different conflict dynamics, types of main issues, and actors involved. They are also located in three distinctive geographical parts of East Asia. It should here also be noted that as during the research process there will have been an alteration between theory development and new empirical observations, the theoretical findings will not be merely inductions based on observed phenomenon, but they have a solid theoretical base. The findings are not merely inductively derived, but also deductively linked to the existing theory.

1.4.4 The research process

The research process can be divided into three phases: 1. the preliminary study; 2. the collection and preliminary analysis of the data; and 3. the final analysis and writing up. Firstly, a preliminary study was conducted in late 2004-2005. This included 3 months of fieldwork in China. A preliminary exploration of the possible informal processes behind the East Asian peace was undertaken. The preliminary findings, together with previous research on East Asia, guided the development of the initial interview guide and helped develop the basic presumptions concerning the importance of informality and informal processes. In addition, the author's previous research on China's role in negotiations on the Korean Peninsula influenced the preliminary study, the initial interview guide, and the basic assumptions (Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b).

During phase two, data collection and preliminary analyses were undertaken in tandem, and the interview guide, preliminary categories of processes and mechanisms, and underlying hypotheses were continuously revised. In each case study, the processes and their related conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms were identified and mapped. This was done separately for each case study to minimize the risk that processes or mechanisms were left out to make the cases fit the same frame, and to limit the influence of observations done on the aggregated East Asian level. Needless to say, given that the three case studies have been done more or less in parallel, the findings and experiences from the different cases have affected each other throughout the research process. For example, when a new process or mechanism was identified in one case, its possible existence and role in the other cases was investigated. Throughout the research process, efforts were made to ensure that cross-fertilisation did not have a negative impact on the identification and inclusion of new processes and mechanisms. For example, the final category "elite interaction" did not exist at this stage, but was created during the final analysis.

In phase three, the findings were compiled and analysed. The identified processes were mapped, categorised, and analysed. This was a delicate process, during which efforts were made to fit the

identified processes into the same categories in each case study. This, however, had to be done without violating the empirical data. In order to handle the extensive empirical material, and the large number and types of identified processes and mechanisms, software for computer assisted qualitative analysis was used (in this case MAXQDA). For example, in the Korean case study the Chinese influence deserved its own section, and in the Taiwan case study "secret envoys" needed to be included in the section on back-channel negotiations. This was realised only after this feature was specifically emphasised in the interviews in ways that did not fit the definition of back channel negotiations used in this study (see "Back channel negotiations" in chapter 2). At this stage, the analyses moved back and forth both between the three cases, and between the embedded cases and the East Asian level. After the processes were categorised and analysed, a similar process was conducted with regard to the mechanisms. The findings in the three cases were compiled and the overarching conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms for each category of processes were identified. It was not until this stage that the mechanisms were categorised and received their final labels.

1.4.5 Case selection

Within East Asia, three cases were selected: 1. the Taiwan issue; 2. the South China Sea; and 3. the Korean nuclear conflict. The Taiwan issue concerns Mainland China's relations with Taiwan and the question of Taiwan's international status. The South China Sea case analyses the developments of the conflicts in the South China Sea, as well as China's relations to the ASEAN and its member states. These two cannot be separated, as the SCS is the key area of conflict and, at the same time, as will be seen in the case study, very much a manifestation of Sino-ASEAN relations. The Korean nuclear conflict concerns the possible possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea and the international responses to this. Focus will be on the role of China and its relations with, and influence on, North Korea.

These cases are suitable for developing an understanding of the East Asian peace. Firstly, they have been identified as the three most critical post-Cold War conflicts in East Asia. Following, to understand the East Asian peace, the lack of war in these three cases are needed to be accounted for since they are the three conflicts with the greatest risk to break the peace. The South China Sea is the locus of a number of territorial conflicts between China and the ASEAN members and a conflict where there have been regular military clashes. On the Korean Peninsula the risk of war has been imminent throughout the post-Cold War era, and in the Taiwan Strait the possibility of a Chinese invasion is always present. There are also theoretical reasons behind the case selection. Indeed, these are the East Asian conflicts that, according to neorealist analysts, have been predicted as most prone to escalation into war after the end of the Cold War. For example, in 1992 Andrew Tanzer characterised the Spratly area in the South China Sea as Asia's next flash point (Tanzer 1992), and David Kang has labelled Taiwan and Korea (together with Kashmir) as Asia's "three acute conflicts that had endured for decades" (Kang 2003a). (see "The Empirical paradox" above). Sino-Japanese relations in general and the conflict in the East China Sea over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands were considered as an alternative case. However, the three other cases were considered more critical for the 1990-2008 East Asian peace, mainly because there has not been an overhanging risk of war in Sino-Japanese relations in the given time period, despite the tensions.

Secondly, these cases are the most informative ones, as they differ in their features. They have different levels of conflict intensity, and are located at different levels of peace (see "Defining

peace" in chapter 2). Each case involves different actors, types of issues, and conflict dynamics and differs in its geographical location. Consequently, the findings of these three cases are, not only, expected to carry significant explanatory value regarding the processes and mechanisms behind the East Asian peace, but will also have general bearing beyond the East Asian region. In short, the processes and mechanisms identified in the three cases are not derived from a unique case, nor are they dependent on certain specific conditions.

1.4.5.1 Review of the selected case studies

The Taiwan issue has, with the exception of the early to mid 1990s, been stalemated on a crisis level.²⁷ The level of conflict intensity has been high with explicit threats of military actions from Beijing, and official relations have been absent.²⁸ At the same time, if a peace perspective is applied, it is clear that cooperation in all other areas outside official relations did grow tremendously during this period, despite frozen political relations and the official Taiwanese policy. Indeed, if focus is limited to these areas, cross strait relations have been moving towards a stable peace. There are few signs of a crisis or unstable peace, and the feeling of perceived security is higher than could be expected.

The South China Sea (SCS) represents a historical success story. The conflict has been transformed from the early 1990s when it was perceived as the next regional next flash point. State to state relations have transformed, making war more and more unthinkable. In terms of peace, the SCS and Sino-ASEAN relations have been transformed from a crisis level to one best described as a nascent stable peace. The SCS has, throughout the period of study, been the most critical conflict between China and the ASEAN. However, the SCS conflict has followed the overarching positive developments in Sino-ASEAN relations. Despite the tensions in the SCS and the unresolved underlying incompatibilities, war is nevertheless assessed as most unlikely as the SCS conflict cannot be separated from the overarching Sino-ASEAN relations. Since the early 1990s peaceful relations between China and ASEAN has been institutionalised, and there have been a strong regional integration process making the two become interlinked and economically interdependent. Thus, as a manifestation of the latter, the conflict is tilting towards a stable, rather than unstable, peace, where war is very unlikely.

The Korean nuclear conflict is included since it has been the most critical conflict in the region, and hence needs to be accounted for. Of the three cases included in this study, the Korean nuclear issue is the conflict that has come closest to passing the war threshold, but by spring 2008 the conflict still had not escalated into war. Throughout the 1990-2008 period, the conflict fluctuated

²⁷ In most research, it is assumed that conflicts follow a cyclical pattern in regard to their intensity levels, i.e. they are escalating from (relative) stability and peace into crisis and war, thereafter deescalating into relative peace. These cycles are seen as reoccurring until the conflicting parties have been able to resolve the underlying incompatibilities (See e.g. Lund 1996: (esp. pp. 37-44). For a discussion on the life cycle(s) of conflict see Swanström and Weissmann 2005.) In the case of Taiwan, the main conflict over Taiwan's status has been stalemated on a high conflict intensity level, neither moving towards peace or war. (For a discussion of the stalemate in relations between Mainland China and Taiwan see e.g. Bush 2005b; Ding 2005; Zheng and Wu 2006.)

²⁸ This has changed after the spring 2008 elections, after which political relations have increased. However, these developments largely fall outside the time limitations of this study. Positive effects have been seen as a result of the 2008 parliamentary (January) and presidential elections (March), even before the newly elected President Ma took office (May). The positive developments that had occurred by May support the findings with regard to the 1990-2008 peace across the Taiwan Strait.

between the levels of crisis and unstable peace. Up until 2003, the conflict regularly escalated to the brink of war, and crisis can be said to have been the normal state of affairs. Between 2003 and 2008, the conflict was best characterised as an unstable peace. In this latter period, crises have occurred on a regular basis, but there have been no brink of war situations. At the same time, relations between North Korea and the U.S. seem to have developed in a somewhat more positive and constructive direction. In addition to this, China has moved away from granting North Korean unconditional support, which over time has enhanced the conditions conducive for peace. Although this has been a slow development with regular downturns, it has nevertheless been a move in a positive direction.

The Taiwan issue has a long historical background since it is a conflict that originates in the post-colonial liberation of China, the following communist revolution and the subsequent exile of the Kuomintang government. It is a deviant case that falls outside normal international practices since one of the regional great powers (China) does not accept outside interference in what it perceives as its internal affairs. Consequently, the Taiwan issue cannot be addressed in any international framework, nor be subjected to multilateral approaches. The conflict concerns sovereignty and the main issue is Taiwan's political status (the right of the *de facto* independent Taiwan to decide whether it is to be accepted as a *de jure* independent state). In this conflict, the U.S. plays a central role as Taiwan's security guarantor in case of an attack from the Mainland.

The South China Sea case is closely linked to the overall Sino-ASEAN relations, and central to the development of peaceful relations in the region. Of the three included case studies, this case has seen the most positive developments regarding peace, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The SCS differs from the two other cases by being a multi-party conflict. It concerns competing territorial claims between China and a number of ASEAN members.²⁹ The ASEAN members have worked together, collectively engaging and negotiating with China. It is also a multi issue conflict. Although the key issue concerns territorial sovereignty, it is also linked to free sea lanes of navigation and access to natural resources. Furthermore, the geographical and geostrategic position of the SCS makes it a security dilemma not only in East Asia, but also in the wider Asia Pacific region.

The SCS is also a manifestation of cross-regional economic policy, successful economic integration and interdependence, and its possible spill over on peace. The experiences from the economic field have, not least, been positive for the development and acceptance of non-confrontational norms and practices among the regional powers. In this regard, the "ASEAN-way" has been fundamental for the development of a relative peace in the sub-regional security settings, and has impacted the actor's behaviour in other conflicts across the region. For example, although the Taiwan issue is not handled within regional frameworks, features of the "ASEAN-way" are found also in this case study. The role of informality and, to some extent, conflict avoidance has been important in this context.

The Korean nuclear conflict can be traced back to the end of the Cold War, when the loss of support from Moscow and Beijing caused Pyongyang to accelerate its nuclear program. The main issue concerns nuclear proliferation. It has two dimensions: the question of nuclear proliferation

²⁹ The latter is here referred to as ASEAN, both as a simplification and as an acknowledgement that over time it has been normalised to manage the SCS in multilateral frameworks.

in the Korean Peninsula and the neighbouring countries; and the survival of the non-proliferation treaty. It is a hence also a global issue, as it concerns the survival of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is the only case where one of the conflicting parties is an extra-regional actor, wherefore its progress cannot be limited to intra-regional dynamics. For example, the "ASEAN-way" does not apply here, as the norms and practices of informality, conflict avoidance, and face saving is neither acknowledged by the U.S., nor by the North Koreans. The two conflicting parties are North Korea and the United States, the two parties that signed the armistice agreement that ended the Korean War in 1953. South Korea is also involved, but has been forced to keep a low profile in regards to the overall resolution of the main issue since North Korea refuses to negotiate with any state but the U.S. China is also a key actor. Not only is it a neighbour and a major regional power, but it also enjoys a historical relationship with the Korean peninsula that dates back more than 2,000 years. Finally, given the six-party talks, it is the only conflict in East Asia where a formal conflict management mechanism exists. However, as is argued in the case study, it is not the formal conflict management mechanism in itself, or its relative formality *per se*, that has had peace impact (see chapter 5).

Table 1: Overview of case studies

Case	Area	Key issue	Conflicting parties
Taiwan issue	Taiwan Strait	Sovereignty (political status of Taiwan)	Mainland China and Taiwan
South China Sea	South China Sea	Territory	China and ASEAN members
Korean nuclear conflict	Korean Peninsula	Nuclear proliferation	North Korea and the United States

1.5 Material

1.5.1 Fieldwork

Most empirical data was collected during periods of fieldwork between November 2004 and December 2008. Totally three longer periods of fieldwork (3, 12 and 6 months respectively) and three shorter field trips were undertaken to China, Taiwan and South Korea. Most of the material was collected during 12 months of fieldwork from June 2006 to July 2007 and in February - March 2008. The extended fieldwork periods were spent in Beijing, with regular visits to Shanghai, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. One trip was also undertaken to Guangzhou and Tokyo, Japan respectively. During the autumn visit in 2008, little new material was collected, but efforts were made to check and confirm previously collected material with the available experts. The reason for choosing Beijing as the field work location is both that it is the centre of power of the main actor, and that there is a denser cluster of people and institutes with knowledge, experiences and insights of importance for this study. In addition, Beijing is the city through which most foreign delegations and many other individuals from the research and policymaking community pass. This has allowed for interviews and discussions with a number of non-Beijing based individuals from East Asia, Europe and the U.S. There is also a pragmatic reason behind the choice of China and Beijing. The author had, when planning his field work, a developed personal network in China, particularly in Beijing. Taken together, this made China and Beijing the best access point for interviewees, both locally and in the rest of the region. The June 2006 - July 2007

field work period was jointly hosted by the School of International Studies (SIS), Peking University and the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China in Beijing. Between November 2004 and January 2005, the hosts were China Foreign Affairs University and Renmin University of China.³⁰

Table 2: Field research, overview

Time period	Base
Nov 2004 - Jan 2005	Beijing, China
Jul 2006 - Jun 2007	Beijing, with regular visits to Shanghai and Hong Kong and one visit to Guangzhou and Tokyo respectively
Mar 2007	Taipei, Taiwan
Apr - May 2007	Taipei, Taiwan
Sep 2007	Shanghai, China
Dec 2007	Hong Kong, China
Feb - Mar 2008	Seoul, South Korea and Beijing, China
Jul - Dec 2008	Beijing, China, with a brief visit to Seoul, South Korea

The empirical material used in this study can be divided into four types: 1. interviews; 2. participatory observations (participation in different track two settings); 3. official documents and other primary written sources (including transcripts of speeches and statistics); and 4. written secondary sources (background studies, research, etc).

1.5.2 Interviews

The major part of the empirical material was collected through interviews with elite individuals in East Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan) and in Europe (Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Denmark). The main interviewees were experienced elites with unique personal insights from, or expertise on, the interactions in the three cases. These include current and former policymakers, military personnel, and others involved in cross-border interactions or policy. Many of the Chinese interviewees were members of government think tanks. The people interviewed in Europe included current and former policymakers and military officials, experts, and people involved in track two frameworks in East Asia. The interviewees were not necessarily nationals of the country in which the interview was conducted. Thus, although the interviews were conducted in East Asia and Europe, a substantial number of the interviewed were American nationals.

The interviewed people had different access to information than the author, and were often personally involved in the conflicts included in this research. The interviews were important also in cases with openly available factual material. In this regard, the elaborations of the interviewee and the interaction between the author and the respondent have been a value-adding process. In particular, it was beneficial to this research project to let the interviewee elaborate on his/her

³⁰ Peking University is the leading university in China in the area of this dissertation. The university has close links with the Chinese leadership and its researchers have extensive linkage to policy. Renmin University (People's University of China) was founded by the Chinese Communist Party and even as it has the same formal status as other universities, it is closely linked to the Chinese Communist Party. China Foreign Affairs University is not a regular university under the Ministry for Education, but part of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It has close links to the ministry and many of its students have parents in the ministry. It is also used as an academic umbrella by the Foreign Ministry. It is also a place where it is natural for foreign diplomats and delegations to pass by.

insights and experiences in the context of the relative East Asian peace and/or the relative peace in the embedded cases, or other more specific aspects of this research undertaking such as informality and personal networks. It should also be noted that many things that can be discussed in an interview cannot be published, at least not by the interviewees. This problem was most apparent among the Chinese interviewees.³¹ Thus, without interviews, much of the material would not have been available. In addition, even when the needed material was available, there was always a risk of overstretching information to make it fit existing theories, a risk that is partly overcome by using first-hand expertise and insights provided by the interviewees.

The interviews also have added value as they allow for general conclusions on the role and importance of different processes and mechanisms based on the experiences of people with firsthand knowledge. During the interviews, individuals involved in, for example, conflict resolution in the SCS and across the Taiwan Strait have elaborated on why, how and to what extent specific processes and mechanisms have played a role for peace. This is the case both with regard to specific activities or processes, and on a more general level. As long as the author knows about the involvement of the respondent in these processes, such benefits occur regardless of whether the person is explicit about the own role.³² First-hand knowledge is essential given that this study focuses on informal, often unofficial or semi-official, processes and mechanisms. The interviews also made possible to get concrete examples and confirmation of phenomenon and practices that are widely acknowledged, but not well analysed or sourced. For example, off the record negotiations and discussions within formalised frameworks is a common feature that is generally acknowledged by insiders. At the same time, little is written about it. In addition, the interviews have allowed for a continuously testing of the preliminary findings on new interviewees throughout the research process.

1.5.2.1 Conducting interviews with key persons

Most of the interviewees in this study are key persons and members of the elite in their respective society. They are members of a group of people who perform important roles in the governance of society. Indeed, both as individuals and as a group, they possess disproportional influence over societal decision-making in the form of social prestige, political power and money. It is a group bound together by social and educational background. Often, these individuals share experiences in government, business, and the military sectors, as well as experiences as policy specialists, independent entrepreneurs, and consultants outside the formal structures (cf. Mills 1956).

Interviewing elites comes with a range of specific problems that needs to be taken into account. Little has been written on the epistemological issues in elite interviewing. Rather the focus is more often on the problem of access, or which interview format to use (Dexter 1970; Glassner

³¹ In addition, among Chinese experts it is not only sensitive to write on a number of issues, moreover the Chinese university and think-tank system does not reward publishing in the same way as in the West. Publishing is simply not necessarily an important aspect of a successful career, particularly not in foreign language journals outside China.

³² Most individuals, and especially the Chinese, interviewed in East Asia were humble about their personal involvement. In this context, the extensive network of the author, together with information from gatekeepers, has been essential for assessing the value of the information obtained in the interviews. Among the interviewees, many have been, or still are, deeply involved in one or several of the case studies, and/or have similar experiences from other areas. This can be contrasted with the interviewed American citizens who often had a tendency to strongly emphasise personal involvement. The Europeans also tended to, at least, make a point of their involvement to enhance their credibility, although in a more humble fashion.

and Hertz 1999; Hertz and Imber 1995b; Odendahl and Shaw 2002). In the literature, four key problem areas have been identified: 1. the problem with obtaining access to the elite; 2. the problem of power asymmetry between the researcher and the interviewee; 3. the problem of assessing the openness of elites; and 4. whether to provide feedback to the interviewee or not (Welch, Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2002). These problems were taken into account when planning the fieldwork. Especially the first three problems did arise in this study.

The first problem, to get access to the elite, is a major one. In comparison with non-elites, access to elites is regarded as particularly difficult because they, by their very nature, "establish barriers that set their members apart from the rest of society." (Hertz and Imber 1995a: viii. Also see Adler and Adler 2003; Zhang 2008). To get access to elites in East Asia has been a major problem, and one of the main concerns for the feasibility of this study. The problem has been addressed by using theoretical and snowball sampling, and the use of gatekeepers. This proved to be the most effective way to select appropriate interviewees for this research, as it was difficult to access all the appropriate people without introductions.

Gatekeepers were essential, especially in Mainland China, Taiwan, and South Korea. They have also, to some extent, been used in Europe. Without gatekeepers it would, in most cases, not have been possible to gain access to the interview subjects. In those cases where access would have been possible, the lack of trust would however have limited the information obtained. In this regard, trust-transfer has been essential whereby the recommendation by a reliable individual transfers his or her trust onto the author. The gatekeepers were also important to get the snowball sampling started, and to facilitate the theoretical sampling, i.e. to find the correct people to interview. This was the case, not least since the aim was to get access to people with experiences of a more informal or semi-official kind.

The snowball sampling helped the author to get access to further interviewees. However, the initial gatekeepers, together with local affiliations, continued to be of importance throughout the research process. In China, the local affiliation is central to gain access, and the acceptance and interest needed to conduct interviews in connections to visits, conferences, and workshops. In South Korea and Taiwan, it was more a question of gatekeepers than of affiliation. Snowball sampling is an efficient method for getting access to people in East Asia due to the local practice of doing things on a short notice. With few exceptions, the interviews were not planned more than a few days, or possibly a week, ahead. This should be contrasted with Europe, where it is often necessary to plan far ahead if you want to gain access to elite interviewees, as key persons have a tendency to be bound by their schedules. In East Asia, when trying to organise interviewees the response has often been "call me when you arrive" or "just pass by my office". Also when using gatekeepers, they have tended to work on the same schedule, i.e. not setting up meetings until the last minute or upon arrival. This did work well, and meetings generally took place within days, regardless of organised by gatekeepers or through the snowball model. Nevertheless, this practice made repeated visits necessary, as it was problematic to fit all necessary interviews into one visit due to overlapping commitments and availability. The problem of planning in advance also meant that it was necessary to stay at least one to two weeks, as it often took a few days to get "the snowball" moving. One practice that proved successful was to arrive Tuesday - Wednesday, and leave Wednesday - Thursday the coming week. This gave enough time to conduct one or two interviews before the weekend, and get the time to set up a full schedule of interviews for the second week. This also worked well, as there was a tendency

for people to postpone meetings until the last minute before departure. Thus, the marginal effects of staying a few days longer would have been limited.

Theoretical sampling was used to select the most relevant interviewees. Indeed, interviewees identified through a theoretical sampling procedure are more likely to accept being interviewed since they tend to feel that they have something to contribute. It also shows that efforts have been made to select them, and the researcher will also be more informed before conducting the interview, which taken together help create trust.

The second problem is the power asymmetry between the researcher and the interviewee, where the interviewee is in a position of power. The literature, especially in business studies, identifies a number of problems derived from this asymmetry. These include the problem that the elites may dominate the interview as they are "professional communicators" (See for example Ostrander 1993; Welch, Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2002), which was obvious in some cases. No set formula was found to handle this problem, but one strategy that often proved successful was to focus on the person's own experiences, moving towards the specific, and to interfere with own assessments to get the person to move out of his or her space. It was also helpful that the interviewed people often had a direct interest in the topic of the study, and hence were interested in learning about the author's findings and research.

Thirdly, it is often difficult to assess how open the interviewees will be beforehand. The researcher's experience is that, in the Chinese context, the junior individuals are more guarded in their comments than the senior people, who are more open to assess their views and opinions. This was the case even when the opinion differed from official policies. This was also the pattern expected (Fitz and Halpin 1995; Sinclair and Brady 1987). Most central for increasing the subject's level of openness, was to know others who they know and respect (Ostrander 1993: 16 in Welch, Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2002). In this regard, gatekeepers and snowball sampling is central. To be knowledgeable, and have good affiliations proved to be of utmost importance. In this regard, the authors' affiliations in Sweden and China were most beneficial.

The fourth problem concerns whether to give feedback to the interviewees before publication of the findings. In the literature, this is encouraged as far as it provides additional information, or even verify facts (Thomas 1993 in Welch, Marschan-Piekkari et al. 2002). However, this can also lead to attempts to censorship. In this study, no feedback was given, except already published material. Lack of feedback has not been a problem, and the interviewees did not make any specific requests in this regard more than occasionally showing an interest in receiving a copy of the dissertation. Repeated communication after the interview situation has sometimes taken place to gain additional information and verify data. This was mainly done in discussions face-to-face. The author has refrained from using email to this end as it is an unsecure form of communication, especially since the interviews often were undertaken under the condition of anonymity.

One last feature central to elite interviewing, is the worry that the results of the study may be embarrassing for, or perceived as hostile to, the elites or gatekeepers (Odendahl and Shaw 2002; Whyte 1984 in Kezar 2003: 398). The key to handle this is found in the

"... need to balance rights (academic freedom) and obligations. If researchers persist with challenging authority, they will impact researchers' access to elites in the future and may develop opposition to social science research writ large..." (Kezar 2003: 398) (Also see Punch 1986; Whyte 1984.)

In this study, this balancing act has been managed by openness about the purpose of the interview and of how, and in what form, the material will be used. The level of anonymity was discussed with the interviewee in the beginning of each interview, to ensure that the person felt confident in sharing information. This way, the information can be used freely, as long as the agreed borders are respected. It was also helpful that the East Asian peace is a positive paradox, and that the outcome of this study is not very sensitive for the parties involved. It would, for example, have been more problematic to analyse the intentions behind Chinese military policy, or other aspects of high politics or diplomacy.

1.5.2.2 Interview styles

The interviews were either semi-structured, or applied an informal conversation-style. Semi-structured interviews are

"...designed to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance but such questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorized way." (Wengraf 2001: 5)

The interviews were guided by an interview guide. This guide was developed over time. In regards to the focus and topics of the interviews, these have varied between the different cases and the persons interviewed. Given the preceding theoretical sampling, the author was well informed about the areas in which the specific interviewee would be able to contribute. The interviewee was seen primary as an expert on the topic of the interview. Sometimes, the interviewee added an interpretation of his/her observations or experiences in the answer. Overall, these interpretations have been helpful in understanding the dynamics behind the East Asian peace. Nevertheless, emphasis has been put on separating between empirical data and analyses.

In addition to the more formal semi-structural interviews, a large number of informal conversational style interviews have been undertaken. These include discussions and conversations, both shorter and longer, with decision makers, academics, military officials, and others. These interviews added new empirical information and insights that were useful for this study. They also worked as a forum for testing material and insights obtained from the semi-structured interviews and other sources. The interaction was invaluable to understanding the dynamics of the case study and the three cases. This interaction also increased the author's ability to assess the significance of the material collected in the semi-structured interviews, the different interview persons, and other sources. These understandings have been important when assessing what empirical material to use in this study.

The reason for this mixture of styles relates to a problem when interviewing elites, both regarding access to information and the correctness of this information. This applies, in particular, to the Chinese setting where there is little incentive to share information with outsiders, and, moreover, can affect the interviewee negatively. By combining these two types of interviews, it became possible, both to get access to interviewees, and to create an interview setting in which the interviewee felt comfortable. This made possible a maximising of the information obtained. In particular, the informal conversation-style interviews were good for obtaining sensitive data and/or get access to people who are cautious, or prohibited, to give (formal) interviews. It has, for example, made possible the access to military personnel in China and other people who cannot, or do not want to, be interviewed on sensitive issues, but have less problem discussing them more informally. The semi-structured interviews have, on the other hand, been superior in regards to

obtaining comprehensive material on specific topics. Thus, as far as possible, attempts have been made to arrange semi-structured interviews. This has been strived for even in cases where informal interviews were deemed more useful since the combination of first having a more formal interview followed by a conversation style interview over dinner or a coffee help secure both the comprehensive material and the elaboration on more sensitive issues. This pattern was common, in particular, with Chinese and Taiwanese interviewees, with whom the author had regular interactions. Repeated interactions made it possible to build trust, which over time meant that the author gained both the official and less official stories.

Both interview styles were used in all locations. The balance between semi-structured and informal interviews depended on the amount of time spent at a specific location. In China, where more extensive time periods were spent, there were more opportunities for informal interviews. In numerous conversational style interviews and a large number of semi-structural interviews were undertaken in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong. The latter type of interviews was mainly used when focusing on strategic thinkers at different government think tanks and other academic institutions. Emphasis was put on finding individuals with close links to policy making circles, and/or with personal involvement in the different case studies. The informal interviews include all types of key persons. In Taiwan, the bulk of the interviews were semi-structured. In this location, individuals from all levels and branches were open for this interview style, including current and former policymakers, people from the military and the non-governmental sector, and strategic thinkers with links to academia. In addition, informal interviews were undertaken with Taiwanese abroad. The interviews undertaken in South Korea were, with few exceptions, semi-structured. The interviewees include experts and individuals with policymaking background. Informal interviews were also undertaken with a limited number of South Koreans in other places. In Europe, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with strategic thinkers, many of whom with personal experience from track two diplomacy. Also in this geographic setting, informal interviews were undertaken.

During most of the interviews, the author was alone with the interviewee. Sometimes, interviews were done with two or more persons simultaneously. In a few cases, personal assistants to the interviewee, or the gatekeeper providing the access to the interviewee, were present. In most cases, the author's assessment is that other people's presence had little impact on what the interview person decided to share.³³ No tape recorder was used during the interviews. Instead, extensive and detailed notes were taken. The reason for this practice is that, in most cases, the elites in East Asia were hesitant to be recorded. Moreover, in those cases where the respondents accepted being recorded, they were less open in their answers. This was the case, especially in China, where people not only are afraid of the misuse of information, but also of any future consequences this may have for them. Without a tape-recorder, the interviews tended to become more open and constructive. To further facilitate openness, it was agreed, in many interviews, that the material may only be used as long as the identity of the interviewee is not disclosed. For this agreement to work, the introduction by the gatekeepers was important since it transferred their trust to the author and gave credibility to this agreement.

³³ In these cases, the other person was always junior to the author. In these cases, the interviews were with high level people, so it can therefore be assumed that it was their own conscious decision as to whom they wanted to be present and what they wanted to share.

1.5.3 Participatory observation and written sources

In addition to interviews, participatory observations were undertaken at a number of track two meetings in the region (either as full participant or as observer). This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of these processes. It allowed for hands-on experience regarding the development of social networks, the informal interaction between the participants, as well as knowledge of their links to policy makers. Even if the information, as such, may have been accessible through interviews, the obtained in-depth understanding required participation. The participation also allowed for informal discussions with the members of the elite that were participating. This made possible a continuing testing of the study's preliminary findings on the people involved in the cases. In addition to this, the two years spent in China during the research process enabled an engagement in the field on a daily basis which was most important. This enhanced the understanding of the underlying values and dynamics of both the people and the regional security settings, thereby allowing for a better selection, evaluation and contextualising of the data. It also helped the author to gain understanding, skills, and networks needed to conduct the interviews in the best possible way. These forums also gave the author access to Chinese and Taiwanese decision makers and military officials that would otherwise have been impossible to meet.

Information was also obtained from written primary and secondary sources. These include official documents, and other primary written sources such as transcripts of speeches and statistics, and written secondary sources such as background studies, scholarly works, and newspapers. Indeed, there is a vast body of information available in different publications on East Asia, East Asian security, regionalisation, and economics. Many of these are produced by insiders focusing on narrative descriptions, anecdotes, and other forms of non-theoretical compilations of information. Hence, there is a lot of useful information that has not been appropriately analysed and compiled. It is also important to note that, in recent years, the amount, quality, and availability of official statistics has increased. Hence, it was possible to include much information in support of the argumentation within this dissertation. In addition, speeches, public lectures by key people, and official statements and conventions are accessible and have been used where appropriate.

The written material used have with a few exceptions been English language sources. This is not to be interpreted as the existence of Chinese language sources having been missed. The author is aware that there is a range of writing in Chinese, which if included would most likely have added at least some value to this study. Nevertheless, as the author himself does not read Chinese, and the budget of this dissertation project has not allow for translation of Chinese sources it has not been possible to include the existing Chinese material to any substantial extent. This said, a lot of efforts have been put into limiting the negative effects of this weakness. When selecting sources, efforts have been made to ensure the inclusion of writings by well-respected Chinese scholars, both in the form of conference papers, book chapters, and journal articles. It should be emphasised that as a result of having spent an extensive time-period in China, the author have developed a good ability to assess what Chinese scholars to use and how to interpret their writings. Furthermore, by having an extensive network among Chinese scholars and other China experts, it has been possible to discuss with colleges how representative and/or trustworthy the material of specific scholars is. The author have also been trying to ensure the inclusion of the "Chinese angle" through extensive discussions with leading Chinese thinkers both in and outside

China. Here in particular more informal discussion while conducting fieldwork in China, and with Chinese guest researchers in Sweden, have been beneficial for understanding the Chinese perspective. The author has also been a regular participant in conferences in China, as well as conferences where Chinese thinkers have participated abroad.³⁴ This has given an opportunity to listen to the presentation of Chinese research, and discuss their research. In addition, in these conferences many of the papers have been in English, including the papers by scholars normally not publishing in English. Numerous discussions have also been conducted with leading China watchers.

1.5.4 Source criticism and triangulation

To secure a high reliability in this study, multiple data sources have been used. The usual criteria have been utilised when assessing the quality of the information obtained. The triangulation principle was used, both in the assessment of information from interviews, and in the selection of different types of sources. As far as possible, the sources have been cross-referenced and compared both with data of the same type, and with other types of data. In regards to the primary interview material, cross-references were made, when possible, between different formal interviews. When this proved impossible, the primary interview material was cross-referenced with informal conversational style interviews, observations during track two conferences and workshops, and secondary sources. The extensive time spent in the region made possible to control the trustworthiness and bias of the interviewees.

Many of the interviewed people were members of Chinese think tanks. To assess the value of the interviews, it is important to understand the difference between Chinese and Western think tanks. In short, in China, think tanks do not have the same degree of "independence" as in the West. As argued by Shai and Stone, "... the majority of Chinese think tanks maintain close patron-client relations with certain political leaders and operate within a closed policy context that is distant from civil society." (Shai and Stone 2004: 142). This relationship was also confirmed in the author's interviews and observed during fieldwork in China. In most cases, Chinese think tanks are funded by the government and are often part of the government structure. Most of their members also see their organisations as politically dependent. Shai and Stone separate between three types of Chinese think tanks: official, semi-official and privately owned (Shai and Stone 2004). Official think tanks, here referred to as government think tanks, are research institutes affiliated with the government, the military, or the propaganda system. These have a vertical bureaucratic relationship with their funders (Glaser and Saunders 2002). The author's interviewees described this system as a bureaucratic report system, where they hand in their research reports and thereafter, sometimes, get invited to advice government officials.³⁵ The universities are best described as semi-official think tanks. They have close relations with, and are mostly funded by, government organisations. Members of semi-official think tanks are linked to the government mainly through informal connections. Since the end of the 1980s, a number of

³⁴ Between November 2004 and February 2008 the author have been a participant or observer at in total 9 conferences in China (5 in Shanghai and 4 in Beijing) and 4 international conferences with participating Chinese scholars.

³⁵ Interview with former member of government think-tank, Beijing, China, 10 April 2007.

privately owned think tanks have emerged. Despite being privately funded, these think tanks tend to be semi-official given the affiliations of their directors.³⁶

The think tank members interviewed for this dissertation were members of official and semi-official think tanks. They include experts on the different cases, and on different aspects of the respective conflict. In China, they include a number of, what Shai and Stone refer to as, "establishment intellectuals" who have close links to decision makers and play a crucial role in policy-making and policy advice through informal channels (Shai and Stone 2004). Many of the people interviewed have worked as interlocutors, convening meetings with foreign counterparts and delegations. They are often regular participants and organisers of different track two meetings. The interviewees within official think tanks often have access to information and people within the funding agency. This makes them most valuable as interviewees, as they have information but are less constrained than policymakers. Even if not sharing detailed examples or explicit experiences, their understanding of general dynamics is central. Indeed, with a proper triangulation method, and the exploration of the individual's insights, they can be useful sources. Not least the cross-referencing with information obtained through other sources creates valuable insights. In Taiwan, there is also a close link between think tanks and the political leadership (Shai and Stone 2004). Here, the link is more concrete and direct given the common practice of policy makers to retire into think tanks, and for think tank researchers to move into policy. This was confirmed during the fieldwork on the island. Indeed, most of the think tank people interviewed had previously been prominent officials, either in the political or the bureaucratic sphere. Some of the interviewed officials also used to be researchers.³⁷ In the South Korean case, a number of the interviewees are members of government think tanks or work as policy advisers and some of them are former policy makers.

1.6 Outline of the study

This study is divided into three parts. In the first part, the theoretical and methodological frameworks are presented (chapter 1-2). Part two has an empirical focus and provides a brief review of China's historical role in East Asia. Thereafter, the three case studies are introduced (interlude + chapter 3-5). In the final part, the findings are compiled, and conclusions regarding the East Asian peace are made (chapter 6).

In chapter 2, the research field is reviewed, focusing on the explanatory power of realist, liberalist, and constructivist international relations theory. Moreover, the constructivist framework that guides the three case studies is presented. Thereafter, focus moves to the theoretical framework, which is founded on the concepts of peace and informality. The concepts that are important for the empirical part, such as regionalisation, personal network, track two diplomacy, and back channel negotiations are also reviewed briefly.

Thereafter, the study moves on to its empirical part. Firstly, a brief review of China's historical role in East Asia will be presented. Thereafter, in chapter 3-5, the processes and mechanisms

³⁶ For an in-depth discussion of the dynamics of Chinese think-tanks, see the *China Quarterly* (2002) which has a special section with five articles on the subject, and Liao 2006.

³⁷ This pattern might, in the interviewees, be skewed, as the author's gatekeepers have academic affiliations. However, this pattern has been confirmed by interviewees in Taiwan and Europe.

behind the relative peace in the three case studies are identified and analysed. These chapters also include a brief overview of each respective conflict. Chapter 3 focuses on the relations between Mainland China and Taiwan and the Taiwan issue. In chapter 4, the Korean nuclear conflict and the role of China is in focus. Thereafter, in chapter 5, the South China Sea and Sino-ASEAN relations are analysed.

In the concluding chapter, the findings are drawn together for the overarching East Asian case. Here, the processes and mechanisms identified in each respective case are compiled, and the reasons behind the East Asian peace are analysed. In doing so, a model for the relative peace in East Asia is developed. Finally, the analysis moves up the ladder of abstraction, and the general bearings of the findings are assessed.

2 Review of field and theoretical framework

The first section of this chapter provides a brief review of previous research relevant to this study. The review of the field focuses on international relations theory and its general explanatory power in regards to the East Asian security setting and, more specifically, the East Asian peace. The focus is mainly on the explanatory power of the main schools of realism, liberalism, and constructivism, and a number of related approaches. The second section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study. Firstly, the constructivist approach, which is applied in the three case studies, is discussed, followed by a constructivist interpretation of a number of other theories that are found to have a certain explanatory power. Thereafter, the two legs of the theoretical framework - peace and informality - are presented. The concept peace, and its historical roots, is reviewed and defined. Subsequently, the conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, mechanisms through which peace is realised are discussed. Following the section on peace, research on informality and formality, informality and peace, and the role of informality and informal processes in East Asia is reviewed. In section three, a number of central theoretical concepts, such as regionalisation, personal networks, track two diplomacy, and back channel negotiations are presented and discussed.

2.1 Review of field - international relations theory and East Asia

2.1.1 Realism and its relation to the East Asian security setting

The existing bulk of research on peace and security in East Asia lean to the realist stand. In particular, there are, many studies with a geopolitical focus on China's role in Asia, focusing on hard power, and military balance, which paints a rather gloomy picture of the future of the region (Friedberg 1994; Johnston 2003). Realism has predicted a Cold War East Asia embroiled in everlasting conflict. This prediction has, so far, not materialised. Instead, the region has become more integrated and focused on multilateralism and multilateral cooperation. To quote Zha and Hu,

"[t]he plea from adherents to the realist school that we need to "just wait" for them to be proved correct deserves serious questioning now that over a decade of intra-regional developments have pointed to a different, if not opposite, result." (Zha and Hu 2006: 24) (See also Kang 2003b; Peou 2002; Zha and Hu 2006: esp. ch. 1-2)

Nevertheless, realist assumptions need to be taken into consideration in any analysis of the East Asian security setting, as they dominate the mindset of regional policymakers and strategic thinkers. This is important both for how interests are perceived and for how reality is constructed. In this study, realism is used in particular for understanding and assessing the strategic and military aspects

of East Asia, and U.S. policies and behaviour. The military and strategic aspects are important to key issues in the respective cases, which all concerns high politics and traditional security issues. Realism is also underlying much of U.S. foreign policy thinking and behaviour in East Asia.

To realists, world politics is about the rise and fall of great powers. Realist theories emphasise the importance of the distribution of power. In the case of East Asia, this translates into assessing the current and future roles of the United States, and the two regional great powers; "rising China" and Japan. The underlying logic is that there is a need for a balance of power to safeguard peace and stability. With their focus on the distribution of power, realists have identified both an unfolding multipolarity and an emerging power vacuum in East Asia after the demise of the Soviet Union. According to realist theory, such a development is expected to create instability and turmoil (Betts 1993; Buzan and Segal 1994; Friedberg 1994; Mearsheimer 1990; Moller 1996). The assessment of East Asia as a "region of turmoil and 'strategic uncertainty'." is also made by virtually all analysts of U.S. policy (Gurtov 2002: 191). Indeed, the realist lines of thinking run through the U.S. policy towards East Asia, and includes

"...containing Japan; containing (while engaging) China; preventing the emergence of a rival hegemon; ... sustaining the confidence in bilateral treaty partners and other friendly countries; and deterring "rogue states" such as North Korea." (Gurtov 2002: 191)

One concrete example of the adherence to realism in U.S. policymaking circles is the open warning issued by the U.S. Department of Defence stating that if China continued its military build up in the same speed as today, it might eventually tilt the balance of power (Bush and O'Hanlon 2007: 26-27).

To avoid negative developments towards turmoil and conflict, the emerging power vacuum needs to be filled by something, or someone, in order to re-create a balance of power. In this context, different forms of power balancing were, especially during the 1990s, the most widely discussed scenarios among realists for how to organise security in the Asia-Pacific (Betts 1993; Dibb 1995; Stuart and Tow 1996). "Power balancing refers to the distribution of military power or hegemony. The objective of power balancing is to ensure that no one actor will prevail over other key actors, short of going to war." (Tow 2001: 5). Thus, from a realist perspective, "manipulating the distribution of power to one's own advantage through alliance, coalition, concert or other strategies" is not only expected, but also legitimate (Tow 2001: 5-6). Particularly American realists have identified a risk that a power vacuum may be filled by either an expansionist country or by an external power (Gurtov 2002: 189-90). (This implies an "unselfish peacekeeper", according to the terminology preferred by U.S. analysts, or a "hegemon" as often referred to by Chinese strategic thinkers.) The former role could be shouldered by China, or possibly Japan, while the external power would be the United States. The external power solution is almost axiomatically prescribed for East Asia among American foreign policy analysts, who emphasise U.S. primacy, the benefit of bilateral alliances, and the maintenance of the balance of power (Gurtov 2002). This external solution could take different forms, as an East Asian balance-of-power can mean many things. The most common suggestions include a U.S.-Japan alliance balancing China (Bernstein and Munro 1997), or the U.S. as a more distant extra-regional or offshore balancer (Layne 1997). Different forms of advanced multilateral solutions have also been suggested, including for example a "quintipartite great-power arrangement" which involves China, India, Japan, Russia, and the U.S., as well as diplomatic support from the middle powers (Dibb 1995), or a multipolar balancing order

similar to the 19th century European concert of great powers (For a discussion see Tow 2001: 208-09).

In the East Asian context, extensive research has also been conducted on the U.S.-Japan alliance (Hughes 2004), the Sino-U.S. relationship, (Dreyer 2000; Lampton 2001; Odgaard 2007; Shambaugh 2000) including on United States' soft balancing of China (He and Feng 2008). It has also been explored why the existing hegemonic system has not been challenged by any of the regional powers, including China and Japan (Van Ness 2002). Research has also, more specifically, assessed the importance of the rising China (Lampton 2007), and how China as a "responsible stakeholder" affects U.S. interests (Peng 2007). There is also a bulk of more general research on the U.S. and its role in East Asia. This includes analyses of the U.S. role in Northeast (Scalapino 2007) and Southeast Asia (Beeson 2004; Mauzy and Job 2007). Assessments have also been made on how the new multilateralism affects the U.S. (Brazinsky 2008; Cossa 1996a; Kim 2005), and on U.S. policy towards East Asia with contrasting positive sum and zero-sum security strategies (Christensen 2006b). These studies give good insights on U.S. policy towards, and behaviour in, East Asia, as well on U.S.-China relations. It also provides a well-developed understanding of the strategic dynamics in Northeast and Southeast Asia respectively, but less so in regards to the overall East Asian dynamics. They do not give any comprehensive explanation to the East Asian peace, nor to the complex East Asian dynamics.

The United States should be viewed in the light of the existing consensus of its dominating position in the regional security setting, both during and after the Cold War. During the Cold War, the U.S. did after replacing the colonial powers including Japan after World War II establish a sphere of influence extending from Japan to Malaysia (Ross 2003 esp. p. 353). Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has committed resources to keep the Cold War security architecture in place. In short, according to realist thinking the U.S. has, as the dominating power, continued to maintain a "balance of power" in the region. In this regard, Washington has a preference for a so-called "hub and spokes" architecture, based on its existing web of bilateral alliances throughout the region and its military bases in Japan and South Korea (Tow, Trood et al. 1997). The U.S. is still the dominant power, despite the fact that its influence has decreased over time as intra-regional relations have evolved from a focus on "balance of power" to building a "Strategic Partnership" with the perception of China shifting from the rising China as a threat (both *per se* and for the balance of power), to an emphasis on China's role as a responsible stakeholder.¹

Realism also facilitates the understanding of why and how the U.S. has created a feeling of security among the regional states, and how it has worked as a stabilising factor and crisis management mechanism. The U.S. presence, and its bilateral alliances, has created a feeling of security among its regional allies. As the military superpower, the U.S. has been able to externally impose a bottom line for acceptable behaviour in different contingencies. In other words, the U.S. has, as the "hegemon", spelled out, and thereby constrained, the framework for actions and behaviour. For example, the U.S. does not accept behaviour that threatens the freedom of navigation in the South

¹ On the "China threat", see Bernstein and Munro 1997; Gertz 2000; Roy 1996; Yee and Storey 2002).

China Sea, triggers a military confrontation with China over Taiwan or on the Korean Peninsula,² or causes nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia and threatens the non-proliferation treaty. This is of little importance when relations are good, but when the existing conflicts escalate and the risk of military confrontation is imminent, the explanatory power of realism is relatively strong, at least for short term behaviour.³

In the case of China, realism has certain problems to account for China's general post-Cold War foreign policy behaviour, and for the changes within it. China has shown to be sensitive to intra- as well as extraregional reactions to its international behaviour. Its foreign policy focus has been to present itself as a "peacefully rising" power.⁴ It has tried to paint the picture of a "soft power" with benign intentions.⁵ As long as its bottom-line, for example independence for Taiwan, is not crossed, China has done its utmost to present a non-aggressive foreign policy stance. Over time, China has even shown an increasing willingness to cooperate within multilateral settings. Thanks to its changed behaviour, the perception of China as a threat has diminished among other East Asian states. In Northeast Asia, China is arguably perceived as a rival, rather than as a threat. Also in Southeast Asia, China is no longer seen as a threat and is today rather perceived as a partner. In short, the changed perceptions of China show that material power, as emphasised by realist, *per se* does not suffice to create a threat. Rather, the intentions behind the material power matter just as much (Dongxiao 2003: 172. See also Wendt 1992, 1999). The argument that China is waiting for the ripe moment to rise simply does not hold up to scrutiny. Even Friedberg, who coined the phrase "ripe for rivalry", has over time become more nuanced, arguing that a conflict between a rising China and the dominating United States is but one of many possible outcomes (Friedberg 2005). Even if China in fact would be awaiting the right moment to reinsert itself as the dominating power in East Asia, there is a possibility that China will redefine itself while doing so. Indeed, to "play" peaceful will over time reconstruct China's self-identity and create an ideational and normative structure that, in turn, will guide and constrain its interest construction and international behaviour.

Many scholars, particularly within the constructivist field, have long been sceptical about realism's explanatory power in the post-Cold War security setting, especially after its failure to predict the end of the Cold War. These sceptics have criticised realism's emphasis on polarity and material power (Katzenstein 1996b; Lebow and Thomas 1995). They have instead argued for the importance of the growing economic interdependency in East Asia and the greater Asia Pacific. Moreover, they have pointed to the proliferation of regional institutions such as the Asia Pacific Economic

² A U.S. military intervention in North Korea would risk the involvement of the Chinese military, which might take action to avoid U.S. control over the North Korean territory, including future U.S. military forces on its border. For example, Andrew Scobell has argued that it is "quite likely" that the Chinese would intervene "to protect its vital interests" if North Korea implodes, or if there is a military conflict in North Korea, especially if including U.S. backed South Korean forces (2004: 31).

³ The U.S. *de facto* presence, in combination with the attributed importance of realist-inclined analysts has impacted the structure of the interviews and the design of the empirical chapters. During the interviews, explicit questions were asked about the U.S. role for peace in East Asia and the respective cases. In the empirical chapters, the role of the U.S. is explored in separate sections in chapter 4 to 6.

⁴ Sometimes the term "peacefully developing" is used among Chinese experts. The reason for this is that too much emphasis has been put on "rising" as opposed to "peacefully".

⁵ This task is taken very seriously by all parts of the Chinese elite, including the political, military and academic spheres. All conferences and track two frameworks that the author participated in, the Chinese participants always emphasised China's benign intentions. Only in regards to the Taiwan issue do the Chinese take a more uncompromising stance, stressing that Taiwan is a part of China and that *de-jure* independence is not an option.

Cooperation, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the more informal networks within some of the organisations, such as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), and ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS). These scholars have also acknowledged the move towards a less confrontational and power focused strategic culture and the role of norms and identities in the emerging security setting (Ball 1993; Dewitt 1994; Higgott 1994; Katzenstein 1996b; Mahbubani 1995; Wiseman 1992). The key argument is that taken together, these factors will, at least, further confidence building and reassurance, or, at best, alter the states' preferences from competitive power politics to community-based conceptions of interests and security (Khong 1997). The author of this dissertation leans towards these constructivist interpretations of world affairs, which will be reviewed in more depth in the section on constructivism below ("Constructivism, the "ASEAN-way", and soft regionalism"). Before doing so, the security regime theory and regional security complex theory, which are linked to realism, and the contribution of liberal approaches, will be reviewed.

2.1.1.1 Security regimes theory

Robert Jervis, a leading neorealist scholar, introduced the concept security regimes in 1982 (1982. See also Jervis 1983, 1985).⁶ More recently, the concept has been developed by, among others, Buzan and Waever.⁷ Security regime theory can contribute to analyses of the developments in East Asia although it does not explain the processes or mechanisms behind the East Asian peace as such. Nevertheless, it does provide a way of thinking that can contribute to the understanding of how regional integration and interdependence can be important for peace.

Jervis has defined security regimes as

"...those principles, rules and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behavior in the belief that others will reciprocate. This concept implies not only norms and expectations that facilitate cooperation, but a form of cooperation that is more than the following of short-run self-interest." (Jervis 1982: 357)

A security regime does not imply that relations among its members are harmonious and without conflict. Rather conflicts exist but the actors agree to cooperate in dealing with them. Part of this implies accepting a limitation to the use of force. A security regime hence falls between an anarchical system where order is maintained through balance of power, deterrence and a collective security system. Jervis has identified four conditions for a security regime: 1. "great powers must want to establish it - that is, they must prefer a more regulated environment to one in which all states behave individualistically"; 2. "the actors must also believe that others share the value they place on mutual security and cooperation"; 3. "even if all major actors would settle for the status quo, security regimes cannot form when one or more actors believe that security is best provided for by expansion"; and 4. "war and the individualistic pursuit of security must be seen as costly" (Jervis 1982: 360-62).

⁶ On other international regimes, see Hasenclever, Mayer et al. 1997; Katzenstein 1996b esp. ch. 1 & 2; Krasner 1983; Peterson 2005.

⁷ They argue that a regional security regime will develop only in the context of a supportive global international environment, and with an engaged U.S. in East Asia (Buzan and Waever 2003: 176. Also see Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002; Nye 1987; Smith 1989; Stein 1985.)

In the East Asian context, the ASEAN was already in the early 1990s characterised as a security regime also among sceptics such as Buzan and Segal (Buzan and Segal 1994), whereas Northeast Asia, on the other hand, continuously has been perceived as a case of "conflict formation" (Buzan 2003: 163). Some studies have explored the possibility of a Northeast Asian multilateral security regime as a solution to regional problems, using the six-party talks as a template (Chung 2000; Kim 2007; Zhang 2005). However, the interest in such a solution decreased as a result of the continuing failure of the six-party talks to resolve the Korean nuclear conflict.⁸ Studies have also been carried out on an Asia-Pacific security regime (Mack and Ravenhill 1995), including attempts to extend the ASEAN-style security regime to the rest of East Asia. Here, the ASEAN regional forum has been one important component (Buzan 2003: 154-62), as well as the ASEAN+3 process.

An argument could be made that, by now, East Asia can be considered a *de facto* security regime following Jervis four conditions. The pan-regional acceptance of the "ASEAN-way", in combination with the ASEAN+3 process, has created a form of regulation of East Asian international relations, which has been accepted by the regional "great powers" China and Japan. Secondly, over time there has been an increasing acceptance of, and belief in, the shared value of mutual security and cooperation. Thirdly, currently no regional power considers expansion as a way to achieve security. Lastly, with the focus on economic growth and development, in combination with regional interdependence, individualistic pursuit of security has become costly.

2.1.1.2 Regional security complexes

Barry Buzan and Ole Waever have put forward the regional security complex theory (RSCT) as a way of understanding the new emerging structure of international security (Buzan and Waever 2003) (Early versions of the theory can be found in Buzan and Waever 1983: 105-15; 1991: ch. 5). A regional security complex (RSC) is defined as "a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 44). In theory, this is a blend of the neorealist influenced materialistic ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power and the constructivist idea of securitisation (Buzan and Waever 2003: 4). (On securitisation, see Buzan, Waver et al. 1998; Waver 1995). The RSCT is largely a continuation of Cold War ideas in that it is trying to present a new form of world system theory based on regions in a context of global power politics. It takes into account the "relative autonomy of regional security ... [that constitutes] a pattern of international security relations radically different from the rigid structure of superpower bipolarity that defined the Cold War." (Buzan and Waever 2003: 3). This ability allows for a certain region to be singled out as a unit of analysis on its own terms.

In the Asian context, some scholars have applied the RSCT to Northeast Asia (Bae and Moon 2005) and the Chinese policy towards North Korea (Kahrs 2004). Weaver and Buzan have identified an emerging post-Cold War East Asian Regional Security complex (including Australia and Papua

⁸ Another problem was the Chinese reluctance to extend the talks to other issues, as they would under no circumstances accept the model for the Taiwan issue.

New Guinea) (Buzan and Waever 2003).⁹ They have also suggested the possibility of a China-centred Asian super complex not unlike 19th century Europe. In both cases, the security settings are dominated by powerful modern states in combination with some weak, or even failed states. Overall, there is a robust number of Asian regional powers whose interplay creates a strong regional security dynamic. Buzan and Waever consider the developments in Sino-U.S. relations as key for the Asian security setting. They are arguing that

"If China remains unified and adopts an aggressive posture, and if the United States reduces its security engagement in East Asia, then conflict formation becomes the most likely outcome. It is hard to say how these two developments might interact. A US disengagement might well encourage Chinese hegemonism. Pugnacious Chinese behaviour could either draw the United States in (constructing China as a global rival) or push it out (fear of engagement in Asian wars)." (Buzan and Waever 2003: 174-75). (On the application of regional security complex theory on Asia, also see Buzan 2003)

Regional security complex theory facilitates the understanding of regional dynamics on their own terms. It is also helpful in drafting overarching models of East Asian security dynamics. It is, however, less beneficial for a deeper understanding of either the broader security dynamics, or the complex web of factors important for the post-Cold War developments in East Asia. It does little to explain the East Asian peace, as it has a different focus. The scenario, based on a regional security complex, is also problematic for understanding the East Asian peace since its underlying realist logic reduces the security options for the region to a narrow band between "the milder end of the conflict formation scenario or somewhere near the weak end of the regional security regime" (Buzan and Waever 2003: 177). Indeed, the peaceful developments in the region is both more complex, and have arguably developed past this point.

2.1.2 Liberal approaches and their relations to the East Asian security setting

As opposed to realist theories, liberalism does not predict war. In line with classical liberal logics, East Asian countries "...can do better through internal economic development sustained by a worldwide market for their goods and services than by trying to conquer and assimilate large tracts of land." (Rosecrance 1986: 25) It is obvious that this logic does have an impact on policy thinking across the region. However, although economic growth and prosperity is prioritised, sovereignty over territory is still perceived as very important across the region. This is illustrated by the importance given to territorial conflicts in interstate relations in the region, of which the East China Sea, the Taiwan issue, and the South China Sea are good examples.¹⁰ Through increased economic cooperation, intra-regional interdependence has grown, leading to decreased incentive for military

⁹ During the Cold War, they argued for the Northeast Asian and the Southeast Asian RSC. The Northeast Asian RSC included Mainland China and Taiwan, the two Koreas and Japan, while the South East Asian RSC contained Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar/Burma, Cambodia, and what is now Timor Leste. The post-Cold War East Asian RSC consist of all the above mentioned states plus Australia and Papua New Guinea. The South Asian RSC has remained an independent RSC and consists of India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Myanmar/Burma did, during the Cold War, belong to both the Southeast and South Asian RSC, but currently belongs only to the Southeast Asian RSC. (Buzan 2003: 145-62)

¹⁰ This is especially important to China where unity is seen as permanent, and separation only as temporary. China is not willing to give up what it considers parts of China including Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. But the importance of economic growth, and the interlinked development of good relations with its neighbours, is an important incentive for China to resolve its land border conflicts.

conflicts, as the costs of such conflicts have risen. The cost of a major regional security crisis would indeed be major as it would have an impact far beyond regional interdependence. Thomas Berger argues that one of the "immediate security consequences" of the "growth in intra-regional interdependence" has been a "growing reliance on world markets [that] has pushed up considerably the costs of military conflict." (2000: 417). At the same time, there is a general understanding across the region that economics and politics should be kept apart.

The economic integration is important for strengthening the voice of moderation. This is a spill over effect of successful economic integration, as

"...to the extent that these [economic] policies are viewed as successful they strengthen the political influence of those groups in East Asian societies who favour a cooperative approach to foreign relations, and a corresponding decline in the political influence of those sectors of Asian government which are the most concerned with security matters." (Berger 2000: 417)

One example of this strengthening of the voice of moderation can be found in the "perhaps not entirely coincidental fact that the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo under Jiang Zemin, for the first time, did not include any representatives of the People's Liberation Army (Berger 2000: 417).

Thus, economic integration and interdependence (EII) can, through the above identified mechanisms, be assumed to be part the explanation of the East Asian peace. However, the lack of cooperation over disputed energy sources and the conflict across of the Taiwan Strait, illustrate that economics in some cases are subordinated more important interests on the agenda. Although this study is aware of the role of EII, both in regards to data collection and analyses, it is cautious not to overestimate its importance.

International organisations and other institutional arrangements form a central part in many liberal theories. When applied to East Asia, these theories tend to either exaggerate the importance and abilities of regional institutional arrangements or dismiss them as insignificant (For a review of the liberalist view on East Asia see Zha and Hu 2006: 40-46). Scholars who dismiss them often do so due to the differences between the informal (or soft) East Asian approach to institution building and the formalised and legalistic variations suggested by different liberal theories. At the same time, it should indeed be acknowledged that East Asian institutions do not have the same abilities as more formalised institutions. Nevertheless, other scholars argue that multilateral institutions in East Asia work as effective constraints, even though they lack strong institutionalisation (Acharya 1991, 2001; Chiang 2000; Kivimäki 2001; Scalapino 2001; Zha and Hu 2006). This is especially the case in Southeast Asia where norms and inter-subjective consensus forged by the ASEAN has been central for the peaceful development in state-to-state relations (Kivimäki 2001).

2.1.2.1 Liberal peace theory

The liberal, or democratic, peace theory is founded on three pillars: the presence of liberal democratisation; economic interdependence (trade); and regional institutionalisation (international organisations). The core argument is that liberal democracies will not go to war against each

other.¹¹ The liberal peace thesis is considered to have universal bearing and most studies include data for all states in the international system (For example Cederman and Rao 2001; Cornwell and Colaresi 2002; Jungblut and Stoll 2002; Oneal and Russett 1999b; Oneal, Russett et al. 2003; Russett and Oneal 2001). A number of studies show regional differences in levels of conflict and the roots of conflict (Gleditsch 2002; Lemke 2002), and a number of studies have also been made trying to examine regional differences (Goldsmith 2006, 2007; Henderson 2009). Although the combined importance of liberal democratisation, economic interdependence (trade), and regional institutionalisation is generally accepted within the scholarly community (See McMillan 1997; Oneal, Oneal et al. 1996; Oneal and Russett 1999b; Russett and Oneal 2001; Schneider, Barbieri et al. 2003), criticism against the liberal peace has also been voiced (See for example Nederveen Pieterse 1998; Paris 2004; Richmond 2005). One major point of criticism is that although mature, stable democracies may indeed be peaceful, states do in fact get more aggressive and war prone during the democratisation process (Mansfield and Snyder 1995; Ward and Gleditsch 1998). When it comes to the relative importance of the three factors, scholars tend to disagree. Traditionally, emphasis has been on the importance of liberal democracy and the accompanying liberal norms (Beck, Katz et al. 1998). Others argue that the presence of economic interdependence/trade is, in fact, the key factor (Solomon W. Polachek 1997).

When looking at East Asia, the core hypothesis, that liberal democracies never or seldom fight each other, is of little relevance considering the lack of liberal democracies in the region.¹² In fact, in the case of East Asia, the argument that democratisation can be a cause of instability and conflict, rather than contributing to peace, is more relevant (Mansfield and Snyder 1995; Ward and Gleditsch 1998). If these findings are correct, democratisation in East Asia may cause instability across the region. The liberal peace thesis is also irrelevant for the East Asian peace since it focuses on peace *between* democracies, and not between democracies and non-democracies. Also the role of institutional structures, in the form of international organisations, has little explanatory power in East Asia, with the possible exception of the ASEAN (Goldsmith 2007).

In regards to East Asia, the more relevant part of the tripod is the role of economic interdependence/trade (Gleditsch 2008: 706-07; Oneal and Russett 1999a: 423-24). If this hypothesis holds, it may be part of the explanation behind the East Asian peace. Indeed, researchers focusing specifically on testing the democratic peace thesis have found support for the importance of intra-regional economic interdependence in Asia in regards to peace.¹³ In regards to policy, the belief in economic interdependence/trade, according to the liberal peace thesis, is obvious within the pan-blue camp on Taiwan. It has guided the thinking and actions of the current Taiwanese Vice

¹¹ The democratic peace theory builds on a long tradition of liberal writings. It is often associated with 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The democratic peace theory was revived by Michael Doyle in the mid-1980s, and has since been forming an important part of the debate of the nature of the post-Cold War order.

¹² Benjamin E. Goldsmith (2007) tested the liberal peace thesis in Asia (South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Oceania, and Central Asia) in a large-sample quantitative study but found little evidence of joint democracy as a force of peace. Instead, he found that in 1976-2000, joint democracy made war among Asian states more likely.

¹³ Goldsmith's research (2007) has confirmed the pacifying effect of economic interdependence in Asia (defined as South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Oceania and Central Asia). This effect is, however, not necessarily visible in to the interaction between Asian and non-Asian states. Here, it should be acknowledged that Goldsmith's "Asia" is different from the "East Asia" in this study. But the findings do show that, at a minimum, the benefit of economic interdependence applies also to the Asian setting. This is no surprise, and has been accepted by most Asian analysts, but it is interesting to see that this logic holds also when using a large sample study.

President Vincent C. Siew and the Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation. The belief in economic integration and interdependence also constitutes the platform for cross-strait cooperation that current Taiwanese president Ma used as his 2008 election platform.¹⁴

Generic research, discussed in the previous paragraphs, point to both direct and indirect peace benefits of economic interdependence in East Asia. Indeed, the importance of trade, and economic cooperation more generally, has also been emphasised in research on East Asia. Indeed, the focus on safeguarding and promoting economic growth and prosperity permeates the region, as long as it does not threaten core national interest. This economic focus is important for the understanding of relations across the Taiwan Strait, the developments of Sino-ASEAN relations, and of how the South China Sea conflict has been managed.

2.1.2.2 Functionalism, neo-functionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism

Functionalism emerged during the interwar period, at a time when the role of the state as a social organisation was being debated. Functionalism should be understood in the context of the failure of the League of Nations and its grand constitutional plans. Functionalism argues for a radically different form of international cooperation that avoids explicit federal arrangements. One of its earliest pioneers was David Mitrany, although its theoretical roots can be traced back to the liberal/idealist tradition based on the writings of Kant (Mitrany 1943, 1966). Mitrany's work has a universal, rather than a regional, focus. He argues that "peace will not be secured if we organize the world by what divides it" (Mitrany 1966: 96). Consequently, he was in fact an opponent to the European integration project.

Functionalism argues that international cooperation should begin by dealing with specific and non-confrontational issues where technical skills can be applied. The successful cooperation will in turn lead to a replication of this experience in an ever-widening process, i.e. create spill over effects. Hence, functional cooperation will begin with technical, functional or economic cooperation, in fields such as postal services or disease control, or agreements on property rights. Functionalism is based on the hope, or expectation, that over time the different governments will transfer certain responsibilities to international agencies, thereby gradually weakening the principles of legal and territorial sovereignty.

On the theoretical level, functionalism has two key problems, which were later addressed by neofunctionalism. Firstly, early functionalism has a somewhat naive idea of the separation between noncontroversial technical, functional and economic issues on the one hand, and political issues on the other (Griffiths, O'Callaghan et al. 2008: 118-120). Secondly, it is somewhat over optimistic in regards to how spill over effects are generated, and spend little time addressing the needed learning and adaptation processes for spill over between noncontroversial and controversial issue areas to occur at all (Griffiths, O'Callaghan et al. 2008: 118-120). As can be seen in the case of European integration, spill over is not an automatic process, nor is political and institutional designs organic.

In the 1960s and 1970s, neofunctionalism arose. Neofunctionalism is inspired by functionalism, but is more moderate in its belief regarding the effects of functional cooperation, more explicit on how spill over will occur, and acknowledge the problem of separating issue areas. Ernst B. Haas identified a problem with separating the political and technical sphere. He realised that "...economic

¹⁴ Interview, Vincent C. Siew (蕭萬長), Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007 (Also see Siew 2001, -).

integration, however defined, may be based on political motives and frequently begets political consequences." (Haas 1958: 12). Haas also saw a potential problem with the distribution of gains from cooperation, where unequal gains would risk leading to conflicts. In this respect, neofunctionalism saw a role for formal institutions with some form of autonomy that could uphold inter-state agreements. It was also acknowledged that states need to accept the rule of law and the principle of majoritarian decision making, i.e. the need for an international organisation or other form of formalised international institutional framework was identified. Here, the European integration was seen as the model for regional integration that should be followed in other parts of the world (Haas 1967; Haas and Schmitter 1965; Nye 1965, 1971).

A key concept in functionalism and neofunctionalism is the role of spill over. Spill over is best understood as

"...a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action, and so forth" (Lindberg 1963: 10)

Haas used spill over to show that integration in one sector of the economy will inevitably lead to the integration of other economic and political activities (Haas 1968). The underlying idea is that spill over creates a certain level of path dependency, or an inevitable integration process. This process can be unintentional, where to secure envisaged benefits new goals need to be formed and cooperation extended into other spheres than the original one (Wunderlich 2007: 14-15).

A more recent addition to functionalism theories is found in liberal intergovernmentalism. Its focus is on the state (central government, executives), as opposed to neofunctionalism with its starting point in transnational society and supranational institutions. According to liberal intergovernmentalism, the economic and social interests provide the material for politics although these need to be recognised and mobilised to become active (Choi and Caporaso 2002). In 1993, Andrew Moravcsik, the founder of liberal intergovernmentalism, presented a two-step process for preference formation and bargaining (Moravcsik 1993). Later, he extended the model into a three step process of preference-formation, intergovernmental bargaining, followed by an institutional lock-in of bargaining (Moravcsik 1998).

The helpfulness of functionalist theories when it comes to understanding the East Asian peace is unclear. One of the problems of linking neofunctionalist theories to the East Asian setting is the limited regional interest in full regional integration, since few, if any, regional states are interested in giving up sovereignty (Stubbs 2006: 4). As Richard Higgott has argued,

"...neither liberal intergovernmentalism nor neo-functionalism provide sufficient explanatory power for a complete understanding of enhanced co-operation in the Asia-Pacific. Both approaches are interest-driven, rational actor analyses of collective action. They assume interests exist rather than explain how interests occur... [underlined section in italics in original]" (Higgott 1998a: 50)

Nevertheless, functional cooperation forms part of the long term peace and confidence building process between the East Asian states. Functional issues have offered an area for cooperation, without addressing any political issues. In this regard, the general perception of a separation between economics and politics has been helpful. Functional cooperation has also been a beneficial learning process for, in particular, the Chinese, who over time have got accustomed to multilateral frameworks.

Functional cooperation does also have indirect spill over effects that most likely are important for peace. The functional cooperation that exists, in particular within the framework of ASEAN and ASEAN + 3, has socialised the regional elites and created a nascent regional identity. It has also facilitated and spurred intra-regional trust and confidence building. Socialisation is not limited to Sino-ASEAN relations, but can also be seen in the North Korean case. Although functional cooperation does not explain how interests occur, as observed by Higgott above, a strong argument can be made for its long term impact on the construction of interests.

2.1.2.3 Security communities

The work on security communities, by Karl Deutsch and others, is linked to liberal ideas about peace, and can be seen as a precursor of the modern liberal peace theory. Security communities were initially proposed by Richard Van Wagenen in the early 1950s (Puchala 1971: 165 in Adler and Barnett 1998c: 25) and developed by Deutsch and his colleagues in the same decennium. Karl Deutsch considered a security community to exist whenever a group of people had reached a point of integration and this sense of community, in turn, created "...a real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way." (Deutsch 1957: 5) Deutsch distinguished between two groups of security communities: amalgamated and pluralistic communities. The former group is created when previously independent states form a new government. In a pluralistic security community, the states keep their sovereignty. The concept of pluralistic security communities was, more recently, expanded upon by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Adler and Barnett 1998b: esp. ch. 1-2 & 13).

Deutsch's original work on security communities concerns the developed Western world, with emphasis on Europe and the North Atlantic (Holsti 1983: 440-41). It is more problematic to apply the concept to developing states, since these often are conflict ridden. Moreover, for a security community to develop, there needs to be a liberal-democratic milieu with high levels of economic interdependence and political pluralism (Russett 1998). For example, neofunctionalists such as Ernst Haas and Joseph Nye, argued, in the 1970s, that a major reason for the lack of European style regional integration in the third world was due to the lack of domestic pluralism (See Acharya 1998a: 220-21, note 11).

Deutsch's ideas have, since the 1950s, been interpreted as part of a liberal tradition by most scholars, and some scholars have even drawn a philosophical link between the Kantian notion of democratic peace and security communities (Acharya 1998a: 199 & note 5, 2001: 31). In the Asian context, the liberal bias has been challenged by, among others, Amitav Acharya (Acharya 1998a, 2001, 2003). Acharya criticises the liberal preconception where

"...a high dose of authoritarian politics and relatively low levels of intra-regional economic interdependence render the Third World particularly inhospitable for the emergence of regional security communities." (Acharya 1998a: 199)

He asks what, in this case, can explain the fact that the Southeast Asian members of the ASEAN have not fought wars against each other since 1967. His conclusion in his 2001 volume is that the ASEAN is best understood as a "nascent security community" (Acharya 2001: 194-209. Also see Khoo 2004). According to Acharya, it is not justified to claim that the ASEAN is a security community in the Deutschian sense. Rather, he suggests a more differential and graduated approach leading to the conclusion that the ASEAN is a nascent security community. This is the first of three phases in the development of a security community according to Adler and Barnett's heuristic

model, which include the stages of "nascent", "ascendant", and "mature" security communities (Barnett and Adler 1998).

2.1.3 Constructivism, the "ASEAN-way", and soft regionalism in East Asia

In international relations theory, constructivist approaches offer a suitable framework for understanding the relative peace in the East Asian region. Since Richard Higgott in 1994 argued that existing theories ignore the significance of underlying ideational questions, an extensive body of constructivist literature has developed (Higgott 1994). The area-focused constructivism has mainly focused on Southeast Asia whereas few, if any, apply constructivism to Northeast Asia. Indeed, it is difficult to assess the exact relationship between Southeast Asian community building and the broader East Asian security setting, including what the exact role of China has been, or how important China's "soft power diplomacy" and ASEAN's "constructive engagement" of China has been. This study is based on the conviction that the insights from Southeast Asia are relevant for understanding also the broader East Asian developments, particularly the post-Cold War developments, including the spread of regionalisation across East Asia. This regionalisation process has obviously been influenced by the Southeast Asian community building experience and the ASEAN practices. This is partially because the ASEAN has been driving the East Asian regionalisation and community building process, particularly through the ASEAN+3 and the ARF processes (see e.g. Acharya 2001; Cossa 2007; Dent 2008; Jimbo 2007; Singh 1997; Tanaka 2007b). In turn, this has resulted in the spread of ASEAN's preferred practice of multilateralism and the general acceptance for the so called "ASEAN-way" as the normative frame for diplomatic practices.

The focus of most constructivist studies has been on the creation and development of the ASEAN and the ARF, with emphasis on the idea of a regional identity and the "ASEAN-way". It is argued that regional identity is created and reinforced through the socialisation process between government leaders and regional elites through multilateral frameworks, track two diplomacy, and other inter-personal interactions that has been going on since ASEAN's foundation in 1967. This socialisation process is seen by constructivists as being of fundamental importance for regional community building, and the institutionalisation of peaceful interactions among the ASEAN members. (Regional community building in this context equals regional identity building.) However, the focus of most constructivist studies is not specifically on either peace or conflict management. There are a few notable exceptions, such as Timo Kivimäki's work on the long peace of the ASEAN, and Amitav Acharya's research on the ASEAN (Acharya 1991; Kivimäki 2001). (Also see "Informality in East Asia" below for a research review of the importance of informality and informal processes for peace and conflict management.) The *Pacific Review*, a key forum for international relations theory debates in the Pacific area, also produced a special issue on Southeast Asian relations that acknowledges and addresses the inherent problems of constructivism.¹⁵ There is also a range of studies within IPE, which focus on the link between economics and politics. These studies offer a comprehensive understanding of East Asian regional dynamics, but lack a peace and conflict management focus (See "Informality in East Asia" below for an in-depth discussion.).

¹⁵ *The Pacific Review*, Vol 19, No 2, June, 2006. (See in particular Acharya and Stubbs 2006; Narine 2006; Tan 2006.)

2.1.3.1 The "ASEAN-way"

The so called "ASEAN-way" forms an important part of East Asian international relations, both regarding the positive developments in the overall East Asian regionalisation and community building process, and the creation and success of more formalised frameworks such as the ASEAN, the ARF and the APT. From a peace, conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspective, practices that correspond to the "ASEAN-way" are expected to impact, in particular, short term conflict prevention. It is also expected to work as a catalyst for longer-term peacebuilding, but less so for conflict resolution. By avoiding conflicts at all costs, many sensitive issues cannot be addressed. Consequently, practises according to the "ASEAN-way" contain little space for addressing the underlying causes of conflict. Nevertheless, considering the level of sensitivity and intractability of the existing conflicts, failed attempts to resolve conflicts would potentially have disastrous effects and may even trigger military confrontations.

The "ASEAN-way" is a diplomatic style that emphasises consensus building and conflict avoidance over results. It was developed during the last few decades by the ASEAN countries. Its origins can be traced to the early days of the ASEAN when an informal code was established to alleviate the historical animosity and suspicion among the ASEAN members. The "ASEAN-way" is a process-oriented practice based on, and consistent with, what is seen as core Southeast Asian values. As expressed by ASEAN Secretary-General, Rodolfo C. Severino:

"Southeast Asians' way of dealing with one another has been through manifestations of goodwill and the slow winning and giving of trust. And the way to arrive at agreements has been through consultation and consensus – mushawara and mufakat – rather than across-the-table negotiations involving bargaining and give-and-take that result in deals enforceable in a court of law." (Severino 2001)

It should be emphasised that these are not only Southeast Asian values. Across East Asia, there is a general preference for informality, consultation, and consensus building, which will be discussed more on depth below (see "Informality in East Asia" below).

Over time, the "ASEAN-way" has spread beyond Southeast Asia and the ASEAN members, and it has become a *de facto* accepted norm for diplomatic practices in virtually all inter-state relations across the East Asian region (save North Korea). This is manifest, for example, in the preference for low-key or quiet diplomacy, back channel negotiations, the proliferation of different track two frameworks, and the importance attributed to personal relations among leaders. It has also become an inherent principle in the frameworks for multilateral cooperation that have developed, not only in Southeast Asia, but also in broader frameworks such as the ASEAN+3 and the ARF.

Many researchers discuss the exact meaning of the "ASEAN-way" (Acharya 1999: ch. 2; Acharya 2001; Haacke 1999; Katsumata 2003a; Nischalke 2000; Zha and Hu 2006: Ch. 5). There is a consensus on at least four elements: 1. the principle of non-interference in internal affairs; 2. the non-use of force; 3. decision making through consensus; and 4. informal diplomacy. The non-interference in internal affairs and the non-use of force are fundamental underlying principles originating in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC) in Southeast Asia (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 1976). The former principle refers to non-interference in, what can be perceived as, domestic issues of other member states. The latter principle pronounces the fundamental idea that conflicts are to be resolved in a peaceful way.

The "ASEAN-way" focuses on the process and the means, rather than the goal itself. Indeed, the interaction and informal negotiation process in order to reach consensus is seen as an important goal in itself. The "ASEAN-way" rejects legalism and instead emphasizes socialization and consensus building. Consensus is being built by dialogue and consultation through an often tedious and time-consuming process. This is illustrated by, for example, the high frequency of high-level ASEAN meetings on political, economic, and social issues, reaching 230-250 annually (Snitwongse 1998).

This process develops trust, understanding, and inter-personal relations among the leaders, regardless of the end result. The "ASEAN-way" focuses on "elite politics and negotiations" and uses "behind-the-door" diplomacy, which underlines the preference for informal or secret settings and channels (Zheng and Tok 2008: 189).

The consensus building process is non-confrontational and, focuses on trying to avoid conflict (conflict avoidance) and to offend others (face saving) while building consensus before any official decisions.¹⁶ During the consensus building process, public criticism is avoided. The importance of conflict avoidance and face saving cannot be underestimated in the context of safeguarding peace. All actors are doing their utmost to avoid any form of confrontation or conflict, strive to downplay more sensitive issues, and focus instead on positive relations.

The "ASEAN-way" also promotes multilateral dialogue with major powers, rather than unilateral or bilateral dialogues (Zha and Hu 2006: 117-18). The underlying logic is that the ASEAN believes that security only can be achieved through engagement and cooperation with the major powers, not by the ASEAN alone (Zha and Hu 2006: 117-18). The most obvious examples of the proliferation of multilateral dialogues are the ASEAN+3 process and the ARF. These two processes, together with the proliferation of track two diplomacy, represent a pan-East Asian practice of frequent high-level meetings (also see chapter 4).

2.1.3.2 Soft regionalism

In 1987 Robert Scalapino used the term soft regionalism to characterise an emerging regional integration in Northeast Asia. This type of regionalism lacks formal structure and is instead based on unofficial and quasi-official dialogues on economic issues and sub-regional cooperation (Scalapino 1987 in Harding 1995). East Asian regionalism, as opposed to the legalistic European regionalism based on harmonised domestic and international law, is based on regimes that share similar socio-cultural norms of behaviour and group networks (often overseas Chinese) (Higgott 1997; Katzenstein 1997a). This form of "soft", slow and inclusive regionalisation, based on informal networks, is preferred by most East Asian states, which resist exclusive institution building (Katzenstein 1996c). The APEC and the ASEAN, though very different organisation, are often used as classical examples of soft regionalism (Chu 2002: 48).

Soft regionalisation has many supporters also among scholars outside the region. Particularly constructivist scholars see this indigenous, more flexible, and possibly less costly, way of inter-state cooperation as an alternative to the over-bureaucratic and "thick institutionalisation" in Europe (Acharya 1997, 1998b; Busse 1999; Higgott 1994; Higgott 1998b). Nevertheless, the lack of formalisation has a negative impact on the capacity to manage crises. This was seen most clearly in

¹⁶ For a discussion on differences in conflict management style, including the values behind the Chinese preference for conflict avoidance, see Morris, Williams et al. 1998: esp. pp. 733-34.

the 1997-98 Asian Financial crises, when the existing informal structures could not form a response. This failure, together with the over time deeper integration of East Asia, has led to a growing interest in the development of new institutions and an expansion of the ones that already exist (For an in depth account of this process of change, see Beeson 2009). The prime example here is the "Chiang Mai" currency swap initiative among the ASEAN states, China, Japan and South Korea (On the Chiang Mai initiative, see Eichengreen 2003; Yung Chul and Yunjong 2005). Nevertheless, the underlying principles of soft institutionalism and the "ASEAN-way" still have strong support across the region. It is mainly the economic sector that shows willingness for increased institutionalisation.

2.1.3.3 The ASEAN-way, soft regionalisation and Chinese foreign policy

The acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" and the process of soft regionalism are important for the understanding of both the general post-Cold War developments in the East Asian security setting, and for understanding the changes in China's foreign policy behaviour. Since the end of the Cold War, China's foreign policy has broadened its scope and has moved away from the sole focus on big powers. Indeed, since the 1990s, China has, for the first time, cultivated a deep and comprehensive relationship with the ASEAN, and has further accepted multilateralism and multilateral frameworks (Zha and Hu 2006). To begin with, China was not too enthusiastic about engaging in multilateral frameworks and only reluctantly joined the security focused ARF in 1994. At this time, China's foreign policy was almost solely focused on bilateral relations, and multilateralism/regionalism was seen as undermining its power position (Foot 1998).

As opposed to realists, constructivists see the changes in Chinese foreign policy, at least partially, as a result of China's engagement and socialisation with the outside world. China has quickly stepped up its learning curve and is now participating with more confidence in multilateral frameworks. The Chinese leadership has acquired the diplomatic skills needed for the protection of its interests also in non-bilateral settings and has, over time, come to accept the "ASEAN-way" as the diplomatic norm for relations with its East Asian neighbours. In fact, the non-threatening features of the "ASEAN-way" are arguably part of the reason why China embraced multilateralism in the first place. Over time, China has boosted its image and credibility towards the ASEAN by adhering to a policy of "good neighbourliness", and by using soft power in its relations towards Southeast Asia.¹⁷ Today, there are a limited number of studies on China's soft power diplomacy and they are mostly analysing to what extent a change from hard power diplomacy has taken place, what impacts the new practice has had, or what the implications are for U.S. interests (Garrison 2005; Johnston 2003; Kurlantzick 2007).

In this study, the ability of constructivism to interpret the reciprocal relationship between China and the ASEAN is of foremost importance. This reciprocal process has been going on since 1990. On the one hand, China has deliberately shifted to a soft power diplomacy, while on the other hand, the ASEAN has moved to normalise its relations with China under the banner of "constructive engagement", which also has improved relations. Moreover, Sino-ASEAN economic relations have

¹⁷ "Soft power" is a term introduced by Joseph Nye. It refers to the ability to get what you want by persuading and attracting others to adopt your goals. Hard power, on the other hand, is the ability to use carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will (Nye 2002). Applied to China, it refers to deliberate actions taken by the Chinese to project a benign image of itself, including positioning itself as a model of social and economic success for its ASEAN neighbours (Kurlantzick 2007).

increased as a result of significant economic growth in several ASEAN countries before the Asian financial crisis, and China's deepening economic reforms. Also the diplomatic relations have expanded and deepened.

These reciprocal relations have increased China's acceptance of multilateralism and the "ASEAN-way". However, if, and to what extent, ASEAN's "constructive engagement" has caused China to change, or if in fact China's soft power approach has managed to erase the previous "China threat" perception among the ASEAN members, is not yet well researched. The existing literature on the "ASEAN-way" and ASEAN's normative power focuses mainly on the Southeast Asian region, and does only, to a limited degree, address the impact on China and on the Sino-ASEAN relationship (Acharya 2005; Eaton and Stubbs 2006). In recent years, a few general works on China's relations with the ASEAN and Southeast Asia have been published (Lai and Lim 2007; Percival 2007; Öjendal 2004). Although they provide relevant overviews of the relations, they do not address in detail the role of peace and/or conflict management. Ba has also written on how the ASEAN has influenced China through socialisation, and Zha and Hu has used an IPE approach for studying the building of a "neighbourly community" in East Asia (Ba 2006; Zha and Hu 2006).

2.1.4 The need for an inclusive approach

To sum up the review of the field, each of the three schools of international relations and their sub-theories can in different ways contribute to our understanding of the East Asian security setting. However, none of them can by themselves account for all the aspects of the East Asian security setting or explain the East Asian peace. Realism, the dominant research paradigm, fails to grasp fully the East Asian security dynamics in its prediction of perpetual conflict and war. Although realism provides a fairly good account of regional dynamics, the explanatory power holds only within its own framework. This framework, in turn, relies on rather conventional security interpretations or general international relations perspectives.

Liberalism and constructivism each account for several aspects of the East Asian dynamics. Of the two, in particular constructivism has been relatively successful in providing a tool for interpretation of the East Asian security dynamics. Nevertheless, neither provides enough keys to a comprehensive understanding of the East Asian peace. The best attempts so far have been done by region-focused researchers, but the East Asian peace remains a problem since the focus of these studies tend to be limited either to the regional dynamics, or to the question of peace. Differently expressed, the conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspective in this research project is rarely applied to the East Asian security setting. In fact, research on the overarching field of conflict management (broadly defined), focusing on East Asia or the Asia-Pacific region, is still very limited and in need of further exploration (Bercovitch, Huang et al. 2008; Heijmans, Simmonds et al. 2004; Swanström and Weissmann 2005).

The problems of the different schools of thought in the field of international relations, in regard to the East Asian security setting, have been acknowledged by scholars, such as Shambaugh. He has concluded that, although undermining conceptual clarity, the current reality in the evolving Asian system is a mixture of realist, liberal, and constructivist elements (2006). It has also been argued that there is a need to integrate the different traditions in the same framework. This has been done most deliberately by Katzenstein and his co-writers, who argue for the use of a so-called "eclectic approach" (Katzenstein and Okawara 2002; Katzenstein and Sil 2004). Inclusive approaches are often used by researchers who apply frameworks that are influenced by international political

economy, or by constructivists. In general, researchers who apply inclusive approaches also tend to lean towards the constructivist school of thought. This is also the theoretical approach in this study, which uses a framework based on constructivist epistemology when analysing the three case studies.

2.2 Theoretical framework

As mentioned above, this study is founded on a constructivist epistemology, and uses a framework which has two main components: peace and informality. Peace concerns the observed paradox of the East Asian peace. Informality, on the other hand, is a concept that is used as an entrance for the identification and understanding of the central processes and mechanisms that can explain the existing peace, why existing conflicts have been prevented from escalating, and how peace has been built. This section starts with a presentation of the applied constructivist approach. Thereafter, the concepts peace and informality are discussed and defined. This includes an analysis of the role of informality in East Asia, and a review of previous research on the particular topic of this dissertation.

2.2.1 The constructivist approach

This study works within a constructivist framework, in which the three case studies will be placed (For a brief but good review of the philosophical and sociological foundations of constructivism and the evolution of constructivism in international relations, see Adler 2002: 96-100). This study applies a holistic constructivist approach, which should be separated from systematic and unit-level constructivism. The two latter strands of constructivism developed in international relations theory during the 1990s (Reus-Smith 2005: 199). Systemic constructivism

"...follows neo-realism in adopting a "third-image" perspective, focusing solely on interactions between unitary state actors. Everything that exists or occurs within the domestic political realm is ignored, and an account of world politics is derived simply by theorizing how states relate to one another in the external, international domain." (Reus-Smith 2005: 199).

One of the most well-known theorists within this approach is arguably Alexander Wendt (1992, 1994, 1995, 1999). Unit-level constructivism instead "concentrate on the relationship between domestic social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states" (Reus-Smith 2005: 200). This form of constructivism have, for example, been adopted by Katzenstein in his work on the national security policies of Japan and Germany (Katzenstein 1996a, 1997b). As opposed to systemic and unit level constructivism, the holistic constructivist approach that is applied in this study aims

"[t]o accommodate the entire range of factors conditioning the identities and interests of states, they bring the corporate and the social together into a unified analytical perspective that treats the domestic and the international as two faces of a single social and political order." (Reus-Smith 2005: 201)

The dual capacity described above is important for this study. Indeed, the domestic dimension is important, not only because it influences how national interests and identities are constructed, but also because this study also includes non-state actors and processes that cross borders without being inter-governmental. Such processes include personal networks, track two diplomacy and market

driven economic integration. The holistic constructivist approach also accounts for "...the development of the normative and ideational structures of the present international system, as well as the social identities they have engendered." (Reus-Smith 2005: 201) Thus, such an approach makes it possible to account for the East Asian identity building process and the development and institutionalisation of shared normative and ideational structures across the East Asian region.

Since identities and interests are intersubjective constructs, they are best understood in the context of interactions between different actors. In other words, in this study it is argued that the identities and interests of all regional actors – from state to individual – continuously are being reconstructed as a result of intersubjective interactions. If viewed from the perspective of peace, this may well be a development in the wrong direction, but it nevertheless constitutes a change. A similar pattern is occurring with regard to how subjects perceive their cultural belonging and cultural differences, which impact how they perceive each other.

As identities and interests are social constructs under continuous reconstruction through intersubjective interactions, they are thus affected by regular interactions and socialisation among actors. Even if this process not necessarily increases the level of agreement, at least it constitutes a learning process whereby the understanding of the other's perceptions and interests increases. Consequently, the risk for miscalculations and misunderstandings is reduced.

Interaction and socialisation is, in itself, also a trust and confidence building process. Indeed, interaction and socialisation creates trust through the development of personal ties and reciprocal commitments. This, in turn, increases the incentive and ability to keep up the working relations. Even in cases where trust proves hard to build, the actors will still have gone through a learning process, which eventually will improve their ability to assess whom to trust, and to what extent. The argument that interaction and socialisation is a trust building process should be understood in the Chinese cultural context, where the building of "personal relationships" or "connections", often referred to as "guanxi" and "reciprocity", in the form of mutual obligations, is of paramount importance (Gold, Guthrie et al. 2002). The importance of maintaining inter-personal relations goes deep in the Chinese culture, to the level that maintaining the relationship becomes a moral obligation. Building trust is, in this regard, a long and tedious process embedded in inter-personal interaction. Nevertheless, it is a fragile achievement as existing trust can be instantly destroyed. (See "Informality in East Asia" below for an in-depth discussion.)

2.2.1.1 The reciprocal nature of agency and structure

Agents and structures are seen as mutually constitutive and the relationship between them is reciprocal, as opposed to dualistic. In line with Anthony Giddens' "structuration theory", it is argued that structure and agency cannot be separated (Giddens 1979). Structures are neither independent of actors, nor in control over them. Structures create rules which guide the actors and which the actors tend to reproduce over time. Structures, however, depend on the actors' recognition, without which the structure would cease to exist. The structure is in other words both the medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices that constitute the system, practices which can be both constraining and enabling (Giddens 1979). Although accepting the dialectic relations between agency and structure, this study gives priority to the role of agents. The focus is thus on the actions and behaviour of agents, and how they influence structures, rather than on how the behaviour of the agents are caused, and constrained, by existing structures.

Structures do more than constrain the agents: they also influence the construction of their identities and interests. As far as structures shape the interests and behaviour of actors, be they states or individuals, normative and ideational structures are given just as much weight as material structures. Thus

"...intersubjective knowledge and ideas ... have constitutive effects on social reality and its evolution. When drawn upon by individuals, the rules, norms and cause-effect understandings that make material objects meaningful become the source of people's reasons, interests become the source of international practices." (Adler 2002: 102)

Following Wendt, it is argued that material forces are significant only so far as "... they are constituted with particular meanings for actors" (Wendt 1999: 24). Wendt's own example fits well the context of this study: 500 British nuclear weapons are perceived as less threatening to Washington than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons. This is the case "because the British are friends of the United States and the North Koreans are not, and amity or enmity is a function of shared understandings". (Wendt 1995: 73). For example, the role of the U.S. and the implications of its military superiority for the East Asian peace and the case studies must be understood in the light of the shared knowledge of its meaning. That is, the U.S. is perceived as a stabilising force (Alagappa 2003; Mastanduno 2008; Sutter 2003; Wang 1996) and, as a consequence, the regional states act accordingly.¹⁸

Identities, interests and behaviours are interlinked. The social identities of actors inform the construction of interests, which in turn informs actions. To quote Wendt,

"Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a "portfolio" of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations." (Wendt 1992)

Hence it is important to understand how identities and interests are constructed, re-produced, and changed over time. For example, it is significant to comprehend how the Chinese identification as a peacefully rising power affects how China thinks about itself, its identity, and its perceived interests. In this context, the East Asian community building process, in particular the general acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" as the diplomatic norm, must be explored and its effects on identity, interests, and behaviour must be mapped.

More specifically, normative and ideational structures shape the actors' identities and interests through the mechanisms of imagination, communication, and constraints (Reus-Smith 2005: 198). Imagination concerns what is perceived as being in the realm of possibility, that is "how they think they should act, what the perceived limitations on their actions are and what strategies they can imagine, let alone entertain, to achieve their objectives." (Reus-Smith 2005: 198). Institutionalised norms embedded in the "ASEAN-way" do for example set the practical limitations for how to behave and act in regional multilateral frameworks. Communication concerns the influence of normative and ideational structures on the way actors seek to justify behaviour by appealing to existing norms and accepted legitimate conduct. In East Asia, the role of communication is seen in the non-interference in the internal affairs of others which is legitimised by reference to exiting

¹⁸ The role of the U.S. as a stabilising force has been emphasised in the majority of the interviews and discussions with strategic thinkers at universities and government think tanks in China during fieldwork Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

legal principles, or the "ASEAN-way". Lastly, constraints concern how norms and ideas constrain acceptable behaviour. For example, a peacefully rising China has created constraints regarding how it can behave on the regional, and international, arena.

This said about constructivism, this study is inclusive in its understanding of the processes and mechanisms in each case study and behind the East Asian peace. This means that, although this study applies a constructivist framework, it also draws upon insights from realism and liberalism as will be discussed below. An inclusive approach enables the study to expand the scope of research problems beyond that of each specific research tradition. This is indeed necessary if to understand the dynamics behind the East Asian peace, which mainstream theories fail to explain properly. By being both critical in transcending existing subdivisions and research parameters, and in allowing for an eclectic integration of realism, liberalism and constructivism, the inclusive approach provides this study with a needed frame, but at the same time makes sure that this frame does not restrict or limit the exploration of a new area (informality and peace).¹⁹

2.2.1.2 A constructivist reading of liberal approaches and security regime theory

A constructivist framework is useful for this study also when drawing on other theoretical approaches. For example, in line with liberalist theories, economic integration and interdependence in East Asia is expected to impact the identity and interests of states. In East Asia, it is clear that a common interest in economic prosperity has developed, which has given rise to an "economics first" policy across the region. However, as opposed to liberalism, constructivism does not consider the interests to be fixed. Rather, it is argued in this study that the regional priority of economic growth and prosperity is a constructed interest in the first place, and that its reconstruction is not automatic.

Theories on security communities, functionalism and neofunctionalism are also well suited for a constructivist reading. The works of Karl Deutsch et al. and Ernst B. Haas can indeed be interpreted as influential forerunners to constructivism (Deutsch, Burrell et al. 1957; Haas 1958). Emanuel Adler has suggested such an interpretation, arguing that Deutsch et al., together with Ernst Haas, "anticipated modernist constructivism", and that Deutsch's sociological approach has "had an indelible influence on later developments in constructivism." (Adler 2002: 99).²⁰ Although Deutsch was not a constructivist himself, his program on security communities dealt with peaceful transnational collective identities using a sociological approach which emphasised social transactions and social communities (Adler 2002: 99). Security communities are themselves constructed through interactions among states, whereby over time they reconstruct the identities and interests of states. The constructivist strain is also found in the development of Deutsch's work by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, who have given the concept a constructivist spin in their work on pluralistic security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998b: esp. ch. 1-2 & 13). As mentioned above, one central idea in functionalist theories is the role of spill over. Spill over refers to a transformation of the interests, identities, and behaviour of the subjects as a result of interaction. These transformations are best understood when applying a constructivist framework. Constructivism facilitates the interpretation of the learning and adaptation processes that early

¹⁹ The approach used in this study is influenced by what Katzenstein and colleagues calls "Analytical Eclecticism" (Katzenstein and Sil 2004: 19).

²⁰ In this chapter Adler also makes an interesting review of the personal links between Karl Deutsch and later constructivists.

functionalism overlooked (see "Functionalism, neo-functionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism" above). Constructivism provides a framework for understanding informal institutionalisation and thus facilitates the understanding of how functional integration in East Asia can develop without a formal structure.

By applying a constructivist framework, insights from the security regime theory also become applicable to the East Asian setting. The region has experienced a shift in focus, from self-interest and short term gains to a more long term perspective in inter-state relations. Moreover, a general agreement on principles, rules, and norms that restrain nations across the region has developed. This does not imply a formal agreement, but rather ideational and normative structures, manifest in the APT process and the institutionalisation of the "ASEAN-way", but also across the Taiwan Strait. Here constructivist ideas on ideational and normative structures are useful. Furthermore, constructivist insights on identity and interest transformations are helpful for an interpretation of the nascent security regime given that it takes the transformation of interest into account.

2.2.2 Peace

The concept of peace has been debated and scrutinised throughout the history of the social sciences. Not surprisingly, the concept has been defined differently over time. At a first glance, one might get the impression that scholars, at least in history, rather have focused on war. Nevertheless, although war may have been the main focus in most of these earlier studies, they have, perhaps inadvertently, also contributed to the knowledge of peace.

In classical times, great scholars such as Plato, Aristotle and others used a negative definition of peace – peace was defined as the absence of war. Over time, the definition was broadened, firstly by the Romans who took a step towards a positive peace structure by both including a set of obligations to be upheld in peace treaties as well as dividing between intra-empire peace and peace with non-Romans (i.e. barbarians). In the same tradition, with the coming of Christianity, peace was considered existing when there were no wars between Christian states. War with, or among, non-Christians ("just wars") did not violate Christian peace. This perception continued during the early middle ages and can be found in the thinking of Dubois, Aquinas, and Dante. This perception lasted until the Renaissance when the idea of humanism re-defined the idea of peace to including the entire humanity. With this peace also moved towards a positive definition, including social justice, freedom, and development into the conditions for peace. Here the writings of Cruce are a good example. This trend continued in the 19th century, when strong emphasis was put on the linkage to social- and economic issues and freedom as found in Hugo, Cobden, Proudhon, Marx, and Hegel.

Throughout history, there have been variations in what is perceived as causing peace, i.e. the underlying conditions needed to be able to realise peace. Different ideas exist on what is needed. Religious pre-requisites such as the need for everyone to belong to the same faith (Dar-al-Islam) in Islam and the realization of the divine law (Christianity) have been suggested. Plato argued for wisdom and Epictetus for freedom, while in the 14th century Dubois claimed that only a pope could lead a Christian federation, Aquinas said it needed to be a monarch, while Dante believed in a secular authority. In the 19th century, Proudhon noted the need for economic equality and prosperity, while Marx, Hegel and others emphasised the need for a transformation of society. Through history many has also claimed a need for some form of international organisation (e.g. de Saint-Pierre, Mill, Saint-Simon, and Wright). This focus on international organisations has been a

prominent feature also during the 20th century, when the European project has turned into a benchmark.

In the 1950s, peace became an academic research field in its own right. In January 1959, the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) was set up by Johan Galtung. The same year, the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution was set up by Kenneth Boulding at the University of Michigan. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) was founded seven years later. Since their foundation, the two sides of the Atlantic have developed different traditions of peace research. The U.S. tradition focuses on war and conflict, while the Scandinavian focuses on peace. The Scandinavian tradition emphasises the need to go beyond the achievement of negative peace. The American school is more concerned with the transformation from war/rivalry towards (negative) peace. This difference in focus has also been accompanied by a difference in methodology. The American tradition tends to have a positivist starting point and prefer quantitative methods, whereas the Scandinavian tradition is more qualitatively focused and lean towards a constructivist ontology. However, the differences have faded over time and there is today a joint acceptance of the interlinkages between peace, security, and development, and the need to build peace as well as prevent war.

2.2.2.1 Defining peace

Peace is a concept that triggers a lot of emotions and thinking among both researchers and ordinary citizens. Everyone has an idea about what peace is, and when asked, they tend to define peace simply as the absence of war. This is the negative way of defining and conceptualising peace. Negative peace focuses on the absence of organised collective violence between major human groups.²¹ It refers to a political condition other than one of organised armed conflict (war), and is often distinguished from a situation of non-war (neither war nor peace) (Evans and Newnham 1992: 250). Generally, it refers to states, but can also concern other collective groups based on e.g. race, ethnicity, or class. Such a negative definition is inadequate, as peace arguably goes beyond the absence of war. Indeed, it is in this study argued that the quality of peace may be categorised into different levels and that there "... is a tremendous variation within the category of 'no war' ranging from those actors that are still hostile towards one another but not actively fighting to those that have an integrated web of cooperation and for whom war is unthinkable". (Klein, Goertz et al. 2008: 67). The variation within the "no war" category, or the peace continuum, is here divided into four categories: 1. crisis; 2. unstable peace; 3. stable peace; and 4. durable peace (see below).

²¹ During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a lively debate between Galtung and Boulding about the meaning of peace. This debate centred around Galtung's idea of "positive" and "negative" peace (See Boulding 1977). Galtung defined negative peace as the absence of physical violence, which at the time was opposed by Boulding, who argued that "Peace ... is not just "not-war" any more than water is "not ice"" (Boulding 1977: 78). This said, in 1978 Boulding defined the "negative side" of peace as "the absence of turmoil, tension, conflict, and war" (Boulding 1978: 3)". Adler argues that the concept positive peace is best understood as a concept that "has no ontological existence at all... [, as it is] a goal that can never be achieved in our times" (1998: 166). Galtung defines positive peace as the absence of structural socio-economic violence (Galtung 1969), while Boulding defines it as a "condition of good management, orderly resolution of conflict, harmony associated with mature relationships, gentleness, and love" (Boulding 1978: 3). A central aspect of the concept of positive peace is the inclusion of some form of social and economic justice, and a holistic perspective including the needs and interests of humans as a whole (see Kacowicz 1998: ch. 1; Kacowicz and Bar-Siman-Tov 2000).

As set out in chapter 1, in this study, peace is understood as a concept that addresses inter-group relations, in this case states. Furthermore, these relations are understood as separated into two parts, one negative and one positive. To quote Johan Galtung in full,

"Since the search for peace is concerned with the relations between groups, it obviously divides into a negative and a positive part: the search for the conditions for the absence of negative relations, and the search for conditions that facilitate the presence of positive relations." (Galtung 1967: 14)

The relative peace in East Asia can be described as a situation where there are unsuitable conditions for the absence of negative relations. There is also a thick web of negative relations, not least in the three cases. At the same time, despite the negative relations, conditions that are suitable for facilitating positive relations have also developed, as illustrated by the post-Cold War proliferation of interstate cooperation on less sensitive issues.

It is important to note that the "two aspects of the search for peace [conditions for the absence of negative relations and conditions facilitating positive relations] are not unrelated", and that "the most promising way to reduce negative relations to a minimum is via an increase of positive relations" (Galtung 1967: 14). This said, merely observing an "empirical correlation does not imply logical dependence", that is the existence of positive relations can be, but need not be, the cause of the absence of negative relations (Galtung 1967: 14).

In the context of this study, Galtung's argument provides a theoretical foundation for presuming that the development of positive relations, despite the existence of negative relations, can be beneficial for peace. Thus, in this study, it is argued that positive relations may be beneficial as a long term peacebuilding process, and may have a transformative potential also on negative relations. According to the constructivist understanding applied here, the development of peaceful relations will over time bring about changes in identity, interests, and behaviour. Trust and confidence will be the effect of positive interaction, and perceptions of the other will change eventually. Positive relations can thus be expected to act as a catalyst for reducing, or transforming, negative relations. Hence, the many negative relations in the region do lessen the importance of the parallel process in which positive relations are developing, without necessarily addressing or resolving the conditions causing negative relations. This also facilitates the important practice of conflict avoidance, which implies focusing on positive relations without addressing existing tensions and conflicts.

As mentioned above, this study differentiates between four qualitatively different levels of "no war": crisis, unstable peace, stable peace, and durable peace.²² At a minimal level, peace is defined as a "political condition other than one of armed conflict (war)" (Evans and Newnham 1992: 250).²³ In this context, war is defined as "...organized violence carried on by political units against each other" (Bull 1977: 184. Also see Wallensteen 2002: ch. 2; Vasquez 1993: 21-40). To be labelled war, the situation needs to entail battle-related deaths (Wallensteen 2002: esp. ch. 2).

Crisis, the first level of peace is the negative extreme on the peace continuum, located just before the situation moves over the threshold into war. At the crisis stage, the risk of war is imminent and military action is the preferred, or likely, option. There may be sporadic utterances of violence

²² This differentiation draws on Lund's model of the basic life history of conflicts (1996 ch 2; 2009).

²³ Although the Korean War formally has not yet ended, it is not an armed conflict since there has been no organised violence between the conflicting parties since the armistice agreement.

between the parties, but no regular organised and open violence. This study uses the United States Institute of Peace's definition of crisis, according to which a crisis is a

"...tense confrontation between armed forces that are mobilized and ready to fight and may be engaged in threats and occasional low-level skirmishes but have not exerted any significant amount of force. The probability of the outbreak of war is high." (United States Institute of Peace 2006: 12)

A crisis is similar to what Benjamin Miller calls "cold war", which he defines as

"... a situation of negative peace – a mere absence of hot war in which hostilities may break out any time. It is characterized by recurrent military crisis and a considerable likelihood of escalation to war, either in a premeditated way or inadvertently." (Miller 2007: 44-45)

The next level of the peace continuum, unstable peace, describes a level of conflict in between crisis and stable peace. Different terms has been used for the same concept, including "cold peace" (Miller 2007: 45-46), "precarious peace", (George 2000), "adversarial peace" (Bengtsson 2000), "negative peace" (Boulding 1978), and "conditional peace" (George 2000). During a period of unstable peace, tensions and suspicion has increased. It is a situation where, although still at peace, the tension between the parties is so high that peace no longer seems guaranteed and the parties perceive each other as enemies. During periods of unstable peace a plausible war scenario can be constructed, the conflict is normally defined and the parties have taken measures to deal with it, even if militarized options not yet have been adopted. Following Lund, unstable peace is here defined as "a situation in which tension and suspicion among parties run high but violence is either absent or only sporadic" (Lund 1996: 39).

Stable peace is a situation where the level of tension between the parties is low. There are different forms of connections and cooperation between the parties, often including economic and environmental cooperation, as well as cooperation within other non-sensitive issue-areas. During a situation of stable peace, the level of peace has transcended the stage where war *does* not happen and moved into a situation where war is perceived as something that *will* not happen, at least in people's minds (at the cognitive level) (Allan and Keller 2006: 111). There are a range of definitions of stable peace (Elgstrsm and Jerneck 2000; George 2000; Kacowicz and Bar-Siman-Tov 2000; Vayrynen 2000). A common feature of all definitions is the reference to a situation where war is considered unthinkable among all parties. For example, Kenneth E. Boulding defines stable peace as "...a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved". (1978: 13). Russet and Starr defines stable peace as "the absence of preparation for war or the serious expectation of war with each other". (1993: 376). According to Alexander George, whose definition this study applies, stable peace can be described as

"... a relationship between two states in which neither side considers employing force or even making a threat of force, in any, even serious disputes, between them. Deterrence and compellence backed by threats of military force are simply excluded as instruments of policy. Two states that enjoy stable peace may continue to have serious disputes, but they share a firm understanding that such disputes must be dealt with by non-military means." (George 2000: xiii)

On the positive extreme of the peace continuum is durable peace. Durable peace is a situation that

"...involves a high level of reciprocity and cooperation, and the virtual absence of self-defence measures among parties ... A 'positive peace' prevails based on shared values, goals, and institutions (e.g. democratic political systems and rule of law), economic interdependence, and a sense of international community." (United States Institute of Peace 2006: 6)

The achievement of durable peace is linked to the development of a "pluralistic security community" (Adler and Barnett 1998c; Deutsch, Burrell et al. 1957). A security community is a "...transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change." (Adler and Barnett 1998a: 31) In these communities, war is not only unthinkable, but the parties are also tied together by extensive communication links and transaction flows (Deutsch, Burrell et al. 1957). Key features of pluralistic security communities are compatible major values and mutual responsiveness, a high intensity of interactions and a belief in mutual rewards from cooperation (Deutsch, Burrell et al. 1957). Such communities are expected to have shared identities, values, meanings, and long term interests and to interact at several levels (e.g., private as well as governmental) (Adler and Barnett 1998c). (See "Security communities" above for a review of research on security communities.)

Stable peace is the level of the peace continuum that is most relevant for this study. Stable peace is, in this study, seen as the suitable description for the East Asian security setting in 1990-2008. Durable peace is included for completeness, although it is hard to argue that East Asia, at the present day, is best described as a situation of durable peace, or close to reaching that stage. Since East Asia has not suffered from war during the period of study, it is clear that the situation in the region and in the three included cases, at worst, can be labelled crisis or unstable peace.

2.2.2.2 Realising peace: conflict prevention and peacebuilding

To understand how peace has developed requires an understanding of the conflict management mechanisms behind the relative peace. "Conflict management" is here understood as an umbrella term for concepts and approaches to build peace and to prevent, mitigate, and/or resolve conflicts (For a more in depth review of different conflict management terms see for example Ackerman 2003; Aggestam 2003; Björkdahl 2000; Jentleson 2000; Swanström and Weissmann 2005; Wallensteen and Möller 2004). Following John Burton, the process that creates peace is understood as dual, including both "the prevention of conditions conducive to violence" and "the promotion of conditions conducive to peace".²⁴ When related to the definition of peace used in this study, the former roughly equates to preventing negative relations between groups, and the latter translates into the promotion of positive inter-group relations. In this study, the terms "conflict prevention" is used to capture the prevention of conditions conducive to violence and "peacebuilding" for the promotion of conditions conducive to peace. Generally, in this study, conflict prevention covers mechanisms with impact over a relatively short term, while peacebuilding concerns the building of a longer term peace.²⁵ In general, the term conflict prevention indicates the prevention of negative

²⁴ John Burton uses the term "conflict prevention" to capture this process (1990: 3).

²⁵ The definition of "peacebuilding" in this study, to some extent, overlaps with the concept of "structural prevention". Both concepts focus on the longer term perspective. There are two reasons for using the term peacebuilding rather than structural prevention: Firstly, structural prevention focuses on addressing the underlying causes of conflict, i.e. its emphasis is on preventing conditions conducive for violence. Secondly, it implies a focus on deliberate actions or measures aimed at preventing conflict. The term peacebuilding leaves more space for non-intentional processes and mechanisms with direct or in-direct peace impact.

relations from escalating, while peacebuilding encompasses the development of positive relations between states. The term "direct conflict prevention", sometimes called "short term", is used to capture measures aimed at preventing short term, and often imminent, escalation of conflicts.²⁶ "Crisis management" is used when a conflict is at a crisis level, where further escalation would result in war. "Conflict resolution" is used to cover attempts to make conflicting parties resolve their "central incompatibilities" and "accept each other's continued existence as parties"²⁷

Trust and confidence building processes form an important part of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The two are linked, and can be understood as two stages of the same process. Put simply, confidence is a light version of trust and entails an increased ability to understand and assess the other party, and an increased consciousness of one's own powers in relations to the power of the other. To exemplify the difference, in the North Korean case continuous interaction has increased confidence between Washington and Pyongyang, but there has been little trust building. In the Taiwan case, interactions between the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT) have gone beyond confidence building and by now include an extensive level of trust. Confidence building or confidence building processes are not the same as confidence building measures (CBM), sometimes called confidence and security building measures (CSBM), although both aim at building confidence (On CBMs, see "Unofficial military exchange and contacts" in the chapter on the Taiwan issue.).

2.2.3 Informality and formality

The meaning of informality has been discussed, at least since the 1940s, most notably in work concerning the idea of a dual or two-sector economic model (Boeke 1953; Bromley 1978; Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur et al. 2006a; Lewis 1954). As a concept, informality appeared in the 1970s. The term "informal" was coined by Keith Hart, and the same year the International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced the idea of, what that would be labelled, the "informal sector" (Bangasser 2000). Despite its history, there are no clear definitions of, or consensus regarding what informal and formal are. There are a confusing range of, often implicit, definitions and reviews have concluded that there are competing perspectives rather than a single dichotomy (Christensen 2006a; Cross 1998; Portes and Schauffler 1993; Sindzingre 2006). It has been suggested that "...formal and informal are better thought of as metaphors that conjure up a mental picture of whatever the user has in mind at that particular time". (Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur et al. 2006a: 3)

²⁶ Despite a wide array of writings on conflict prevention, there is a lack of consensus regarding its definition (See e.g. Ackerman 2003; Aggestam 2003; Hampson and Malone 2002; Jentleson 2000; Swanström and Weissmann 2005; Swanström, Weissmann et al. 2005; Tongeren, Veen et al. 2002; Zartman 2001). Thus, there are narrow definitions focusing on limited ways of prevention, such as Michael Lund's definition of preventive diplomacy as "actions taken in vulnerable places and times to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle the political disputes that can arise from destabilizing effects of economic, social, political, and international change" (Lund 1996: 37), as well as broad definitions, such as David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel's definition of conflict prevention as "a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment". (Carment and Schnabel 2003: 11).

²⁷ This definition draws on Wallensteen, who defines conflict resolution as a situation "...where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent actions against each other." (2007: 8).

This study follows Douglass C. North's differentiation between informal and formal. According to him, informal is self-enforcing constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, codes of conduct, conventions, and norms of behaviour), while formal refers to (formal) regulations (constitutions, laws, and property rights). Informal constraints evolve over time and are unwritten, while formal constraints are "created", written, and intentional (North 1990, 1991). Informal constraints can also be intentional, but it is not a requirement. In this study, formal processes refer to created, written, and intentional processes, structures and institutions. In practice they can be equated with regional organisations.

Based on the research on formal and informal economics in the field of IPE and economics, it is argued in this study that the often-used dualism formal – informal is misplaced (Lipton 1984). It is rather accepted that there is no clear division between formal and informal, and that the terms should be seen as a continuum (Lipton 1984 in Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur et al. 2006a). The underlying assumption in this study is that whether "more" or "less" formality is "better" or "worse" for peace is not self-evident (See Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur et al. 2006b). This follows the same logic as for rules, i.e. whether they are formal or not does not determine their credibility in a particular situation (Sindzingre 2006: 67. Also see North 1990). To exemplify,

"[f]or individuals the fact whether rules are "formal", written, or coming from the state does not determine their credibility on a particular situation and is no more relevant than many other attributes that orient individuals' tradeoffs regarding compliance with it ... State rules and institutions may be less credible in certain developing countries than local institutions (e.g. social insurance networks). When individuals are exposed to competing norms ("modern" and "traditional"), tradeoffs are determined more by the relevance and credibility of the norms, and hence by historical and cognitive path dependence." (Sindzingre 2006: 67).

This applies to individuals as well as states. Also in the case of states, trust is indispensable for a formal process or rule to be efficient and credible. For example, the credibility of the multilateral agreements among the parties in the South China Sea depends on their mutual trust, not the fact that the declaration is both formal and written (see ch. 4). The importance of trust is also the reason for focusing on how trust and confidence is built between the different regional actors in the three case studies. As trust is more or less absent both in the formal regulations and in the regional organisations, how relations develop in the region depends to a large extent on the level of trust between the parties.

Informal and formal processes are often mutually reinforcing and sometimes even overlapping. It is, for example, possible for informal processes to exist within formal structures, such as international and regional organizations and forums. This is evident in the case of the European Union, the ARF and the ASEAN. Indeed, these are all codified institutions, but, at the same time, their direct and indirect role in their respective regional security setting is largely a result of their norm creating and trust building ability as platforms for personal networks and interactions.

2.2.3.1 Informality in East Asia

Informality, and informal processes, is inherent in, and forms a central part of, the East Asian norm system(s). The importance of informality and family is deeply rooted across in the East Asian region (Allinson 1991; Chan 1986; Fang 1980; Moore 1967; Triandis 1994, 1995). It is an important aspect of the family and network based social systems that exist in the region. Perhaps the most obvious example of the role of informality is the importance given to guanxi, loosely

translated to connections.²⁸ Guanxi emphasises personal connections, social capital, and reciprocity. In China, as well as the rest of East Asia, the overarching principles of guanxi are important for informal politics and the system is built on personal relations, reciprocity, and face. (Although guanxi is a Chinese term, the same social practices can be found throughout East Asia.)

Informality is, together with the culturally embedded emphasis on consensus building, a central feature in regional track two processes and the "ASEAN-way".²⁹ Indeed, the formal organisations that do exist, in particular the ASEAN and the ARF, are also founded on consensus and informality. In fact, informal processes within these organisations are arguably more important than the structures themselves. The importance of formal rules is secondary in East Asia, where it is necessary to look beyond the formal logic of the institutions to "...the webs of power and interest in which institutions are embedded..." (Beeson 2002: 253) to fully understand the role of the state and regional institutions. In the East Asian context, it should be emphasised that trust is not created by formalisation, but rather through the process leading to formalisation (if formalisation is necessary at all – when there is trust there is no need for formalisation). Hence, in the East Asian setting, formalisation does not necessarily improve trust (or regional/interstate stability), but can rather have a destabilising effect. All states are wary of non-flexible agreements, and there is a strong preference for the "ASEAN-way" of doing things. For example, the socio-cultural and economic integration and people-to-people contacts in East and Southeast Asia (and Europe for that matter) are the result of changes in social practices and norms, which have moved the states and their communities closer to each other. This integration has been positive for peacebuilding as it has caused existing conflicts to deescalate and helped develop a peace constituency.

Previously research on East Asia has only to a limited extent taken the role of informality and informal processes in conflict prevention and peacebuilding into account. The impact of informality and informal processes with regard to peace/conflict is mentioned in some of the existing studies (Ball, Milner et al. 2005; Bercovitch, Huang et al. 2008; Kwok and Tjosvold 1998; Weissmann 2005), but so far no in-depth empirical or theoretical examination has been undertaken as far as the author is aware. In international relations theory and security studies, informal aspects are taken into account in at least some studies. The foremost examples are found within the constructivist tradition and research on pluralistic security communities and regional security complexes, with links to constructivism, as discussed above. These studies provide a good account of the regional dynamic, but fail to properly address the peace and security dimensions. Instead the focus tends to be on

²⁸ Guanxi has been described as a "...Chinese idiom of social networks, integrally linked to other building blocks of Chinese sociality such as *ganqing* (sentiment), *renqing* (human feelings), *mianzi* (face), and *bao* (reciprocity) [italics in original]" Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie, and David Wank (2002: this section and the quotes are from pp. 4-7). The literal translation of guanxi is "relation" or "relationship", but it is commonly referred to as "particularistic ties" (Jacobs 1979, 1980). These can be either ascribed or primordial as kinship, native place or ethnicity. (The "native place" tends to be context dependent and may range from village to a province. When abroad,, merely being "Chinese" can have the same function. These ties can also be obtained through common school or university background or service in the same military unit. Often guanxi is used in the meaning of putting a relationship to use, implying "going through the backdoor" to get something done, or to help someone referring to. In general terms, it is similar to Bourdieu's concept of social capital (Bourdieu 1986). In the Chinese and East Asian context, guanxi-style social capital should be understood as something accumulated with the intention of, at some point, converting it into economic, political or symbolic capital.

²⁹ The term "track two processes" is used as an umbrella term for all forms of track two activities. This study uses the broad definition of track two used in Asia, i.e. it also includes what is often referred to as track three, four, and/or multitrack diplomacy. (Also see "Track two diplomacy" below.)

security in a broader sense (Suh, Katzenstein et al. 2004), or on overarching international relations in East Asia (Acharya 2005; Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Tan 2006). The exception being constructivist work on the ASEAN and the ASEAN-way, and on track two diplomacy as discussed above. Some important research has also been done on informal processes within regional organizations/frameworks (Kivimäki 2001, 2005; Kivimäki, Sørensen et al. 2005; Swanström 2002).

Within the generic literature, for example on negotiation and mediation, there are studies exploring different kinds of informal aspects. Indeed, informality is an important feature in research on mediation (Jönsson, Bjurulf et al. 1998; Melissen 1999: in particular ch. 6 and 7; Paul Sharp 2002). Often back channel and informal negotiation (sometimes referred to as back channel diplomacy (BCD)) is the focus of such studies (Pruitt 2008; Wanis-St. John 2006). Research on the Middle East and the Oslo peace process provides empirical examples of back channel, informal negotiations and mediation (Abbas 1995; Aggestam 2004; Egeland 1999; Klieman 1988; Putnam and Carcasson 1997; Waage 2002, 2005). The Northern Ireland case is also a relevant example (Arthur 1999; Sparre 2001). In regards to Asia, research on informal mediation and negotiations has targeted the handling of the South China Sea (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999), and the North Korean case (Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b). These links are analysed in more depth in the chapters on the case studies. Informal mediation and negotiation have also been important in the Cambodian peace process (Solomon 1999) and the handling of the Mindanao flashpoint among others (Ball and Acharya 1999; Solomon 1999). Research on how informal processes affect the way actors define their interests has also been carried out on the institutions of the European Union (See for example Checkel 1999), on how regulatory regimes are created (Coen and Doyle 2000; Eberlein and Grande 2000; Eberlein and Grande 2005; Majone 2000), and how the EU defines itself and how its institution develops over time (Crum 2006; Stacey and Rittberger 2003).

In international political economy, research on regionalism and regionalisation have addressed informality and informal processes (Richard Higgott 2000; Scholte 2005; Stubbs and Underhill 2005). This type of research does not, with few exceptions, address the issue of peace and conflict (Acharya 2001, 2003; Adler and Barnett 1998b; Buzan 1991; Hettne, Inotai et al. 2000; Öjendal 2001, 2004). Rather, it focuses on economic development and cooperation, regional differences, security cooperation in a broader sense, or a general regionalism and regionalisation (Breslin and Hook 2002; Breslin, Hughes et al. 2002; Katzenstein and Shiraishi 2006; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003).

A large amount of research focuses on East Asian regionalism. This research takes informality into account as it addresses related topics such as consensus building, the need for open regionalism and the uniqueness of regional characteristics. However, these studies tend to work on regional groupings or organizational frameworks, looking for the more formalized structures. In most cases, peace or conflict management is not addressed, as focus rather is on economic development, regional differences, or possibly security cooperation (See for example Breslin 2004, 2005; Katzenstein 2006; Liu, Regnier et al. 2002; Pempel 2005b; Rozman 2004). This said about East Asian regionalism, it should still be acknowledged that it provides a great recourse of empirical material on East Asia that is useful in this research undertaking. This is especially true in regards to the large amount a-theoretical or semi-theoretical writings by policymakers, academics active in policymaking and other people with first-hand knowledge of the East Asian security setting (See for example Ball and Acharya 1999; Cornell 2002; Fu, Lai et al. 2007; Pitsuwan 2001).

2.2.3.2 A preliminary reading of informal processes and peace

From a theoretical perspective, informal processes are expected to impact peace in a number of ways (Also see Weissmann 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Over time, informal processes will alter individual (social) and collective (cultural) identities, values, and norms, and, consequently, the perceived interests and behaviour of the actors. For example, cultural identities are, over time, reconstructed through a range of processes that alter perceptions of cultural belonging and cultural differences, as well as the collective construction of (in)security. Such processes include, for example, economic integration and political, social and cultural micro- and macro regionalisation. Informal processes are also expected to be important for creating a shared understanding of the social, moral and cultural dynamics of conflict, conflict management and peace, or, at least, increase the understanding of each other's perceptions and interests. For peace, the interactions through informal processes are indeed important for altering the perceptions of self and others, and for developing long term trust, cooperation and confidence between individuals and collectives. The developments of Sino-ASEAN relations, the APT process, and East Asian community building are examples of these forms of processes (see chapter 4).

It should be noted that although cultural, social, and economic issues often are separated from political and military ones, the trust and long term relationships that are the result of cooperation and interactions are expected to have spill over effects and thereby be beneficial also for the political and military sphere. These spheres are not separated from each other in absolute terms. Rather they are overlapping and continuously being reinterpreted. Over time, issues are being reinterpreted and, hence, are moving back and forth between different spheres. In this way, previously sensitive and non-negotiable issues may be reinterpreted and even become negotiable. Even if the division of these issues and spheres (incorrectly) would be perceived as natural, the trust and enhanced understanding, brought about by interaction, would make it easier to negotiate new and other issues over time.. The developments between Mainland China and Taiwan in early 2008 serves as a good example of this form of trust-transfer, i.e. when trust built through cross-strait track two inter-party relations and personal networks was utilised to negotiate sensitive and complex issues (see chapter 3).

2.3 Key concepts

2.3.1 Regionalisation

The development of regional integration is one of the defining features of post-Cold War East Asia. It is hence appropriate to briefly discuss regionalisation, and present the frame used when analysing the possible importance of regionalisation for the East Asian peace.

Regionalisation is understood foremost as a process, as opposed to the policy or ideological features of regionalism projects (Fawcett 2005: 25). More specifically, regionalisation

"... refers to the process of cooperation, integration, cohesion and identity creating a regional space (issue-specific or general). It furthermore implies an activist element, a strategy of regionalization, which can be pursued by both state and non-state actors." (Söderbaum 2004: 7)

A regionalisation process includes all aspects of society, ranging from social and cultural aspects to political and economic ones. Furthermore, it can have both top-down and bottom-up dimensions. It

is important to note that the actors involved in the regionalisation process not necessarily are dedicated, or even conscious of it. Similarly, the rhetoric and ideology of regionalism does not always hold much practical significance for regionalisation in reality (Söderbaum 2004: 7). In other words, regionalisation can be an unconscious and informal process. It can be caused by, and/or be part of, a regionalism project. However, this need not be the case, and the regionalisation process may even develop contrary to the wishes of the regionalism project (i.e. it need not have any set spatial or social limitations).

Regionalism is a concept similar to regionalisation and is often used interchangeably. It is a blanket term covering a wide range of developments and processes taking place all over the world. Regionalism is, contrary to regionalisation, an ideological project. It is often a formal program which results in the building of formal institutions (Söderbaum 2004: 7). Moreover, regionalism also ties agents to the specific regional project, which is limited spatially or socially, but not in time (Hveem 2000: 72). It can refer to

"... processes of social or economic regionalisation; the growth of regional awareness or identity; the formation of inter-state regional institutions or state-promoted economic integration; or the emergence of politically cohesive regional blocks." (Hurrell 2005: 41)

The author of this study agrees with the so-called new regionalism perspective, which

" ... pays tribute to the multidimensionality of regionalism and the fact that regions are constructed and reconstructed – intentionally or unintentionally – by state, market, civil society and external actors, which come together in complex and often informal multi-actor coalitions for a variety of both positive and negative purposes." (Söderbaum 2004: 2. See also Hettne 2005; Hettne and Söderbaum 2000; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003)

In sum, the terms regionalisation and regionalism are two ambiguous concepts that are both lacking clear definitions, and moreover, the usage of the terms are sometimes overlapping, and by some even used interchangeably.³⁰

This study focuses on the process of regionalisation. A separation is done between market driven regionalisation and state driven regionalisation. When regionalism projects exist, they are classified as state driven regionalisation. In East Asia, regionalisation consists of the two interrelated types of regionalisation processes mentioned above. The process has foremost been market driven. The economic integration has, for a long time, been working and expanding through the use of international production networks and informal networks. In particular, networks of ethnic Chinese have been of importance. Over time, the market driven regionalisation has spread to include other spheres. For example, the political sphere has been catching up, which has made regionalisation more dependent on political decisions (cf. "The" ASEAN-way"

above). In the East Asian context, the ASEAN and the APT process are foremost examples of regionalism projects.

³⁰ For a thorough review of theories on regionalism and regionalisation, see for example Farrell, Hettne et al. 2005 (esp. ch 1, 2, 17); Söderbaum and Shaw 2003; Söderbaum 2004 (esp. ch. 2-3).

2.3.2 Personal networks

Personal networks is a concept closely linked to informality and sometimes referred to as informal networks or *guanxi* (here used interchangeably). Drawing on Jönsson, Tägil et al., a network is defined as a web, or space, represented by "discrete points (nodes) bound together by lines (links). The network discriminates between nodes that are connected to it and those that are not".(2000: 23).³¹ In personal networks, the nodes are the individuals and the links constitute social relations. Jönsson, Tägil et al. distinguish between three different types of networks: "physical", "institutional" and "social and cultural" (2000: 23-24). Personal networks are examples of social and cultural networks and

"...unite individuals, and therefore also fields of knowledge and social environments. They convey ideas and impulses. Kinship or some other form of social relationship may serve as the tie that binds. So can various communities of interest, shared knowledge and mutual understanding. Social and cultural networks involve complex structures that together forge a virtually impenetrable network morphology." (Jönsson, Tägil et al. 2000: 24).

In concrete terms, personal networks are networks of individuals, without formal structures, linked together by one or more social relationship. Personal networks are both central for, and developed through, track two activities as described above. However, these networks are not limited to track two, but also play central parts in economic, social, and cultural exchanges as well as in (micro and macro) regionalisation on a general level. The networks are often institutionalised through deeply embedded patterns of social practices and norms, though no formal (written) structure of the network exists. There are numerous forms of personal networks, ranging from larger networks such as networks of ethnic Chinese, the *chaebols*, and the *keiretsus*, to other forms of informal inter-personal and/or family based networks. The networks can be found in, and across, different spheres including academia, policy, business and media.

Previous research has shown that different forms of informal or personal networks are important in all aspects of Asian politics and economics, but how and why this is the case is either unknown, or knowledge confined to insiders. This picture also holds true in regards to research on how personal networks impact peace. The impact of informality and informal networks are mentioned in some of the literature (Dittmer, Fukui et al. 2000; Kwok and Tjosvold 1998; Swanström 2002; Weissmann 2005, 2008), but no in-depth theoretical examination has been undertaken, which has left the underlying mechanism unexplored and unknown. Preliminary findings indicate that these networks play a vital role as a form of informal cooperation and institution, in both the political and economic spheres where informal connections, contacts, agreements and mutual understanding are of foremost importance (Weissmann 2005).

The networks can, and do, exist within formal institutions, such as the ASEAN, the APT, and the ARF, where informal cooperation and interaction often is central. Formal institutions offer an opportunity to create and deepen networks, create trust, and build long term relationships between individuals from the different member states. Since many interconnected co-existing networks share the same members, there is a gradual move towards increased mutual understanding and the ability to relate to the understandings of other members. Over time, personal networks will facilitate the

³¹ Jönsson, Tägil et al. focus on networks in the context of geographical space (2000: 4-5, 23-24).

reversal of perceived insecurities, help develop more coherent regional norm and value systems, and increase the understanding and acceptance of each others' differences. Here, it is important to note the distinction between the sometimes formalised structure in which these networks are developed, and the actual networks themselves. For example, track two meetings are a formalised structure that works well for network development, but all participants at such meetings are not necessarily included in a personal network. In a strict sense, personal networks are by definition voluntary.³²

The ability to prevent conflicts and build peace increases when people with opposing views have some form of connection to, and understanding of, each other, which is exactly what personal networks provide. Socialisation on an individual level between influential people from the different sides of a conflict is a central feature in societal confidence and trust building. This is especially the case in East Asia, where the importance of exactly these factors is emphasised.

The networks that are expected to be most central in peacebuilding are the large number of elite-networks with members from within and outside the region. These are mainly created through track two activities and regular meetings between key policy and decision makers within the framework of different regional, subregional, and international organisations and forums (For a discussion on the benefits of elite socialisation in track two frameworks, see for example Kaye and Rand 2007: 21-23). Key here is the people-to-people socialising and interactions on the sidelines of the formal framework or negotiations, sometimes referred to as informal communication, informal channels, or off-the record discussions. Interactions within the academic and business sector are also central, since the openness to developing network is larger in these sectors, given their less sensitive focus. The business and academic sector have a lot of influence, as can be seen, for example, in the case of China where many academics are part of the policy making process either through informal, personal contacts or through different formalised report systems. The same applies to Taiwan where many academics, and businesspeople with an economic interest on the mainland, for example are members of the president's advisory group or members of the board of the Strait Exchange Foundation (Cheng 2005). The key here is that these individuals know each other, both across sectors and political entities. In short, they know and understand each other, are used to interact and communicate, and if necessary know whom to contact, and how, when needed.

2.3.3 Track two diplomacy

One important form of process in East Asia is track two diplomacy (or track two frameworks, here used interchangeably). These are, by many, seen as important for regional peace and security. These processes are largely informal, even if their structures are formalised. As such, they form an integrated part of the East Asian regionalisation process, as well as in efforts of regional conflict prevention and peacebuilding (See for example Ball 1994; Ball and Acharya 1999; Ball, Milner et al. 2006; Ball October 2000; Evans 1994a; Simon 2002; Weissmann 2008). (See chapter 4 for a discussion on the proliferation of track two diplomacy in East Asia.)

Originally, track two diplomacy referred to negotiations between private citizens on topics usually reserved for official negotiations. Today, the concept encompasses processes such as problem-

³² One possible exception here is ethnic and family networks. But even within such networks, there are differences in regards to how good a relationship is. Similar differences can be found between relations you have with people you have just met, and relations with people that you have spent more time with and learnt to trust.

solving workshops, dialogues, cultural and scientific exchanges, travelling artists, and sports teams. Second track diplomacy is thus different from first track diplomacy, which implies interaction between government officials. In East Asia, the term can have different connotations. It can refer to

"...the entire complex of informal networking activities, unofficial channels of communication, and people-to-people diplomacy, across national and regional levels, including official and nongovernmental diplomacy, undertaken across social, political, and economic realms of civil society". (Job 2002: 246)

However, the more widely accepted definition is more narrow, using second track diplomacy "...with reference to a particular form of dialogue activity associated ... with the promotion of cooperative security and multilateral security regionalism" (Job 2002: 247).

This form of track two activity has by Evens been referred to as "blended" dialogues "involving meetings of academics, journalists and occasionally politicians and also ... government officials ... attending in their 'unofficial' or 'private' capacities" (Evans 1994a: 125 cited in Job 2002: 247). In this study, track two diplomacy refers to any form of unofficial or informal interactions and negotiations between academic, business, religious, citizens, and other (Non-governmental organisation (NGO)) groups.³³

In addition to track two diplomacy, an idea of "track one and a half" (or 1.5), track three, and multi-track diplomacy has been put forward. The term 1.5 diplomacy was introduced by Paul Dibb in the mid-1990s and referred to activities that are attended predominantly by government and military officials although they are said to be unofficial, or activities where the government has set the agenda (David and Evans 2002: 211-12). Track three, or grass-root diplomacy is located on the other end of the spectrum. (David and Evans 2002: 217-19). This refers to activities essentially undertaken by individuals, NGOs, transnational or advocacy networks who claim to be marginalised from the centre of power. This is also referred to as multi-track diplomacy, a term introduced by John McDonald and Louise Diamond. It aims to illustrate the many ways to bring people together in addition to official negotiations. Consequently, they use nine tracks rather than two or three in their definition,³⁴ The nine tracks are, more or less, the same as what generally is covered by the terms track one, 1.5, two and three diplomacy.

One of the underlying ideas behind track two diplomacy is that peace also needs to be build from below and not only top down. Another key feature is that track two diplomacy allows influential second-level leaders and civil society actors to interact more freely and, at the same time, be in a influential position vis-à-vis their leaders (the track one level) and their own communities. Such unofficial and informal contacts between the parties can potentially de-escalate a conflict before any official negotiations can reach the same results, or work as a parallel forum where the parties can explore options without taking an official stand. They can also work in close collaboration with

³³ This definition draws on Joseph Montville, the main difference being that this definition does not, in the same way, require some form of conflict or adversarial relationship (Montville 1987)

³⁴ The nine tracks are 1) government, or peacemaking through diplomacy; 2) nongovernment/professional, or peacemaking through conflict resolution; 3) business, or peacemaking through commerce; 4) private citizen, or peacemaking through personal involvement; 5) research, training, and education, or peacemaking through learning; 6) activism, or peacemaking through advocacy; 7) religion, or peacemaking through faith in action; 8) funding, or peacemaking through providing resources; and 9) communications and the media, or peacemaking through information. (Diamond and McDonald 1996)

track one, and provide a support structure or function as an innovation or test lab for new ideas, which arguably is harder within the first track. This is common in East Asia and will be discussed further below. Track two activities are also important since they build bridges between people, build confidence, increase trust, correct misperceptions, change the attitudes to the other, and foster mutual understanding. Thus, they have a significant socialising function and serve to improve the already open channels of communication. Through these activities, the voices of moderation can be strengthened and social networks among the moderates can develop.

2.3.4 Back channel negotiations

The use of back-channel negotiations (BCN) is closely linked to track two diplomacy. A number of other terms are sometimes used for the same or similar phenomena, including "back-channel communication", "cloaked negotiation", "under-the-table negotiation", "hidden negotiations", or "informal negotiation" (here used interchangeably). Back-channel negotiations can be part of the track two diplomacy, but it can also be conducted in secrecy on the side-lines of track two meetings. However, as opposed to track two diplomacy, with its often broad and non-specific focus, back-channel negotiations are direct negotiation or mediation measures aiming to reach a specific and pre-defined goal. BCN normally refers to "...*official* negotiations conducted in *secret* between the parties to a dispute" (Wanis-St. John 2006: 120).³⁵ They are sometimes undertaken on a "freelance basis", i.e. without official authority or knowledge of top decision makers. The people engaging in this form of negotiations often have strong links to decision makers, which allows the back-channel effort to get official status if an agreement seems possible (Wanis-St. John 2006). These links are also required for the freelance negotiators to be accepted as credible by the other party. These negotiations can operate in parallel with, or replace "front channel" negotiations. They are often used for pre-negotiation, i.e. before moving to official, or front-channel, negotiations. An example is Ambassador Hasjim Djalal's work before the formalisation of the workshops on "Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea" (see chapter 4).

Back channel negotiations have been described as "...the "black markets" of negotiation, providing separate negotiation spaces where bargaining takes place in the shadows". (Wanis-St. John 2006: 120) BCN can take two forms: direct discussions between decision makers or their representatives; or indirect discussion between third party mediators (Pruitt 2008). The role of China in the negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea is a good example of the latter, while secret negotiations between Mainland China and Taiwan is an example of the former. Back channel negotiations can also be used to overcome deadlocks in official negotiations since it allows for informal meetings and discussions off the record.³⁶

People involved in back channel negotiations tend to have close links to top decision makers. These connections can either be formal or personal and are essential to create the needed trust and authority for credible negotiations. These negotiators are often closer to the decision makers than the front channel negotiators, and are "thus able to authoritatively explore a wider range of options

³⁵ Dean G. Pruitt instead uses the term "back-channel communication", defined as "...secret communication between the leadership of opposing groups (including organizations and nations) that is designed to foster settlement of a conflict between them". (Pruitt 2008: 37)

³⁶ This practice has been analysed by Pruitt (1971) and was also acknowledged in interviews undertaken in China, Taiwan and in Europe for the purpose of this study.

and to commit to a tentative agreement more readily than front-channel negotiators are". (Wanis-St. John 2006: 121) This linkage is evident, for example, in the case of China.³⁷

Back-channel negotiations can take place in a wide range of settings. These include, but are not limited to, international conflict (Alger 1961; Ikle 1964), ethno-political conflict (Bartoli 1999; Pruitt 2005; Wanis-St. John 2006) and labour-management conflict (Douglas 1962; Walton and McKersie 1965). In international conflicts, two examples are often used to illustrate the usage of back channel negotiations: negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leading to the Oslo agreement; and the negotiations in Northern Ireland (Abbas 1995; Aggestam 2004; Arthur 1999; Egeland 1999; Klieman 1988; Putnam and Carcasson 1997; Sparre 2001; Waage 2002, 2005). The use of back-channels is also a common practice in East Asia, as seen for example in the Cambodian peace process (Solomon 1999), and in the Mindanao flashpoint (Ball and Acharya 1999; Solomon 1999). It is particularly suitable here given the regional preference for informality, face-saving, and the use of informal channels (also see "Informality in East Asia" above).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of existing theories and research of relevance for understanding the East Asian peace, mainly focusing on research within the three main schools of international relations theory. It was concluded that the three schools and their sub-theories can contribute to our understanding of the East Asian security setting, but that none of them can account for the East Asian peace as a systemic feature on their own. It was argued that although an inclusive approach is needed, constructivism currently offers the best framework for understanding the dynamics of the East Asian security setting and for understanding the East Asian peace. The theoretical framework used in this study is also based on a constructivist epistemology. This study is further informed by the concepts of peace and informality. The former concerns the observed paradoxical phenomenon that this study aims to understand, while the latter is used as an entrance point for the identification and understanding of the processes and mechanisms behind the relative peace. Hence, in the coming empirical chapters a constructivist lens is used to identify processes that impact peace. A constructivist lens is also used when analysing the processes, in order to identify and understand their interrelated conflict preventative and peacebuilding mechanisms, through which, their impact on peace can be explained.

In concrete terms, the insights of the theoretical framework guide the identification, mapping and interpretation of processes and related mechanisms that can help explain the East Asian peace. By using a holistic constructivist approach, the inclusion of different factors from all levels of analysis, including the domestic and international levels, as well as different regional and sub-regional factors is emphasised. The analyses focus on the understanding of interactions and links between different identities and interests. Efforts are made to understand the dynamics behind how individuals think about their perceived interests, how they perceive the other, and how they are affected by structural constraints.

³⁷ Interviews with members of government think tanks and universities in China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007, Jul - Dec 2008.

When conducting the three case studies, both during the data collection and in the analyses, in particular, two questions have been important when trying to develop an understanding of the relative peace: why do these conflicts not escalate into war when at a crisis level?; and what are the processes and mechanisms that are moving inter-state relations towards a self-sustainable peace, i.e. moves the cases towards a durable peace? These two questions concern why there has been no war, and why there is more peace than could be expected considering the security setting. In concrete terms, the author has been identifying examples of negative cross-border relations and conditions that contribute to the absence of the same, and examples of positive cross-border relations and the existence of conditions that facilitate them.

Throughout the explorative process, the question of how the identified processes impact peace was explicitly asked to the material. The concepts of conflict prevention and peacebuilding served as a guide in the continuous search for reasons that can explain how (in the short to medium term) conditions conducive for violence have been prevented from escalating (i.e. conflict prevention and crisis management), and how (in the longer term perspective) conditions conducive for peace have developed (i.e. peacebuilding).

When identifying processes, this study is guided by the basic presumption that informal processes are important for East Asian peace. Thus, in the case studies the search for different forms of informal processes has been emphasised. Although informality is emphasised, the case studies are open for all forms of processes that can help explain the absence of war, and, consequently, why there is more peace than expected. This said, efforts are made to include the complete continuum of informal and formal processes, since neither type is inherently more beneficial for peace, conflict prevention, or peacebuilding. In the interviews, questions were asked specifically about the role of informality and the existence of different forms of informal processes.³⁸ This does not mean that formal processes have been excluded, merely that they were less prominent and easier to identify. For example, when asking about the Korean nuclear conflict, nobody fails to mention the six-party talks, whereas the possible importance of inter-personal socialisation within KEDO, or unofficial cross-border trade, may not always be mentioned unless specifically asked in the interview situation. .

Before moving to the three case study chapters, an interlude will follow. The interlude gives a very brief review of China's historical role in the East Asian region. The historical background is of vital importance for understanding the context and dynamics of the East Asian security setting, as well as the context in which the three case studies are embedded. The historical background focuses on the

³⁸ The term used for "informal processes" have varied depending on context and preferences among the interviewees. Examples of alternative terms include "informal networks", "informal interactions", "informal contacts", and "informality". During data collection, and the following analysis, a number of informal processes were identified. Some of these have already been singled out as potentially important in previous research, but they have not necessarily been included in any explicit peace framework. In addition, the research process has alternated between theory development and empirical observations. Thus, over time, the search for processes and mechanisms was guided by new insights and preliminary findings. This applies to the process within, and between, the three cases. For example, when one process or mechanisms was identified in one case, its existence and importance was explicitly investigated in the other cases as well. The four key concepts - regionalisation, personal networks, track two diplomacy, and back-channel negotiations - are examples of processes that became more important during the research process. The importance of these processes was not deducted from previous theories, nor was their significance predefined and included in hypotheses to be tested. This is why they are presented before the empirical analyses, and why they are not key parts of the theoretical framework.

period up until the end of the Cold War. The post-Cold War period is reviewed more in depth in the three case studies.

Part II: Empirical cases

Interlude: A brief review of China's historical role in East Asia¹

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese empire was the unchallenged power centre in East Asia. China dwarfed its neighbours by the sheer size of its population and by its economy, which at the time was the largest in the world, boosting a thriving commercial sector. China extended its Confucian civilisation to its neighbours. Its written language, examination and bureaucratic systems were adopted in Korea, Japan and parts of Southeast Asia. At the centre of this Sino-centric world order was the "Middle Kingdom", led by a semi-divine emperor. He was the "son of heaven", the link between the supernatural and natural realms, and the bringer of harmony in China. The emperor also spread the Confucian blessing to the "barbarians" beyond China's borders. That said, the Chinese emperors were primarily inward looking and foreign policy was not seen as vital beyond upholding the proper respect of the barbarians. China's international leverage was of cultural and economic nature rather than military. The existence of a "tribute" system meant that the surrounding states (including Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma) accepted the hierarchical order and paid symbolic tribute to the Chinese emperor. The emperor, in return, authorised them to govern on his behalf. Normally, China did not interfere in its tributary states, but when needed, it did show potent force (for example in Burma and Vietnam in the late 18th century).

Korea and Vietnam saw China as a political and cultural model, a pattern that is apparent also in China's current relation with these two states. The Chinese system appealed less to Burma and Thailand, where China's Confucianism was not considered a political system worthy of emulation. Their ideals were rather drawn from South Asian Buddhist and Hindu traditions, and the rulers saw no need to be legitimised by China's semi-divine emperor as they regarded themselves as Buddhist "god-kings" (Miller 2003 Ch. 1, p. 3). The tribute system was nevertheless accepted, not least as it offered trade benefits. Japan, however, did never accept Chinese superiority as they consider the idea humiliating to their own emperor. Nonetheless, the Japanese did embrace Confucianism and *de facto* accepted China as the regional hegemon when closing their relations with the outside world in the early-seventeenth century.

¹ This section is based on Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies 2003 (esp. ch. 1 by John Miller and ch 2. by Jim Rolfe); Fairbank, Reischauer et al. 1989; Fairbank and Goldman 2006; Mäkihannu November 2007; Oberdorfer 2001; Pluvier 1974.

Western colonisation and the rise of Japan

The European colonial powers began arriving in East Asia during the sixteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, the regional order had changed and the position of China had faded. External pressure did not only come from territorial colonisation, but also from economic pressure from the vast volumes of silver pouring into East Asia as a result of the Spanish trade with the Americas, which transformed the regional economies and agricultural system. The pressure from the Western powers became more all-encompassing with increasing control over territory and the introduction of European style social and political institutions. After the Chinese defeat in the First Opium War 1839-42, the Western powers forced China to open up its markets with the 1842 Treaty of Nanking. This was the first of a number of humiliating Chinese military defeats. Most East Asian states, with the exception of Thailand and Japan, had similar experiences of Western domination.² Thailand kept its independence, and created a useful buffer zone between the British in Burma and the Malay Peninsula, and the French in Laos and Cambodia.

While the Chinese empire was eroding, Chinese immigrants spread throughout the region as a result of labour demands from plantations and mines initiated by the colonial powers. The effect of the Chinese immigration is key to understanding East Asia also today. Many of the immigrants stayed on and moved into business and other professions and gradually became local elites. This pattern is most apparent in Malaysia and Indonesia where a minority of overseas Chinese today controls large parts of the economy, which has created resentment among the local population.³

Japan emerged as the dominating power in the region in the 1890s when it transformed its isolated feudal system and turned into a Western style state with vast military power. Japan attacked nearby China and Korea, which were both weak at the time. After the Sino-Japanese War 1894-95, in the "Treaty of Shimonoseki" signed between Itō and Li April 17 1895, China did not only recognise Korea's independence, but was also forced to cede Taiwan, the nearby Pescadores Islands, and the Kwantung Peninsula in South Manchuria (Fairbank, Reischauer et al. 1989: 554). The victory in the Sino-Japanese war allowed Japan to annex Korea completely in 1910. Japan saw its success as a proof of its superiority over its regional neighbours, and some Japanese saw it as their calling to liberate Asia from Western dominance. However, Japan cooperated with the Western powers until the 1930s when they abandoned the Washington Treaty System, which had frozen the colonial *status quo*, including the Chinese territorial and administrative integrity. Japan converted Manchuria into a puppet state (Manchukuo) and launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937. Japan was defeated in 1945 after the end of World War II, or the "Pacific War" as it is referred to in East Asia.

² The Philippines was colonised by the French already in the 1570s and came under American control in 1898 after the Spanish-American war. Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were seized by France, whereas Burma, the Malay Peninsula and parts of Borneo came under British control. Most of today's Indonesia was controlled by the Dutch.

³ In Malaysia, 30% of the population are ethnic Chinese, and the corresponding numbers in Thailand and Indonesia are 12% and 5 % respectively (Zha and Hu 2006: 65).

The Cold War period and beyond

The end of the Pacific War did once again change the regional power balance. With the defeat of Japan, the United States arose as the dominant power in the region. The war also opened up for a re-emergence of China. China was seen as one of the big powers and was granted one of the permanent seats in the United Nation's Security Council. This happened during the Chinese Civil War between the Kuomintang and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party. China, at the time "the Republic of China" (ROC), was ruled by the Kuomintang under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. In 1949, this government was forced by the communist forces to withdraw to Taiwan where it subsequently set up a government in exile.

In 1949, Mao Zedong and the CCP founded "the People's Republic of China" (PRC). In 1950, the presence of the Cold War was experienced first hand also in East Asia when Chinese "volunteers" joined force with Soviet and North Korean forces in the Korean War. The U.S., at this point, tried to isolate China diplomatically. It deployed large military and naval forces in the region and created a network of bilateral alliances with anti-communist states in China's immediate surroundings: the so-called "San Francisco system". This network of bilateral alliances included South Korea, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, and Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China in Taiwan (Tow, Trood et al. 1997). In Indochina, the Vietnamese communists, backed by China, expelled the French, and set up a communist state in northern Vietnam in 1954. This was seen as threatening to the non-communist government in southern Vietnam as well as to states like Thailand and the Philippines that were struggling with communist insurgencies within their own borders.⁴ This led to the Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War⁵ 1959 - 1975, between the Chinese backed North and the U.S. backed South.

In the late 1960s, China had a falling out with the Soviet Union, which led to the 1971-72 Sino-U.S. *rapprochement*. Washington and Beijing found common interest in countering the risk of Soviet hegemony. As part of this process, more and more states recognised the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China, and in 1971 the PRC was after a vote in the General Assembly given the Republic of China's seat in the Security Council. This Chinese *rapprochement* with the U.S. and the capitalist world became even more concrete in the late 1970s when Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping started to open up China to Western trade and investment.

China's engagement with the capitalist world meant that China and Vietnam lost their common enemy. This stirred up latent tensions that manifested themselves in a rivalry over Cambodia and led to Chinese military actions against Vietnam in 1979. Thailand, which previously had been part of the American led anti-PRC alliance, joined side with China and thereby drew the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) into the conflict. ASEAN had been founded in 1967 to develop regional relations in Southeast Asia. Its five original member states were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei

⁴ At the time, communist insurgencies was taking place in Burma and Malaysia and communist forces were active also in the, at the time, chaotic Indonesian politics.

⁵ The First Indochina War, also known as the French Indochina War, was fought against the French colonial power in contemporary Vietnam between 1946 and 1954.

Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, the People's Democratic Republic Lao and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. China now started to court the ASEAN members as part of a phasing out of support to communist revolutionaries. Over time, this Sino-ASEAN engagement has helped the ASEAN members to overcome historical fears and helped socialise China into playing a positive role in the East Asian regional community. The relationship progressed over time, both in depth and in scope. The exception is the Korean Peninsula, which has been caught in a Cold War time warp since the end of the Korean War. North Korea enjoyed, and to some extent still enjoys, a "special relationship" with China, and previously had strong support from Moscow, which made possible its isolation from the outside world. Also Sino-Japanese relations have stayed tense, partly due to historical issues, despite mutual interests in investment, trade, and technology. South Korea and China have been more open to cooperation, despite their positions as antagonists during the Korean War.

Historically, China has preferred handling its regional diplomacy on a bilateral basis, as this has been advantageous to China as a regional great power. Since the mid-1990s, China has become more comfortable with multilateral approaches to international issues and has improved its ability to gain leverage as a participant in regional organisations and other multilateral frameworks. For example, China has, despite an initial reluctance, become an active participant in the pan-regional, and security focused, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (also see chapter 5). In Northeast Asia, China's foreign relations have continued to be foremost bilateral, and it does not cooperate multilaterally with South Korea and Japan within this setting. That said, in the broader East Asian context, all three are members of the ASEAN+3 process, as well as other multilateral frameworks that include additional Northeast Asian parties. The ARF, mentioned above, and the APEC are examples of such engagements.

At the sub-regional level, China has stepped up its level of engagement with the ASEAN after Thailand, in the early 1990s, challenged the idea of China as a threat and argued for cooperation with, and engagement of, China. (See chapter six for more on Sino-ASEAN relations.) This engagement has developed both within the bilateral ASEAN+1 framework and later under the umbrella of ASEAN+3, which includes the ASEAN members and, in addition to China, Japan and South Korea. The main achievement in Sino-ASEAN relations is economic cooperation, which is illustrated, not least, by the 2001 China-ASEAN agreement to create a free trade area. This has been followed by an agreement to create an East Asian free trade area. However, at the same time as the region integrates, a number of flashpoints stand out as potential sources of conflict in East Asia. Of these, the Taiwan issue, the Korean nuclear conflict, and the South China Sea will be the focus of the next three chapters.

3 Mainland China – Taiwan relations and the Taiwan Issue

This chapter explores *the* range of processes and mechanisms that have been important for preventing the conflict across the Taiwan Strait to escalate into war, and at the same time been crucial for building, sustaining, and, over time, enhancing the relative peace between the two sides. The Taiwan issue is, in theoretical terms, a conflict that is stalemated at a high conflict intensity level (see chapter 1, footnote 27). The conflict does not seem to move towards violence, and neither towards a stable peace. The empirical material collected for this study points to a range of processes and mechanisms of importance for the peace across the Taiwan Strait. These have been identified partly by reviewing existent research on the Taiwan issue, but mainly by collecting new data through interviewing key persons in Mainland China and Taiwan between 2004 and 2008.

First, the background of the Taiwan issue and Mainland China – Taiwan relations is reviewed. Thereafter, in section two, the importance of a number of different forms of elite interaction is explored. This includes analysing the role of personal networks among the elites on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as well as the role of track two diplomacy, not least regarding its conflict preventive and peacebuilding impact. Next, the role of CCP-KMT inter-party connections and unofficial military exchange and contacts is discussed. These relations could be described as forms of track two processes, but due to their specific characteristics and impact, they are addressed separately. Thereafter the role of back-channel negotiations and secret envoys is analysed. Finally, the overall importance of elite interactions for peace is summarised.

In section three and four, the study explores two processes with a longer term impact on peace: economic integration and interdependence (EII) and functional cooperation. These processes enhance positive relations and create conditions conducive for a long term peace. First, the role of EII in the Taiwan Strait is analysed, followed by a discussion of the role of functional cooperation. In the last section, the role of the U.S. is analysed.

3.1 Historical context of PRC – ROC relations

The conflict across the Taiwan Strait is important both for regional and global stability, and involves high political and economical stakes for a number of actors. The two conflicting parties are the People's Republic of China (PRC/Mainland China) and the Republic of China (ROC/Taiwan). The U.S. is a key actor as Taiwan's ally and security guarantor in case of unprovoked military actions by Mainland China. As a result, it is the regional flashpoint most likely to evoke a military conflict between the U.S. and China.

The Taiwan conflict centres on the question of Taiwan's international status, i.e. whether Taiwan is to be accepted as a sovereign state of *de jure* independence, or if it is a part of China that eventually should be reunified with the Mainland.¹ According to the Mainland perspective, there is only one China and Taiwan is part of that China. This is referred to as the "one China principle". Also KMT has traditionally adhered to the one China principle, but considers the ROC as the legitimate government of the whole China.² The "one China" principle is accepted by the U.N., by all major states in the international community including the U.S. and the E.U. members, and by the overwhelming majority of states.³ Even if concessions have been made to Taiwan, the PRC has always upheld the fundamental parts of the principle; that there is only one China. Here, it is important to emphasise that Beijing is not concerned by Taiwan's *de facto* independence, but rather by its strivings for *de jure* independence. The Taiwan issue is a conflict that has proved to be unsolvable, at least in the short term. The Mainland is, for the time being, content with *status quo* and the idea of a reunification in the future. As long as there is an acceptance that there is only one China, Beijing is willing to negotiate and compromise on most other issues.⁴

3.1.1 Historical background⁵

Taiwan is separated from Mainland China by a strait of about 130 km at its narrowest point, and 260 km at its widest. Mainland Chinese have conducted commercial activities in Taiwan since 500 AD, but it was not until the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) that the first Chinese government was established on the island. In 1683, the Qing emperor annexed Taiwan and made it a prefecture of Fujian province. Thereafter, Taiwan remained under nominal Chinese rule until it was ceded to Japan in 1895 after the first Sino- Japanese war. Japan controlled Taiwan until its 1945 defeat in the Pacific War.

¹ The Chinese position on territorial integrity goes back to the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.) when China was first unified and there is a tradition of "great national unity" (da yi tong) embedded in Chinese culture. This tradition holds that unity is better than division and that division is temporary and abnormal while unity is permanent (Xinbo 1998: 129). Hence, for the Chinese, territorial integrity is not a question of *if* but *when* - time is of little importance and one day China will once again be unified. We should also keep in mind that in both China and Taiwan, the militaries are politically influential, which generally means that great importance is attached to territorial integrity and territorial matters.

² As late as in October 2008 KMT President Ma Ying-jeou said that mainland China is the territory of the Republic of China. Ma stated that under the ROC Constitution, the ROC "definitely is an independent sovereign state, and mainland [sic] China is also part of the territory of the ROC." This said, the Presidential Office later made certain elaborations, "saying that under the 11th Amendment to the Constitution and the Statute Governing the Relations Between the Peoples of the Taiwan Area and Mainland Area (台灣地區與大陸地區人民關係條例), the relationship between Taiwan and China is one between two regions. "It is between the "Taiwan region" and the "mainland region,"" (Ko 2008)

³ In January 2008, Taiwan had full diplomatic relations with 23 states. The number of states recognising the ROC has decreased over time as more and more states change their recognition to the PRC. The states that do recognize the ROC are mainly small island states motivated by economic incentives and encouragement by the Taiwanese.

⁴ On the "one China" principle see e.g. Bush 2005a; Hughes 1997: ch. 3; Lijun 2001: 99-100, 171-73. For differing perspectives on the "one China" principle, see Wang 2000; Yao 2005.

⁵ This section is based on the authors interviews (Taiwan, Spring 2007; China, 2004-2008; Sweden 2003-2007; United Kingdom, 2007-2008) and a range of written sources including (International Crisis Group 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Lijun 2001: ch. 1; Swanström and Ledberg 2006: 5-12; Taiwan Yearbook 2007; Tsang 2004) Information has also been drawn from the websites of the Cross-Strait Security Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, <http://www.csis.org/isp/taiwan>; the Mainland Affairs Council, ROC, <http://www.mac.gov.tw> and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, PRC, <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn>.

The current conflict can be traced back to Dr. Sun Yat-sen's founding of the Republic of China on January 1912. Dr. Sun is also the founder of Kuomintang. After the foundation of the ROC, three decades of warlordism and fragmentation followed, which finally ended in a Civil War between the ruling KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This war was fought, with varying intensity, between 1927 and 1949. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong officially proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In December the same year, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT forces withdrew from the mainland to Taiwan and declared Taiwan as the provisional headquarters of the ROC government. The cross-strait conflict has ever since been stalemated at a high level of conflict intensity, except between the mid-1980s and mid 1990s.

In the 1950s, there were military hostilities between the PRC and the ROC. It was not until the early 1970s that the ROC military doctrine abandoned the idea of retaking the Mainland by force. From that point onwards, the focus of the conflict shifted from military to political strategies. This change was a result of the transformation of the PRC, from a political outcast in the 1950s to a recognised member of the international community two decades later. In the early 1970s, the U.N. General Assembly voted to expel the ROC from the U.N. and recognised the PRC as China's legitimate representative. Consequently, the PRC replaced the ROC as one of five permanent members in the U.N. Security Council. The U.S. – China relations were normalised in 1979 when the U.S. shifted its recognition to the People's Republic of China. The premise for this recognition was that Beijing was to resolve the issue of Taiwan's status by peaceful means. The U.S. policy towards Taiwan has, since 1979, been characterized by ambiguity. It has been difficult to identify a common view among U.S. officials on whether or not the U.S. regards Taiwan a part of China, legally and/or politically. As a result of this "strategic ambiguity", where the U.S. support is to be determined on a case to case basis, it has been unclear how strong the U.S. commitment to Taiwan really will be in case of a Chinese attack (Kan 2007).

In the 1980s, cross-strait relations changed. The period from the mid 1980s to mid 1990s are often referred to as a "honey moon" period as relations across the strait reached new positive heights. Deng Xiaoping introduced his concept of "One Country, Two System" as a new outline for peaceful reunification, Cross-strait trade and Taiwanese investments on the mainland grew, and Taiwan became the largest investor in the PRC (if including indirect trade via Hong Kong).

3.1.1.1 Conflict and cooperation during the Lee Teng-hui government (1990 - 1999)

The first half of the 1990s was a high point in cross-strait relations.⁶ In 1990s, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and its mainland counterpart the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) were established as the agents in charge of handling cross-strait communication and negotiation. The first political meetings were held WHEN? and the two sides agreed on the so called "1992 consensus". According to the "1992 consensus" both sides recognise the "one China principle" meaning that there is only one, undivided, China to which both the Mainland and Taiwan belong, but each side with its own interpretation.

⁶ Lee Teng-hui became president of the Republic of China in January 1988, after Chiang Ching-kuo had died. This section focuses on the post-1990 period when Taiwan tried to break its diplomatic isolation.

Nevertheless, at the same time Beijing was getting suspicious about President Lee and the Taiwanese leadership's true colours concerning the "one-China" issue and reunification.⁷ This worry was enhanced over time as Taiwan tried to break its diplomatic isolation in the early 1990s, which, in turn, was interpreted by Beijing as a move towards *de jure* independence (Lijun 2001). In 1994, President Lee argued that Taiwan was not part of China, but a state of its own which, at least on the Mainland, was perceived as a determination to separate Taiwan from the mainland (Asahi Weekly 1994). Lee initiated a "pragmatic diplomacy" campaign, which included bidding for U.N. membership, conducting visits to several neighbouring countries, and an economic policy aimed at discouraging Taiwanese investments and economic relations with the Mainland and instead redirecting them to South East Asia.

Up until now, Taiwan had been a relative low priority on the U.S. foreign policy agenda. As long as Taiwan did not openly challenge the "one China" position and the Mainland did not openly refer to the use of force, the Taiwan issue was not an immediate threat to U.S interests. This changed in 1995-1996, in the run up to the first democratic presidential elections in Taiwan. In the summer of 1995, Lee became the first ROC president to visit the U.S. and he made an (in)famous visit to his alma mater, Cornell University. This visit triggered a strong response from the Mainland and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) carried out missile tests and large scale naval exercises in waters near the Taiwan coast in 1995-1996. The U.S. now felt compelled to react, and did, in 1996, after failed diplomatic attempts, deploy two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Taiwan area to deter China.

In the years after the face-off, relations between the Mainland and Taiwan were strained. The relations stabilised in 1998 and talks between SEF and ARATS were restarted. These positive tendencies only lasted until July 1999 when President Lee, in an interview for Deutsche Welle, stated that the cross-Strait relationship should be viewed as a "nation-to-nation, or at least as special nation-to-nation relations." (Associated Press 1999) Official talks between the two sides were unilaterally stopped by Beijing, and a new series of military exercises were initiated. In retrospect, the troublesome ending of the 1990s can be seen as the prelude of the coming relations between the Mainland and Taiwan after the 2000 Taiwanese presidential elections.

3.1.1.2 Chen Shui-bian and Taiwan moves towards independence (2000 - 2008)

Already in the run up to the elections in 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), led by candidate Chen Shui-bian, made it clear that it regarded Taiwan as an independent country, and not as a part of the PRC. Despite pressure from the Mainland, Chen Shui-bian won the election, thereby ending an era of uninterrupted KMT rule since the founding of the ROC on the Chinese mainland.

Although Chen Shui-bian was a well-known proponent of independence, Beijing decided to be patient after his election. Chen chose the opposite approach, and in August 2002, he made a statement referring to Taiwan as a country (Yao 2005: 144, note 3). Chen's intention was to

⁷ This uneasiness can at least partially be attributed to the lack of personal relations between the Chinese leadership and Lee. With the two previous leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo, many leaders in Beijing had personal connections and could hence feel sure about their true characters, which was not the case with Lee. Moreover, Lee was not born on the Mainland nor had he lived there. There were also worries that he was anti-communist and that his position was too weak to go ahead with unification talks.

rewrite the ROC constitution. The initial step would be to hold a referendum in 2006, and thereafter to have a new constitution put in place by 2008. In Washington, the newly elected Bush Administration exacerbated the situation by adopting a more pro-Taiwan policy. In April 2001, Bush stated that his administration "would do whatever it takes" to help Taiwan defend itself. In Taipei, the statement was interpreted as a shift away from strategic ambiguity to unconditional support for Taiwanese independence.

Chen was re-elected in 2004. Although he had somewhat toned down his standing, the situation remained critical and relations between the two sides deteriorated. Trust was lacking, which diluted the political will to find a peaceful solution and both sides thus prepared for the risk of military actions across the Strait (Yao 2005: 143). In Beijing the situation was considered extremely serious and Beijing decided to draw a bottom line and passed the so-called anti-secession law. The anti-secession law created a legalistic framework for taking actions towards a Taiwan seeking *de jure* independence.⁸ In Washington, the seriousness of the situation had become clear and Washington thought that Taiwan had abused its support and friendship. The U.S. now increased its pressure on Taiwan to not push independence further. Washington also made clear that Taiwan could not expect U.S. protection if it unilaterally declared independence and consequently caused Beijing to use force (Kan 2007: 82). Nonetheless, President Chen continued his efforts towards independence.

In 2005 - 2006, the Taiwan Issue escalated into a crisis where there were a high risk for military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait. At this time, the U.S. started to reiterate its "one China" policy more strongly, as well as its opposition against unilateral moves towards independence. Chen Shui-bian, however, ignored the U.S. concerns (Zhao 2005). At this point, from 2005 onwards, a peculiar change can be identified in the way Beijing handled its Taiwan policy. China had come to realise that its pressure on the island was not effective, or even counter-productive, as it was perceived as interventions into Taiwanese affairs. Instead, Beijing and Washington jointly agreed that pressure was to come from Washington instead.⁹ Arguably, Washington worked as a *de facto* intermediate between the two sides.

While political relations were increasingly strained, there was increased engagement in other spheres. There was a rather successful separation between the political and economical sphere. This can arguably be seen as an adaptation of politics to reality, as the level of cross-strait trade and investment was already very high and Taiwanese had since long been regular visitors on the Mainland. Thus, to some extent, this was a result of changing restrictions that simply did not work, and furthermore were destructive for Taiwan's development. The economic sector had been

⁸ The law re-states the one-China policy and that PRC "...shall never allow the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces to make Taiwan secede from China under any name or by any means." The law entitles China to employ "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures" to stop such a development. (People's Daily Online 2005) The legal aspect of the framework should not be over emphasised even though some Chinese may claim that the law makes it legal to take military actions towards Taiwan under certain circumstances. Indeed, what these circumstances are, and what the consequences would be has been made clear already before the law. However, as the issue was politicised on all levels of the Taiwanese society, the law still had a calming effect since it formalised Beijing's policy and made it easier to predict.

⁹ Interview with former National Congress Representative engaged in cross-strait exchanges, Taipei, Taiwan, April 2007. Also see Tung 2005: 352-53 for a brief and good review on Beijing's reliance on the US.

negatively affected by the restrictions, and the Taiwanese authorities had problems getting the Taiwanese companies to bring back their profits from the mainland due to the unsecure situation.

On the political level, Chen continued his independence policy. Beijing was cautious to in its reactions and continued to let Washington take care of the pressure. In 2008, in the run up to the legislative and presidential elections, many Taiwanese were worried that Chen's focus on independence would trigger a confrontation with the Mainland. This fear lessened after the January KMT landslide victory in the legislative election, which crippled Chen's ability to implement his policy in the run up to the presidential election in March. During the presidential election, Beijing was silent, worrying that its involvement would backfire. The DPP lost the presidential election in 2008 and the KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou was elected president of the ROC. Ma's cross-strait approach emphasise the need to improve ties with the Mainland. He wants to liberalise the economic sector and restart an official cross-strait dialogue.

Directly after having been elected, before his inauguration, the Taiwan Vice President-elect Vincent Siew participated in the Boao forum. On the sidelines of the forum he met with Hu Jintao to have discussions primarily on economic issues, this was highly symbolic and a starting point for improved relations between the two sides. In a similar fashion, during a visit to the mainland by KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung, it was decided to restart talks between SEF and ARATS on the basis for the 1992 consensus. Where it leads, and how it will develop, when relations move from symbolic to concrete, and come to include more sensitive issues is too early to say, and falls outside the scope of this study.

3.2 Elite interactions

3.2.1 Personal Networks

This section explores the importance of inter-personal networks among the elites on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The importance of developing a thick web of linkages among the elite in the political and military sphere has been emphasised in many of the interviews made on both sides of the Strait. The importance of personal networks has, for example, been emphasised by high-level KMT interviewees.¹⁰ One interviewee, deeply involved in NGO and track two work, referred to personal contacts as "irreplaceable resources" and a "sort of social capital".¹¹ He emphasised, in particular, the "guanxi", or "relationship" he had with his "friends on the mainland", which he had "developed through the previous seminars, received researchers etc".¹² Personal networks have been an important part of, and catalyst for, the development of positive relations across the Taiwan Strait. They have been a requirement for the success of track two diplomacy and back-channel negotiations. Indeed, these processes have been dependent on personal connections of the participants and the organisers.

The trust gained from personal networks is also the platform for the inter-party relations between the KMT and the CCP. Here, many of the leaders of the two sides know each other personally. The importance of this form of elite inter-connectedness for building peace should not be

¹⁰ Interviews with members of the KMT party, Taipei, Taiwan, May, 2007.

¹¹ Interview with cross-strait NGO representative organising track two activities, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007.

¹² Ibid.

underestimated. Already in 1978, Kenneth E. Boulding identified the existence of integrative relationships among leaders as one of the important factors for developing a stable peace (Boulding 1978: 63).

Many of the people interviewed, or with whom more informal discussions were held, on the Mainland and in Taiwan have acknowledged their friends and colleagues on the other side. In this context, it should be noted that senior academics on the Mainland are well-connected to the Chinese leaders and/or are members of influential government think tanks. The same situation applies to their Taiwanese counterparts who have excellent personal relations with members of the Taiwanese leadership. For example, on numerous occasions, senior Chinese academics have referred the author of this study to their Taiwanese colleges to get better answers to the questions asked, or to get more in-depth knowledge. The same applies to the interviewees in Taiwan. The linkages between influential scholars on the two sides have also been observed at track two workshops and more academic seminars and conferences, where the author has been a participant or observer. These personal networks are not limited to scholars, but include people from the military and political sphere, as well as, to some extent, representatives of the business community.¹³ The importance of the networks is not only identified among scholars, but also within policy making and military circles. For example, one senior Taiwanese military officer emphasised the importance of networking across the Taiwan Strait, by stating that "[n]etworking is key" and that "[t]he [track two] workshops and the individual networks accumulate" over time.¹⁴

A common feature among the elites active across the Taiwan Strait, is that many of them hold a Ph.D. from a major U.S. university. This common experience can work as a basis for socialising and creates a common language and framework for understanding. For example, the participants are schooled in the same international relations discourse, and have been taught the same terminology and concepts. The common language and educational experience is central, as it facilitates understanding and makes communication more effective. It also allows the participants to frame and discuss the problems in general terms without linking them specifically to the circumstances or political features of either Mainland China or Taiwan.

It is difficult to trace and assess the actual peace impact that originates in personal networks. Furthermore, their impact needs to be understood in relation to the role of the networks as catalysts for other processes and the potential synergy effects.

Drawing on informal discussions with senior and influential academics on both sides of the strait, as well as Western experts, a number of mechanisms have been identified.¹⁵ At a minimal level, it is clear that the individual members in the networks have an increased understanding of, and trust in, the other side. Understanding and trust have allowed for relatively positive interactions and a willingness to listen and find common grounds has developed over time. Understanding and trust also make it possible to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations. It should, in this

¹³ The inclusion of people from the business sphere is more extensive on the Taiwanese side.

¹⁴ Interview with military official, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

¹⁵ The informal discussions in Mainland China and Taiwan have been conducted in connection with the fieldwork undertaken for this study. Discussions have also taken place with Taiwanese and Chinese individuals visiting Sweden (Uppsala and Stockholm, 2003-2008). Of the Western scholars, the majority have been from the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom, and a few have been US scholars visiting Sweden or China (2003-2009).

context, be noted that these positive dynamics are relatively strong in personal networks since being a member in a, by definition, voluntary network implies an openness to mutual engagement and learning. Moreover, as discussed in the theoretical framework, from a constructivist perspective, regular interactions and socialisation is a trust and confidence building process.

In concrete terms, the understanding and trust created through personal networks have been important for the ability to resolve tensions and problems, and for enhancing positive relations across the Taiwan Strait. They have been important both for smoothen relations on a general level, and in helping to defuse issues and tensions with conflict escalation potential before they have escalated to a critical level or spread. This is illustrated empirically in the work of numerous NGOs working on cross-strait issues and dialogues. Among these, the Cross-Strait Cultural, Education, and Economic Exchange Association (CSCEEEA) is perhaps the foremost example.

The CSCEEEA is an institutionalised track two process with the goal of resolving issues and promoting "mutual-win" across the strait.¹⁶ The organisation is based on its members' good connections and influence on both sides of the strait.¹⁷ Its members are top people from the Taiwanese pan-blue camp with excellent connections to the leadership on the Mainland (also see "CCP-KMT inter-party connections" below).¹⁸ People from CSCEEEA have since its foundation been visiting the Mainland both as individuals and in delegations. They have, both officially and unofficially, met and socialized with the top Chinese leaders. Its founder was, for example, invited to meet Jiang Zemin to discuss the cross-strait situation and how to promote peace. Other delegations, just to mention a few, have met with top leaders such as Premier Wen Jiabao and the leaders in the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.¹⁹

Due to good personal connections, the CSCEEEA has been able to help out in numerous high profile cases. As opposed to the contacts between SEF and ARATS, there is trust between the CSCEEEA and the Mainland government. The centre has worked as a channel of communication with the leadership on the Mainland and as a result of regular interaction, high levels of trust and confidence, as well as routine in communication, have developed. This has also been utilized to solve different issues arising as a result of the lack of official links across the Strait. In addition to softer issues such as humanitarian relief, exchange and other services, CSCEEEA have also been able to use their contacts in cases that are more sensitive. For example, the organisation has helped resolve tensions such as the repatriation of fishermen and illegal immigrants, which otherwise could have conflict potential as it involves crossing claimed state borders. Despite

¹⁶ The CSCEEEA was established in February 1999 with the intention to increase the mutual understanding of people across the strait and help them solve "some problems". At the same time, it aims at carrying forward Dr. Sun Yat-sen's motto of "Rejuvenating the Chinese nation" and promoting "mutual-win" of the two sides. The centre has a formal cooperation and assistance agreement with ARATS. (Cross-Strait Cultural, Education, and Economic Exchange Association -).

¹⁷ Interview with Hu-Hsiang Fung (馮滙祥), Chairman of the CSCEEEA and personally active in cross-strait activities, Taipei, Taiwan, 1 May 2007.

¹⁸ The Taiwan political parties are divided into the pan-blue side that is leaning towards reunification or the upholding of *status quo* (Kuomintang and the smaller the People First Party and the New Party), and the pan-green side where the members favour independence over reunification (the Democratic Progressive Party and the small Taiwan Solidarity Union and the Taiwan Independence Party).

¹⁹ Interview with former legislator, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007.

being boycotted by the DPP government, the centre handles about 1,000 cases annually, which adds up to 8,000 by spring 2007.²⁰

The success of these undertakings depends on good contacts and reputation on both sides of the strait (Cross-Strait Cultural, Education, and Economic Exchange Association -). Excellent personal contact with Mainland leaders was also fundamental in Chairman Fung's work to release alleged Taiwanese spies captured on the Mainland. These cases are all examples of the importance of the personal networks. Personal links make it possible to ask, explain, and succeed in getting the Mainland to understand Taiwanese concerns.

Personal networks have also helped avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations in policy decisions. On the Mainland, these positive effects have increased in recent years as the top Chinese leadership regularly invites scholars to brief them on different issues.²¹ The elite level networks also contribute to the existence of open channels of communication. The trust and confidence in personal relations, at least, increase the ability to contact the other side also at times of tensions given the decreasing risk that the other side will abuse the contact for personal short term gains. Personal networks can hence be said to create a form of platform for short term conflict prevention measures. Moreover, they also contribute to the success of longer term peacebuilding processes, as they open up for discussions and negotiations without immediate official commitments or public exposure. One additional benefit with personal networks in this context is that they do not suffer from the same party-camp limitations as the inter-party links between KMT-CCP (see "CCP-KMT inter-party connections" below).

Personal networks also facilitate the transfer of ideas and understandings from track two to track one level. Many of the individuals participating in track two meetings from both sides have good connections into their respective government, and can, informally, pass on new information and insights.²² This is an important link, given the limited participation of officials in their private capacity in track two meetings in 2000-2008. Personal networks have also been a good way for the moderates in the pan-blue coalition, who are the more active track two participants, to influence the government. For example, interviewees have stressed the importance of former students within the DPP and/or government as important channels "to get the government to listen".²³ The personal networks also allows for relaying messages, as will be discussed in "Back-channel negotiations and secret envoys" below. The importance of personal networks is furthermore underscored by the great effort made by the organisers of these track two meetings to assess the respective networks of the invited individuals. The reason for this is that the usefulness

²⁰ The cases concern: emergency relief; humanitarian, cultural and educational visits; economic and trade cooperation; agricultural and medical cooperation; cross-strait marriages (including helping Mainland brides in Taiwan); identity authentication; people searching; visiting relatives; disputes regarding property, fishery, business, and legal matters; Taiwan spies cases; joint crime prevention etc. (Cross-Strait Cultural Education and Economic Exchange Association -; interview with Hu-Hsiang Fung (馮滙祥), Chairman of CSCEEEA, Taipei, Taiwan, 1 May 2007)

²¹ Interview with China expert, United Kingdom, 12 June 2008. This practice has also been emphasised in interviews and informal discussions with Mainland Chinese scholars during the authors fieldwork in China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007. Several of these scholars had themselves been invited to advise the leadership.

²² Interviews with scholars who have been regular participants in cross-strait track two frameworks, Taipei, Mar - May 2007; China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

²³ Interview with senior researcher organising cross-strait economic and cultural exchange, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007.

of the meetings increases when the participants have personal links to the leaders, and thereby a way of influencing policy decisions (also see "Academic exchanges and dialogues" below).²⁴

Personal networks have also been able to identify starting points for future (official) negotiations, i.e. they have worked as a platform for pre-negotiation. As virtually all cross-strait issues are sensitive, personal trust is important for discussions frank, open and creative enough to find acceptable compromises. A former National Congress Representative²⁵ described the personal networks as beneficial because they: create a situation where sincere questions can be asked about, for example, the plausibility of a peace treaty; allow frank discussions on the contents of an eventual peace agreement; or communicate to the counterpart what issues that are really sensitive. His view was that this would not be possible without mutual trust. He argued that these dynamics, for example, may help manage the problem with China's "one china" stand, which has deadlocked negotiations. Despite an acceptance that there is a need for peacebuilding, he argued that if "...Taiwan would accept the one-china principle as the basis for negotiations, Taiwan would be in an unequal negotiation position from the beginning [as this would forfeit the possibility for fair negotiations about Taiwan's status]." In this case, the personal networks allow for the needed informal discussions and back-channel negotiations prior to open negotiations.

A concrete example of the importance of the personal linkages in the political sphere became clear after the KMT victory in 2008. The rapid move to open up relations, restart official communication, and implement practical changes within months would not have been possible without the personal relations between the leaders. The 2008 situation can be contrasted with the problems experienced by the SEF and ARATS when restarting their communication after the 1995-1996 crisis. In this regard, one interviewee, who was a high-level official at the time, pointed to the problems of having "no communication across the strait", which created a situation where "[t]hey had to build it from scratch to restore links of communication."²⁶ The personal networks have, in 2008, also allowed for important back-channel negotiations, which can be assumed to have taken place before, for example, the May meeting between President Hu and KMT Chairman Wu when they both referred the "one China" terminology when discussing problem solving. (see above).

From a conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspective, personal networks have prevented conflict escalation by keeping a channel of communication open and by working as a frame for pre- and back-channel negotiations. For this, the embedded trust and confidence has been important, as it has allowed for good and efficient discussions and negotiations. Personal networks role as a source of understanding has been important to avoid miscalculation and misunderstandings, both of which would risk escalating or triggering new conflicts. In a similar

²⁴ E.g. interview with track two organiser at a government think tank, Shanghai, China, May 2007. This importance was emphasised by Chinese and Western participants with whom the author had personal discussions at different track two meetings. Senior participants pointed out the important persons and described who had links to whom in the leadership, which in turn made their statements more or less important. For example, when a senior Chinese military official who reputedly had links to the top leadership made statements at one of the workshops, the other participants listened very carefully (The Fifth Shanghai Workshop on Global Governance "Current Situation and Future Prospects of Asia-Europe Security Cooperation", Shanghai, 23-24 Jan, 2007).

²⁵ Interview with former congress representative, Taipei, Taiwan, 25 Apr 2007.

²⁶ Interview with former official in the Mainland Affairs Council, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007.

fashion, the ability to resolve specific tensions and disputes before they escalate or spread has been central to smooth cross-strait relations.

Personal networks are important for longer term peacebuilding as they are catalysts for positive relations and a sustainable peace across the strait. The membership and socialisation in personal networks will, over time, affect the individual and collective identities, norms, and values. It is clear in the interviews that, over time, trust and confidence has been built, which in turn has affected the social identity of the members. It is also clear that, over time, the perception and understanding of "the other" has changed among the members of cross-strait networks. The perceptions of the network members' own cultural belonging and cultural differences also changed. Often a shared understanding of peace, as the single most important issue, was expressed. There was also an indication of changes in identities, as illustrated by the emphasis on similarities rather than differences in regards to cultural belonging. Emphasis was put on the "Chineseness" of the "Taiwanese". The Mainland Chinese pointed to the acceptance of "free-market principles", and sometimes everyone was referred to as "East Asian" or "Asian". The fact that one can have several identities at the same time was highlighted. There was also a strong emphasis on the need for a perception of collective security, as opposed to relative insecurity.

3.2.2 Track two diplomacy

The importance of track two diplomacy, in particular track two meetings and workshops, and different form of elite exchanges and dialogues, is apparent in the interviews undertaken on both sides of the strait. The importance of track two dialogues is also emphasised in official statements from both Beijing and Taipei. There is a strong theoretical logic behind this stress on track two diplomacy given the negative experiences during periods when this was lacking (1999 - May 2008) or during periods of limited official communication (1991-1999). Track two is hence an alternative way, sometimes the only, to build confidence and trust across the Taiwan Strait.²⁷

This section starts by exploring track two meetings and workshops across the Taiwan Strait. Thereafter, the scope will be broadened to include academic exchanges and dialogues in a broader sense.

3.2.2.1 Track two meetings and workshops

The interviewees have described track two meetings and workshops (hereafter workshops) as "central" for cross-strait relations. One senior military official was arguing that "we should try to have as many [workshops] as possible. The important thing is not the workshop itself, but the trust that is built in the process."²⁸ This line of reasoning has been repeated by interviewees on both sides and in all spheres, including the military and the political circles.²⁹ The general consensus is clearly expressed in a comment made by a member of a Shanghai government think tank with extensive experience from track two workshops: "[Track two workshops] give an opportunity to talk about regional questions as well as cross strait relations. This is important for

²⁷ These forms of engagement also allow for social networking and socialisation, and increase the understanding of each other's positions and interests.

²⁸ Interview with military official, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007. This has also been supported by Western scholars and policymakers involved in track two workshops.

²⁹ Interviews with scholars, military officials, and policy makers in China (Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007) and Taiwan (Mar - May 2007).

cross-strait understandings, as without meeting each other the decision makers would miss one side."³⁰

There are, however, limitations to track two workshops, such as their bias towards including only participants from the pan-blue camp in Taiwan and scholars of Taiwan studies from China.³¹ One senior DPP member singled out the problem that the Mainland tends to "get rid of the nationalistic people" from Taiwan and itself "sends Taiwan studies scholars instead of International Relations scholars".³² He argued that if international relations people would get involved "it would be a more civilized dialogue and interaction across the Taiwan Strait."³³ This said, it is not only the Mainland that creates problems. There are also constraints coming from the DPP party, which make it difficult for their senior members to participate in track two meetings on cross-strait relations.³⁴ It is also difficult to involve people from the military, as it is illegal for military officials on duty to meet with each other across the Taiwan Strait.³⁵ There are ways around this (see section "3.2.4" below), but in the case of regular track two workshops there are limitations.

The abovementioned limitations, in combination with the sensitivity of the core issue, have meant that many of the track two workshops taking place are organised by a third party, or as part of a multilateral framework. This has increased the possibility for DPP members to participate in their private capacity. Moreover, Taiwanese and Chinese scholars and practitioners are given the opportunity to communicate in connection with international track two forums. One good example is the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), in which Taiwan has participated with a study group since April 1996.³⁶ The Taiwan issue is not allowed to be on the agenda, but the participants "...can talk a lot in the coffee breaks, during dinner and lunch etc about the Taiwan-issue."³⁷ This practice of addressing the Taiwan issue off the record has been confirmed by several CSCAP participants.³⁸ These settings give the Taiwanese participants, whom are influential scholars and practitioners, an opportunity to discuss the Taiwan problem in a framework in which Mainland Chinese delegates participate, thereby being able to share understandings and thinking with each other.

Another problem with track two workshops is the lack of policy innovation. The Taiwan issue is so sensitive that there is little leeway for trying out new ideas, in particular among participants

³⁰ Interview, with member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, 14 May 2007.

³¹ Chinese scholars focusing on Taiwan Studies do not have the same broad understanding and big picture as those with a more general international relations focus. (Interviews with a senior scholar and chairman of a cross-strait NGO, with extensive experience of cross-strait relations, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007; Strategic thinker connected to the DPP party, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr 2007; China expert, United Kingdom, 12 June 2008.)

³² Interview with DPP member, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Interviews with people active in organising track two workshops and DPP members, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

³⁵ Interview with military staff, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

³⁶ Taiwan is not a member of the steering committee nor does it have a vote. It has been participating since 1996 and since it is not allowed to change participants too often as all changes needs to be accepted by Beijing, it has created a certain continuity in Taiwan's participation. (Interview with CSCAP participant, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr 2007)

³⁷ Interview with senior expert with extensive experience from multilateral track two workshops, Taipei, Taiwan, 30 Apr 2007.

³⁸ Interviews with CSCAP participants from Europe, Mainland China, and Taiwan, 2004-2008.

from Mainland China.³⁹ In addition, the Taiwan issue is so politicised that practitioners participating in their "private capacity" means nothing more than that it is not official policy statements that are being made.⁴⁰ In addition, there is, at the same time, no room for contradicting current policy stances. For policy innovation, the closer to a purely academic setting the more useful is the workshop in this regard. At the same time, with a more academic setting, the link to policy and decision-making circles may be interrupted. In short, there is a direct cost-benefit link between inclusion of practitioners and level of policy innovation brain-storming – if no practitioners, there might be new ideas but limited policy impact, and vice versa.

This problem is, to some extent, overcome by the contradictory relationship between seniority and openness in the case of Chinese scholars. The well connected and senior scholars are more likely to speak their minds and be innovative, while the junior and less connected tend to keep as close to the official policy line as possible.⁴¹ In regards to policy innovation, settings that include third parties, in addition to Mainland China and Taiwan, have proved beneficial. Such settings defuse some of the sensitivity and problems imbedded in bilateral cross-strait engagements. It also enables the non-Chinese participants to contribute with creative suggestions since they are not constrained by high invested stakes in the conflict. Track two workshops also leave room for unofficial discussions on innovative solutions during breaks and in the corridors outside of the official meeting. It is also possible to organise semi- or unofficial workshops for selected individuals in connection to the larger workshops, in which case the larger, official workshop may serve as an umbrella or excuse for the participants.⁴²

Track two workshops are important for peace through their role as catalysts for the development of personal networks among the participants (see "Personal Networks" above). Over time, a thick web of social networks has developed among mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people who are regular participants in international track two and other meetings. More often than not, the participants from Taiwan and mainland China are seen socialising with each other during coffee breaks, meals, or excursions, as well as in more informal discussions away from the main table.⁴³ Indeed, it has been observed by the author how well elite people on the two sides of the strait know each other when discussing common friends, or when participating in track two workshops and other academic or semi-academic gatherings. This has also been confirmed by interviews with participants in track two workshops.⁴⁴

3.2.2.2 Academic exchanges and dialogues

Academic exchanges and dialogues have been extensive across the Taiwan Strait. Despite being "academic" in nature, the exchanges and dialogues have been far from purely academic undertakings. In most cases, the Chinese participants come from government think tanks, or are

³⁹ Interviews, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

⁴⁰ Author's observations at different track two meetings 2004 - 2008. Also see Shai and Stone 2004.

⁴¹ Author's observations during fieldwork and at track two meetings in China and Sweden 2004 - 2008.

⁴² Interviews with Westerns scholars involved in track two workshops, Sweden and United Kingdom, 2005 - 2007; Shanghai, China, 22-25 Jan 2007.

⁴³ Discussions with track two organisers, and observations at different track two meetings in China, Taiwan, and Europe 2005 - 2008.

⁴⁴ Interviews with elite individuals with experience from track two workshops, China Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007, Jul - Dec 2008; Taipei Mar - May 2007; United Kingdom Oct 2007 - Jun 2008.

individuals with good personal connections.⁴⁵ On the Taiwanese side, many of the scholars involved have links to the policy circles and are regarded as influential. The level of influence varies depending on the political party in power. The links are generally stronger when the KMT is in power, as compared to the DPP. This creates a channel of communication between the two sides.

Scholarly dialogues are a way of increasing understanding, as they do not have same limitations as the broader track two workshops. These dialogues are also good for policy innovation, as they are less restricted than the track two workshops discussed above. One former national congress representative stressed the importance of dialogues among academics, since they make the two sides "understand each other" and since there "are no limits in these dialogues" as opposed to non-academic ones.⁴⁶ He exemplified this argument with his own experience explaining Chen Shui-bian's policy to scholars from Beijing:

"I advised them not to read Taiwan independence into every word. I asked them if they before August 3 2002 had heard any word that Chen Shui-bian opposes the one-china policy. What he did not agree about was to use the one-China policy as a precondition, not that he opposed it. He wants to talk about one-China, but he does not want to accept one-China now. If you do not read what he has said very carefully you miss this."⁴⁷

This is also a good example of the close links between the academic and policymaking sectors in Taiwan - the interviewee is here talking about a meeting that took place after he had retired from policymaking to academia. The example also shows how track two can help preventing misunderstandings, reduce differences, and hopefully strengthen the voice of moderation.

In connections to different academic visits to Taiwan, Mainland scholars are known to have had occasional, informal meetings with government officials.⁴⁸ This practice has helped the policy makers in Taiwan to better understand the thinking and perceptions of the Mainland. These meetings are seen as important for policy makers, since if "...meeting with no scholars from the Mainland, [they would] lack a side, that is bad."⁴⁹ In this context, it should be remembered that many of the scholars visiting Taiwan are members of government think tanks, and/or have close personal links to Chinese policy makers.⁵⁰ This makes the increased understanding a reciprocal process: as the Taiwanese policy makers get new insights from connected and well-briefed visitors, the Taiwanese thinking feeds directly into the Mainland policymaking circles. This process thereby works both as information exchange, and as a catalyst for increased understanding and decreased risk of miscalculations. The meetings also create a possible channel in case the leaders on the Mainland wish to send messages to the Taiwanese leadership.

⁴⁵ Interviews and informal discussions with Chinese and Taiwanese track two organisers and participants, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, and Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2007.

⁴⁶ Interview with former legislator, Taipei, Taiwan, 25 Apr 2007.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Interviews with organisers of track two meetings and cross-strait dialogues, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007.

⁴⁹ Interview with member of government think tank, China, May 2007.

⁵⁰ Interviews with organisers of, and participants in, scholarly cross-strait exchanges, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

Among Mainland scholars, a great divide can be observed between those who have interacted with Taiwanese scholars and visited Taiwan, and those who have not.⁵¹ Among the former group of scholars, the understanding of how the Taiwanese think, what their interests are, and how interactions should be handled to not be provocative is much more developed. It is the scholars with experience from regular contacts and close personal relationships with the Taiwanese that can grasp the nuances of Taiwan's behaviour. This requires a deep understanding, something that only comes from long term relationships on a personal level. Many of these scholars also show a change in mindset. Not that their standing on the core issue has changed, but their thinking and understanding of, and respect for, the other has been altered. A similar pattern can be observed in Taiwan, but to a lesser degree.⁵²

Many benefits from track two exchanges among younger elite have also been identified. It has been argued that it is "[e]specially important and beneficial for young scholars, 30-45 years old" to interact, as the Taiwan issue "will not be resolved in a few years ... [but] will take time".⁵³ If building "some links" or "personal relationships" among the people who will

"become key people over time ... they then have friends in Beijing [and vice versa] in similar positions. I am confident that it will be good for both sides to avoid conflict. Especially as we in Taiwan have close policy-academia relations."⁵⁴

The collected empirical material supports this logic, but it does not allow for a conclusive assessment of the importance of this form of exchanges in 1990-2008. Moreover, since more extensive cross-strait exchange is a relatively new phenomenon, the process has not yet reached the stage where the "young" have reached positions of power.

Not all track two processes are equally beneficial. Whether the track two processes have any positive impact on relations across the strait or not depend on their form and participants. For example, one senior member of a Chinese government think tank with vast experience from cross-strait exchange⁵⁵ explained that the effectiveness "...depends on whether the ones who participate are from influential think tanks or not. [You need to] assess the organisation and the [participating] people's background." This point has also received strong support among the other interviewees.⁵⁶ In the case of China, in general track two processes can be assumed to have at least some impact, as the Chinese participants generally report either through a formal report system (government think tanks) or through informal channels (both government and semi-official think tanks). Even when no formal system exists, the academic and semi-academic sector influences policy through personal connections (also see "Personal Networks" above). The importance of personal connections to the leadership cannot be underestimated in the Chinese context. It is of foremost importance both within the government funded think tanks, but also, and even more so, for those outside these institutions. The influence varies from person to person,

⁵¹ Author's fieldwork in China Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, and experience from meetings with Chinese scholars in Sweden and Japan, 2003-2008.

⁵² Author's fieldwork in Taiwan Mar - May 2007, and experience from meetings with Taiwanese scholars in Sweden, China, and Japan, 2003-2008.

⁵³ Interview with former government advisor active in cross-strait exchange, Taipei, Taiwan, 9 May 2007.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Interview with member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, May 2007.

⁵⁶ Interviews with scholars, policy makers, and military staff involved in track two processes, China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007, Jul - Dec 2008; Taipei, Mar - May 2007.

although clusters of influential people can be found especially at the top universities. One good example is the School of International Studies at Peking University, where many of the academics have good links to the Chinese leadership.⁵⁷

It is also noteworthy that people with good contacts and respect not only are found in China, but also in the U.S., which make them good middlemen and honest bookers between Beijing and Washington.⁵⁸ To manage relations with Washington is important, given the position of the U.S. as key ally and protector of Taiwan, as well as the actor with the most influence over Taiwan's behaviour. Over time, the Chinese leadership has shown an increased willingness to use advice in areas where they lack expertise. Moreover, there have been moves to include not only Taiwan studies scholars, but also international relations ones.⁵⁹ One senior Chinese expert described the situation as one where "previously the leaders put in the people who thought like themselves. Now the leaders listen more. The Chinese leaders are willing to listen to track two, this is important."⁶⁰

As mentioned above, the academic and political sector is very much overlapping in Taiwan.⁶¹ It is common practice to move back and forth between academia and policymaking (either as civil servant or elected politician). Many of the senior people at the top universities in Taiwan are former policymakers who retired and moved into academia when the KMT lost the elections in 2000. At the same time, other academics moved into the DPP government. There are also extensive links between policymakers and academics, who work both as advisors and as active members in the respective party. The people interviewed for this study include, for example, professors with a background as elected representatives or civil servants, and current civil servants with an academic background.⁶² Since most people involved in track two interactions across the Taiwan Strait belong to the pan-blue camp, there were certain problems with the track two links to policy makers during the DPP period. Although the links still existed between the involved people and the government, they were less extensive.⁶³ For example, influence can be derived from a position as official advisor to the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) or through the participation in informal meetings.⁶⁴ The influence also depends on the links between the respective think tanks and the individual political leaders. This includes both the links between

⁵⁷ Interviews with scholars at government think tanks and universities, Beijing, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁵⁸ Interview with senior member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 Dec 2006; observations and informal discussions during fieldwork in China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005 and Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁵⁹ This trend can be most clearly identified in the difference between Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. The former has a different decision making style and includes international relations scholars in the decision making process, while Jiang only used Taiwan Studies people. Moreover, Jiang brought in his own people who agreed with his own position. Hu Jintao went back to seeking advice from academic institutes, including holding ad hoc meetings with academics. (Interviews with China expert, United Kingdom, 12 June 2008; China expert, Taipei, Taiwan, 30 Apr 2007)

⁶⁰ Interview with senior expert with experience from track two diplomacy, Fudan University, Shanghai, China, Dec 2006.

⁶¹ This paragraph is based on interviews with current and former policymakers in Taiwan (Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007)

⁶² Interviews with current and former policymakers, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

⁶³ Interviews and informal discussions with scholars, journalists, and former and current policymakers, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

⁶⁴ Interviews with scholars, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 and 9 May 2007.

the presidents or directors of these think tanks and the political leadership, as well as the personal connections of individual researchers to policymaking circles.⁶⁵

3.2.3 CCP-KMT inter-party connections

One form of elite interactions that has been important for peace is found in the close relationship between the CCP and the KMT. Throughout the post-Cold War period, in particular since 2000, there have been active inter-party contacts between the CCP and the KMT and party members have met regularly to discuss issues of common concern.⁶⁶ These contacts have been of importance for peace as there have been no official negotiations between the two sides, except between 1992 and 1999.⁶⁷ In the early 1990s, relations between the KMT government in power and the Mainland were relatively good. The two sides held, what at the time were perceived as positive and progressive, talks on cross-strait relations. After the "1992 consensus" had been reached, it became possible to hold official negotiations. These negotiations worked well until President Lee's visit to the U.S. in 1995. Four years later, in 1999, the Mainland unilaterally stopped all official communication.

Inter-party contacts have continued also after 1999, including after the DPP victory in 2000. There have been both informal and formal links between the KMT and the CCP and their members. These links have given the KMT direct links to the absolute top leadership in Beijing.⁶⁸ Through the interparty links, a channel of communication has remained open across the strait to be used if and when necessary. The informal links between the two parties and their members have created trust and built informal personal relationships between the CCP and KMT leaders. As a result, the two sides can talk openly and sincerely, which is beneficial for an in-depth understanding of the other side and for the possibility to find common grounds. These benefits can also spread to the government also when KMT is not in power.

The inter-party relations have created what could be understood as a joint project for a peaceful future across the Taiwan Strait. The links have been important in helping to sustain the idea of long term peace across the Taiwan Strait on the Mainland, when eventually KMT gets back in power. This became apparent particularly during Chen's second term. At this point, the inter-party communication became more formalised.⁶⁹ In April 2005, the KMT leader Lien Chan made a visit to China where he met with Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the CCP, and they jointly held an inter-party summit. This was the first meeting between KMT and CCP leaders since 1945. Since 2005, the two parties have held forums on cross-strait issues, including economics,

⁶⁵ Interviews with strategic thinkers at universities and think tanks, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, and Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007. These findings are the same as those of Ming-Chen Shai and Diane Stone (2004).

⁶⁶ For a detailed review of the KMT - CCP relationship see Yu 2008.

⁶⁷ After KMT retreated to Taiwan after losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Taiwan adopted an official "Three-No's" policy, i.e. no negotiations, no concessions, and no contact between the two sides. From the mid-1980s there were limited relaxations of this policy (Lijun 2001: 181).

⁶⁸ Interviews with KMT members, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

⁶⁹ This was something that the DPP government repeatedly reacted against by emphasising that any agreements made between the CCP and the KMT were not valid. The DPP has also seen it as problematic that some of its people join force with its enemy the CCP, an actor that hinders its moves towards independence and, moreover, threatens to invade.

agricultural and cultural matters.⁷⁰ The benefits of these processes have been described by one of the participants as being "better than not meeting at all" and as "the best way to communicate between Lien Chan [the KMT leader] and Hu Jintao".⁷¹ The importance of these channels should not be underestimated, as there had previously not been any communication. The CCP-KMT forums provided "an opportunity for them to talk", which is "trust building" and work as a "consolidation" of relations.⁷² The participant also pointed to great unofficial benefits coming from these forums, as the meetings allowed for informal communication and discussions between the two sides. The most important example of this was that "[a]t the conference ... CCP invited Lien Chan to have dinner, and he will [there] tell him the whole story."⁷³ This positive view on interparty contacts is shared by Mainland experts, who underline that these meetings are useful for cooperation, dialogue and for the creation of new ideas.⁷⁴

In the interviews, respondents have highlighted the difficulties in utilising the benefits from the inter-party links when the KMT has not been in power. This has, for example, limited the possibility to implement agreements and thereby any impact that these may have. This has been acknowledged by, among others, Vice Present Vincent C. Siew, former premier of Taiwan and, at the time of the interview director of the Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation. He identified problems concerning the possibility to implement a cross-strait common market as long as the KMT was not in power. Siew observed that "[i]n the last two years [2006-2007], KMT has visited the mainland often.", and "[a] lot of good gestures comes from this" but that "it is only lip-service." as long as KMT is not in power.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the links have been beneficial for peace through the building of trust, confidence, and understanding.⁷⁶ They are also important as they keep up the hope for a peaceful future in Beijing, i.e. the goal of an eventual reunification is kept alive since the KMT adheres to the one China principle, which has given Beijing an incentive to avoid provoking or confronting Taipei. It makes it possible for the leaders in Beijing to take a wait-and-see approach.⁷⁷ This is important, since a central problem for cross-strait relations has been the lack of trust in the 2000-2008 government.

⁷⁰ The first forum was held in Beijing in April 2006 and addressed the impact of cross-strait exchange on economic development. In October 2006, the forum was organised in Fujian and focus was on cross-strait agricultural cooperation. At the third forum, in April 2007, economic and cultural affairs, including direct sea and air links, were addressed. Each forum has about 400 - 500 delegates. (Tang in Yu 2008)

⁷¹ Interview with participant in the CCP-KMT forums, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Interview with member of government think-tank, Shanghai, China, May 2007.

⁷⁵ Interview with Vincent C. Siew (蕭萬長), Director of the Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation and former Premier of Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2008.

⁷⁶ One Taiwanese scholar who had participated at the KMT-CCP meetings emphasised the importance of allowing communication, which is needed for building understanding across the Taiwan Strait. He also emphasised the trust building impact of the meetings and their importance for consolidating relations across the Strait. (Interview with KMT member and participant in KMT-CCP meetings, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007)

⁷⁷ Over time Beijing's confidence in the KMT's ability to regain power decreased. The CCP has been described as "very practical" and it has been argued that the CCP, in case of a DPP victory in the 2008 election, would be [i.e. have been] willing to talk to the DPP, as long as that government does not challenge the one China policy. (Interview with KMT member and participant at the KMT-CCP meetings, Taipei, Taiwan, 3 May 2007)

3.2.4 Unofficial military exchange and contacts

The military tension is high across the Taiwan Strait. There are no military confidence building measures (CBMs), and the two militaries are watching each other closely while preparing for a possible war.⁷⁸ (On military CBMs across the Taiwan Strait see Allen 2001; Cossa 2008; Glaser 2003, 2005; Lin 2001.) Although both sides agree that avoidance of military confrontation is a top interest, the situation across the Taiwan Strait can be understood as a prisoner's dilemma. This dilemma is caused by the

"... lack of communication and platform for conflict prevention ... and the insufficiency in Confidence Building Measures (CBM). ... [which] has lead to the conflict falling into a situation where both sides are challenging each other."⁷⁹

This has resulted in a structural problem for military CBMs, since mixed signals are sent. This problem was described by a Taiwanese expert as "[o]ne day [Taiwan] drink tea [with the Mainland], the next day they [sic] say that it is two countries."⁸⁰ The problem of mixed signals also applies to Beijing, which has combined "a lot of soft measures, but in the meantime also introduce the [anti-]secession law."⁸¹ As argued by Bonnie S. Glaser, great benefits would come from implementing CBMs that "avert misperception and misunderstanding that can escalate to military conflict" (Glaser 2003: 158). The need for CBMs has also been acknowledged by Major General Wang Yang-Cheng and Lt. General Lai Chung-Nang of the Taiwanese Army, who have described the lack of mutual trust that exist between Mainland China and Taiwan as being

"...very likely to cause misunderstanding of one another's action, leading to a spiral of increased threats and ever-more hostile gestures. Such a scenario easily develops into an arms race or the formation of regional alliances that could undermine regional stability. A certain level of mutual trust must thus be in place before conflict prevention measures can be established." (Lai and Wang 2007)

The lack of communication, understanding, and trust make the limited interaction that does exist extremely important for upholding peace. In the interviews, three kinds of interaction have been identified as important for safe-guarding of the fragile peace, and for preventing incidents and/or confrontations between the two militaries: meetings between active military personnel in third

⁷⁸ CBMs are deliberate measures, often in the military sphere, taken to increase transparency and reduce uncertainty, misperceptions and suspicions between conflicting parties, with the aim of reducing the risk for armed conflict. There is no single definition of CBMs. In the CSCAP, they are defined as "both formal and informal measures, whether unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, that address, prevent, or resolve uncertainties among states, including both military and political elements." (Cossa 1995: 6) According to a more narrow definition, CBMs refer to "...initiatives designed to make military intentions more explicit by increasing transparency and predictability, thus reducing the risk of accident or miscalculation. [For example] exchange of information about each other's military activities and doctrine, contacts between militaries, and communication measures such as the setting up of hot lines and the establishment of conflict prevention centers [and] [n]otification and mutual observation of military manoeuvres and missile tests..." (Glaser 2003: 158) The aim of CBMs is to build trust between the conflicting parties and to limit conflict escalation. The underlying logic of CBMs is that while "a single CBM is unlikely to prevent conflict or contribute to peacebuilding, a series of such agreements can allow for an increased sense of security. In time, such measures may even lead to changed understanding of a country's security needs." (Maiese 2003).

⁷⁹ Interview with expert on cross-strait relations, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar 2007.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

party frameworks; PRC military staff visiting Taiwan; and meetings between retired military officers.⁸²

A limited number of possible meeting places do still exist for active military personnel within different third party frameworks. In particular, there are several think tanks and universities in the U.S. where active military personnel from the People's Liberation Army and the Taiwanese military have been able to meet. For example, at the Atlantic Council in Washington and the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) in Honolulu,⁸³ members from both the PLA and the Taiwanese military have been able to participate and work together at the same time.⁸⁴ However, at most international meetings, the Taiwanese side is not invited, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) meeting in Hawaii, and the Shangri-la dialogue organised in Singapore by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Attempts have been made to include both sides at international meetings, but these have not been successful. When Taiwan is invited, the PLA normally refuses to participate.⁸⁵ People from the PLA, including senior officers, have been visiting Taiwanese think-tanks during extensive periods of time. However, this requires that the PLA officers retire from their military posts, then visit Taiwan, and then once again join the service after the visit.⁸⁶

The participants regard the interactions that do take place during these meetings and visits as very important. When interviewed, the Taiwanese talk about the confidence building impact of these interactions.⁸⁷ It has been argued that these interactions also increase understanding and thereby decrease the risk for miscalculation. This argument has received support from both former and current military personnel.⁸⁸ As one former Taiwanese officer explained,

"Informal meetings are very beneficial. [They help me so] I can understand how PLA generals think. It helps me understand their stand with regard to the Taiwan Strait. I get a better understanding of how they will react [in different contingencies]. It is very good to understand their thoughts."⁸⁹

At the very least, this is confidence building since it increases the understanding of the other side's perceptions and dilemmas, thereby decreasing the risk of miscalculations. This is important

⁸² Interviews with military officers, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007. The same view was expressed by most of the strategic thinkers questioned about the role of military exchange and/or CBMs (Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007). However, a number of the interviewees, including government officials, were critical to unofficially organised exchanges (Interview, government official, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007).

⁸³ The Atlantic Council is a Washington think tank with the mission to promote constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs. The Council aims at stimulating dialogue and discussion about critical international issues, and it is organising educational and exchange programs for US leaders. (Atlantic Council 2009). The APCSS is an academic institute in Honolulu under the US Department of Defense. The centre addresses regional and global security issues and invites military and civilian representatives from the US and the Asia-Pacific to different educational programs and conferences. (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies 2009)

⁸⁴ Interviews with military officers, Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2007. In addition to the Atlantic Council and the APCSS, both sides have sent military officers to, for example, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the Stimson Center, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard (Glaser 2003: 175-76).

⁸⁵ Interview with military officer, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May, 2007.

⁸⁶ Interview with military officer, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007. (These visits has since then been stopped by Beijing.)

⁸⁷ Interviews with experts and military officers, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

⁸⁸ Interviews with military officers, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

⁸⁹ Interview with military officer, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

to prevent unintentional conflict escalations or military confrontations, and contributes to long term peacebuilding.

Bonnie Glaser has argued that it is fundamental for cross-strait relations to find an "...approach that can alter the existing hostile images and perceptions", to gradually "...transform negative perceptions and build a less hostile and eventually cooperative relationship" (Glaser 2003: 158). The empirical material in this study indicates that person-to-person contacts between current and retired military staff can be part of such a solution. The author has, through interviews and discussions, observed how personal contacts between the two sides' military personnel have increased the respect and understanding of the other side.⁹⁰ These forms of interactions have given the enemy a human face, and antagonists get to see that the other side is more than "an enemy". For example, one officer who had experience from working together with PLA personnel within a third party organisation, described how suspicion between himself and his mainland colleague overtime transformed into respect and friendship.⁹¹ These interactions do have a potential to transform the mindset of the participants and to moderate the perception of other. The contacts also create mutual respect.⁹² The benefit of the interactions is apparent, and it has been discovered that, in particular, the military profession share many features, characteristics, and problems regardless of location. This makes it particularly easy for professional military staff to connect, respect, and understand each other.⁹³

The relationships that are built between active-duty military personnel cannot be utilised fully, as active military personnel across the Strait is not allowed to communicate officially or on a regular basis. This problem has, to some extent, been overcome by systematic interaction among retired military officers, whom are allowed to interact.⁹⁴ This is potentially important as former high military officials remain influential also after their retirement.⁹⁵ However, it is difficult to assess the actual peace impact of these interactions beyond its socialisation benefit, which possibly creates changed attitudes and increases the moderate voice. In this regard, there is a division between the DPP and the pan-blue side where the latter organises such exchanges while the former sees them as problematic. As one DPP government official explained, "[the exchange of retired military officials are] [d]estructive, it does not build understanding. These visits are not authorised, nor reported to [the government]. This breeds more suspicion, as impact creates social networks."⁹⁶ Among the proponents of unofficial exchanges, the view is different. Dr. Hu-Hsiang Fung, who has been organising visits for retired Taiwanese generals to the Mainland, explained that his idea was that

⁹⁰ Author's discussions with military officers on Mainland China and Taiwan, and interviews with people with experiences from frameworks where military people have met and interacted.

⁹¹ Interview with military officer, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

⁹² Interviews in Sweden, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, 2004 - 2008, and observations during meetings and field work 2003 - 2008.

⁹³ This pattern has been confirmed in discussions with European military officers.

⁹⁴ In Taiwan, there is however an individually decided quarantine period after they leave active service (Interviews with military officers, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007).

⁹⁵ Interview with strategic thinker with in-depth knowledge about cross-strait military visits, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007.

⁹⁶ Interviews with government official, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007.

"we should know each other to have peace. Especially generals should know each other. [this very important as] [t]here are no channels [between the two sides]! I got retired generals of Taiwan to meet retired generals in China. These are often influential, to their students etc. It is good with understanding!"⁹⁷

Others, including military officers, have pointed to the tension reduction potential of this form of visits. It has been argued that as the retired generals "used to be key military people [they] can say important things, and people will listen. They will not do this when young people go. Without such [communication] there could be war."⁹⁸

3.2.5 Back-channel negotiations and secret envoys

Back-channel negotiations (BCN) and the use of secret envoys are examples of elite interactions that have been used for conflict preventive and peacebuilding purposes regardless of who has ruled Taiwan. President Lee's use of secret envoys and secret channels in his negotiations with Beijing during the 1990s is widely acknowledged.⁹⁹ Also the DPP government has been utilising back-channel negotiation, in particular secret envoys including academic and business people.¹⁰⁰ One of the more publicised examples of the use of secret messengers is Chen Shui-bian's suggestion to create a peacebuilding structure. This was a secret mission, but information leaked to the media, and it was reported when Chairman Chen, former vice chairman of MAC, retired to a Taiwanese university and then visited Beijing to negotiate in 2005.¹⁰¹ The media also reported when Mr. Kuo Tai-chian, a businessman with close ties to KMT, acted President Chen's secret messenger in September 2004 and met with President Hu Jintao to discuss the three links on Chen's behalf (China Post 2004). These examples show how back-channel negotiations can be used to enhance cross-strait relations when official channels are closed. These can be direct peace measures, but also work as a way to negotiate functional cooperation and enhance economic ties at times of political chill when no official negotiations are possible.

The interviewees agree about the limitations of unofficial channels. It has been argued that it is difficult to move forward without official negotiations. As expressed by one former legislator,

⁹⁷ Interview with Dr. Fung Hu-Hsiang (馮滙祥), former legislator and Chairman of the Cross-Strait Cultural, Education, and Economic Exchange Association, Taipei, Taiwan, 1 May 2007.

⁹⁸ Interview with military officer, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

⁹⁹ Interviews, China Jun 2006 - 2007; Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007. This fact has also been acknowledged in interviews made by the International Crisis Groups, in MAC documents and numerous news articles, as well as in research. These secret channels can be traced back to the 1980s, when secret discussions took place on ways towards unification. (Lijun 2001: 91-92). (The existence of these channels has also been confirmed during interviews in Taiwan, Spring 2007.) These discussions stopped with Chiang Ching-kuo death in January 1988. Beijing put hope in that President Lee was to continue this process. (CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang sent telegrams on these matters to the KMT Central Committee on 14 January 1988 and to President Lee on 8 July. (Renmin Ribao, 15 January 1988 (p. 1) & 9 July (p. 1), cited in Lijun 2001: 92, 108) President Lee did keep some of the existing secret channels open and some meetings took place in Hong Kong. (Interviews, Taiwan, Spring 2007 and International Crisis Group 2003c: 4; Lijun 2001: 95)

¹⁰⁰ DPP's use of secret messengers and habit of sending messages through academics, businesspeople and others are an accepted fact among experts on cross-strait affairs. This practice has also been confirmed in numerous interviews in Taiwan and China. There are also a number of supposedly secret cases that has been reported in the media. (Also see International Crisis Group 2003c.)

¹⁰¹ Interview with policy advisor, Taipei, Taiwan, 9 May 2007.

"[t]he better way to build peace is to build official dialogues."¹⁰² Despite potential limitations, unofficial channels can work as pre-negotiations and a starting point for future official negotiations. The use of BCN can avoid tensions from escalating by discussing the issue in secret, this way avoiding public scrutiny of differences and the risk of having to publically admit failure. Unofficial interactions can also build relationship and trust before official negotiations starts. For example, in the spring of 2008, BCN utilising the KMT-CCP linkage contributed to peace by working as a platform for pre-negotiations, by agreeing on the framework for official negotiations. In May 2008, KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao met. The two agreed that the SEF-ARATS dialogue should restart as early as possible on the basis of the 1992 consensus. They also resolved the problem with the "one China" terminology.¹⁰³ These back-channel negotiations were successful since they were embedded in the trust and channels of communication built through the CCP-KMT inter-party interactions and the personal networks of the negotiators. They were also supported by the newly elected President Ma, who confirmed that the SEF and ARATS would be entrusted to "complete" what the KMT and CCP had previously agreed on (Wang 2008). In fact, since the election of Ma, inter-party communication has been used as a de-facto inter-governmental channel of communication and negotiation. Basically, the trust and confidence built when the KMT was in opposition, now works for inter-governmental cooperation. The involved persons know each other, understand each other, and can discuss issues in confidence. This creates an optimal setting for preventing conflicts and building peace.

3.2.6 Elite interactions and peace

In conclusion, elite interactions have been important for peace through a range of conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms. They have contributed to keep the cross-strait links open despite a lack of official communication and negotiations. This has, not only, helped prevent unintentional conflict escalation, but also allowed informal discussion in which views and perceptions have been exchanged without the risk of negative political consequences. Sometimes elite interactions have even worked as a platform for pre-negotiation and as an umbrella for secret communication and back-channel negotiations (also see "Back-channel negotiations and secret envoys" below). The regular interactions have also increased the ability for cooperation, which is important as the two sides are geographical neighbours, deeply interlinked through economic relations and a shared history and Chinese heritage.

The elite interactions are important for the social identities of the participants, which over time are formed by these interactions. They have contributed to an altered perception and understanding of the other side among the participants. Even in cases where shared understanding

¹⁰² Interview with former legislator, Taipei, Taiwan, 25 Apr 2007.

¹⁰³ In this case, according to the official KMT newsletter, both Hu and Wu used the term "Chinese nation" to replace "one China". Hu mentioned the "Chinese nation" twice in his welcoming remarks and Chairman Wu repeated the same phrase two times. In a similar fashion, it was said that "cross-strait relations" may replace "stating respectively each side's national title". According to informed sources, Wu and Hu collectively employed the phrase "Chinese nation" more than ten times during their meeting. According to Wu, the non-official consultations between the KMT and the CCP in recent year are the lubrication which enhanced cross-strait relations, and the KMT-CCP platform could continue playing such a role. He went on to say, "of course, we will continue to facilitate and stabilise cross-strait relations. However, any further substantive issues will only be discussed between the SEF and the ARATS". (KMT News Network 2008)

has failed to develop, an increased understanding and respect for the others' perspectives has nevertheless taken form. There has also been a development of shared interests between the two sides. Indeed, through elite interactions, there has not only been an increase in the understanding and acceptance of each other's differences, and but also an identification of shared norms and values.

The elite interactions have also worked as a way to institutionalise positive relations, which forms an important part of longer term peacebuilding. In a way, an elite "community" that transcends borders has been created. This is, in turn, united in the common goal of building a durable peace across the Taiwan Strait. Hardly surprising, the ways varies, although the goal is the same. This community includes people that share certain norms, values, and goals, and who are committed to a peaceful and prosperous future. This way, the elite interactions have created a normative and ideational structure that is guiding its members on both sides of the strait. This has enhanced the voice of moderation and been a force for long term peace, as well as a platform for direct conflict prevention to be utilised when needed. With a strengthened voice of moderation, resistance towards policies and actions that have a negative effect on Mainland China – Taiwan relations has been created. A form of buffer zone has been formed, which reduces the likelihood that the Taiwan issue will move from stalemated conflict, albeit on a crisis level, to an actual military confrontation.

3.3 Economic integration and interdependence

The economic interdependence and integration (EII) across the Taiwan Strait have reached unprecedentedly high levels. In 2002, the Mainland received 24.68 percent of Taiwan's total exports (10.92 percent of the Mainland's total import) (Cheng 2005: 96). The same year, 7.8 percent of Taiwan's imports came from the Mainland (2.7 percent of the Mainland's total export) (Cheng 2005: 96). Three years later, in 2005, the Taiwanese import and export dependency on the Mainland had increased to 12.2 percent and 28.2 percent respectively.¹⁰⁴ In real terms, in 2004, the total trade between the Mainland and Taiwan was U.S.\$ 78.32 billion, an increase by 34.2 percent over 2003.¹⁰⁵ The Mainland's import from Taiwan was U.S.\$ 64.8 billion, while its export was U.S.\$ 13.6 billion, which points to a large trade deficit for the Mainland.¹⁰⁶ There are also substantial Taiwanese investments on the Mainland. However, as opposed to trade which has increased on an annual basis, the volume of Taiwanese investment on the Mainland has been fluctuating over the years since it took up pace in the early 1990s. In 1990, the volume was U.S.\$ 0.22 million, increasing to U.S.\$ 3.14 billion in 1993. Between 1993 and 2005 the volume averaged U.S.\$ 3.07 billion annually, fluctuating between U.S.\$ 3.97 billion (2002) and U.S.\$ 2.16 billion (2005).¹⁰⁷ In conclusion, there is a substantial, although asymmetric, economic interdependence across the strait.

From a peace perspective, economic interaction and integration has been an important part of peacebuilding across the Taiwan Strait. It has been important for economic growth and

¹⁰⁴ Statistics from Bureau of Foreign Trade, available at <http://eweb.trade.gov.tw/>, accessed 20 February 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Statistics from the Department of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs, available at <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/>, accessed 20 February 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

development both in Taiwan and on the Mainland, and a driving force for cross-strait interactions in all spheres. In line with expectations based on functionalist theory, EII has increased the presence of cooperation and cross-strait integration. This has happened even without any formal agreement. Nevertheless, the spill over between the economic and the political sphere has, at best, been limited. In Mainland China – Taiwan relations, economics are said to be "at the opposite end of politics".¹⁰⁸ It is a situation where "...cross-strait economic links growing stronger by the day while political differences show no sign of reconciliation ... [it is a] phenomenon of "economic zeal, political chill." (Siew -). This is a view shared across the strait, and by both political camps in Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

Among the interviewees, there was limited support for the liberal idea that the increasing cost of military conflict will work as a constraint.¹¹⁰ The reason for this is seen, in particular, when focusing on a shorter-term perspective. Indeed, in this regard, the constraining effects of EII on conflict escalation have been limited. This is, at least partially, due to the separation made between the economic and the political spheres on both sides as discussed above, but also due to the essence of the Taiwan issue, i.e. sovereignty. Economics simply has no major impact on the two sides' policies on the main issue. In the case of Beijing, despite its "economics first" policy, it is clear that when it comes to the ultimate issue of Taiwanese independence all interviewees agree that politics do override economics regardless of cost.¹¹¹ Also on the Taiwan side, the potential cost of conflict has had limited impact on policy. Indeed, despite a rapid growth of economic integration since the late 1980s, both President Lee and President Chen have taken an assertive stance towards the Mainland since the early 1990s. The limited impact of EII has also been suggested in previous research (Kastner 2005: 324-329).

When looking beyond short term conflict preventive effects, the peace impact of EII has been more substantial. Since economic cooperation has created economic growth and prosperity, both sides have become less inclined to move the relations into a military conflict. For Taipei, the gains from EII have given an incentive to not provoke a declaration of independence. Such a move from Taiwan would by necessity require a reaction from Beijing.¹¹² This would, in turn, risk undermining China's "economic first" policy and impact its economic development negatively.¹¹³ In short, EII can be understood as having created a buffer zone by giving an incentive for the two sides to avoid triggering an escalation of the conflict into a severe crisis, or military confrontation, both of which would have dire economic consequences. To quote a senior

¹⁰⁸ Interview with DPP member, Taipei, Taiwan, March 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with members of government think tanks and university scholars, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; members of DPP, KMT and People First Party, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

¹¹⁰ Interviews with scholars, policymakers and military officials, Beijing and Shanghai, China Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007; Taipei Mar - May 2007.

¹¹¹ Interviews with scholars, policymakers and military officials, Beijing and Shanghai, China Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007; Taipei Mar - May 2007.

¹¹² Interviews in China Jul 2006 - Jun 2007 (e.g. with members of government think tank, Beijing, Feb 2007; senior scholar, Shanghai, Feb 2007).

¹¹³ Even if the economic interdependence with Taiwan is asymmetrical, a Chinese military move towards Taiwan would risk undermining its economic relations to other states both in and outside the region.

expert on Mainland China – Taiwan relations at Taiwan's National Chenchi University, "[i]t can serve as a brake if the present situation worsen".¹¹⁴

EII is also important for peace since it has had spill over effects and has led to closer ties between the two sides within other spheres. These spill over effects are a direct result of economic integration, but they do also occur indirectly since the economic sphere is the driving force for soft regionalisation across the Strait. For example, by 2005 more than one million Taiwanese were living on the Mainland (Wang 2006: 111).¹¹⁵ Most of the Taiwanese live in the coastal provinces in the southeast of China, and a majority live in Shanghai. The presence of Taiwanese businesspeople has, in turn, led to the opening of schools with Taiwanese teachers, medical facilities with Taiwanese doctors, and so on.¹¹⁶ EII has also been an incentive and catalyst for different measures aiming to make cross-border interaction work smoother, such as the introduction of mini-links via Jinmen and Mazu, the negotiation of direct charter flights during the holiday season, and special direct cargo flights between Taiwan and the Mainland, only to mention a few examples of innovative measures that cater for the needs caused by EII. (See e.g. Cheng 2005: 104-116 (esp. pp. 111-12)).

In sum, as soon as the main issue of sovereignty is in focus, EII has worked as an underlying peacebuilding mechanism by developing positive relations and creating conditions for peace. Despite a stalemated conflict in regards to the main issue, other relations have been transformed. The economic cooperation also help keep up hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict on both sides of the Strait. On the Mainland, economic integration forms an important part of Beijing's strategy to tie Taiwan closer the Mainland and thereby facilitate for an eventual reunification.¹¹⁷ In Taiwan, the same economic integration is perceived as a way to open up and possibly transform Mainland China into a democracy, as will be analysed in section 3.3.2 below.

3.3.1 The role of business people

One spill over effect of economic integration and interdependence that is important for peace is the large number of Taiwanese businesspersons visiting and living on the Mainland. The businesspersons have a direct conflict preventive impact through their ability to influence the political leaders. This is the case given the intimate links between the private, academic and policy sectors in Taiwan. The senior policymakers in Taipei have close contacts to key Taiwanese businesspersons and consult them regularly.¹¹⁸ The businesspersons can also work as

¹¹⁴ Interview with senior expert on Mainland China - Taiwan relations, National Chenchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 30 April 2007.

¹¹⁵ The estimates on the number of Taiwanese on the mainland vary, see "The role of business people" below.

¹¹⁶ Informal discussion with European China expert, Stockholm, Sweden, October 2006. These developments have also been confirmed in interviews and informal discussions during field work in Mainland China Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, and Taiwan Apr - May 2007.

¹¹⁷ See the 1993 and 2000 White Papers on the Taiwan Issue ("The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China" (August 1993) and "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue" (2000). (available at the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council website,

http://www.gwytb.gov.cn:8088/detail.asp?table=WhitePaper&title=White%20Papers%20On%20Taiwan%20Issue&m_id=4 and

http://www.gwytb.gov.cn:8088/detail.asp?table=WhitePaper&title=White%20Papers%20On%20Taiwan%20Issue&m_id=4, accessed 15 September 2009). For a survey and analysis of the Taiwan policy 1979-2000 see Swain 2001.

¹¹⁸ Interview with senior government official, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007.

channels of information, and have been used as messengers between the Taiwan leadership and the Mainland (see "Back-channel negotiations and secret envoys" above).¹¹⁹

The business community generally emphasises the importance of maintaining good relations with the Mainland, i.e. it is a voice of moderation. For example, in the run up to the 2004 elections, numerous Taiwanese businesspeople in China were concerned about Chen's confrontational policy towards the Mainland and saw it as bad for their business. At the time, more than 1,000 business executives from Taiwanese factories on the Mainland, including the heads of 56 out of 76 Taiwanese business associations on the Mainland, held a banquet to show their support for the KMT (South China Morning Post 2004). The same year, after Chen Shui-bian was re-elected, the Taiwanese General Chamber of Commerce argued that Chen should strive for better relations with the Mainland (Huang 2004).

On the Mainland, the presence of an estimated 1-1.5 million Taiwanese businesspeople in China is also believed to be a stabilising factor.¹²⁰ At the same time, there is a cautious scepticism about the actual benefits of this. This is largely the result of an incident in connection to the 2004 presidential election when Taiwanese businesspersons, who had earned money on the Mainland, invested in Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence campaign.¹²¹ Since this incident, Taiwanese businesspersons are seen as a double-edged sword on the Mainland.¹²²

3.3.2 Creating conditions for a durable peace

The interviewees, both on the Mainland and on Taiwan, viewed the role and impact of EII more positively in a longer term perspective – i.e. its role for creating conditions for a durable peace across the strait - compared to its short term benefits. The main long term peace benefit was seen as coming from the development of a market economy on the Mainland. This benefit was acknowledged in interviews and discussions on both the Mainland and in Taiwan.¹²³ This development is seen as an important catalyst for the opening up and democratisation process on the Mainland, which is argued to be essential to the building of a long term stable peace, and therefore should be encouraged.¹²⁴ One senior official in Taipei expressed his belief in "promoting the free-market principle" as the best approach, arguing that

*"promoting a sound liberal life [on the mainland]. Then they can understand [Taiwan's] democracy. ... This is the better way to prevent any conflict. To develop modern civilisation and democratisation [also on the mainland]."*¹²⁵

The underlying argument is that with a free market, identities and interests will transform on the Mainland. A free market is seen as leading to shared values, norms and understandings on both sides of the strait, which in turn creates a shared identity and shared interests. This argument has

¹¹⁹ Interviews with former policymakers and other experts on cross-strait relations, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

¹²⁰ Interview with senior member of government think-tank, Shanghai, China, 15 Dec 2006.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Interviews with scholars within government think tanks and at universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Jul - Dec 2008.

¹²³ Interviews and discussions with scholars in Beijing and Shanghai during fieldwork Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; informal discussions, Beijing, 20-22 Feb 2008; interviews with scholars and policymakers, Taipei, Apr - May 2007.

¹²⁴ This point was, for example, made by a former senior official of the Mainland Affairs Council (Interview, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007).

¹²⁵ Interview with senior official, Taipei, Taiwan, 9 May 2007.

among the interviewees been often been explicitly founded in liberal theories. However, in principle it is not necessarily the market economy, or a possible democratisation, *per se* that is needed for peace, but rather a feeling of a shared identity and interests. Shared identity and interests help avoid the development of inside/outside dichotomies, and is an important part of building a durable peace. For example, the Mainland makes efforts to use "Chineseness" as the basis for a common identity and for the construction of common interests in a common peaceful future.¹²⁶

The most clear and deliberate use of EII as a peace project is found in Vincent C. Siew and the Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation (CSCMF). Siew's ideas are founded in liberalism, and he adheres to what is best understood as a (neo)functionalist thinking about economic integration and interdependence. Siew argues that

"Building on the progressive integration of their economies, the two sides can then turn to a step by step integration of politics, giving both sides of the Taiwan Strait the capability to make breakthroughs in solving mutual issues of concern while pursuing continued peaceful development. ... I hope [a common market across the Taiwan Strait] will serve as a good venue to development and security among both sides. The economic benefits will be good. Also peace stability and security is vital to both sides and to the whole region. We need a common interest/language. I think common market the best one."¹²⁷

In line with functionalism, the economic integration is also seen as a "sharing of sovereignty", where

"The future establishment of a "cross-strait common market" will reduce the areas where the One China dispute is relevant, thus lessening mutual political arguments. During the establishment of a "cross-strait common market," we can devise coalition mechanisms, via negotiation and cooperation, to manage specific aspects of mutual economic affairs. These interim arrangements will lead to the "sharing of sovereignty" in the agreed areas. Under this concept, therefore, the One China issue will be solved gradually as the jurisdiction of "A Greater China" is phased in." (Siew 2001)

The idea of economics as a bridge includes, what functionalists call, spill over effects, but does also include its role in keeping up hope and channels of communication. Nevertheless, certain scepticism was often shown. As one former senior official of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) pointed out, to use the economic sphere as a bridge for other areas of cross-strait relations is no simple task as "[n]ot even economic and commercial relations are without controversy. MAC has to be very sensitive how to handle the relations."¹²⁸ Whether the economic sphere is seen as a bridge or not tend to depend on the actor's own perspective on cross-strait relations and how the intentions of the other side is understood. In Taiwan, in general within the pan-blue side,

¹²⁶ Interview with director of NGO working on cross-strait exchange, Taipei, Taiwan, 9 May 2007.

¹²⁷ Interview with Vincent C. Siew, Taipei (蕭萬長), Taiwan, 8 May 2007. (Siew is the founder and director of CSCMF and the former premier of ROC. At the time of the interview, he had not yet been elected Vice President of ROC.)

¹²⁸ Interview with former senior official of the Mainland Affairs Council, Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2007.

there is a stronger belief in, and a greater openness towards the use of economics as a more unconditional bridge to other spheres.¹²⁹

When the questions focussed on tensions and conflicts not directly related to the sovereignty issue, the respondents expressed a stronger belief in the benefit of economics.¹³⁰ There was some support for the idea that EII has had a transformative effect on foreign policy, and thereby was a good instrument for building conditions for a long term peace.¹³¹ It was pointed out that economic interest bind the parties together, and, over time, can serve as a good venue for security and development across the strait.¹³² The importance of these observations should not be underestimated, as cross-strait relations concern much more than sovereignty, an issue that neither side perceive as resolvable within the near future.

3.4 Functional cooperation

The increased integration and interaction across the Strait has created a need for functional cooperation to manage functional and technical issues between the two sides. The interviewees have emphasised the importance of functional cooperation as a trust and confidence building mechanism, arguing that it has helped to build confidence and trust between Mainland China and Taiwan.¹³³ This has been important for moving cross-strait relations towards a more stable peace. Although the most hawkish interviewees failed to identify any benefit coming from it, they did nevertheless not regard it as something negative *per se*.¹³⁴

Functional cooperation has been institutionalised through the quasi-official Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF).¹³⁵ On the Mainland, its counterpart is the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits. The SEF has been the key entity for functional cooperation across the strait, as it is the only body entrusted to do such activities on behalf of the Taiwanese government. Its goal is "...to institutionalise the communications in the trade, cultural and economic exchange areas. ... smoothing our [i.e. Taiwan's] relations with Hong Kong and Macao, [and] maintaining good relations [with the Mainland]." ¹³⁶ The SEF has been important for smoothing relations across the

¹²⁹ Interviews, Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2007.

¹³⁰ The difference between Beijing and Shanghai is assessed to be a result of the closeness to, and dependency on, the central policy making bodies among the people interviewed in Beijing, as opposed to in Shanghai. The Taiwan issue is both emotional and sensitive, hence people are most cautious to make sure that they are not perceived as opposing the one-China principle. But with more in depth discussion about conflicts beyond the sovereignty issue, it was possible to discuss the benefit of economic integration regarding less sensitive areas.

¹³¹ Interviews with former senior policymakers, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007; senior researcher, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.

¹³² Interview with former senior policymaker, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007.

¹³³ Interviews with scholars within universities and government think tanks, Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; scholars and policymakers, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr - May 2007.

¹³⁴ Interview with strategic thinker close to DPP, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr 2007.

¹³⁵ The Straits Exchange Foundation was founded in 1991, sponsored by the government and by private donors. The underlying reason was that the Taiwanese government for the first time formally opened up to visits to the Mainland in November 1987 and since there were no official contacts, the body was formed to handle the problem stemming from cross-strait exchange. The SEF is able to negotiate and sign agreements with Mainland China. It can also, with approval from the Mainland Affairs Council, entrust public welfare entities to assist it. (Straits Exchange Foundation).

¹³⁶ Interview with former government official, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 May 2007.

strait in a range of issues. These include assisting mainland Chinese in trouble on Taiwan, e.g. people without valid travel documents or problems for Chinese spouses living on Taiwan.¹³⁷ In fact, the functional cooperation initiated and agreed upon between the SEF and the ARATS between 1991 and 1999 has been, if not a prerequisite, at least a strong catalyst for the integration across the Taiwan Strait. This applies to all spheres. For example, without the framework set up as a result of SEF – ARATS negotiations, there would have been more difficult and risky to do business across the Taiwan Strait, to conduct people-to-people exchange, or to be a tourist on the Mainland.

Functional cooperation is mainly seen by the interviewees in Taiwan and Mainland China as positive for peace in the long term perspective. This perspective is not limited solely to the pan-blue side, but can also be found among at least some DPP government officials. For example, one senior official in the DPP government sees functional cooperation as being positive for peace as

"...[i]t sets up framework for exchange and this is something we can move on from. We continue to propose cooperation with the overarching purpose of building confidence and face. The goal is to move towards a permanent peace. Functional issues should be the first step."¹³⁸

Also Beijing takes a positive approach to functional cooperation, emphasising the smoothening of relations also after its unilateral termination of formal negotiations and dialogue in 1999.¹³⁹

There is a consensus among the interviewees about the limits of functional cooperation. Both the Chinese and the Taiwanese are cautious, but nevertheless optimistic when discussing its long term impact.¹⁴⁰ Functional cooperation is not seen as short term "Confidence Building Measures, it is in the longer term where there will maybe be an effect. In 5-10 years it will have no impact."¹⁴¹ One obstacle for functional cooperation to impact peace is the lack of spill over into the political sphere, contrary to the prediction of functionalist theories. Some of the pan-blue people believe that this might change in the long term, but this is, however, equated with a free and democratic China (see "Creating conditions for a durable peace" above).¹⁴²

Nevertheless, a number of short term benefits have been identified. From the collected empirical material, it is clear that functional cooperation has helped facilitate day-to-day interaction across the Taiwan Strait. This was also acknowledged by both the MAC and the SEF during interviews in 2007.¹⁴³ Functional cooperation also plays a part in the defusing of tension and the resolution

¹³⁷ The SEF has provided judicial and administrative assistance (43903 cases between March 1991 - September 2006), joint crime fighting, personal safety for Taiwanese business people in China (933 cases between 1991 - Sept 2006), assistance in major trade disputes (1670 cases between 1991 - Sept 2006), assistance in major cross-strait travel accidents (23 cases between 1991 - Sept 2006). (Straits Exchange Foundation: 17-18, and interviews with senior officials at SEF and MAC, Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2007).

¹³⁸ Interview with senior official, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007.

¹³⁹ See "Spokesperson's remarks at the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council's webpage for an in depth overview of China's view on cross-strait functional cooperation 2001 - 2008, <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/>, accessed 10 May 2008.

¹⁴⁰ Interviews with scholars in China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; scholars and policy makers in Taiwan, Apr - May 2007. This pattern has also been observed at different track two workshops and during informal discussions with a number of current and former European policymakers.

¹⁴¹ Interview with senior expert active in cross-strait exchange, Taipei, Taiwan, 30 April 2007.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Interviews with MAC and SEF officials, Taipei, Taiwan, May 2007.

of problems before they risk escalating. Without functional mechanisms, tensions such as trade conflicts, disputes over fishing rights, repatriation of fishermen and illegal immigrants may well escalate, as there are no channels for official negotiations across the strait. Still, the form of spill over predicted by (neo)functionalism has been limited or absent. In fact, functional cooperation, in this case, is created by a necessity to handle the reality of cross-strait integration, rather than as a deliberate way to progress integration.

Functional cooperation has an indirect benefit through keeping channels of communications open. It also creates routines for cooperation and communication. The SEF and the ARATS also offer a framework for quasi-official cross-strait dialogues that can be utilised as a conflict prevention mechanism when needed. The quasi-official status of the SEF makes it a flexible organisation that can be used for negotiating all forms of issues. If needed the SEF – ARATS can also be used for negotiations on politically and military sensitive issues, in which case they can be used as an umbrella. This possibility was used, for example, in spring 2008 when official contacts were restarted.

In conclusion, functional cooperation contributed to an underlying peacebuilding process in 1990-2008. Its key contribution was as a confidence and trust building process. It was most beneficial until 1999, when China unilaterally stopped all official communication. Until 1999, there were open diplomatic channels and, through these, a range of agreements important for the overall positive development of cross-strait interaction could be negotiated. Also after 1999, the quasi-official functional cooperation and negotiations have been beneficial for peace. The counterfactual scenario, not engaging, would possibly have had devastating consequences. The Strait Exchange Foundation has worked as a *de facto* government-to-government channel of communication for different issues and this way kept smaller tensions and issues under control. The cooperation has also forced officials to engage, which has created understanding and a routine of cooperation. (Also see the case of North Korean participation in the KEDO framework in chapter 5 (section 5.7.2).) The creation of bodies for functional cooperation has also facilitated inter-personal interaction and socialisation, and created personal networks between bureaucrats and policy makers on the two sides (see above).

Functional cooperation has been important, in particular, for developing positive relations. Despite not driving the process, it has been a catalyst for the extensive cooperation in most cross-strait areas and has been an important component of economic growth and development across, and on both sides of, the Taiwan Strait. Functional cooperation has been beneficial for travel and communication within the system and for the web of economic interdependence, two factors that Boulding highlights as important for developing a stable peace (Boulding 1978).

3.5 The U.S. factor

3.5.1 The U.S. policy in the Taiwan Strait

Since the normalisation of U.S. – China relations in 1979, the U.S. Taiwan policy has been based on three official communiqués signed between the U.S. and China in 1972, 1979, and 1982, and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) adopted by the U.S. congress in April 1979. In the 1972

Shanghai Communiqué, the U.S. maintains that there is only "one China" and that it is in U.S. interest that the two sides resolve the Taiwan question peacefully.¹⁴⁴ The U.S. recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1979 was made on the premise that Beijing would use a peaceful approach to resolve the issue of Taiwan's status. The U.S. also stated that it was to maintain "cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations" with Taiwan.¹⁴⁵ Three years later, in 1982, the U.S. reiterated its "one-China" position. The 1982 communiqué between the U.S. and China went further than the 1979 communiqué, stating that the U.S. "...has no intention of infringing on Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, or interfering in China's internal affairs, or pursuing a policy of 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan.'"¹⁴⁶ Before the communiqué was signed on August 17, President Reagan sent a message to the ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo that the decision to sign the coming communiqué was "...based on a PRC decision only to use peaceful means to resolve the Taiwan issue. ... If there is any change with regard to their commitment to peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue, the U.S. commitments would become invalidated." (Kan 2007: 42)

Overall, the U.S. congress took a more explicit stand on the U.S. – Taiwan military relations than the administration. It was also the congress that passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in April 1979.¹⁴⁷ The act stipulates that the U.S. would regard any military action, boycott or embargo towards Taiwan as a threat to peace in the Western Pacific and therefore a grave U.S. concern.

The U.S. policy towards Taiwan has, since 1979, been characterized by ambiguity. It has for example been difficult to identify a common view among U.S. officials on whether the U.S. position meant that Taiwan legally and/or politically is a part of China. The U.S. "strategic ambiguity" also implies that it is unclear how strong the U.S. commitment really is to protect Taiwan in case of a Chinese attack (Kan 2007). However, after China's use of military pressure in 1995, as a consequence of President Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell University, the U.S. felt forced to take action. After the PLA launched its first missile towards Taiwan in July 1995, U.S. President Bill Clinton wrote to President Jiang Zemin and assured that Washington 1) would oppose Taiwan independence; 2) would not support "two Chinas", or "one China and one Taiwan", and 3) would not support Taiwan's admission to the U.N. (Garver 1997; Mann 1999). He also deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Taiwan vicinity (On the 1995-1996 crisis see Zhao 1999). This indicated a strong commitment and sent a signal to China that the U.S. disapproved of PLA's actions and was willing to protect Taiwan in accordance with its Taiwan Relations Act. After these incidents, the U.S. held unofficial track two meetings with China. Track two meetings have since then been held annually and are perceived as fruitful.¹⁴⁸

144 *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, February 28, 1972. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>, accessed 1 June 2008.

145 *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, January 1, 1979. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>, accessed 1 June 2008.

146 Article 5, *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, August 17, 1982. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>, accessed 1 June 2008.

147 *The Taiwan Relations Act*, Public Law 96-8 96th Congress. Available at <http://usinfo.state.gov>, accessed 1 June 2008.

148 Speech by Former Secretary of State, William J. Perry, School of International Studies, Peking University, Beijing, China, 17 Sep 2006.

During the Bush Administration, the U.S. Taiwan policy went through major changes. President Bush altered Clinton's "strategic ambiguity" regarding the U.S. commitment to the defence of Taiwan. On April 27 2001, he stated that his Administration "would do whatever it takes" to help Taiwan defend itself.¹⁴⁹ This statement, in combination with a number of other policies concerning arms sales, transit visits, and strong emphasis on the TRA, created space for Chen Shui-bian to move towards independence and step up his provocations towards China.

From 2001 to 2006, the Bush Administration also changed the U.S. approach to private and unofficial transit visits from Taiwanese leaders. Bush did not move away from the three joint communiqués or the "one China" policy, nor did he support Taiwanese independence. But there was a qualitative change. Bush, for example, emphasised that any change in the political status must happen with the support of the Taiwanese people and that peaceful means was a prerequisite for the "one China" policy. In 2001, he approved the largest arms sale since 1992 when the first Bush Administration sold, among others, 150 F-16A/B fighters (Kan 2008: 7, 49-56). There was also an increased willingness to issue transit visas for President Chen who visited the U.S. annually, with the exception of 2002.¹⁵⁰ Bush also took actions indicating a willingness to help Taiwan increase its international space, for example by agreeing that the administration should "find opportunities for Taiwan's voice to be heard in organizations in order to make a contribution, even if membership is impossible,"¹⁵¹.

As a consequence of the run up to the 2004 elections in Taiwan, in particular the fear of the proposed referendum, the U.S. altered its policy. Chen refused to give in despite pressure from the U.S. *de-facto* ambassador in Taiwan, and personal appeals from President Bush, not to provoke China. As a result, Taiwan was seen as abusing U.S. friendship, and Bush reengaged China to balance the situation.

"U.S. has important stakes in Taiwan, including defending democracy and the credibility of U.S. security commitments in the region. However, these stakes do not outweigh Washington's economic and security interests in China. The Bush administration cannot afford an improvement in U.S. relations with Taiwan to adversely affect U.S. relations with the PRC, particularly in light of the change after 9-11 when Beijing's role in the war on terrorism and in resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis has become prominent." (Zhao 2005: 30-31)

After his re-election, Chen continued to pursue his provocative policies. This in combination with the Chinese anti-secession law resulted in developments towards a situation where there were an apparent risk for war. To counter such a contingency, in 2005 - 2006, the U.S. continued to increase its pressure on Taiwan. The U.S. transit visa policy was made stricter. The U.S. started to put pressure on Chen to tone down his independence rhetoric and actions. For example,

¹⁴⁹ This new position was driven both by Bush's view on the PRC. Whereas Clinton had sought a strategic partnership with China, Bush saw China as a "strategic competitor" and potential future challenge to US interests in the Asia-Pacific. (Zhao 2005)

¹⁵⁰ In 2001, Chen made two stopovers in New York (May 21-23) and Houston (June 2-3), in 2003 he stopped in New York (Oct 31 - Nov 2) and Anchorage (Nov 4 - 5). In 2004, he made two extended stopovers, in August - September in Honolulu and Seattle, and in 2005 he visited Guam and Miami. (Kan 2007: 15) The administration also took a more open position regarding the kinds of meetings Chen was allowed during his stops. During his stop in August 2000, when Clinton was still president, the understanding was that he was not to attend public events, while in later years, he was even allowed to meet with members of congress.

¹⁵¹ Letter to Senator Frank Murkowski, May 11 2001 (quoted in Kan 2007: 16).

President Bush, in June 2005, indicated that Taiwan could not count on U.S. support in case of a unilateral declaration of independence:

"If China were to invade unilaterally, we would rise up in the spirit of the Taiwan Relations Act. If Taiwan were to declare independence unilaterally, it would be a unilateral decision, that would then change the U.S. equation, the U.S. look at what the ... the decision-making process. My attitude is, that time will heal this issue. And therefore we're trying to make sure that neither side provokes the other through unilateral action."¹⁵²

The same pattern can be seen in different state department comments concerning the status of Taiwan and its aspiration to gain membership in the U.N.

In fact, from 2005 onwards, the U.S. has worked as a *de facto* intermediate and channel between Beijing and Taipei through what one of the interviewees referred to as a "strange trilateral relation".¹⁵³ To quote a former Taiwanese policy maker,

"Since 2005 there has been a strange trilateral relation between Washington, Beijing, and Taipei. Every time Taiwan causes trouble, the pressure comes from the U.S., not Beijing. Starting in 2005, the State Department will react stronger than Beijing. When I was in Xiamen last month, I asked why so? They said there might be some agreement between Beijing and the U.S. ... If U.S. can control Chen Shui-bian, there will be no problem."¹⁵⁴

This is, according to the interviewees, founded on Beijing agreement to keep a low profile and not provoke Taiwan or change its Taiwan policy.¹⁵⁵ In return, the U.S. will put pressure on Taipei. The reason for letting Washington pressure Taipei, is that it is perceived as less dangerous and more effective.¹⁵⁶ It is difficult to assess the impact of these trilateral relations. They seem to have had little impact on the DPP government's policy. Beijing has, on the other hand, kept a low profile towards Taiwan, at least seen in light of how close Chen Shui-bian got to a declaration of independence. Without the U.S., Beijing's would most certainly have felt obliged to react more strongly. In turn, this would have risked a counter reaction from Taipei. Moreover, without the U.S., Beijing would have had fewer ways to pressure Taipei, which most likely have would have forced a more hawkish stance from Beijing. At a minimum, this scenario would have worsen relations, and perhaps even provoked a new crisis similar to the one in 1995-1996, during which Beijing tried to threaten Taiwan to not declare independence.

3.5.2 The U.S. role for peace

One problem of determining the role of the U.S. is the difficulty of assessing the counterfactual scenario, i.e. whether there would have been an escalation into war if the U.S. had not been present. There are two key reasons for this: the Chinese leadership's economic policy focus; and

¹⁵² George W. Bush, Interview with Fox News, June 8, 2005, in Kan 2007: 82.

¹⁵³ *De facto* mediator does not equal a "mediator". As argued by, among others, Chong-Hai Shaw, the US is not interested in becoming a mediator, neither at present nor in the future (Shaw 2004. Also see Bush 2005b).

¹⁵⁴ Interview with former congress representative and expert on cross-strait and Sino-US relations, Taipei, Taiwan, Apr 2007. The same point was made by a number of other scholars and former policymakers interviewed in Taipei, Taiwan, 25 & 30 Apr, 3 May 2007.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Interviews with strategic thinkers at universities and within government think tanks, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; scholars and former policymakers, Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007.

that China, until recently, simply lacked the capacity to overtake Taiwan militarily. The latter issue has been debated by military strategist, and emphasised by realist scholars (See for example Lin 1997; Nathan and Ross 1997; O'Hanlon 2000; O'Hanlon 2002: ch. 6; Watson 2003). They argue that, as late as during the 1995-1996 crisis, it was questionable whether the PLA had the capacity to invade Taiwan (Lijun 2001: ch. 6). Clearly, however, China had the ability to conduct military operations short of war, which would have had disastrous effects, but this was the case already in the 1990s (Anderson 1999). Since then, China has modernised its military, but it is still questionable whether the PLA has the capacity to conduct a successful full-scale invasion of Taiwan (Globalsecurity.org 2008).

However, the question of military capability needs to be understood in the context of China's economic policy focus and success. Since the mid-1980s, China's top policy priority has been economic modernisation and development. Economic development is also the key factor for regime survival for the CCP. It is unlikely that the Chinese leadership would have been willing to sacrifice China's economic development over anything less than Taiwanese independence. Chinese leaders have always had a long term view on reunification, with the exception of Jiang Zemin and the third generation of leaders who wanted to achieve reunification under their time in power (Wright 2001: 196-97). For example, in the early 1980s Deng Xiaoping said that reunification will happen, but that the Chinese people are patient and can wait 100 years.

In addition, the so called "Olympic factor" came into play a couple of years before the games in August 2008. This was a time when relations across the Strait were tense. China had put much prestige into the Olympics, which was seen as a confirmation of China's role in the international community. The Chinese were therefore most unwilling to take any actions that would have jeopardised a successful Olympic.¹⁵⁷ This worked as a conflict prevention mechanism by creating an incentive for Beijing to find peaceful resolutions to the tensions across the Strait. This said, it should be noted, as is done by the Chinese interviewees, that the Olympics would not have stopped military action if Taiwan indeed would have declared independence.¹⁵⁸

In conclusion, the U.S. has helped prevent war across the Taiwan Strait by working as a stabilising factor and crisis management mechanism in cross-strait relations. With the exception of the 2001-2004, the U.S. has contributed to increased stability in the Taiwan Strait. The U.S. policy, especially its strategic ambiguity until 2001, has worked as a strong incentive for Taiwan not to provoke the Mainland beyond a certain point. That is, to not make a formal declaration of independence. That such a declaration would trigger Beijing to take action is well known, and was made even more explicit through the 2005 anti-secession law. For Beijing, the U.S. involvement has created a certain feeling of security, as it knows that Taipei most likely will stop short of declaring independence as a result of U.S. pressure. This is the case, not least as the U.S. has no interest in getting involved in a military conflict with China.

In theoretical terms, the U.S. has created an informal structure that defines the meaning of the undisputed military superiority of the U.S. in the context of the Taiwan issue. Similar to ideational and normative structures, the realm of possibility is defined by an implicit framework,

¹⁵⁷ Interviews with strategic thinkers at universities and within government think tanks, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with senior member of government think tank, Beijing, China, Feb 2007. This view was also confirmed in interviews with strategic thinkers in Taipei, Taiwan, 25 & 30 Apr 2007.

which defines acceptable behaviour for both Beijing and Taipei. There are constraints, for example that a declaration of independence, or military action towards Taiwan, clearly is not acceptable. There are suitable ways of communication, although they have not always been utilised. These include avoiding provocation and explicit threats of military action, as well as threats or actual moves towards independence.

Despite its importance for preventing crises from escalating into violence, the overall U.S. role for peace should not be overestimated. There are doubts about the U.S. policy goals, and according to some analysts it is clear that the U.S. has little, if any, interest in getting involved in either conflict resolution or long term peacebuilding efforts in the Taiwan Strait, or the rest of East Asia.¹⁵⁹ Washington does not regard long term commitment, or regional conflict resolution as a U.S. policy priority.¹⁶⁰ As argued by one East Asian expert

"The U.S. is only interested in preserving status quo; keeping the peace, only to keep the lid on. This is the history of the U.S., especially since in the post Cold War period. They do not do anything to reduce the underlying issues. The U.S. is not interested in peacebuilding, only conflict prevention. ... The U.S. does not want to undermine the East Asian security architecture (bilateral alliances with some security dialogues added). They are reluctant to get involved. In the Taiwan case, they do not want to be involved."¹⁶¹

It is also clear that Washington's perceived interests, in regard to Mainland China and Taiwan, change over time. Specifically, the U.S. has changed its emphasis to good relations with Mainland China, and has thereby come to loosen its ties to Taiwan. Over time, good relations with China have been reinterpreted as a U.S. national interest (On U.S. policy towards China see e.g. Finn 2007; Johnston and Ross 1999: ch. 3; Lijun 2001).

3.6 Conclusions

Mainland China – Taiwan relations and the Taiwan issue have two sides. In regards to political relations, there is an ongoing, and rather intense, conflict. On the other hand, the cooperation and integration across the Taiwan Strait has proliferated at an unexpected speed and scope given the conflictual relationship between the two actors. The main issue, which concerns Taiwan's legal status, was stalemated at a crisis level from the Chinese unilateral termination of talks across the Strait in 1999, until after the 2008 presidential election. The level of hostility has been high with explicit threats of military actions from Beijing. There were no intergovernmental communication and agreements, with the exception of a certain level of semi-official agreements on certain functional issues. At the same time as the above aspects deteriorated during Chen Shui-bian's time in office (2000-2008), other, positive relations, have moved in the opposite direction, namely towards a stable peace. In short, some aspects of cross-strait relations have been what is best described as peaceful (with the economic relations standing out), whereas the diplomatic situation concurrently has been in a crisis mode. Cooperation in all areas, but official relations, did grow tremendously throughout the period, regardless of political relations and the official policy that came from Taipei. Indeed, when observing only these areas, the situation resembles a

¹⁵⁹ Interview with East Asian security expert, United Kingdom, 18 Jan 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

stable peace rather than a crisis or unstable peace. The interaction in these areas alone gives an impression of, at least from the Taiwanese side, a relationship where war *will* not happen, rather than *does* not happen. In addition, the public perception of security on Taiwan is more positive than could be expected, which points to a relationship regarded as unstable peace rather than crisis.¹⁶²

When analysing the reasons behind the relative peace in the Taiwan Strait, a number of important processes have been identified. These processes have been categorised into five types: 1. elite interaction; 2. back-channel negotiations and secret envoys; 3. economic integration and interdependence; 4. functional cooperation; and 5. the U.S. factor. Firstly, different forms elite interactions have been important for peace across the Taiwan Strait. Elite interactions have been providing mechanisms for both short term conflict prevention and longer term peacebuilding. Moreover, they have been essential for increasing understanding and building relationships, confidence, and trust between the two sides. This has enhanced the ability to cooperate, avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations. It has also increased the possibility to find settings for more informal discussions which are needed to facilitate policy innovations. Elite interactions have been important for keeping unofficial channels of communications open across the strait, as there have been none or limited official communications. The personal networks have been of particular importance as a frame for pre- and back-channel negotiations, thereby utilising the trust, confidence, and relatively high levels of understanding imbedded in these networks. Elite interactions have also been important for long term peacebuilding, as they have played, and play, a central role in altering social and cultural identities, and the perceived interests of the participants. They furthermore alter perceptions, understanding, and respect of the other sides, and create hope in, and commitment to, a peaceful future for all involved parties. The idea of a joint peace project is central, as the question of Taiwan's status is accepted as a long term issue. The level of hope and belief in long term peace in Beijing has, in turn, a direct impact on its short term policy towards Taiwan: if there is hope, there is less need for threats and displays of power. The elite interactions have also been important for strengthening the voice of moderation on both sides. Moreover, they have contributed to making cooperation in the economic and other spheres work more smoothly. In addition, they work to ensure that the tension across the strait does not escalate into military confrontation due to miscalculations or other unintentional actions. Taken together, these are all important aspects of longer-term peacebuilding.

Closely linked to, and largely a result of, elite interactions are back-channel negotiations and the use of secret envoys, which have been important for successful conflict prevention. These forms of communications and negotiations have, due to the lack of official negotiations and the sensitivity of cross-strait relations, been a central platform for successful negotiations and for the ability to prevent military confrontations in the Taiwan Strait.

The economic integration and interdependence across the Taiwan Strait has been fundamental for the development of positive relations, i.e. it has been important for peacebuilding in the sense that

¹⁶² In a survey conducted by the Election Study Centre of the National Chenchi University in 2004, when tensions were high, only 11% considered a war within three years likely, while 64% thought it would not happen. There is still an awareness of the risk of war in case Taiwan passes Beijing's critical line. In a scenario where Taiwan declared independence, 58% considered war a likely scenario (28% definitely, 30% possibly), while 21% still considered it unlikely (9% definitely not, 20% probably not). (Chu and Yang 2004)

it is building conditions conducive for long term peace. Not least has it been a driving force for the development of positive cross-strait links in general, and by creating a need and incentive for quasi-official negotiations and functional cooperation. EII has also been vital for cooperation and important for the upholding of a feeling of perceived security also during times of high tension. It has worked as an incentive for avoiding war, thereby creating a buffer zone between crisis and war. Through EII, a certain number of informal channels of communication between the two governments have been upheld, and it has also worked as a catalyst for elite interactions. EII has been a peacebuilding force in that it has fostered a shared identity based on free trade/market principles across the strait. Even so, its importance for the 1990-2008 peace is inconclusive. At a minimum, a feeling of shared interests in economic cooperation has developed. Clearly, the economic sphere offers a venue for actively working for a peaceful future, despite existing tensions and "political chill". It has also helped strengthen the voice of moderation within the business community and the general public. Its most significant contribution to peace is perhaps that it has worked as an underlying peacebuilding process, which, despite the stalemated political conflict, has managed to transform other relations. It also keeps up hope for a future resolution of the conflict. Considering how EII has developed, if Johan Galtung is correct that "the most promising way to reduce negative relations to a minimum is via an increase of positive relations" (1967: 14), it should be the way towards a durable peace in the Taiwan Strait.

The fourth process, functional cooperation, has contributed to peace as a confidence and trust building process, and as a catalyst for the extensive interactions across the strait. Finally, the U.S. has played an important role for crisis management and short term conflict prevention by preventing the level of hostility from escalating into war at times of crisis. The U.S. has worked as a stabilising force, except between 2001-2004, by creating a framework for acceptable behaviour for Beijing and Taipei. In addition, at times of need, it has acted as a channel of communication and *de facto* intermediate between Beijing and Taipei, in particular after 2005. The U.S. has also enhanced the Taiwanese feeling of security.

4 The South China Sea and Sino-ASEAN relations

The South China Sea (SCS) has been a successful case of conflict prevention since the early 1990s. Although the underlying incompatibilities have not been resolved, the conflict has nevertheless been mitigated and the parties have agreed to find a peaceful resolution to their disagreements. This chapter analyses the factors that have prevented the conflict in the SCS from escalating into war and discusses why it has moved towards a durable peace, as illustrated by the consensus among the conflicting parties to resolve the conflict peacefully. In this context, the SCS dispute should be understood as part of the overall peacebuilding process between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has taken place over the past two decades. Indeed, as one senior member of a Chinese government think tank stated, "the South China Sea is [part of the] larger China-ASEAN treaties and joint cooperation with ASEAN."¹ In Sino-ASEAN relations, the SCS flashpoint is the most likely dispute to escalate into a military confrontation or generally undermine otherwise positive developments.²

After discussing the importance of the SCS conflict, this chapter looks at the broader context of Sino-ASEAN relations of which the SCS is a manifestation. The chapter focuses on a number of processes that, according to the collected empirical data, have been of importance not only for preventing conflict escalation in the South China Sea, but also for the progression towards peace in Sino-ASEAN relations more generally. Two interlinked process categories – elite interactions and Sino-ASEAN/East Asian regionalisation - have been identified as of key importance, and will be the focus of this chapter. Two forms of elite interaction are particularly important: track two diplomacy and personal networks among regional leaders and elites. Finally, the role of the U.S. will be analysed.

The first section introduces the conflicting issues and their background. The following two sections discuss the role of elite interactions and regionalisation. Firstly, the South China Sea informal "Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea" is analysed. Secondly, the study analyses the importance of personal networks among the regional leaderships and elites. Thirdly, the analysis looks at the importance of track two diplomacy, which has proliferated in East Asia since the 1990s. The fourth section analyses the role of regionalisation. This section, in turn, is divided into three parts: the importance of the overarching Sino-ASEAN *rapprochement*; the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the increased level of institutionalisation of international relations in East Asia in general, and more specifically between China and the ASEAN; and the importance of economic integration and interdependence

¹ Interview with senior member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 December 2008.

² The term ASEAN refers both to the organisation as a collective and to its member states, depending on context.

(EII). Finally, section five discusses the role of the United States in the above mentioned developments.

4.1 The South China Sea³

The South China Sea stretches roughly from Singapore and the Strait of Malacca in the southwest to the Taiwan Strait in the northeast. The area includes more than 200 small islets, rocks and reefs, many which are partially submerged. The major islet grouping, and core area of conflict, is the Spratly and Paracel Islands. The Spratly Islands lie within a nearly 410 000 sq km large area and consist of more than 100 small islets and reefs, which in turn encompass less than 3 sq km. Of these, about 45 are occupied by small military forces from China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam (Central Intelligence Agency 2007: 583). The Paracel Islands covers a much smaller area and consist of some 31 small islands. Despite their geographical tininess, these two groups of dispersed islets have become a regional hotspot and the focal point for territorial disputes between China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines.⁴

The South China Sea's geographical and geostrategic position creates a security dilemma for virtually all powers in East Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, the existing dilemma was further exaggerated by the scaling down of the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s, at a time when China was emerging as the most likely dominant power in the region. Taken together, this has made the SCS a key flashpoint and a stumbling block in the East Asian region in general, and in Sino-ASEAN relations in particular. It is also the key point of disagreement among the Southeast Asian states (On intra-ASEAN disagreements concerning the SCS see Mak 2008; Odgaard 2003: 13-19; To 1995).

As the conflicting claims concern territorial sovereignty, the SCS has important internal dimensions in the form of invested national prestige and identity (cf. Taiwan case (ch. 3, footnote 1)) The territorial claims are closely linked to securing ownership of natural resources in the area (See for example Amer 1999; Ba 1994; Blanch and Blanch 1995; Buszynski and Sazlan 2007; Salameh 1995; Senese 2005; Valencia 1997). However, it is still unclear whether the oil and gas resources exist, and, if so, how large they are.⁵ The South China Sea also ranks as one of the richest fishing grounds in the world, and since the contesting states are among the most fish consuming countries in the world, fishing rights are given a premium value. Furthermore, access

³ This is merely a brief summary of a complex conflict. For a more complete understanding, see for example Buszynski and Sazlan 2007; Catley and Keliat 1997; Kivimäki 2002b; Lee 1999; Mingjiang 2008; Odgaard 2003; To 1995; Tønnesson 2002; Valencia 1995.

⁴ Brunei has established exclusive fishing right around Louisa Reef in the Spratlys, but has not publicly claimed the territory. Indonesia is a claimant in other areas of the South China Sea, which makes it indirectly involved in the Spratly Island disputes since developments in this conflict do set precedence which will apply to Indonesia as well.

⁵ The estimates of the oil reserve in the SCS region vary. Since areas surrounding the Spratlys are rich in oil deposits, it has led to speculations that the sea bed below the Spratly Islands could contain vast oil resources. However, there have been no explorative drilling, and as of January 2008 there were no proven resources in the Spratlys or the Paracels. Indeed, besides estimated data from the Chinese side, there is little proof to support the claim. The U.S. Geological Survey's estimates indicate that about 60 to 70 percent of the region's hydrocarbon resources are not oil, but natural gas but the estimates of size vary widely. As of 2008, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei were undertaking production of oil or natural gas in the South China Sea. (Energy Information Administration (US) 2008)

to fishing waters becomes an important means to meet the expected increase in food demand in, especially, China where fish likely will become more important in the future given China's current combination of low fish consumption and scarcity of agricultural land (Catley and Keliat 1997: 44-65).

The Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) are important and have both regional- and geo-strategically implications. The SCS is the world's second busiest sea-lane and over half of the world's merchant fleet (by tonnage) sails through the region every year, including more than half of the world's super tanker traffic (GlobalSecurity.org 2009). Hence, interrupted or endangered SLOCs would be devastating not only for the economy of the regional trading states, but could possibly even undermine their very existence given their dependence on imported oil. (China has been a net importer of crude oil since 1993, most of which comes through the Strait of Malacca and the SCS.) The SLOC are also important for the self-image of the U.S., as it has invested a lot of prestige and *de facto* committed itself to the protection of the principle of free navigation in the region.

Ownership of the SCS is contested with overlapping claims by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei (See Table 3. For a detailed review of the claims see Buszynski and Sazlan 2007: 144-51.) Most of the claims are based on historical rights, or on the internationally accepted principles in the 1982 "UN Convention of the Law of the Sea" (UNCLOS). The latter gives coastal states sovereign rights within a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and/or in accordance with their continental shelf principle (On the legal discussion see for example Chemillier-Gendreau 2000; Furtado 1999; Gjetnes 2001; Park 1975, 1987; Valero 1994; Zou 2001). The U.S. has not recognized any of the parties' claims.

Table 3: Claims made in the South China Sea

State	South China Sea	Spratly Islands	Paracel Islands
China	All*	The entire archipelago, based on historical rights.	All
Taiwan	All*	The entire archipelago, based on historical rights.	All
Vietnam	All*	The entire archipelago, based on historical rights.	All
Malaysia	UNCLOS	Several islands west of Borneo, based on its exclusive economic zone in accordance with the law of the sea.	No
The Philippines	Significant portions	A concentration of islands in the western part of the archipelago, based on explorations made in the mid-1950s.	No
Indonesia	UNCLOS	None	No
Brunei	UNCLOS	Not an official claimant but claims the exclusive economic right of Louisa Reef, based on the law of the sea.	No
	* Excluding buffer zone along littoral states (calculations for buffer unknown)		

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Country Analysis Brief, South China Sea, March 2008 (http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/South_China_Sea/pdf.pdf, last accessed April 2008)

There is a lack of consensus among the parties regarding the historical aspects of the conflict. Indeed, the different claimants refer to their own historical doctrines as a justification for their own claims.

4.1.1 Historical background

The discovery of the archipelago in the SCS dates back to ancient times.⁶ The islands in the SCS are mentioned in accounts of journeys and in maps, as well as in old Chinese texts. Nevertheless, they were not possessed by any state or occupied in any form that had legal ramifications. In the early 18th century, the rulers of Annam in northern Vietnam started to show an interest in the archipelago. In 1816, Emperor Gia Long confirmed Annam's sovereignty over the archipelago by posting a flag and taking formal possession of the archipelago (Taberd 1837: 738 cited in Prescott 1978: 100). In the following decades, Annam erected markers and undertook other works on the islands (Prescott 1978: 100-01).

In the late 19th century, France established its domination over Indochina. In 1887 it claimed the Spratly and Paracel Islands on behalf of its then colony Vietnam. This claim was reasserted in 1933, and between 1933 and 1939 France controlled the islands. The French domination was interrupted by the occupation of parts of the islands by Japanese forces during the Second World War. After the war, the colonial *status quo* was challenged. Firstly, by the Taipei government and the Philippines, thereafter by the new Communist leadership in Beijing who made its own demands on the archipelago in 1951 as the Japanese peace treaty was being drafted. Vietnam also made claims to the archipelago. The peace treaty, which formally ended the Second World War, was signed on September 8 at the San Francisco conference, and made Japan renounce all rights, entitlements and claims to the Spratly and Paracel Islands. The treaty's failure to determine the authority over the different archipelagos in the SCS resulted in what Valero calls a "legal and political vacuum" (Valero 1994: 333). Consequently, with the French withdrawal in April 1956, the interested parties started to pursue their claims. When the French Expeditionary Forces withdrew from the Pattle Island in the western part of the Paracels, they were replaced by forces from South Vietnam. At the same time, the Chinese discretely occupied the eastern parts of the Paracel archipelago. The same year, Taiwan dispatched a garrison to Itu Aba, the largest of the Spratly islands, and Philippine nationals visited the Spratlys in their private capacity claiming discovery and occupation. The Philippine claim to the Spratlys, founded in geographic proximity, was later reiterated by the Manila government. This pattern of claims and counter claims continued the coming years, although direct confrontations were avoided (For a chronology see Chemillier-Gendreau 2000: 42-45). In the early 1970s this, however, was to change.

In 1974, China forcefully seized the Crescent group of the Paracel islands, hitherto occupied by Vietnam. There were violent clashes between Chinese and Vietnamese forces, causing the death of 70 Vietnamese sailors. However, China had yet to establish a foothold in the Spratlys itself. This did not happen until 1988 when China, for the first time, sent troops to the Spratlys, to secure control over six islands after a brief naval clash with Vietnam over the Johnson Reef. In the late 1960s, the Philippines took control over three islands and it extended its claims in 1978 with the Lankian Cay in the Spratlys. Malaysia started major building works on the Island of Hoa Lau in the Spratlys in 1983, despite strong Vietnamese protests.

⁶ The historical background until 1992 draws on Chemillier-Gendreau 2000: 34-47.

4.1.1.1 Asia's next flash point (1990-1995)

The early-1990s was a critical time in the SCS. During the 1978-1991 Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, China and the then ASEAN states shared an interest to isolate Vietnam, and the claims in the SCS was not prioritised. (For an overview of the SCS conflict in Sino-Southeast Asian relations 1990-2002 see Emmers 2008: 5-12.) As this conflict came to an end by the signing of the 1991 Paris Accords, this changed. Moreover, there was a common assumption among analysts that China would behave aggressively. At this point in time, the Spratly area was characterised as "Asia's next flash point" by Andrew Tanzer, which, not without reason, became a standard reference phrase for the area (Tanzer 1992).

The fear of Chinese aggression was underscored in February 1992 when China passed the "Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zones" law. Through this law, all the Spratly islands and several other archipelagos officially were made part of the Chinese territory. In July the same year, tension escalated when China seized an additional number of reefs in the Spratly area. Two weeks later, the foreign ministers of the ASEAN issued a joint declaration on the SCS. The so called "Manila declaration" emphasised "the necessity to resolve all sovereignty and jurisdictional issues pertaining to the SCS by peaceful means, without resort to force" and urged all parties to exercise restraint to create a positive climate for a resolution of the conflict (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 1992). Vietnam, by then not yet a member of the ASEAN, responded positively to the declaration. China's response, however, was the complete opposite and it subsequently moved to seize the Da Lac Reef in the Spratlys within days of the declaration.

During the following years, the conflict was visible primarily in two ways: through the building of different structures by claimants on several of "their" islands; and by the granting of oil concessions and exploration in "their" territories. These concessions often involved foreign firms, preferably U.S. ones. This was a way to acquire expertise, legitimacy and arguably also protection against interference from other claiming states.⁷ In 1995, the conflict re-escalated when the Philippines found out that Chinese forces had occupied Mischief Reef within the area claimed by the Philippines. This incident led to military activities on both sides, although it stopped short of a military conflict, mainly because of the unequal power of the two states (For an in-depth analysis of the implications of Mischief Reef incident see Zha and Valencia 2001).

During the 1990s, many attempts, both formal and informal, were made to find ways to manage and solve the SCS conflict. The level of success of these attempts varied however. Official negotiations between the conflicting parties were virtually nonexistent, and when such negotiations did occur, little progress was made. The only thing the claimants could agree about was that the conflict should be managed by peaceful means. Since there were no official negotiations, a series of annual informal track two workshops on "Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea" (The South China Sea workshops/SCSWs) was initiated by Indonesian ambassador Hasjim Djalal in 1990, to prevent the SCS from becoming even more unstable (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999). At the time, one of the basic problems obstructing the attempts to manage or resolve the conflict was the power difference between China and the other states. China was fully aware of its relative power advantage and had not yet become accustomed

⁷ By involving U.S. firms it was presumed that the U.S. fleet would guarantee security in case of violence or threats.

to multilateral dialogues. Hence, it preferred to handle all its negotiations on a bilateral basis. This is illustrated in its so-called "Three Nos"-policy on how to deal with the Spratly issue: no to any form of internationalisation of the issue; no to any form of multilateral negotiation; and no to a Chinese specification of its territorial claims (Valencia 1995: 12).

4.1.1.2 De-escalation and progression towards a peaceful resolution (1995-2008)

Since the mid-1990s, progress has been made in de-escalating the SCS conflict. After the 1995 Mischief Reef incident, there have not been any major incidents. The Mischief incident triggered the following de-escalation process and made the ASEAN parties unite and, for the first time, take a common stance against China. Without explicitly mentioning China by name, on 18 March 1995 the ASEAN foreign ministers issued a statement expressing

"...serious concern over recent developments which affect peace and stability in the South China Sea. ... [calling upon] all parties to refrain from taking actions that destabilize the region and further threaten the peace and security of the South China Sea. ... [and called] the early resolution of the problems caused by recent developments in Mischief Reef." (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 1995. Vietnam, at the time a few months short of becoming a member of ASEAN, supported the statement.)

This was the start of a process of multilateral dialogues between China and the ASEAN. China remained opposed to an internationalisation of the SCS, but did become more open to discussions in multilateral settings. In April 1995, during the ASEAN-China Senior Official Meeting in Hangzhou, informal meetings were held between Chinese and ASEAN officials, the latter expressing concerns over China's aggressive behaviour (Emmers 2008: 8). Prior to the 1995 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting (on ARF see "" in chapter 1), China declared its willingness to discuss the Spratlys in a multilateral setting. Two years later, in 1997, China accepted that the SCS conflict was put on the agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Also within the ASEAN, positive steps were taken. In 1999, ASEAN officials agreed to a regional code of conduct to prevent conflict in the Spratly islands. This was a more specific agreement than the previous Manila declaration. At this point, China was not ready to agree on the draft, but did agree to hold talks with the ASEAN on the newly founded code of conduct (For a review of the origin and development of the code of conduct see Song 2000: esp. pp. 451-57).

In January 2000, tension rose once again when photographic evidence made clear that China had expanded the installation, referred to as shelters for fishermen, on the Mischief Reef that it had erected in 1995. This made the ASEAN concerned that China was trying to strengthen its claims, and it called for restraint and adherence to international law during high-level meetings with China. Two years later, on 4 November 2002, China, and the ASEAN member states finally signed the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea". In the declaration the parties

*"...undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations ... [,] to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability ... and to handle their differences in a constructive manner."*⁸

Since 2002, Sino-ASEAN relations in the SCS have been moving in a positive direction. This includes initiations of joint collaborations on exploiting natural resources between China and the Philippines (2003), and China and Vietnam (2005).

4.2 Elite interactions

The proliferation of elite interactions, in particular track two diplomacy and personal networks, has been important for peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the South China Sea, as well as in Sino-ASEAN relations and the broader East Asian region. The elite interactions have increased the regional ability to prevent conflicts from arising and escalating and have thus been an important peacebuilding mechanism. Not least, they have been an important force for regional trust and confidence building, and for the development towards a regional identity through East Asian community building.

In regards to the South China Sea dispute, the informal South China Sea Workshops have been of particular importance. These workshops have been promoting cooperation and confidence building and have been building understanding and trust among the conflicting parties. The importance of these workshops should be understood in the context of the thick web of track two frameworks that developed in the region in the 1990s. The frameworks are interlinked: they interact both formally and informally; they discuss similar issues, and, to a great extent, have overlapping participants. This creates synergy effects and strong links to the track one level. These mechanisms are explored in more depth in the following sections on proliferation of track two diplomacy and on personal networks.

4.2.1 The informal "Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea"

In the early 1990s, the SCS was the region's most critical flashpoint, and there was no forum through which this conflict could be efficiently handled. At the time, the informal Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea (SCSW) were the only mechanisms for

⁸ In the declaration the parties also "[p]ending the peaceful settlement of territorial and jurisdictional disputes ... undertake to intensify efforts to seek ways, in the spirit of cooperation and understanding, to build trust and confidence between and among them, including:

- a. holding dialogues and exchange of views as appropriate between their defense and military officials;
- b. ensuring just and humane treatment of all persons who are either in danger or in distress;
- c. notifying, on a voluntary basis, other Parties concerned of any impending joint/combined military exercise; and
- d. exchanging, on a voluntary basis, relevant information."

The declaration also encourages cooperative activities, including "a. marine environmental protection; b. marine scientific research; c. safety of navigation and communication at sea; d. search and rescue operation; and e. combating transnational crime, including but not limited to trafficking in illicit drugs, piracy and armed robbery at sea, and illegal traffic in arms." (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2002)

reconciliation, and the only feasible forum through which China could engage and cooperate with the ASEAN with regard to the South China Sea dispute.⁹ The aim of the workshops was to "...informally manage potential conflicts in the South China Sea through the promotion of cooperation within the context of promoting confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy" (Djalal 1999: 195). The organizers themselves have argued that the workshops can be regarded as "preventive diplomacy" as defined by then U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Boutros-Ghali emphasised the need to prevent new disputes from arising, the need to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and the need to limit the spread of conflict if occurring. The workshops were most important between 1990 and 1999, before the ASEAN code of conduct was developed and China agreed to hold talks with the ASEAN on this matter. During this period, a total of ten annual workshops and a large number of other working group meetings were held. With the exception of the first workshop, all relevant regional states were participating.

To better understand the role of the SCSWs it should be emphasised that although these meetings are examples of track two diplomacy, they share many of the features of track 1.5 workshops. Firstly, the workshops have many of the characteristics of informal diplomacy, information exchange, and (pre-)negotiations. It has been explicitly stated that the workshops should be "a platform for policy-oriented discussions, not only for academic exchanges of views" (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999: 117. This aim was stated in Djalal's opening remark at the first workshop). When selecting participants, emphasis was put on senior officials rather than on academics. Thus, the workshops normally gathered senior foreign ministry level officials from all participating states (department head level). This high-level participation ensured a direct link back to the decision makers and other relevant authorities concerned with the SCS. This was the case although the participants, in theory, were there in their "private capacity", which in practice meant little less than preventing the participants from making binding statements or agreements (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999: 117). The relative importance of the policy aspects was also underscored in the actual set up of the workshops, where a U.N. style setting with little room for discussion was used, as opposed to the traditional academic style normally used in track two settings. In addition, the SCSWs were, from the very beginning, supported by the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs and by Foreign Minister Ali Alatas himself, which ensured a high profile, a certain level of importance, and gave incentive for the parties to send equally prominent participants.

The SCSWs have, since their very beginning, discussed the territorial, jurisdictional, political, and security issues in the SCS. Several workshops have been devoted to these issues. That said, the discussions have been problematic as some of the delegates have questioned the forum's mandate to address the issues, which eventually lead to a stalemate by the late 1990s.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the SCSWs did help the participants to reach a better understanding of each other's positions as they opened up for both information exchange, and formal as well as informal communication among the participants. This understanding consequently decreased the risk for miscalculations, which is important to prevent unnecessary and unintentional conflict escalation.

⁹ The first SCSW took place in Bali January 1990. This workshop was restricted to the then six members of ASEAN but it was decided to include Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Taiwan and China in future workshops. (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999: 116-17)

¹⁰ This is the same pattern as can be identified in the ARF and other multilateral forums.

Moreover, the workshops ensured the existence of channels of communication between the parties, which raised the ability to defuse tensions and prevent conflict escalation.

To prevent the conflict from escalating is critical in the SCS case since it is a flashpoint where the parties, not only, have military forces present, but where military confrontations have been occurring regularly in history. This problem has also been acknowledged in the workshops. In the mid 1990s, the workshops did discuss the problem of military presence in the SCS and stressed the need for military transparency and confidence building measures, including military exchanges (Djalal 1999: 189). (On CBMs in the SCS see Snyder, Glosserman et al. 2001.) In short, the SCSWs have been a successful forum for policy innovation and pre-negotiation and served as a possible starting point for official negotiations. In fact, many of the features that later on appeared in official statements and joint declaration had previously been discussed in the informal workshops.

Since they were track two and informal, the SCSWS did not have the same restrictions as official negotiations. Already at the second SCSW in Bandung, West Java, in 1991 – the first workshop with Chinese participation – the involved parties agreed to settle the conflict peacefully, thereby avoiding the use, or the threat, of force. The participants also agreed to exercise restraint and to develop cooperative programs and projects regardless of the territorial disputes (Djalal 1999). These agreements were similar in content to the ASEAN's declaration on the South China Sea in 1992 (the Manila Declaration). Needless to say, the principles in this declaration played an important role in diffusing tension during the Mischief Reef incident in 1995.

The workshops have also worked as catalysts for cooperation within a range of different functional areas. Through its Technical Working Groups and Group of Experts Meetings, a number of projects have been established in areas such as ecosystem monitoring, biodiversity, sea level, and tide monitoring. (For a more detailed summary of the range of work the technical working groups has undertaken see Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999 note 8, p 131.) Nevertheless, few, if any, spill over effects into other areas have occurred. In the case that these projects have had positive effects on cooperation on more sensitive issues, this has been limited to the establishments of functional frameworks. One example was the set up of a special study group on joint development in the South China Sea in 1998, which addressed the sensitive and conflict ridden issue of access to natural resources. These discussions were held within a functional framework, and the group's task was to explore various models of joint development used around the world to find suitable applications for the SCS setting. In sum, the role of functional cooperation here is better described as a process of confidence and trust building between the conflicting parties.

The SCSWs had close ties to other track one- and two multilateral forums in East Asia. Although no official links existed, the participants overlapped with other forums where issues linked to the SCS were addressed, including the ASEAN-China dialogue, CSCAP, ASEAN-ISIS and the ARF (Djalal and Townsend-Gault 1999: 121). That this form of membership overlap, both between and within track two and one forums, is a common feature in East Asia is widely acknowledged,

and has been confirmed by the author's interviews.¹¹ In other words, the SCSWs can be understood as a SCS focused forum imbedded within a wider net of track two- and one frameworks in East Asia. However, despite these overlaps, there were inherent problems with addressing the SCS in informal track two settings. In the late 1990s, Djalal argued that it was time to move beyond the existing division between track two and track one frameworks. He argued for an involvement of the formal ASEAN Regional Forum in the work of the SCSWs and related activities, to avoid activity duplication and strengthen the two forums (Djalal 1999: 193-94). The ARF did also recognise the positive contribution of the SCSWs, and asked to be informed of its activities through the current chairperson of the ARF track one activities (Djalal 1999: 194).

In conclusion, the SCSWs have been a catalyst for peaceful developments in the South China Sea. Not least, it has been important for pre-negotiation and policy innovation. In addition, it has created a forum in which the relevant officials from the conflicting parties have been able to meet in an informal setting. The workshops and their working groups have been important for building relationships and trust among officials. They were, in this respect, also important for the development of personal networks among the participants. The importance of the SCSWs for the network building process should be viewed in light of the limited integration between China and the ASEAN during the 1990s. The workshops have also smoothen relations through technical cooperation at a time when conflict was tense and the official lines of communications between China and the other parties were limited. Still, there has been no spill over effects into other issue areas. The importance of the workshops has also been acknowledged by the respective governments, as they were willing to allow, and financially support, the participation of senior government staff. In short, the SCSWs have been important for safe-guarding the fragile peace in the 1990s. These workshops have prevented the conflict from escalating and, as such, constitute an important part of the peacebuilding process in the South China Sea and between China and the ASEAN members.

4.2.2 Personal networks among leaders and the regional elite

The interviews in this study confirm the importance of personal relations among regional leaders.¹² In fact, most interviewees, particularly in East Asia, called them "extremely important".¹³ The inter-personal interaction process and the developing of relationships were acknowledged by the interviewees as crucial for mutual trust and understanding.¹⁴ Indeed, personal contacts and relations between the top leaders were argued to be "a key" to friendly inter-state relations as "[the relationship between the top leaders] reflects relations between

¹¹ Interviews and discussions with regular participants in track two forums at think tanks and universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005 and Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Taipei, Taiwan, Mar - May 2007; and United Kingdom and Sweden 2006-2007. Among the interviewees were CSCAP members from the United Kingdom, China, and Taiwan.

¹² Interviews, China, Taipei, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Denmark, 2004 - 2008.

¹³ Interviews, China Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007, Jul - Dec 2008; Taipei Mar - May 2007; Hong Kong Dec 2007; South Korea Feb - Mar 2008; and Japan Mar 2007.

¹⁴ Interviews with strategic thinkers in China, Taipei, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Denmark, 2004 - 2008.

countries".¹⁵ This said, networks among lower level policy makers and officials are also important, in particular for long term peacebuilding, which is discussed below.

The network building has been driven by the combined forces of regionalisation and the proliferation of track two processes. The unprecedented number of meetings has led to a situation where top leaders, officials and regional elites have numerous points of contact (also see "Proliferation of track two diplomacy" below).

Through these meetings, webs of personal networks have been built among the participants, which have increased confidence and trust among their members, as well as contributed to the building of a nascent regional identity. This identity building process has been important, given the "need for a regional identity" if "mutual confidence" should be achieved in such a diversified region as East Asia with its differing political systems, levels of economic development, culture, and ethnicity.¹⁶ It should be emphasised that the development of personal relations between the Chinese and the ASEAN leaders is a new phenomenon. China has traditionally not had personal relations with Asian countries. This new trend came after China introduced its "good neighbourhood policy", which has resulted in "good relations with all countries. [except Japan]".¹⁷ The ASEAN+3 (APT) process has been of foremost importance for this network and trust building exercise. For example, one researcher at a Chinese government think-tank emphasised the APT annual summits as "a very good opportunity for top leaders to develop a mutual understanding plus getting to know each other better."¹⁸ This resembles the pattern observed in the Taiwan case study (see chapter 3).

The importance of personal networks goes beyond the top leaders. Through the multilateralism and the institutionalisation of the regionalisation process - in particular the APT process – lower ranking officials socialises with their counterparts as well. The importance given to informal socialisation can be seen in different ASEAN related meetings where efforts are made to ensure that participants get the opportunity to interact informally. This pattern applies also to non-policy making elites participating in different meetings and track two forums. Socialisation not only develops a thick web of personal networks among government officials, it also increases the mutual understanding and develops confidence and trust at all bureaucratic levels. To include all bureaucratic levels is essential, as cooperation now includes actors and bodies outside the top leadership and the foreign ministry. It is thus beneficial for all levels of officials to learn how to communicate and work efficiently with foreign officials. It is important that individuals at all levels are determined to avoid confrontations and prevent issues and tensions from escalating.

The benefit of elite socialisation and elite networks is noticeable also within the respective states. Here, the networks build an efficient link between track two and track one policymaking circles. This is an important aspect in the Sino-ASEAN setting where the link between track two and track one is unclear, as the two tracks are often overlapping. Moreover, in China the linkages to track one have increased in recent years, as the Chinese leaders have become more receptive of

¹⁵ Interview with senior member in government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 December 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

new ideas.¹⁹ Personal networks also contribute to keep channels of communication open between conflicting parties, as illustrated by the informal communication predating the South China Sea workshops. The personal networks also facilitate back-channel negotiations, as can be seen in the setting up of the SCSWs.

4.2.3 Proliferation of track two diplomacy

When looking beyond the SCS, it is clear that track two diplomacy has proliferated in East Asia during the last two decades. According to Paul Evans, there were only three or four track two channels in the whole Asia-Pacific in 1989 (Evans 1994a). Since then, track two security dialogues have flourished and reached more than 200 by 2005.²⁰

The reason for this trend is an increasing interest, both within and outside the region, to engage in dialogues aimed at developing a more secure and stable neighbourhood, and to work for continued economic prosperity. As a result, a substantial amount of funding has been made available for organising track two dialogues.²¹ Track two style processes also fit very well in the region, as they correspond to the norms of informality, consensus building, consultation, face-saving, and conflict avoidance, which are important in the East Asian context. Another key factor is China's shift from being a reluctant (non-) participant, to becoming one of the driving forces in track two dialogues in the region. This is especially obvious in its behaviour within the APT framework, in particular in the Chinese led Network of East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT). (also see "Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of relations" below)

The benefits of the proliferation of track two diplomacy in the last two decades has been described by the regular participants as "enhanced mutual understanding (even when we are hostile), increased transparency, development of mutual trust and development".²² Even talkshops, as some critics label them, are important. Since they include officials "they build trust between policy makers and make them more informed", leading to them taking "more knowledgeable decisions".²³ Trust and informed decisions are important for preventing conflict and building peace, as it increases the ability to handle tensions and disputes in the region, including in the SCS. The above mentioned benefits for peace are not limited to track two diplomacy involving influential policy makers. Even when fewer influential policy makers are involved, the dialogues still have an impact as many of the region's academics have links to their governments. Furthermore, many institutes have report systems that feed into the government (at

¹⁹ Interview with senior member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 December 2006; China expert, United Kingdom, 12 June 2008.

²⁰ Data from Japan Center for International Dialogue and Exchange, *Research Monitor: Towards Community Building in East Asia*, Inventory of Meetings in 2005 (January-June), Inventory of Meetings in 2005 (July-December). (Available at the Japanese Center for Exchange website, <http://www.jcie.or.jp/drm/>, accessed April 2007.)

²¹ Funding has mainly been made available through sources outside the region where there have been a large interest in supporting track two style activities, such as governments (ranging from trade- to development agencies), foundations, and to some extent businesses.

²² Interview with senior member of government think-tank affiliated with a number of track two frameworks including NEAT and CSCAP, Shanghai, China, 12 May 2007. The same line of argument were also raised in interviews with track two participants from East Asia as well as Europe.

²³ Interview with scholars with extensive experience from track two processes, Fudan University and Shanghai Institute of International Studies, Shanghai, China, 14-15 Dec 2006. This idea was also reoccurring in the interviews conducted in China between Nov 2004 and Dec 2008.

least in China). Moreover, track two dialogues have a direct peace impact when official dialogues are stalled, or when a government wants to have a what Ralph Cossa, a leading U.S. track two participant, calls "benign cover" to try out new policy ideas (Cossa 1996b, 1998: 54). The latter has been seen in the case of the SCSWs. In addition, they are important through their potential spill over effect on regional identity formation (Kim 2001).

A number of track two institutions stand out for their role for peace. Among the track two institutions, the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) have been of utmost importance. Their impact goes beyond trust, confidence, and network building, as they have worked in symbiosis with first track forums. Thus, the two institutions have had direct impact on policy through their close working relationship with official institutions. They have also been forerunners in the institutionalisation of East Asian regionalisation and community building.

ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP form a part of the ASEAN Regional Forum "two-track approach", where

"...Track One activities will be carried out by ARF governments. Track Two activities will be carried out by strategic institutes and non-government organisations in the region, such as ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP. ... The synergy between the two tracks would contribute greatly to confidence building measures in the region. Over time, the Track Two activities should result in the creation of a sense of community among participants of those activities." (ASEAN Senior Officials, "The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper", p 113 quoted in Ball 2000: 48)

However, this close connection also limits the independence and innovation of the two institutions. It has been argued that the close alignment between track one and two institutions restricts the capacity of the latter to be critical in its thinking and analysis (Kraft 2000).²⁴ This argument is valid, but there are also benefits stemming from the symbiosis. For example, the track two institutions serve as a form of control mechanism on the official policy. In short, track one decisions are not made in total isolation. This is of particular importance in China and the ASEAN states where the overall power and influence of civil society and media generally is limited.

CSCAP was formally launched in 1993 as the result of a series of conferences on regional security issues in the early 1990s. It has since been of foremost importance for regional trust- and confidence building, preventive diplomacy, and cooperation on non-traditional security issues. CSCAP has two formalised channels to influence ARF: meetings between the CSCAP Steering Committee and the ARF Senior Official Meetings; and links between the CSCAP working groups and the ARF intersessional meetings (for an in-depth analyses of CSCAP's impact on ARF see Chen 2008). As CSCAP has working groups for a range of issues, it can consequently influence ARF on a wide array of topics.²⁵ In other words, CSCAP has not only been a facilitator of elite

²⁴ This problem has also been observed in the track two dialogues between Mainland China and Taiwan (see chapter 3).

²⁵ CSCAP has the following working groups: 1. Capacity-building for Maritime Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific; 2. Countering the Proliferation of WMD in the Asia Pacific; 3. Future Prospects for Multilateral Security Frameworks in Northeast Asia; 4. Human Trafficking; 5. Regional Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding; and 6. Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Campaign Against International Terrorism with Specific Reference to the Asia Pacific Region. (CSCAP website, <http://www.cscap.org/groups.htm>, accessed 20 April 2007.)

socialisation, but has also contributed to semi-official engagement on a range of issue areas. That said, over time, CSCAP has lost much of its role, as many of its areas eventually have become institutionalised in the APT process. However, given CSCAP role as a forerunner, this is arguably a positive contribution to peace and a significant example of where a track two process has been contributing to the development and safeguarding of the East Asian peace. In this regard, CSCAP has been a catalyst for the institutionalisation of former track two discussions within a track one framework.

The ASEAN-ISIS has not only played a fundamental role in the development of ASEAN, but has also been a positive force for ASEAN's relations with China. It has fostered capacity building for cooperative security and preventive diplomacy, and has provided valuable advice to governments in East Asia on a range of issues affecting regional peace and security in Southeast Asia (Simon 2002). This includes recommendations to create the ARF, to strengthen the ASEAN secretariat, and to push for a realisation of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).²⁶ Furthermore, the ASEAN-ISIS organises an annual Asia Pacific Round Table, which emphasises confidence building and conflict reduction. Moreover, the ASEAN-ISIS has built a link between track one- and two levels by institutionalising meetings between the heads of the ASEAN-ISIS and the ASEAN Senior Officials. (For an indept review of the work of the ASEAN-ISIS, see for example Cheow 2008: 172-77; Katsumata 2003b; Soesastro, Joewono et al. 2006.) In conclusion, a coherent ASEAN is important for the level of success in its relations with external actors, most clearly manifested in the APT process and in the development of free trade agreements with ASEAN's East Asian neighbours.²⁷ The ASEAN-ISIS has been an important catalyst for these developments.

There are other track two processes that have been developed within the APT framework. After proposal by South Korean President Kim Dae Jung in 1998, two research institutes, focussing on East Asian affairs, were established: the East Asian Vision Group (EAVG); and the East Asian Study Group (EASG) (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2007). Since 2003, largely as a result of the work of the EAVG and the EASGS, three other track two processes have been established: the East Asia Forum, the Comprehensive Human Resources Development Program for East Asia, and the abovementioned NEAT. These processes have played an important role for peacebuilding by being a driving force in the East Asian regionalism project and for the process of East Asian community building.

NEAT is a relatively new but influential track two institution of special interest for Sino-ASEAN relations. NEAT was created within the APT process as a direct result of proposals made by the East Asian Vision Group and the East Asian Study Group. The purpose of NEAT is to promote the notion of an East Asian Community, i.e. to contribute to the development of regional cooperation and identity. It is the official track two analogue of the APT process and its function is to provide intellectual support and policy recommendations on issues of East Asian cooperation. It also conducts research on issues raised by the APT and the East Asian Study

²⁶ In turn, the ASEAN secretariat has been important particularly within the ASEAN, but also in the organization's work to engage China as a collective. The ARF has become the institutionalised forum in which common concerns for the whole region are addressed. It has also been an excellent platform for elite interactions.

²⁷ For a good and up-to-date discussion on the emerging economic architecture in the region including the emergence of FTAs in East Asia see Searight 2009. On the ASEAN+3 process see e.g. Tanaka 2007a.

Group. NEAT's main focus is economics, but the network also addresses political, socio-cultural and security issues.²⁸

NEAT's influence is founded on China's leading role as coordinator and its high profile membership with direct links to the top leaders in the region. NEAT has been described as a framework where "[e]lite scholars and the elite hold discussions" , which in turn "fosters a regional cultural identity."²⁹ Of foremost importance is that the network is taken seriously in China. This is illustrated by the fact that the network is placed under the leadership of the China Foreign Affairs University, the only university working under guidance of the Chinese Foreign Ministry. The general coordinator is Ambassador Wu Jianmin, President of the China Foreign Affairs University and Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Network of East Asian Think-tanks 2009). The members in China, in particular, but also in the other member countries, are over all highly influential in their respective fields. In short, the network is linked directly to the Chinese leadership, as well as to leaders in other member countries. This allows the Chinese government to absorb the work of these scholars. Indeed, the government has adopted many of the ideas put forward by members of the network.³⁰

NEAT is working in relative silence compared with for example CSCAP and ASEAN-ISIS.³¹ Given that the government officials invited to participate in different meetings and dialogues are very influential, the semi-secret setting creates a good atmosphere for discussions. Just as important is that the NEAT members themselves have excellent personal links to influential people in policy circles or even the decision makers themselves. In some sense, NEAT is a region-wide combination of think-tank and discussion club where academic and government elite can get together to talk about issues of regional importance. At the same time, the participants get to know each other on a personal level and are given an opportunity to socialise in an informal setting. This enhances their understanding of each other's positions and perspectives, which facilitates the development of new ideas and ways of thinking. Over time, this becomes a significant trust and confidence building process. It also helps develop routines for communication. This is useful for the successful progression towards an East Asian community, both in the sense of long term peacebuilding and for the willingness and ability to handle issues and tensions occurring during the process. Moreover, it strengthens the voice of moderation. The experiences and personal networks developed in NEAT may also be useful in case of a future crisis, when people who already know and understand each other will be present on all sides.³²

²⁸ Interviews with senior academics, including the NEAT coordinator (China), and several NEAT members, Beijing 23 Oct 2006; Shanghai 14 - 15 Dec 2006, 11-13 May 2007; Hong Kong 22 Dec 2006. Also see the NEAT website, <http://www.neat.org.cn/>, last accessed 10 June 2009.

²⁹ Interview with senior member in government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 December 2006.

³⁰ Interviews with academics, including members in government think tanks, Beijing Jul 2006 - Jun 2007 and Shanghai Dec 2006, China.

³¹ The analysis in this paragraph is based on information obtained in interviews with senior academics including several NEAT members and the NEAT coordinator (China) (Beijing, 23 Oct 2006; Shanghai Dec 2006, 12 May 2007; Hong Kong Dec 2006), and informal discussions and observations at a number of track two meetings in China Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

³² Cf. with the discussions on the role of personal networks in the Taiwan case study. Logically the links built through NEAT could be used in a similar way to the CCP-KMT links.

There are a number of track 1.5 processes in East Asia, which take place between the first and second track level. For Sino-ASEAN relations and the South China Sea, the Shangri-La Dialogue organised by the International Institute for Strategic Studies is of foremost importance.³³ The Shangri-La Dialogue is an ongoing annual defence and security dialogue that was established in 2002. It brings together official government delegations led by defence ministers and other senior officials from the Asia Pacific region and the wider security community. Since its inauguration, a total of 27 states have been represented, including all East Asian states, with the exception of North Korea and the Republic of China (Taiwan), the United States, India, Russia, Australia, and a number of key European states.³⁴

Different track two (and 1.5) processes facilitate the gathering of policy makers in a more informal (track two) setting to allow for relatively open and frank discussions on security issues. Even if the general discussions in the open forum tend to be rather formal, there are room for informal, off-the record discussions during coffee breaks, dinners and excursions.. This practice was described by one experienced CSCAP participant ,

*"That is pretty much how it is! ... There is a table, you present a paper. You do not mention Taiwan, then the Chinese would walk out. All business on the side lines. [It is] very Asian, very consensual. No debate [at the main table, and] all positions decided beforehand. [There are] [s]ome open discussions, but most of it at the sidelines, at the coffee table, etc."*³⁵

The unofficial discussions are important for network building. They also work as trust and confidence building mechanisms and allow for the participants to test their ideas without committing to them officially. This, not only, encourages new thinking, but also allows for improved information and understanding of the underlying logics and interests behind official positions, statements, and actions. Through these exchanges, confidence and trust is being built. Occasionally, deep trust is developed; not least as the participants share many experiences and characteristics, and frequently are each other's counterparts. Even if this trust differs from friendship, it becomes a logical result of repeated interaction. Repeated interactions also discourage cheating, as there are mutual gains from upholding a certain level of sincerity. At a minimal level, your ability to assess the other's level of sincerity will have increased, as through interactions you learn whom to, and whom not to, trust. This way, unofficial discussions also decreases the likelihood of confrontations because of misunderstandings or miscalculations. The development of confidence, trust, and networks between, at least some, individuals is central for the ability to implement direct conflict preventive measures. This applies both to regional and extra-regional actors. Even if the extra-regional actors are not parties to a conflict, they can still be of importance for peace by working as back-channel negotiators or mediators.

³³ The Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) is also of importance for East Asian peace. NEACD is a meeting for foreign ministry officials, defence ministry officials, military officers, and academics from China, Russia, North and South Korea, Japan, and the United States that was established in 1993. In NEACD people participate in their private capacities and the dialogue aims at keeping vital lines of communication open in Northeast Asia by providing regular informal meetings for open and frank discussions on issues of regional security and cooperation.

³⁴ The European participants are France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The following states have also participated: Bangladesh, Canada, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Timor Leste. (List of participating countries available at the IISS website, <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2008/participating-countries/>, last accessed March 2008.)

³⁵ Interview with CSCAP participant, United Kingdom, Jan 2008.

However, there are limits to the usefulness of track two frameworks. They are, by some, seen as ineffective talking-shops with limited impact on policymaking. In the words of one Chinese strategic thinker, "it is not the government".³⁶ This problem is evident in the case of CSCAP in recent years. Moreover, as the track one frameworks have been developed, the interest in track two channels has decreased.³⁷ The perception seems to be that track two dialogues are unnecessary if they cover the same issues for which there are a working track one forum. In this regard, the creation and acceptance of the ARF, together with the institutionalisation of regional cooperation in the APT process, have been of central importance, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.3 The Sino-ASEAN and East Asian regionalisation process

The developments in the SCS have been a good measurement of the overall progress of Sino-ASEAN relations, and vice-versa. In turn, the progress of regional integration has been a good measurement of the overall developments in the Sino-ASEAN relations. This section will explore three processes that have been central both for the Sino-ASEAN and East Asian regionalisation process, as well as for the developments in the SCS. Firstly, the origins of the post-Cold War Sino-ASEAN *rapprochement* are traced. This is followed by an analysis of the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the following institutionalisation of international relations in East Asia. Thirdly, the role of economic integration and interdependence as a driving force for East Asian regionalisation since the late 1980s is discussed.

4.3.1 The Sino-ASEAN rapprochement

The Sino-ASEAN *rapprochement* that has taken place since the early 1990s has been an important part of the peaceful developments in Sino-ASEAN relations, and in the successful peacebuilding efforts leading to the 2002 code of conduct signed by the parties in the SCS. Some would even argue that a new East Asian regional order has been built around China's engagement with ASEAN (Shambaugh 2004/2005). Until recently, the relationship between China and ASEAN was characterised by distrust and sometimes outright hostilities. Until the early 1990s, China did not even have diplomatic relations with a number of regional states. ASEAN was perceived as an ally of the U.S.A., and hence a potential threat to Chinese interests. Conversely, China was perceived as a threat to the states within the ASEAN. The China threat perception caused the ASEAN members to build-up their militaries and much effort was made to keep the U.S. engaged in the region.

Since the 1990s, China has moved from a great power oriented foreign policy to "soft power" diplomacy, which has implied cultivating a comprehensive relationship with ASEAN (Whiting 1997; Zha and Hu 2006). This, in combination with ASEAN's "constructive engagement" policy towards China, has led to expanded relations and deepened collaboration (Whiting 1997; Zha and Hu 2006). This *rapprochement* has been a long term identity altering process for both parties, whom have reinterpreted their interests and transformed their behaviour towards each other. It is also fundamental for the understanding of both why there have been attempts to manage the SCS,

³⁶ Interview with strategic thinker with extensive experience of track two diplomacy, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.

³⁷ Interview with European scholar with extensive track two experience, United Kingdom, Jan 2008.

and why these attempts have been successful. In short, without the rapprochement, there would have been less incentive for both sides to ensure that the SCS did not negatively affect their overall relations.

The turning point for China can be traced to the Tiananmen incident in 1989. At this point, as opposed to most of the international community, China's Southeast Asian neighbours did not condemn the incident (Shambaugh 2004/2005).³⁸ After the incident, to quote David Shambaugh,

"...the ASEAN states led a diplomatic campaign to engage rather than isolate China. ... ASEAN's desire to engage China at this critical time left an impression on the leadership in Beijing. While the rest of the world was doing its best to isolate China, ASEAN chose to reach out to Beijing." (2004/2005: 68). (Also see Johnston and Ross 1999.)

The engagement was a reciprocal process. In the early 1990s, the prospect of a rising China was still perceived as a threat in Southeast Asia.³⁹ China, at this point, launched a diplomatic offensive to counteract the existing ideational and normative structures that created this threat perception. It relentlessly denounced the idea that China was a threat, or posed a threat to Southeast Asia. However, it took time before China's new policy had the desired impact and the perception of China as a threat decreased.

The ASEAN did also change its behaviour towards China. China's foreign minister was, for the first time, invited to the ASEAN ministerial meeting in 1991. The year after, China became a dialogue partner of the ASEAN. However, at this point China was both inexperienced and reluctant to participate in multilateral frameworks. For example, it reluctantly joined the ARF in 1994. This was, to quote Ren Xiao, a leading Chinese expert on Sino-ASEAN relations, "a remarkable development", as China at the time had "little experience in multilateral processes, except those within the United Nations system" (2009: 304). This was more of a way to hedge about risking that ARF was to be used in a for China's interests negative way, rather than a genuine interest in participating. During the same period, only limited progress was made in the SCS, which continued to be perceived as the next Asian flashpoint. The SCS was stalemated at a high conflict intensity level, and there was no mutual trust and confidence. Rather, the involved actors did their utmost to secure their claims. The negative developments continued until they peaked during the Mischief Reef clash between Chinese and Philippine forces in 1995. The Mischief clash was important for the shift towards a peaceful approach to managing the SCS. Indeed, after the incident, the ASEAN members succeeded to take a common stance in their dealings with China, thereby forcing it to deal with the ASEAN members as a collective, as opposed to independent actors.

The developments since the Mischief clash in 1995 must be understood in light of China's behaviour in connection with the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. This was indeed the beginning of a process that, later on, made the 2002 declaration possible. The Asian financial crisis was, in a

³⁸ In East Asia, Japan was the only state that explicitly condemned China. South Korea only stated that the "incident was regrettable" and the Southeast Asian states remained silent, or officially claimed that it was an "internal affair". (Shambaugh 2004/2005: 67).

³⁹ The "China threat" perception was the result of the inability of outsiders to predict China's behaviour both internally and externally. Part of the problem also stemmed from an uncertainty of whether the U.S. would contain or engage China. In Southeast Asia the idea of a rising China also brought back historical memories of a Chinese middle kingdom mentality and the tributary system used during the Ming and Qing dynasties. (Zha and Hu 2006)

sense, the beginning of ASEAN's acceptance of China's rise. This was, on the one hand, an acceptance of reality – it is better to join China that, at the time, seemed predestined to become the region's economic leader. On the other hand, it was also the result of the disappointment with how the rest of the world responded to the Asian Financial Crisis. During the time of acute crisis, it was not the U.S., Europe or the international organisations that came to rescue, but rather the regional neighbours.⁴⁰ The 1997 crisis was also important for the level of regional integration and for the institutionalisation of the regionalisation process. The crisis increased the formalised cooperation within a number of sectors, spearheaded by those in the financial sector including the "Chiang Mai" agreement on financial swaps (see footnote 62 below).

In addition, the war on terror has been of importance for the Sino-ASEAN rapprochement. After the September 11 attacks in 2001, the U.S. adopted a tougher attitude regarding the safeguarding of its regional security interests and pressured its regional allies to cooperate on counterterrorism. For ASEAN, refusal to cooperate was not an option, but instead it tried to balance the U.S. by cultivating its other external relations to states like China (Öjendal 2004: 29-30). China, at the time, also felt a need to build closer ties with ASEAN, as Sino-U.S. relations had become increasingly tense and the Bush Administration had labelled China a "strategic competitor" (Öjendal 2004: 30).

The transformation of Sino-ASEAN relations has been a long and tedious process. Time is essential in East Asia, where trust cannot simply be formalised due to the lack of common accepted terms or responsibility on which to build formalised agreements. In East Asia, trust has been described, by one strategic thinker in Hong Kong,⁴¹ as "depending on reciprocity" and there is "no good and easy way to build trust. It takes time and is not built quickly". In the Sino-ASEAN case, China has built trust and confidence by repeating its behaviour over time to gain credibility among the ASEAN members.

"For example China's promise in 1997 to not devalue the RMB. It was a good thing to promise this. This gesture was received with suspicion, China offered more of this (FTA, "early harvest" project). Over time SEA began to change its perception of China. In the early 1990s China was perceived as a threat, this is not the case anymore and nobody in Southeast Asia sees China as a threat anymore."⁴²

The same interviewee suggested that the South China Sea development should be viewed as a good example of the benefits gained from the developing trust and building of confidence.⁴³

In sum, the mutual perceptions and the interpretation of each other's interests have transformed. A joint understanding have developed that the actors share certain interests, and that they all benefit from cooperation. In addition, over time, through a mutual and reciprocal confidence and trust building process, the level of trust between China and ASEAN has reached unprecedented levels. Currently, the two actors not only have an agreed interest in cooperation, but also the trust and confidence needed to do so successfully. Of particular importance is that the Chinese, over time, have become confident in their ability to successfully engage in multilateralism, and that the

⁴⁰ China got most of the credit, but, in fact, it was Japan that paid most of the bill.

⁴¹ Interview with strategic thinker, Hong Kong, China, Dec 2006.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

peaceful relations between China and ASEAN have been institutionalised. This is discussed in more depth below.

4.3.2 Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of relations

China's acceptance of multilateralism, and the interlinked institutionalisation of Sino-ASEAN relations, has, together with the overarching East Asian regionalisation in the APT-process, been important for the gradual move towards a durable peace. Of particular importance is the general acceptance and institutionalisation of the "ASEAN-way", which works as a structure defining how international relations and diplomatic practice are to be conducted. This, in turn, influences and constrains actual behaviour. In constructivist terms, the "ASEAN-way" has created a normative and ideational framework that all East Asian states need to consider and relate to in their decision making processes. This is the case even though the principles are not necessary followed.

By the late 1990s, China had become confident in participating in multilateral frameworks.⁴⁴ This has, according to a member of a Chinese government think-tank, "changed mindsets towards multilateral approaches".⁴⁵ Given that the ASEAN consistently has engaged China, trying to socialise it into multilateral engagement and acceptance of the ASEAN-way, these developments have been highly appreciated. One Hong Kong observer emphasised the benefit of engagement and elite socialisation and argued that "Chinese officials are learning very fast" from their engagement with ASEAN.⁴⁶ This said, it should also be noted that part of the Chinese "learning" has been to understand how to best utilise multilateral frameworks for maximising their own interests. The officials also build personal relations and increase their understanding of each other's positions,⁴⁷ which, as mentioned previously, is positive for preventing conflict and building peace.

The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis has been a milestone for peace by being a critical juncture not only for ASEAN's perception of China and for the level of communication and diplomatic respect, but also for institutionalising the growing inter-governmental interaction. (See e.g. Ba 2003: esp. pp. 634-38; Xiao 2009). In 1997, the first APT summit was held between China, South Korea, Japan, and the ASEAN members. The APT process was institutionalised two years later at the 3rd ASEAN+3 summit in Manila where the leaders issued a "Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation". The APT process was to become a driving force in East Asian regionalisation and for the institutionalisation of peaceful relations in this part of Asia.⁴⁸

The importance of the APT process for East Asian peace lies in its inclusiveness. Indeed, it is a broad cooperative process that goes beyond economic cooperation, to also include some political and security related issues. That said, the spill over effects from the economic field has been limited and there have been no weakening of the principles of legal and territorial sovereignty,

⁴⁴ (For a brief but good review on how the Chinese perspective on regional multilateralism has developed in the post-Cold War era see Wu 2009: esp. pp. 56-59.)

⁴⁵ Interview with member of government think-tank, Shanghai, China, 15 Dec 2006.

⁴⁶ Interview with strategic thinker, Hong Kong, China, Dec 2006.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ On APT see e.g. Alatas 2001; Beeson 2009 esp. ch. 5; Stubbs 2002; Tanaka 2007a.

nor has there been any delegation of state functions to international agencies (cf. "Functionalism, neo-functionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism" in chapter 2). In fact, the principles of the "ASEAN-way" ensure that the spill over is limited. Nevertheless, the APT has become *the* platform for cooperation, reconciliation, and East Asian community building. Seen from the perspective of regional peace, the states have been able to use this platform to "avoiding [the need for] conflict avoidance", that is positive inter-state relations have developed to such an extent that there have been less need for deliberate efforts to avoid confrontations over conflictual issues.⁴⁹ This role is important as ASEAN "is not much of a mediator", which makes APT "a place to reassure each other [that one is] not trying to be dangerous."⁵⁰ Over time, China has also become more positive and proactive in its engagement in other multilateral frameworks, including the security oriented ARF. China has started to develop what has been described as "an open mind" and has "changed its mindset to the idea of security dialogues."⁵¹ This transformation, in turn, did affect the ASEAN perception of China.

These transformations, and the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism, were necessary for success in the overall negotiation process in the SCS. Without these changes, the talks on a regional code of conduct that started in 2000, would most likely not have been possible. These negotiations benefitted from the trust and confidence that had developed between the parties. Since the SCS is a multi-party issue, it required a multilateral setting, not least to avoid unbalanced bilateral negotiations with China.

Since 2000, China has moved beyond being a participant and has become a proactive actor in multilateral settings (Zha and Hu 2006: 69). The underlying Chinese logic is that an understanding of China and its benign intentions will make the Asian actors change their perceived interests and behaviour in a direction that is favourable to China. For example, in 2001 China launched the Bo'ao Forum as part of its strategy to reassure Southeast Asia of its benign intentions (Zha and Hu 2006: 12). Two years later, in 2003, China was acceding to ASEAN's 1976 "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation" (TAC).⁵² The purpose of this treaty is "...to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among their peoples which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 1976: §1).

The move towards, and acceptance of, multilateralism has over time become institutionalised. Institutionalisation has, together with multilateralism, been key "[t]o make the region a more secure one".⁵³ It has been argued that "there is a need to develop regional institutions" in order to "prevent conflicts".⁵⁴ Institutions should in this context not necessarily be equated with traditional regional organisations, but rather as "persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations" (Keohane 1989: 3). Institutions do not need to be formalised in the legal sense, and "may include organizations,

⁴⁹ Interview with strategic thinker, Hong Kong, China, Dec 2006.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Interview with member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, Dec 2006.

⁵² For a detailed review of China-ASEAN dialogues and cooperation see the ASEAN secretariat website, <http://www.aseansec.org/5874.htm>, last accessed November 2008. Also see Saw and Sheng 2005.

⁵³ Interview, senior scholar, Fudan University, Shanghai, China, 14 Dec 2006.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

bureaucratic agencies, treaties and agreements, and informal practices that states [as well as non-state actors] accept as binding" (Lamy 2001: 189 quoted in Timmermann 2008: 144).

The foremost example of the institutionalisation of Sino-ASEAN relations can be found in the APT framework. Zha and Hu describes the APT process as "a set of complex meeting/dialogue mechanisms of cooperation, molded ASEAN-style consultations" with dialogue at various levels and on a wide range of issues (Zha and Hu 2006: 133). The APT process is "[h]eavily influenced by the ASEAN consultation culture" and has created an "integral regional dialogue mechanism in which ASEAN maintains political leverage." (Zha and Hu 2006: 133) Their description of the APT process is worth being quoted in full, as it gives a clear picture on how extensive and deeply embedded the cooperation is, despite its relative lack of legalistic structure:

"The ASEAN + 3 process as a big umbrella includes three separate 10 + 1 meetings between ASEAN leaders and their counterparts from the three Northeast Asian countries. Within each 10+1 framework, there are one 10 + 1 annual summit, three ministerial meetings (foreign, economic, and transport ministers) and "working parallel mechanisms". For instance, within the China-ASEAN dialogue framework, there are six levels of meeting: ASEAN-China Senior Officials Political Consultations; the ASEAN-China Joint Cooperation Committee; the China-ASEAN Joint Committee on Economic and Trade Cooperation; the China-ASEAN Joint Committee on Science and Technology; the ASEAN Committee in Beijing; and the China-ASEAN Trade Council. At the ASEAN + 3 level, there are six ministerial meetings (foreign, finance, economic, labor, agriculture and forestry, and tourism). Which report to the 10 + 3 summit. At the same time, within the framework of 10 + 3. China, Japan, and South Korea have also established an informal "+ 3" summit meeting, five ministerial meetings (foreign, finance, economic, environmental protection, and intellectual property), and cooperation among economic research institutes of the three countries. This "+3" platform was difficult to attain. It would not have been possible if there had been no ASEAN + 3 process." (Zha and Hu 2006: 133)

The APT process has not only driven cooperation to unprecedented levels. It has also turned the "ASEAN-way" into an institution in its own right. In fact, the "ASEAN-way" does fulfil the requirements set out for an institution: it implies a "persistent and connected sets of rules" that "prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations" (Keohane 1989: 3), which "states accept as binding" (Lamy 2001: 189 quoted in Timmermann 2008: 144). Consequently, the "ASEAN-way" has worked as an ideational and normative structure, which has both guided and constrained the diplomatic practice and inter-state relations across East Asia.

In regards to what kind of institutions that should be developed, there is a lack of consensus among the participants. There are different opinions about the optimal level of formality for regional institutions.⁵⁵ The East Asian practice, with a preference for plentiful meetings among politicians, academics, and businesspersons, and the use of track two style frameworks such as the EAVG and the EASG that are reporting to track one meetings, has caused some to describe East Asia as "a jelly fish without spines and bones".⁵⁶ However, there is no consensus on whether

⁵⁵ This difference has been pointed out in interviews with experts on East Asian security and regional security in the United Kingdom (Birmingham, Bristol, and Coventry, Jan - Jun 2008). The differences have also been implied during interviews undertaken in East Asia (Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Feb - Mar 2008, Jul - Dec 2008) as well as in Europe (2004-2008).

⁵⁶ Comments made by the Director of a Japanese think tank at a track two conference in Beijing, 13-14 Nov 2006.

a "jelly fish" is something bad that suffers from its lack of a spine and bones, i.e. its informal nature, or if it is sufficient as it is.⁵⁷ Indeed, many of the interviewed East Asians argued that a "jelly fish" without spine and bones is nothing bad, but simply the East Asian way of doing things.⁵⁸

Even the sceptics tend to accept that APT, ARF, and ASEAN have had an impact on the development in the East Asian security setting, but at the same time they ask "but how much?".⁵⁹ People hosting such sceptical views argue, in line with functionalist ideas, in favour of making the East Asian institutions "more like the EU", and that "it might also be a good idea to take away a few [of the institutions]".⁶⁰ Others view the lack of legal structures simply as the East Asian way of doing things. Consequently, they argue that East Asian integration is based on trust, whereas European trust is based on legal and formal institutions.

*"In the West one discuss conflict and CBM, in East Asia we discuss trust. Here you can think about confidence as something dealing more with contractual relations, while in East Asia trust is a better term. Trust has to do more with the spirits."*⁶¹

Regardless of the correctness of these lines of thinking, the answer probably lies somewhere in between these two interpretations. Pro-formalists do have a point in so far as the lack of formal structures does create problems in the handling of crises. This problem has been acknowledged to some extent. For example, the development of the Chiang Mai initiative was a response to the failure of existing informal structures to manage the financial turmoil during the 1997 financial crisis.⁶² On the other hand, the informal structures have been well suited to develop an unprecedented level of cooperation and facilitate the prevention of conflicts over unresolved issues. As argued in chapter 2, the level of formality is no more relevant than other attributes that orient tradeoffs regarding compliance (section 2.2.3). It is the level of trust in the institution that matters the most, and in the East Asian region, there is little inherent trust either in formal regulations or in regional organisations.

Through the creation of structural frameworks with forums, dialogues, and accepted diplomatic norms and practices (the "ASEAN-way"), the institutionalisation has stabilised the regionalisation process and made it more permanent and regular. The institutionalisation has been an important part of ASEAN's engagement of China and served to increase its stakes in regional peace and stability. Moreover, it has assured that the "China threat" does not become a self-fulfilling prophesy.⁶³ The long term objective of engaging China has been described as aiming

⁵⁷ Interviews in China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Feb - Mar 2008, Jul - Dec 2008; United Kingdom and Sweden, 2007-2008.

⁵⁸ Author's discussions during field work in China and observations made at track two and academic meetings, 2006-2008.

⁵⁹ Interview with an East Asian expert, United Kingdom, 10 Jun 2008. The same line of reasoning has been put forward in other interviews with, in particular, but not only, Western individuals.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Quote from an East Asian professor at "the KEIO-YONSEI-FUDAN Distance Learning Course (Autumn semester 2006)" "Global Governance Conference", Fudan University, 16 Dec 2006.

⁶² For the background to East Asian financial cooperation and the Chiang Mai initiative see e.g. Randall 2002: esp. ch. 3.

⁶³ Interviews with senior experts on East Asian security from Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Beijing Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Shanghai Nov - Dec 2006, May 2007; Hong Kong Dec 2006.

"...to lock China into regional multilateral institutions, which will not only moderate but also gradually transform Chinese regional behaviour" (Zha and Hu 2006: 121-22. See also Segal 1996) It seems like this approach has been successful: China's behaviour has become more moderate, and it has got accustomed to, and compliant with, engagement in multilateral forums. Moreover, China has accepted the "ASEAN-way" as the diplomatic principle and has started to take its neighbours' interests into account. This has been a reciprocal process between China's "soft power diplomacy" and ASEAN's "constructive engagement" policies. It is difficult to say what caused what, i.e. to what extent China has been socialised by the ASEAN to accept current practices, and to what extent China's policies have caused the ASEAN to accept China as a partner. Most likely, this should be viewed as a transformation with synergy effects between "soft power diplomacy" and "constructive engagement". Regardless of which, the hope for a peaceful future has been enhanced.

4.3.3 Economic integration and interdependence

Beneath the above processes lies a significant process of economic integration and interdependence in East Asia, including between China and ASEAN. The focus on economic growth and prosperity has both been a common policy goal across East Asia, and a driving force in the regionalisation process. The whole region, with the possible exception of North Korea, seeks peace, security, and prosperity. It is not without reason that former Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs equated ASEAN+3 with "peace plus prosperity" (Alatas 2001). In East Asia, the enhanced economic integration and interdependence is a relatively recent phenomenon. Central for this take off was the founding of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in 1989 and the agreement on an ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1992.

In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in China's trade with its Asian neighbours. In the case of Sino- ASEAN total trade, the volumes are substantial. In 2005, the total trade reached U.S. \$113.4 billion, or 9.3% of ASEAN's total trade.⁶⁴ By 2008 China had become ASEAN's third largest trading partner, the trade volume having reached U.S.\$ 192.5 billion, accounting for 11.3% of ASEAN's total trade.⁶⁵ This can be compared with 1995, when the total trade volume was a mere U.S.\$ 13.3 billion (2.2% of the total trade volume).⁶⁶ Even as late as 2003, the total trade volume was only U.S.\$ 59.6 billion, or 7.2% of ASEAN's total trade.⁶⁷ Between 2003 and 2008 the average annual growth has been 26.41%.⁶⁸ The economic integration and interdependence will continue to increase, not least thanks to the 2001 framework agreement between China and the ASEAN, which was further amended in 2002. Within this framework, China and the ASEAN are aiming to develop their economic cooperation and move towards a free trade area by 2010. It has been estimated that by 2010, this free trade area will have a total GDP of U.S.\$ 3 trillion and a total population of 3 billion people (McBeth 2003).

⁶⁴ Data from ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2008 (ASEAN Secretariat 2009: 78-79 Table V.12. ASEAN Trade by Country of Destination, 1995-2008).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Data from ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2008 (ASEAN Secretariat 2009: 80-81 Table V.13. Rate of Growth of ASEAN Trade by Country of Destination, 1996-2008).

When looking at the whole ASEAN+3 area, there are a concentration of trade, with by 2006 44.4 % of total exports being intraregional, an increase from 30.6% in 1990 and 39.9% in 1995. 69 The share of intra-ASEAN+3 imports was in 2006 as high as 42-94% for ASEAN members, and about 40% for the other three states.⁷⁰ The share of total exports is lower, and in 2006 the intraregional share of total imports was 34%.⁷¹ Among the ASEAN members the share was, with the exception of Cambodia, ranging from 37.3% - 73%, while it was 21.2% of China's total exports, 33.9% of Japan's, and 39.2% of South Korea's.⁷² In terms of total trade, ASEAN's trade with the other three states reached U.S.\$ 480.2 billion in 2008 (28.2% of ASEAN's total trade), to be compared with U.S.\$315.2 billion in 2005, U.S.\$ 187.8 in 2003, and U.S.\$154.465 in 1996 (respectively 25.6%, 22.8, and 25.1% of ASEAN's total trade).⁷³ China's part of ASEAN's trade with the plus three states has increased over time, from 8.6% in 1996 to 40.1% in 2008.⁷⁴

Economic integration and interdependence (EII) has both short term conflict prevention potentials and longer term peacebuilding capabilities. In the short term, it increases the cost of military conflict, as suggested by liberal theories. This has been an important incentive for the states to avoid confrontations or conflict escalation over, what is perceived as, non-essential issues in the SCS. With the increased EII, the problems in the SCS have simply become less central on the agenda.⁷⁵ The benefits of economic cooperation simply overshadow the problems in the SCS. Since none of the parties wants to risk undermining the benefits from economic cooperation by triggering an escalation of conflict in the South China Sea, conflict avoidance becomes the preferred path. (Cf. chapter 3; the Taiwan Issue is seen as essential and hence cost of conflict does not have the same impact.) For longer term peacebuilding, EII has been important in promoting conditions conducive to peace, both by itself and through spill over effects. It has been important as a driving force for regionalisation and the institutionalisation thereof. The EII has also paved way for different forms of elite interactions (see "Elite interactions" above). In line with functionalist predictions, the economic sphere can be understood as the engine that intensifies other non-economic regionalisation processes. As observed by one senior analyst in a Chinese government think-tank, "[a]ll East Asian countries take East Asian economic cooperation as [a] first step in the East Asian community building process."⁷⁶ That is, it works as an important platform for East Asian identity building, and thus, in turn, impacts how the participants perceive, and behave, towards each other, and how they construct their interests.

Interaction in the economic sphere has built trust and understanding, which has spread to other more sensitive issue areas. This applies both through spill over, as predicted by functionalist theories (although there have been no infringement on sovereignty), and through trust and understanding on a more informal and personal level, which is important for successful negotiation and communication.

⁶⁹ Data from statistical yearbook for Asia and the Pacific (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2009: 159 Table 21.7 Intraregional trade).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Data from ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2008 (ASEAN Secretariat 2009: 78-79 Table V.12. ASEAN Trade by Country of Destination, 1995-2008).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Interview with member of government think tank, Shanghai, China, 15 Dec 2006.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

4.3.4 Building trust and transforming relations between China and ASEAN and in the South China Sea

In sum, the SCS can be understood as a manifestation of Sino-ASEAN relations. The developments towards a durable peace in the SCS have occurred in parallel with the progression of the overall Sino-ASEAN relations and the greater East Asian regionalisation process. The regionalisation has transformed relations in the region, including how the states perceive each other and construct their interests. The relative importance of the conflicts in the SCS on the greater Sino-ASEAN agenda has thus decreased and conflict avoidance has become the preferred path. The importance of the SCS has been downplayed, and the shared interest of ensuring a peaceful resolution has been emphasised.

There have also been nascent developments towards a shared regional identity, as a result of the increasingly deep integration and the active work for an "East Asian community". These developments have altered the ideational and normative structures within Sino-ASEAN relations, which have made possible a re-assessment of interests with regard to the SCS and in how these interests are being pursued. In theoretical terms, the identity building process has affected how the actors define their interests, how they perceive their counterparts, and how they behave. These types of changes do occur, and has already done so in the case study, regardless of whether the "regional identity building" exercise is successful. The process itself has altered the social identities of the parties, given that identities are continuously being reconstructed. The identities, in turn, influence interest, perceptions, and behaviour. That said, the greater the development of common norms and values, the better for peace. So far, the process has been moving in a positive direction. This follows the theoretical logic presented in chapter 1, and has, in this chapter, been illustrated empirically by the transformation of perceived interests, perceptions, and behaviour in the SCS and in Sino-ASEAN relations. Indeed, the changes in the early 2000s, when China signed the TAC and the 2002 declaration on the SCS are clear examples of this.

The general acceptance and institutionalisation of the "ASEAN-way" is key here, as it captures the ideational and normative transformations that has taken place. The regional integration and interdependence, in the economic and other spheres, have also created an incentive for avoiding confrontation. Conflict avoidance as a result of high financial costs is indeed predicted by liberal peace theory. More important, however, is the cost of losing the mutual trust that has tediously been build up through the Sino-ASEAN engagement process. This newly developed trust forms the basis of Sino-ASEAN relations, and great efforts are taken by both sides to ensure continuous positive relations.

4.4 The U.S. factor

Strategic thinkers of varying schools of thought have all argued that the U.S. has played a role in the South China Sea, although they differ in their interpretation of the American influence. From a constructivist perspective, "reality is created by perception".⁷⁷ Consequently, "... the U.S. is thought to be important and is [therefore] induced with centrality [and the] U.S. might is

⁷⁷ Interview with East Asian expert, United Kingdom, 10 Jan 2008.

assumed."⁷⁸ One important effect of the perception of the U.S. as a safeguard against a rising China is that it has given rise to a feeling of security within ASEAN. This has created more space for ASEAN to "constructively engage" China, as the feeling of security has limited the fear of becoming more dependent on China. It has also been beneficial for China in its attempts to engage the ASEAN without creating fears about its intentions. However, the development of Sino-ASEAN relations since the late 1990s shows that the importance of the U.S. based security should not be overestimated.⁷⁹ Arguably, the EII and the APT-process have, at least partially, undermined the role of the U.S. as a source of security.

The perception of the U.S. as a central and powerful actor is similar to the view of the U.S. in the Taiwan case. It is best understood as having created a framework for acceptable behaviour among the regional states, which constrains and influence their behaviour. There is no question about U.S. military superiority, but as the U.S. interest arguably is limited to the preservation of the status quo in the region, its involvement can only be expected in extreme cases.⁸⁰ Indeed, in the case of the South China Sea, the U.S. has not recognized any of the claims of the parties, and there are no commitments to peace beyond a potential intervention if the situation in the SCS would endanger the freedom of navigation. Furthermore, the U.S. is reluctant to get involved beyond conflict prevention, and it has done little to resolve the underlying issues.⁸¹ This lack of interests was made clear when the U.S. declined to offer its Philippine ally support during the 1995 Mischief Reef incident.(Storey 2007).

The U.S. did have an indirect impact during the 1990s, when the SCS conflict was at its most critical level. It did, during this period, work as a stabilising force by its effort to prevent an escalation into war, as argued by, for example, Stein Tønnesson and Liselotte Odgaard (Odgaard and Tønnesson 2001). Moreover, Odaard points to a direct link between U.S. force reduction and Chinese offensive behaviour (Odgaard 1999). Since Sino-ASEAN relations were transformed in the later 1990s, the U.S. has been of little, or no, importance for the developments in the SCS. Put simply, since then, the intensity level of the SCS conflict has not corresponded to a real risk of an escalation large enough to trigger a U.S. reaction.

When assessing the underlying explanations for the lack of war during the 1990s, it should be remembered that the Chinese military was still relatively weak. Most importantly in the South China Sea context, China had at the time no blue water capability. Consequently, it lacked capacity for any long term forward presence in the case of a conflict in the South China Sea. Thus, it is highly questionable if China would have been able to secure the far away area

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ These observations are also in line with the findings of a survey conducted in 2006 on 150 strategic thinkers from the U.S., Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea. The study found that China was perceived as the most likely threat to Asian peace and security in the coming 10 years. However, although China was perceived as the main threat, in the responses from the ASEAN members (Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore) China's average was about 22%, compared with its overall weighted average of 38%. In fact, among the ASEAN respondents China had a small overweight in respondents who considered it the greatest force for peace and stability as opposed to the main threat. (Gill, Green et al. 2009)

⁸⁰ Interviews with strategic thinkers in China Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007, Sep 2007, Jul - Dec 2008; Taipei Mar - May 2007; Hong Kong Dec 2007; South Korea Feb - Mar 2008; United Kingdom Oct 2007 - Jun 2008).

⁸¹ Interview with East Asian security expert, United Kingdom, 8 Nov 2008. (Also see "The U.S. factor" in chapter 3.)

including the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands.⁸² In conclusion, it is far from certain that the dispute would have escalated into war in a counterfactual scenario without the U.S. presence. This is thus a valid argument even without taking into account the Chinese foreign policy priority of economic growth and prosperity and its effort to project itself as a peacefully rising power.

4.5 Conclusion

In terms of peace, the SCS and the Sino-ASEAN relations have, in the period from 1990 to 2008, turned from being Southeast Asia's next flashpoint, to a relatively stable peace. The stability of the peace is dependent on how much faith one puts into the 2002 "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea", and the success of the East Asian regionalisation and community building processes. The assessment here is that the Sino-ASEAN relations have transformed and that in the current scenario, war is becoming more and more unthinkable. Some issues remain unresolved, but the positive relations have built solid conditions conducive for peace. Central to this assessment is the tediously built trust between China and ASEAN, the institutionalised regionalisation through the APT process, and the acceptance of the "ASEAN-way". In the SCS, specifically, peace is best understood as situated between the unstable and stable level. Indeed, "the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations" of the parties (Boulding 1978: 13), but at the same time the tensions are not so high as to define it as unstable peace according to Michael Lund's definition ("a situation in which tension and suspicion among parties run high but violence is either absent or only sporadic") (1996: 39). Furthermore, when understood as a manifestation of Sino-ASEAN relations, which is the position in this dissertation, the SCS tilts towards a stable peace.

In this case study, two interlinked processes with substantial peace impact have been identified: elite interactions (track two diplomacy and personal networks) and regionalisation (economic integration and interdependence and the progression of Sino-ASEAN *rapprochement*, Chinese acceptance of multilateralism, and the institutionalisation of peaceful Sino-ASEAN relations through the APT process).

Firstly, the proliferation of elite interactions has been important for both conflict prevention and longer term peacebuilding. The track two frameworks have played an important role for the enhancement of understandings and the building of confidence and trust since the end of the Cold War. In this context, the role of the track two processes for network building and as a facilitator for elite socialisation is obvious. The elite interactions have built mutual understanding and trust among the regional elites and leaders. It has also altered both how they perceive each other, and how East Asia as a region is perceived. This has been an important component for the building of a shared (regional) identity among the elites. The interactions have also created a platform for direct conflict prevention and pre- and back-channel negotiations, by creating the trust, channels, and settings needed for such measures. The track two frameworks have also worked as an important catalyst for regional cooperation. Regional cooperation has, in turn, had a positive spill

⁸² During the 1990s, there was a vivid debate on the level of Chinese military power, including whether China had capabilities to secure its SCS claims with military force. For an example of a, at the time, typical analysis of the Chinese military capabilities and whether they were suitable for the geographical reality in the SCS see Gallagher 1994.

over effect on the ability to prevent conflict and build peace in the SCS. For example, without enhanced regional cooperation, China would not have accepted the inclusion of the SCS conflict on the agenda in multilateral settings. Regarding the SCS, the informal SCS workshops played an essential role, in particular during the critical 1990s period, when they promoted cooperation and confidence building among the parties. They were also essential for increasing the understanding between the parties at a time when there were otherwise limited interaction. The SCS workshops did, together with the increasingly thick web of track two frameworks in the rest of East Asia, work as a frame for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the SCS. The workshops can, in this respect, be understood as pre-negotiations and a forum for policy innovation for future track one negotiations and/or agreements. Through the workshops, continued inter-party dialogues could be assured and, thereby, the hopes for an eventual peaceful resolution kept alive.

The Sino-ASEAN and East Asian regionalisation process has been building a nascent stable peace both between China and the ASEAN, and in the SCS. It is, in a Galtungian sense, a concrete example of how negative relations are minimised by increasing the level of positive relations (Galtung 1967: 14). The Sino-ASEAN case is, in this respect, much further ahead than the relations across the Taiwan Strait. Over time, the regionalisation process has transformed the perceptions, interests, and identities in China and within the ASEAN. This has been a reciprocal process whereby the regionalisation process and the new engagement policies in both China and the ASEAN have been mutually reinforcing. This transformation is the result of a policy focus on economic growth and development in both China and among the ASEAN members. This economic policy has, together with a very strong regionalisation process, been building conditions for peace, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence in East Asia. The institutionalisation of the APT process, and the general acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" as the framework and guiding principle for inter-state relations in East Asia has been highly significant for this transformation. This way, peaceful relations have been institutionalised, and common diplomatic practices accepted. Together, this has created a feeling of security across the region. Of particular importance for conflict prevention and peacebuilding are features of conflict avoidance and face saving, which are among the characteristics of the "ASEAN-way". This has allowed the concerned states to focus on positive relations while "avoiding" the conflict-ridden issues and aspects of the relations. When applied to the SCS, these developments have created strong incentives to avoid an escalation of the conflict, and a preference to leave it for the future (i.e. conflict avoidance).

The combination of elite interaction and regionalisation has successfully transformed the way China and ASEAN perceives and behave towards each other. The development of shared identities is seen most clearly in the identification with the "ASEAN-way", and in the shared goal of transforming EII and the APT process into an East Asian community. There are also certain shared identities that resemble the developments in the Taiwan case, such as the common goal of economic growth and the development and a belief in free trade/market principles. These shared identities exist both on a collective and individual level. The transformation of perceptions and behaviour is particularly obvious in the shifting view of China - from threat, to partner – by the ASEAN and its members.⁸³ The combination of "comprehensive engagement" by the ASEAN

⁸³ That said, the ASEAN remains cautious about this "partnership" as there are still doubts about the Chinese intentions, and the perception of China as a threat has yet to be erased completely from Southeast Asia.

vis-à-vis China, and China's "soft power" approach with the aim of becoming accepted as a responsible regional power (including taking others interest into account and to accept multilateral engagement with its neighbours) has been highly important for this transformation of perception. Here, the trust building process is, in itself, a peacebuilding mechanism, as it increases positive relations and builds conditions for a stable peace. Moreover, it is also a mechanism for conflict prevention since the risk of quickly losing its tediously built trust gives China a strong incentive to avoid actions that could be perceived as threatening by the ASEAN. These transformations and identities work as a structure, which defines acceptable state behaviour, how behaviour and interests are to be communicated and legitimised, and what's within the realm of possible behaviour in the first place. In addition, as a result of the engagement, both parties' ability to cooperate has been substantially enhanced.

Lastly, the United States has been important for generating a feeling of security in Southeast Asia, thereby creating space for the ASEAN to engage China and vice versa. The U.S. has also been important for the post-September 11 push for building closer ties between China and ASEAN, which at least partially was a response to new U.S. policies. In this way, the U.S. has indirectly been a positive force for the regionalisation process and for peace. It has also, which resembles its role in the Taiwan case, created a framework for acceptable behaviour among the regional actors. However, the impact has, in this case, been more limited, as its commitment has been both limited and ambiguous. With the exception of the SCS in the 1990s, the relations between the conflicting parties have been at a level where their behaviour does not endanger U.S. interests and the risk for an American interference has thus been limited.

5 The Korean nuclear conflict and the role of China

In this chapter, a range of different processes and mechanisms that can help explain the relative peace in the Korean Peninsula are identified. The chapter analyses why the Korean nuclear conflict has been prevented from escalating into war, and why at the same time there are signs of more positive relations. While the Korean nuclear conflict is a case where crisis has been the normal state of affairs, there has been a lack of success in resolving the nuclear issue. Instead, focus has been on short term attempts to prevent conflict escalation and/or on management of crises. At the same time there is an ongoing, underlying peacebuilding process promoting the creation of conditions for peace in the Korean peninsula. This process has largely been the result of intentional actions, including pressure on North Korea to open up, and confidence-building measures undertaken in particular by South Korea and China, as well as an unintentional spill-over effect from non-peace related activities, such as grey area cross-border trade and functional cooperation.

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the Korean nuclear conflict, including a review of its historical background and the main course of events in the post-Cold War period. The remaining parts of the chapter (sections 2 to 6) are structured around a number of central factors that have been identified, both in the analyses of the collected material and in previous research. Section two focuses on the role of China in the Korean nuclear conflict, with an emphasis on the personal networks among the Chinese and North Korean elites and the overall Chinese influence on North Korea in terms of policy and negotiation behaviour. The third section focuses specifically on the Chinese role as a mediator and the six-party talks, the region's only formalised framework for conflict management. Section four analyses the role of U.S. policy. Section five explores the impact of economic integration and interdependence, including both official and unofficial cross-border trade. Section six analyses the impact of elite interactions and people-to-people contact, including the peace impact of deliberate engagement measures, interactions through different functional cooperation, training and academic exchange, as well as interactions resulting from un- and semi-official cross border trade. In the final section (seven), all of these processes and mechanisms are analysed together.

5.1 The Korean nuclear conflict

North Korea has since long been at the centre of international attention due to its attempts to develop nuclear weapons and its aggressive posture in international and regional affairs. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a fear in the region and internationally of the security consequences of North Korea acquiring nuclear capability. A nuclear North Korea does increase

the risk of nuclear proliferation in East Asia, as a failure to de-nuclearise North Korea may create a dangerous chain reaction resulting in Japan and South Korea, and possible even Taiwan, going nuclear (Shi 2008). In addition, nuclear proliferation in East Asia would also risk undermining the global non-proliferation treaty. The results of international efforts to manage the North Korean issue have so far been mediocre, and the commitments from North Korea could at best be said to be erratic. Despite its isolation and social and economic problems, North Korea has continuously used a brinkmanship approach to foreign relations and negotiations with the outside world, and it has consistently violated established agreements. It is not only North Korea's behaviour that has been inconsistent. Also Washington's North Korea policy has been fluctuating, and it has often been less than cooperative. This has worried North Korea's neighbours, including Pyongyang's only ally, China.

The main issue in the Korean nuclear conflict concerns nuclear proliferation, and more specifically how to bring about a North Korean de-nuclearisation. It is a conflict between North Korea and the United States, rooted in the Korean War that ended in with a cease-fire agreement in 1953. China and South Korea are also central actors in the conflict. South Korea would be directly affected by a war on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea is also directly involved through an intra-Korean engagement policy, including extensive trade and aid to North Korea. China is central both strategically and through its role as an ally with strong historical ties to North Korea. As a major regional power bordering North Korea, China has also a strategic interest in the developments on the Korean Peninsula. China has also been a central actor in the moves towards peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict, including being the facilitator of the six-party talks. In addition, China has a special relationship with North Korea, and its influence within both the political and economic spheres in North Korea is substantial (see "The role of China in the Korean nuclear crisis" below).

5.2 Historical background¹

China and Korea have a long historical relationship that has been marked by occupation, cultural exchanges, warfare, and cooperation.² For more than 2000 years, Chinese and Mongolian people have moved to the Korean peninsula, sometimes as refugees, sometimes as conquerors. The Chinese defeat of Choson in 107 B.C. was the first real substantial contact between the Koreans and the Chinese empire, which would expand into a close relationship over the following centuries. In 1910, the Chinese were expelled from Korea by the Japanese. Korea was under Japanese rule until the Japanese capitulation in 1945, when the victorious Soviet Union and the U.S. split the Korean Peninsula along the 38th parallel. While the United Nations (UN) planned

¹ For this background a range of sources have been used, including a number of U.S. Congress Reports (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2005, 2007; Nikitin 2007; Niksch 2006, 2008; Perl and Nanto 2007), reports from the International Crisis Group (2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), and Don Oberdorfer's "The Two Koreas: a contemporary history" (2001). The background until 2004 draws on Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b. In addition, the International Crisis Group's "CrisisWatch" database on the Korean Nuclear issue (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2937&l=1>, accessed 5 August 2009) and the Arms Control Association "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy" (<http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>, accessed 5 August 2009) have been used.

² On China's historical role in the Korean Peninsula see e.g. Fairbank and Goldman 2006.

for an election to determine the status of the peninsula, Kim Il-Sung decided to invade the South (Catchpole 2000). Despite a great deal of reluctance to participate in the war, China felt forced to assist the communist regime in its war against the U.S. In October 1950, Chinese "voluntary" troops crossed the Yalu River into the Korean Peninsula. The Korean War lasted three years before it ended with a cease-fire between North Korea and the U.S. in 1953. Since then, a four kilometre wide area along the Military Demarcation Line, which divides North and South Korea, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), has separated North- and South Korea. During the rest of the Cold War, the Korean Peninsula was an issue of influence and security, and international and domestic political prestige. It was caught in a realist nightmare of increased military spending, insecurity and unpredictability and the options for a resolution of the dispute were few.

5.2.1.1 The Post-Cold war and the 1st Korean nuclear crisis (1990-1994)

With the end of the Cold War, the situation in the Korean Peninsula changed. Both China and the U.S. dismantled their ideological rhetoric and China has since been focused on economic development including cooperation with the capitalist world and improving its relations with the United States (Naughton 1984; Ross 1984; Swanström 2001). In 1992, it abolished its barter system for bilateral trade with North Korea (Jian 2003: 9). China also decreased its energy support, something which hit North Korea very hard. The post-Cold War policy changes thus made Pyongyang doubt the level of Chinese protection. At about the same time, Pyongyang began to question the validity of its mutual defence pact with Moscow, as Russia, the inheritor of the Soviet Union, opened up diplomatic relations with South Korea and tried to improve its relations with the U.S. As a response to the new situation, Pyongyang decided to accelerate its own nuclear program (Nikitin 2007). This was the beginning of an escalating game of crisis diplomacy and brinkmanship negotiations, a crisis that still has not been resolved.

To understand the diplomatic behaviour of North Korea since 1990, there is need to understand its unique underlying domestic situation. North Korea's behaviour is based on a unique combination of Confucianism and a distorted form of Marxist-Leninism (Cornell 2002). In combination with its almost total isolation, this has resulted in chaos and the creation of a surrealistic perception of the world and North Korea's role in it. North Korea considers itself having reached the highest form of political thought, and the leaders in Pyongyang perceive themselves as being morally and politically superior to the outside world. The system becomes impenetrable against criticism as it is based on what is perceived as scientific truths and a hierarchical world based on Confucianism where the leaders cannot be questioned. As a result of the self-chosen isolation and a perception of the external world as an ignorant oddity that has not understood the teachings of Kim Il-Sung, the North Korean elite is ignorant of the outside world, but at the same time maintains a strong feeling of vulnerability for an environment they do not understand. (Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b)

In the early 1990s, the Korean conflict escalated. At the time, the U.S. refused to negotiate with Pyongyang without involving South Korea. Including South Korea was seen as unacceptable by Pyongyang, who wanted bi-lateral negotiations with the U.S. At the same time, President Roh Tae-woo pursued an engagement policy towards its Northern brother ("Nordpolitik") which separated between economics and politics.³ These mixed policies from South Korea and its U.S.

³ On Nordpolitik see Kim 2006: 53-55; Oberdorfer 2001: 186-192.

ally, in combination with an implicit backing from Beijing, gave Pyongyang leverage. The leverage was maximised, and for each concession Pyongyang received in the negotiations with Washington or Seoul, it consequently raised its demands even higher. (See Snyder 1999 for an excellent and insightful analysis of North Korea's negotiation behaviour.) The conflict peaked with Pyongyang's announcement on March 12, 1993 that it intended to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Oberdorfer 2001: 279-80).

In the negotiations during what has come to be referred to as the 1st nuclear crisis, the international community appealed to China to pressure Pyongyang into changing its position.⁴ However, China preferred to maintain a low profile, instead wielding its influence through hidden channels. The Chinese reluctance to get publically involved limited Pyongyang's willingness to negotiate and make concessions. It also limited the possibility for either U.S. or the international community to convincingly threaten Pyongyang with sanctions. Prior to 1993, Beijing had been actively against any pressure towards North Korea. But with the increased importance of its relations with the U.S. and its regional neighbours, combined with an increasing frustration with North Korea's positions and brinkmanship games, Beijing started to change this previously absolute position. China agreed to become a messenger between Pyongyang and Washington.⁵ Beijing also made the unprecedented move to become openly involved in the North Korean negotiations by abstaining from, rather than blocking, a Security Council resolution calling for North Korea to change its position on the nuclear issue. This was the beginning of a Chinese change in policy on the possible use of coercive measures towards North Korea. In Pyongyang, frustration was growing, as Beijing no longer seemed to give its complete and unconditional support.

When this serious and acute crisis erupted, the Clinton administration had yet to consolidate power. Eventually Clinton decided to reverse previous policy and accepted to negotiate directly with Pyongyang. During the first formal negotiations in New York in June 1993, the parties agreed on a joint statement suspending North Korea's withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in exchange for U.S. security assurances and an agreement to continue the dialogue "on an equal and unprejudiced basis" (Nautilus Institute 2009). At first, the negotiations were limited to the nuclear issue, but over time expanded to include other areas. This change was part of the Clinton administration's change from a limited step-by-step approach, as preferred by Bush Sr., to focusing on a "through and broad" (comprehensive) approach for solving the crisis in the Korean peninsula (Oberdorfer 2001: 296; Wit, Poneman et al. 2004: 112).⁶

Nevertheless, the crisis continued to escalate, and by the summer of 1994, the United States was at the brink of war with North Korea. Clinton approved the dispatch of reinforcements to Korea, and plans were prepared for attacking the North's nuclear weapons facilities. The turning point came through a private diplomatic initiative by former President Jimmy Carter, who travelled to Pyongyang in June securing a personal pledge from Kim Il Sung to freeze North Korea's nuclear

⁴ UN Security Council, Resolution 825 (1993). Beijing still opposed the use of sanctions and coercive measures to get North Korea back in line with its obligation in accordance with the NPT.

⁵ For an in depth description of the course of events between March 1993 and July 1995 see Wit, Poneman et al. 2004.

⁶ For an in-depth review of the Clinton approach to North Korea see e.g. Berry 1995.

program and to discuss dismantlement of reactors and reprocessing plant with the United States (Sigal 1998: 132).

5.2.1.2 The 1994-2001 Momentum and the Build-up to the 2nd Nuclear Crisis

Delegations from the U.S. and North Korea held negotiations on an overall resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula in Geneva in the autumn of 1994. These negotiations led to the signing of the "Geneva Agreed Framework", under which North Korea agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its nuclear program. The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Fund was created to implement the key provisions of the agreement. A period of relative calm followed, and the North Koreans' interaction with the outside world focused on dialogue and engagement as opposed to confrontation. (For details on the framework see Oberdorfer 2001: 357.)

In 1998, the nuclear conflict re-escalated as Korean Peninsula Energy Development Fund (KEDO) failed to fulfil its undertakings.⁷ In retaliation, North Korea threatened to "open and readjust" its Yongbyon nuclear facilities and launch a rocket over Japan. Washington decided to send former Secretary of Defence William J. Perry to Pyongyang. Pyongyang was intrigued by Perry's suggestion of step-by-step trying to develop the strained relations in a positive direction (Oberdorfer 2001: 420-23). The positive development continued for the rest of Clinton's administration. At this time, inter-Korean relations were also progressing with Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine policy", which aimed to open up the North through engagement and gradually change its system (Levin and Han 2002: esp. ch. 3).

With the installation of George W. Bush's in January 2001, the détente that had been reached during the Clinton administration was reversed. Contrary to his predecessor, Bush embraced a hawkish position with regard to North Korea. He shifted from the previously used, and by Pyongyang preferred, comprehensive approach, to a strategy that tackled the issues step-by-step and rewarded actual progress. The new strategy was seen by Pyongyang as being "unilateral and conditional in its nature and hostile in its intention" (KCNA 2001). The revised policy was also the opposite of the South Korean sunshine policy, which made South Korea and the U.S. lose common ground, which was used by North Korea (Feffer 2003).

The Washington-Pyongyang relationship continued to deteriorate when President Bush included North Korea in the "axis of evil" in his January 2002 State of the Union address, and showed his personal animosity for Kim Jong-Il by calling him a "pygmy" and "a spoiled child" (Fineman 2002). The magnitude of the latter shall be understood in perspective of Kim Jong-Il's almost god-like status in North Korea.

In October 2002, the conflict turned into a full-blown crisis, after North Korea admitted to having a secret uranium enrichment program (Kerr 2002).⁸ North Korea announced that it would restart the Yongbyon nuclear facilities that had been frozen since 1994 and that it would withdraw from the Non-Proliferation treaty (NPT) in January 2003. The stage was now set once again for imminent U.S. military actions against North Korea. At this point, Beijing became the key player. Both the U.S. and North Korea were seeking Chinese backing for their respective positions.

⁷ For a presentation of KEDO see footnote 94.

⁸ U.S. intelligence had suspected that North Korea had such a program, although this does not decrease the diplomatic impact of this statement.

Having become increasingly frustrated with Pyongyang for creating a situation that continued to escalate seemingly without taking any consideration of Chinese interests, Beijing increased its pressure on Pyongyang in 2003. High-level delegations were sent to Pyongyang and vice versa, and the Chinese message was clear: stop the provocations or suffer the consequences (Fong 2003; Pomfret 2004).

The Chinese pressure ultimately led to a trilateral meeting held in Beijing in April 2003 (Deng 2008: 206; Pritchard 2007: 62-65). This meeting was cancelled after the head of the North Korean delegation told James Kelly that North Korea already had nuclear weapons (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2005: 24; Pritchard 2007: 65). This incident made China more open to deal with North Korea in a more coercive manner. On 1 August 2003, the Chinese did manage, by informal pressure, to convince North Korea to participate in what was going to become the first round of six-party talks in Beijing (Deng 2008: 206-07).⁹

5.2.1.3 The era of the six-party talks and the 3rd Nuclear Crisis (2003 - 2008)¹⁰

From the end of the first six-party talks in August 2003, to the second half of 2004, the Korean conflict was relatively stable. By the summer of 2004, the main stumbling blocks were the U.S. demand for "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" (CVID) of North Korea's nuclear capabilities (Kihl and Kim 2006: 153; Manyin, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2005: 41), and the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) discovery of uranium in Libya that reportedly originated in North Korea (Sanger and Broad 2004). In September 2004, North Korea said that it had turned plutonium from 8,000 spent fuel rods into nuclear weapons (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2007: 27-28), which only escalated the negative developments. In February 2005, North Korea announced that it had "manufactured nuclear weapons for self-defence" and would "suspend participation in the six-party talks for an indefinite period" (Text of Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on nuclear weapons. KCNA, Pyongyang, Feb. 10 2005 in Manyin, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2007: 28).

On July 8 2005, North Korea announced that it was ready to return to the six party talks, and a fourth round was held from July to September (Kwak and Joo 2006: ch. 2). This round was a breakthrough resulting in a joint statement where North Korea promised to give up its nuclear weapons and programs in return for energy assistance and security guarantees from the other five parties. Once again, problems soon arose when North Korea said it would not abandon its nuclear program until it was given a civilian reactor. A further problem that would haunt the process arose in September when Washington froze U.S.\$ 25 million of North Korean assets that were deposited at Banco Delta in Macao. This problem turned out to be a major stumbling block since North Korea refused to shut down its Nuclear Facilities until the money was released (International Crisis Group 2007: 3-4; Joo and Kwak 2007; Lague and Greenlees 2007; Teng 2008). After a visit to North Korea by Chinese President Hu Jintao in October, a fifth round of

⁹ Russia was included in the negotiations as a concession to North Korea that refused to agree to a negotiation where the U.S. and its allies have a numerical advantage over China and North Korea. Russia was believed, by North Korea, to be more supportive of their situation than any of the U.S. allies and a negotiation including Russia would therefore be more balanced. (For an in-depth review of the origins of the six-party talks see Pritchard 2007: 88-111.)

¹⁰ For a detailed review of the six-party talks see e.g. Deng 2008: 202-14; Pritchard 2007: ch. 5-12. For different national perspectives see special issue of Asian Perspective in North Korea and regional security (Asian Perspective 2008).

six-party talks were held 9-11 November 2005, but little progress was made (Lai 2008: 52; Pritchard 2007: ch. 8).

In July 2006, North Korea test fired several missiles into the Sea of Japan.¹¹ This action was taken despite pleas from China, Japan, and South Korea to cancel the launch. As a reaction, the UN Security Council, including China, unanimously voted to impose sanctions on North Korea and even South Korea suspended its food aid. Tensions continued to increase and speculations about a coming North Korean nuclear test circulated. These speculations turned out to be correct and the conflict broke new levels on 9 October 2006 when North Korea made its first nuclear test (International Crisis Group 2006b). This was the worst nightmare come true. It escalated fears of instability both in the Korean Peninsula and in the broader region. Furthermore, the test was seen by the Chinese as a slap in their face (Zhu 2007: 83-87). North Korea had not only passed the red line, but also embarrassed China in front of the whole world. The test was going to change the Chinese approach to North Korea, as North Korea had made clear that it does not at all take Chinese national interests into consideration.¹²

China now decided to even support the UN Security Council to impose financial and arms sanctions on North Korea.¹³ At the same time, Beijing worked hard to restart the fifth round of the six-party talks, including organising meetings between U.S. and North Korean envoys in Beijing. In December, China succeeded and the fifth round was resumed. During the five days of talks held 18 - 22 December in Beijing, little progress was made as North Korea refused to discuss dismantlement of its nuclear program before its frozen funds in Banco Delta Asia were released. These problems were resolved during a surprise bilateral meeting between North Korea and the United States in Berlin 16-18 January 2007 (Lague and Greenlees 2007). It was now possible to conclude the fifth round and in talks, which were held 8 - 13 February 2007, and an agreement was reached whereby North Korea shut down its Yongbyon reactor in return for aid and diplomatic concessions.¹⁴

Since the 2007 agreement, there have been a number of missed deadlines, but overall the progress of the Korean nuclear conflict has (until spring 2008) been positive.¹⁵ The major change is that all parties have become relatively flexible and constructive. Not least the U.S. has been treating the North Koreans with the respect they seek. For example, the U.S. top envoy Christopher Hill made a two-day visit to Pyongyang 21-22 June 2007 (Kessler 2007), and President Bush sent letters to Kim Jong-Il in December the same year (Spetalnick and Pelofsky 2007). This is to mention but two examples of how the U.S. approach has changed since Bush's first term 2001 - 2004. Also China's role as a facilitator and mediator has changed, as it pressures North Korea more as a consequence of the nuclear test. This is not to say that all is good on the Korean Peninsula, but since the nuclear test, a common flexible carrot and stick approach has been

¹¹ On the North Korean missile program see e.g. International Crisis Group 2009b.

¹² Interviews with experts on Sino-North Korean relations at Chinese government think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

¹³ Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006), adopted on 14 October 2006 (S/RES/1718 (2006)).

¹⁴ On 5th round of six-party talks see e.g. Lai 2008. The details of the 2007 agreement are listed in International Crisis Group 2009a: 2.

¹⁵ For a review of the post-2007 developments, see International Crisis Group 2009a or the Arms Control Association's "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy" (continuously updated) (<http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>, accessed 5 August 2009).

applied. The flexibility, in the sense of not always making a worst case scenario reading of North Korean behaviour, combined with the new ability of the five parties to agree upon, and coordinate, a seemingly shared position towards North Korea, has made a big difference. Central factors are thus U.S. flexibility, China's new level of acceptance of punishment – there is now a sincerely fed up ally - and South Korea's willingness to also use the stick.¹⁶

5.3 The role of China in the Korean nuclear crisis

Despite China not being a party to the nuclear crisis, it is generally accepted that China is a key factor in any resolution of the Korean conflict. China's role for peace can be traced to the combined force of its links to, and influence on, the North Korean leadership, and its position as North Korea's sole ally. China has been North Korea's key provider of financial, food and energy support. China is also the only actor that can "protect" the North Korean regime from the risk of a U.S. invasion.¹⁷ As North Korea is a closed state with a bizarre outlook on the world, there is a great need for a non-threatening ally who can work as a facilitator, mediator, and channel of communication between North Korea and the outside world. As will be seen, even when not directly involved, China's behaviour has been important for how North Korea acts, as Pyongyang always takes China into consideration before taking actions. It does not always behave as China wants, but when China has been making serious moves against North Korea, it has eventually always altered its behaviour.

China has had an impact through a range of channels. Firstly, both the military and political leadership in China has strong historical relations to the North Korean leadership, including personal relationships and networks. The historical links and the personal networks have been utilised for, and enabled, influence on the developments in the Korean peninsula. In addition, without the trust and confidence built through long historical and personal relations, many of the other identified processes and mechanisms would not have existed, or at least have had a limited peace impact. Secondly, Beijing has had an ability to put informal pressure on, and send signals to, Pyongyang altering the North Korean behaviour and policy stance. Thirdly, Beijing has been working as a mediator in, and facilitator of, North Korea's negotiations and interactions with the outside world. This includes both bilateral Pyongyang – Washington negotiations and the multilateral six-party talks. Fourthly, China has created opportunities for the training of North Korean bureaucrats and scholars. This has increased North Korea's understanding of, and ability to engage with, the outside world. The last two points are analysed in separate sections below.

5.3.1 Personal leadership networks between Beijing and Pyongyang

China's close ties to the North Korean leadership, and its influence, can be traced back to close personal networks between the respective leaderships in combination with long historical relations, and a joint ideological struggle during the Cold War. During the Cold War, the ties between Beijing and Pyongyang were dominated by a discourse of "lips and teeth" solidarity

¹⁶ This observation was at the time of writing (September 2009) still valid. Despite a second nuclear test and UN resolutions, the observed flexibility and constructiveness have continued.

¹⁷ On Sino-North Korean relations and the Chinese influence on North Korea see e.g. Beck and Reader 2006a, 2006b; International Crisis Group 2006a; Kim and Lee 2002; Scobell 2004; Shulong and Xinzhu 2008; Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b; Zhu 2004.

(Jian 2003; Swanström and Weissmann 2004a, 2004b). There were close ties between the Chinese and North Korean leaders as they were both the product of the revolutionary movement.¹⁸ Kim Il-Sung himself even had close personal ties with the Chinese revolutionary leaders and many high-level military leaders who participated in the Korean War. His son and successor Kim Jong-Il does not enjoy close ties with the Chinese revolutionary leaders, and has no ties military leaders in China. With the fourth generation of Chinese leaders, the link became even weaker. There were no strong personal relations, a lack of joint ideology, and different policy priorities. China had moved to an "economic first" policy where economic development and opening-up to the non-communist world were seen as more important than its relations with North Korea and its leaders. In the post-Cold War period, the relations deteriorated further as a result of Pyongyang's brinkmanship games and, what China perceives to be, a total disregard for its national interests. Although the overall trend of relations has been negative, there appeared to be a warming of relations in the early 2000s (Hart 2001; Pollack 2001; Scobell 2004). At the time China and North Korea tried to be more cordial to each other, and the relationship between were characterised as "friendly" by top officials from the two sides (Scobell 2004: 5-6).

Still, there was a consensus among the interviewees in China, South Korea, and Europe that the links, albeit weakening over time, still are useful both to access the North Korean leadership, and to work as a channel of communication.¹⁹ This can, for example, be seen in the revival of high-level meetings since the early 2000s, including Kim Jong-Il visiting China and Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao visiting North Korea (Lai 2008: 52; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2003; Pritchard 2007: ch. 8). However, these meetings should not be perceived as the same as the previous personal relationships. This revival of meetings has more to do with China's new and more central role in mediating the conflict, than a rejuvenation of close inter-personal friendship between leaders in Beijing and Pyongyang.

The importance of personal relations between Beijing and Pyongyang was emphasised in interviews with experts in both China and South Korea.²⁰ The personal networks, together with strong historical ties, have been central to China's behaviour and actions towards North Korea. Through these networks, trust and understanding have been built. The ties have helped create a deeper understanding of the underlying thinking, needs, and perceived interests of the North Korean leaders. In turn, the combination of understanding and trust has created a Chinese ability to successfully influence the North Korean leadership, at least to a larger extent than any other actor.²¹ Trust and understanding has also made Beijing a good mediator, facilitator and channel of communication between North Korea and the outside world, and vice versa (see "Chinese mediation and the six-party talks" below). Beijing has, not only, access to the North Korean

¹⁸ The section on the development of close personal ties between the Chinese and North Korean leaders, from the Chinese war against the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, the Civil War in the 1940s, until the 1980s, is based on Ilpyong J. Kim's detailed review of interactions between the CCP and the Worker's Party of Korea (1998: esp. pp. 94-105).

¹⁹ Interviews with experts on Sino-North Korean relations in Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb, 4 Mar 2008. This was agreed upon by the interviewees in Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2007; Europe 2004-2008.

²⁰ Interviews with experts at government think tank, Shanghai, China, 12 May 2007; Seoul, South Korea, 4 Mar 2008.

²¹ Interviews with experts on Sino-North Korean relations, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008; Beijing, China, 6 Jun 2007; expert, government affiliated think tank, Seoul, South Korea, Mar 2008.

leaders, but also enjoys the trust needed for off-the record discussions, and the influence and understanding necessary to work as a good back-channel negotiator.

The personal networks have had a direct conflict prevention impact by allowing for communication between the conflicting parties. For example, without the Chinese networks, neither the initial trilateral meetings in Beijing 2003, nor the following six-party talks would have become a reality (see e.g. Pritchard 2007: esp. ch. 4-6). They have, through back-channel negotiations and mediation, made it possible to mitigate and resolve tensions and issues and to draw up and conclude agreements. The Chinese are the only ones in whom the North Koreans trust enough to open up for innovative discussions where real needs and intentions can be shared without commitment and with an acceptable risk for backlash. The links have also been of foremost importance to encourage and facilitate positive relations between the U.S. and North Korea.²² In conclusion, personal networks constitute an important part of China's ability to help prevent escalation to violence. As will be seen in the following sections, the personal networks are of foremost importance for China's ability to be a positive force for peace in the Korean peninsula.

5.3.2 Chinese influence over North Korea's behaviour, policy and negotiations

The relationship between North Korea and China has been a delicate game. When the Chinese does something, North Korea reacts. However, North Korea's reaction has not always been what China would have liked it to be, which in turn triggers a new reaction from China. Furthermore, North Korea has more often than not done something first that China disapproves of, and hence to which China's initial action was a reaction. This circular pattern makes it very difficult to assess China's exact level of influence over North Korea. The Chinese influence is best described as a result of the combined forces of close ties, personal networks between the two leaderships, and China's increasingly important role as North Korea's lifeline and *de facto* security guarantor. Over time, there has been a shift in the relative importance of the two. While personal relations and the Chinese willingness to be North Korea's ally have decreased, the North Korean dependence on China has increased. North Korea has become economically weaker, including developing a chronic energy and food shortage (see e.g. Choo 2008). For example, since the mid 1990s, China is reportedly providing 70 to 90 percent of North Korea's oil, and a third of its imports and food aid (Kim 2003b). This dependency is at least part of the reason why the fragile North Korea has responded so well to Chinese pressure – it simply cannot survive without China.²³

China's influence can also be traced to its role as a deterrent and provider of North Korean security. It is generally perceived as impossible that the U.S. would invade North Korea since it would risk a war with China,²⁴ or that Beijing would let the North Korean regime collapse.²⁵ Pyongyang is aware of this, and despite China being an increasingly reluctant ally, it trusts that

²² On the Chinese influence on U.S. policy, see e.g. Shambaugh 2003: 54-55.

²³ Interview with expert on Sino-North Korean relations, Beijing, Jun 2007; presentation by Chinese expert, Shanghai, China, 12 May 2007.

²⁴ On the "military option" and the role of China in such a contingency, see e.g. Bruner 2003; Moon and Bae 2004.

²⁵ See e.g. Scobell 2004: esp. pp. 45-48; Shambaugh 2003. The importance of avoiding a collapse of the North Korean regime has also been emphasised by all the Chinese interviewees (e.g. interviews with experts on Sino-North Korea relations in Beijing, June 2007; Fudan University, Shanghai, 18 Dec 2006).

China will not to allow either a collapse or a U.S. invasion. China is central for decreasing North Korea's feeling of insecurity as China is the only actor which North Korea feels it can trust (at least to some extent). Together with the personal links, this gives China strong leverage on North Korea. This is the case even without "lips and teeth" relations and a common ideology. Pyongyang's reliance on China as its sole ally and economic partner, together with the increasing influence China has as a major regional power, has given Beijing leverage and influence on all negotiations with North Korea. This is the case also after the relative decline of personal ties between the respective leaderships. This is not to say that the importance of informal networks has disappeared, even if their direct influence has decreased. Without the networks, China would not be able to utilise its leverage. Though difficult to measure, their influence will have impact on, or at the least constrain, the new leadership.

There was an agreement among the interviewees that only China can influence the decision makers in Pyongyang,²⁶ and that "the North Koreans will at least check with the Chinese before doing things".²⁷ This gives China a certain leverage to pressure Pyongyang and to work as a good mediator between Washington and Pyongyang. Exactly how much influence China has is difficult to assess. One Chinese expert with good insight in Sino-North Korean relations described China's influence over North Korea as "[s]ignificant, but far from decisive".²⁸ This quote summarises the aggregated findings from the analysis of the interviews undertaken with experts on Sino-North Korean relations in China and South Korea.²⁹

It should be emphasised that China officially claims to lack influence. The reason for China's claim is a combination of not wanting to raise the hopes of the international society and a real worry about how large the own influence actually is. There is also a fear of becoming a party to the conflict, rather than a helpful bystander. China is willing to help resolve the conflict, but it has consistently emphasised that the conflict is between North Korea and the United States, and that they have the ultimate responsibility to resolve the conflict. I should also be added that the Chinese have a general tendency to understate, rather than overstate, its power and influence out of modesty. However, China does, without question, maintain a certain level of influence by being North Korea's only door to the outside world, its major economic sponsor, and its security guarantee against U.S. military actions.

This said, China's leverage is limited by North Korea's realisation that China prefers a stable North Korea. This not only makes China oppose pressure to change the regime in North Korea, but also allows North Korea to conduct "brinkmanship" negotiations. Pyongyang feels that it can bet on China as a rescuer, or at the least to intervene before North Korea collapses. This realisation creates a problem, as it constrains China's mediation efforts and the effects of Chinese pressure. If China pushes too much, it does not have the wanted effect since North Korea counts

²⁶ Interviews with experts at government think tanks and universities in China, Jun 2006 - Jul 007; United Kingdom, Oct 2007 - Jun 2008; expert on Sino-North Korean relations, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

²⁷ Interview with China expert and policy adviser, United Kingdom, 12 Jun 2008.

²⁸ Interview with Chinese expert visiting Stockholm, Sweden, Apr 2005.

²⁹ Interviews with experts on Sino-North Korean relations (several of whom are personally involved in North Korea related activities) at government think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; policymakers and experts on Sino-North Korean relations, Seoul, South Korea, Feb-Mar 2008. An insightful Chinese perspective can be found in a number of conference papers by Prof. Zhu Feng (2004, 2007). There are also those who make a more critical assessment of the Chinese influence, see e.g. Kim and Kim 2008.

on China not to push it into collapse. On the other hand, if it pushes too little the U.S. complains that China could do more.³⁰ One Chinese interviewee described the situation as one where "[We] want to keep the North Korean government stable. We do not want it to collapse. ... [so when] the U.S. asked us to pressure harder, we said we need to keep talking, not pressure too hard."³¹

5.3.3 The Chinese influence and peace

China's role for peace can be most clearly identified in its direct actions taken to prevent conflict escalation during the three nuclear crises. During the first and second crisis, China's involvement was important to prevent an escalation into war. In the third crisis, it helped prevent an East Asian nuclear proliferation. China has been able to have a direct impact on the negotiations themselves, as well as on the two parties' behaviour and policies. The pattern here is similar to how the U.S. worked in the South China Sea and Taiwan cases. In particular, there are similarities with the Taiwan issue; where cross-strait relations are constrained and influenced by how U.S. policies and interests are interpreted. In the Korean nuclear conflict, China has created a structural framework that has been both constraining and influencing U.S. and North Korean behaviour and, over time, also influenced how they construct their interests. China's interests must be taken into account by both sides when constructing their own interests and deciding how to behave. In the case of the U.S., China's interest in protecting Pyongyang and its insistence on using a moderate approach has pressured the U.S. to move from a hard and unconditional stance, towards a more comprehensive and flexible approach.³² The U.S. has also had to change its goal of regime change. In the Pyongyang case, even if it is difficult to identify actual changes in interests, it is clear that its behaviour has been constrained and conditioned by how it has assessed the level and conditions of Chinese support.

China's impact through its informal pressure and signalling is most concrete in the second and third nuclear crises, but also to some extent in the first one. China was able to force North Korea to alter its policy, especially during its brinkmanship negotiations when Beijing opened up for sanctions and UN resolutions as a result of North Korea pushing too far. The longer-term peace effect of informal pressure and signalling is more problematic to trace. What is clear is that China can pressure North Korea to engage politically with the outside world to address the nuclear issue. The importance of getting North Korea to engage the outside world should not be underestimated, considering its isolation. In addition, China also has some influence in North Korea's negotiations with the outside world. Overall, China must be seen as positive for peace, as it has prevented the conflict from escalating into military confrontation during all three nuclear crises. It has been successful in breaking escalation spirals, and in initiating cooperation, communication, and agreements, which has mitigated and deescalated the conflict (at least temporarily).

³⁰ Presentation by Chinese scholar at workshop, Shanghai, China, 12-13 May 2007.

³¹ Interview with Chinese scholar involved in Sino-North Korean affairs, Shanghai, China, 12 May 2007.

³² The change in U.S. policy is a result of many factors, such as the U.S. being pre-occupied by its post-September 11 commitments in other areas (Xia 2006). This has increased its need for Chinese support in the Korean nuclear conflict, which in turn has made Washington more willing to accept the Chinese pre-conditions for mediating and pressuring North Korea.

5.3.3.1 The 1st nuclear crisis

In the negotiations during the first nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, the Chinese impact was both positive and negative. Without the Chinese influence, wielded through hidden channels, it would most likely have been impossible to convince North Korea to participate in negotiations or to find a formula for peace in the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework and the KEDO protocol. On the other hand, China's reluctance to pressure and punish North Korea limited the leverage of the international community, created space for North Korean brinkmanship negotiations, and limited Pyongyang's willingness to negotiate and make concessions. Beijing's policy also limited the possibility for either the U.S. or the international community to convincingly threaten Pyongyang with sanctions. It seems clear, however, that China's slight but important move to "possibly accept" coercive measures against North Korea did play an important part in forcing Pyongyang to reassess its level of support from China.

It is difficult to make a contra-factual analysis of the effects of more open pressure from Beijing, not least since much of China's pressure is unknown. At the time of the first crisis, China was not at all transparent and still very close to North Korea. This gave more influence, but also meant more secrecy regarding the process and actions. China's preference to maintain a low profile, wielding its influence through informal channels, was at least partially a recognition of the danger of forcing North Korea to negotiate under duress. China was, without question, central in preventing the conflict from escalating into a war, and China did urge North Korea to cooperate and rejoin the NPT treaty and to negotiate with the U.S. It also agreed in 1993 to become a messenger between Pyongyang and Washington (For an in depth description of the course of events between March 1993 to July 1995 see Wit, Poneman et al. 2004). At the time – in the aftermath of the Cold War – Pyongyang still viewed China as an ally and the North Korean leadership did feel confident enough to participate in negotiations even though frustration was growing, as Beijing no longer seemed to give them complete and unconditional support.

5.3.3.2 The 2nd nuclear crisis

During the second nuclear crisis in 2002, China was of utmost importance for preventing an escalation into military confrontation between the U.S. and North Korea. At the time, both North Korea and the U.S. were seeking Chinese backing for their respective positions, which gave China an unprecedented leverage. In addition, Beijing was increasingly frustrated with Pyongyang, which continued to escalate the crisis.³³ China combined back-channel negotiation and low-key shuttle diplomacy with an increased willingness to punish North Korea. The Chinese pressure ultimately led to a trilateral meeting held in Beijing 23-24 April.

Three months later, it was once again China that succeeded in convincing North Korea to participate in multilateral talks (what was to become the six-party talks) by using a combination of informal pressure, back-channel negotiations, and more explicit signals and threats. Before the talks, Chinese officials had discussed the possibility that China would not block American efforts to organise sanctions against North Korea through the United Nations Security Council if North Korea did not cede anything during the talks and proceeded with its nuclear program, it (Economist 2003a). This was a strong signal, as Pyongyang had previously made clear that this

³³ Beijing was also frustrated by Bush's hawkish approach to handling the crisis, as it was believed to only aggravate the situation.

would be the equivalent of a declaration of war (Economist 2003a). China also reinforced its military presence at the North Korean border.³⁴ The reason for this move was dual; firstly to protect China from the wave of refugees that could follow a possible destabilization of North Korea (Economist 2003b), but also to signal to Pyongyang that China both disapproved of its behaviour and perceived the situation to be most treacherous.

5.3.3.3 The 3rd nuclear crisis

Since the 2002 crisis, China has moved to "normal relations" with North Korea, implying that it has no unique relations to its northern neighbour anymore.³⁵ This should be understood as a combination of a signal for North Korea not to expect China to do what it wants, and a frustration with North Korea's behaviour. A leading Chinese expert described the problematic relations between China and North Korea as

"The country [North Korea], though with ties to Beijing "cemented in blood," has been a longstanding headache for China. The latent word unspoken publicly in Beijing being that "we are truly fed up with the puzzle that China's national security interests are relentlessly affected by the confrontational policies in the North["]; "it is [the] last time we put out a hand"." (Zhu 2004: 6)

At the same time as China was frustrated with North Korea, it was still hesitant about pressuring the country too much. There was a fear that harder pressure might cause problems, as "China does not want a quick collapse, but an incremental change".³⁶ Thus, China has continued to try using, as far as possible, informal channels to influence and pressure Pyongyang to de-nuclearise and open up.

While the historical "lips and teeth" relations and the historically strong informal networks have weakened over time, the Chinese leverage increased to unprecedented levels as it opened up for using different punitive measures. Combined with the new flexible approach of the U.S., and a South Korea that also starting to accept punishment, this enabled, for the first time, the parties to reach a common policy stand against North Korea within the six-party talks. This gave the talks new leverage, as it became possible to prevent the North Korean practice of playing in particular China, South Korea and the U.S. against each other, assuming that either China or South Korea would come to its rescue regardless of behaviour (see "The six-party talks" below).³⁷

To sum up, China's involvement has been central both to prevent war at times of crisis, and for efforts to build peace. It is the links and influence of the Chinese that has made it possible to, at least, try to address the conflict's underlying causes and potentially escalating and triggering factors.

³⁴ China let the military, as opposed to the police, assume guard duty in the border region, allegedly a "normal adjustment".

³⁵ Interviews with researchers at government think tank, Beijing, China, Mar 2007; researcher at university, Beijing, China, 10 Apr 2007.

³⁶ Interview with Chinese expert involved in Sino-North Korean relations, Beijing, China, Jun 2007.

³⁷ Still, it was important that North Korea knew that China wanted stability on the Korean Peninsula. Together with the informal links keeping channels of communication open, it was possible for Pyongyang trust that China would protect them, at least as long as they behave.

More specifically, China has been effective in stopping conflict escalation by combining its ability to use personal networks and other informal links, with its leverage as sole ally, protector, and lifeline. Thus, China has been able to wield influence through hidden channels and, at the same time, through open pressure and signalling. These two kinds of processes have been mutually reinforcing, and neither would have worked without the other. It is not possible to threaten North Korea - with its eccentric worldview - to comply, without the trust and understanding developed in more personal and informal settings to construct an acceptable compromise and/or agreement. Nor would it have worked without using the North Korean dependency on Chinese energy and aid, as Sino-North Korean relations are no longer the Cold War "lips and teeth" relations between two ideological partners and comrades in arms. Without China's actions, military actions would, most likely, have been taken against North Korea with the result of a less peaceful region. This was most likely during the 1st and 2nd nuclear crisis, but overall it is difficult to imagine a counterfactual scenario, without Chinese involvement, that would have managed the Korean nuclear conflict without resorting to military means.

5.4 Chinese mediation and the six-party talks

Throughout the 1990-2008, period China worked as a mediator and facilitator of negotiations and communications between Pyongyang and Washington. In the words of a Chinese expert, it has been a "communicator, facilitator, formulator, and manipulator".³⁸ The most obvious example of Chinese mediation and facilitation is the six-party talks, but China's role goes beyond the six-party talks. It is China that has made sure that there were always a possible channel of communication open between Washington and Pyongyang.³⁹ There have been both open, and hidden, processes, where China has sometimes worked as a back-channel negotiator, other times as a more open mediator. Often, China has done both at the same time.

In the context of Chinese mediation, it is important to understand the difference between the Chinese and the Western understanding of mediation. Chinese style mediation

"...is often closer to "manipulative mediation" than "facilitative mediation", and the mediator generally follows the "insider/partial" model more than the "outsider/neutral" mediator model adhered to in the West." (Lachowski, Sjögren et al. 2007: 27)

The manipulative style has been a prominent feature in how China has approached North Korea, and in the way the agreements have been negotiated. The insider/partial model is the one closest to China's role in the negotiations. Despite emphasising that the conflicting parties are the U.S. and North Korea, China is neither an outsider, nor neutral in the Korean nuclear conflict.

China's willingness to be involved in and help resolve the Korean nuclear conflict has been dependent on U.S. sincerity in working towards a resolution, since China is unwilling to be a mediator when it suspects a lack of sincerity from Washington (see e.g. Zhu 2004).⁴⁰ Inflexibility and disrespect is by China not considered consistent with sincere attempts to resolve the conflict.

³⁸ Presentation by Chinese expert, Shanghai, China, 12 May 2007.

³⁹ The U.S. does not have representation in North Korea. This limits its ability to set up meetings without help from a third party.

⁴⁰ The same applies for North Korea. This has often been the case in connection to U.S. elections when Pyongyang often has escalated tensions.

When adhering to such policies, it has also undermined the level of support from Beijing in their mediation attempts and in negotiations they facilitate. To quote Zhu Feng, a leading Chinese expert on China's role in the Korean nuclear conflict

"In this sense, how far Beijing could go to pressure N. Korea would depend largely on how seriously Washington would hold on to diplomatic solution, and likewise, how well ready it is to compromise. Beijing would not unilaterally coerce Pyongyang to retreat if the U.S. stands still; Furthermore, Beijing needs to be gravely persuaded that new pressure policy could significantly boost diplomatic settlement while Pyongyang's security and aid demands would be met and not be scared off. If the U.S. does, and then N. Korea still refuses to compromise, Beijing would re-consider what strategy should be presumably employed to force N. Korea to move." (Zhu 2004: 7-8)

As discussed above, without Chinese support, one cannot be successful in negotiations with North Korea - China is both needed as a link to Pyongyang, and if Pyongyang doubts that China is on your side, it will simply not be willing to make any concessions. As a result, Chinese mediation has been working as an important and effective conflict prevention mechanism. Washington needs, and Pyongyang is dependent on, China. Consequently, Beijing has leverage in its mediation attempts. The Chinese presence also works as a buffer zone, as it can intervene at any point in time if needed to prevent a crisis from escalating into military confrontation.

China has also been important in making the two sides understand each other's interests and behaviour. This has been important for both sides. The U.S. had, especially in the early phases of its negotiations with North Korea, a shallow understanding of North Korea and its perceptions, interests and ways of thinking. For the closed North Korea, with no representation in the U.S. and limited exposure to U.S. policy, China has been important for the North Korean understanding of the U.S. In the words of a South Korean expert, it has been extremely difficult for North Korea to "...understand U.S. decision-making process and catch new trends, wants, and logics".⁴¹ To do this they need Chinese help. Although the Chinese do not fully understand the U.S. decision-making process either, they have a better understanding of it than the North Koreans.⁴² The enhancement of mutual understanding contributes to the ability to avoid unintentional conflict escalations. There is also a certain inherent confidence building coming from increased understanding. It reduces the unknown sides of your enemy and thereby the risk for miscalculations.

5.4.1 The six-party talks

The six-party talks is the only formalised conflict management mechanism that exists in East Asia, and the closest to a security organisation in Northeast Asia.⁴³ This said, the six-party talks are best understood as a framework for negotiations rather than as an organisation of a formalised

⁴¹ Interview with expert on China's role in North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ According to some, whom? it is a good framework that should be expanded to other conflicts in East Asia. However, over time this idea has lost momentum. This is largely a result of the Chinese refusal to even discuss this idea, as they are afraid that it may include the Taiwan issue in the future. The lack of success of the six-party talks has also been an influence. (Discussions with expert at Beijing government think tank, Tokyo, Japan, Mar 2007. The same point has also been made in numerous interviews with experts at government think tanks and universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007)

mechanism in its own right. The talks have no independent role or structure, i.e. it is not a formalised conflict management mechanism in the sense that it sets up rules or regulations that the parties are expected, or have to, follow. In short, the six-party talks are what the participants want it to be, and make of it. Since the initiation in 2003, the six-party talks have, in practical terms, worked as a platform for security cooperation on, and the diplomatic framework for pursuing peace in, the Korean nuclear conflict. One Chinese diplomat described the talks as having created "...a platform for security cooperation in NEA. ... [that is] designed to solve the Korean crisis in a peaceful way. [The six-party talks do] make a non-nuclear alternative a possible choice [for North Korea]".⁴⁴ Others have described the talks as "...for the time being the alliance of security in North East Asia".⁴⁵

The talks have formed an important part in the struggle to avoid war on the Korean Peninsula. Their historical success has mainly been through short term measures that have prevented the nuclear conflict from escalating into war. As observed by one South Korean diplomat, their existence does "...prevent and delay war. It is earning time. It does keep a negative peace".⁴⁶ The talks are not least important, as they have worked as a concrete manifestation of a possible way out of the nuclear crises. This way they have helped to keep up the faith in the negotiation process, in the U.S. as well as in the other involved states.

The talks have also been important in that they have allowed for the outside world to, over time, learn to understand, and counter Pyongyang's odd negotiation style. This was both a learning process for the negotiators themselves and for analysts. The results of this learning process can be seen in, for example, Scott Snyder's 1999 key volume tracing the historical and cultural roots of North Korea's negotiating behaviour, arguing that there is in fact an internal logic to North Korea's seemingly outrageous conduct (1999).

On a more negative note, the six-party talks have had a number of limitations. First, they have completely failed to resolve the conflict as was set out to do. This is a result of several factors. The lack of trust between Washington and Pyongyang has been a stumbling block. China has only partially been able to overcome this. Secondly, during most of Bush's leadership a linkage was made between the resolution of the nuclear issue and regime change in North Korea. Although the linking of the two was implicit, it has not functioned as a good incentive for North Korea to abolish its nuclear program, nor as a way to increase North Korea's trust in the sincerity of U.S. intentions.

Two further problems of the six-party talks with more specific impact are found in the discrepancies between the views of the five parties. The six-party talks have been limited by the lack of consensus among U.S., China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea on how to handle North Korea. There is a consensus that, for the talks to work, the five parties

⁴⁴ Presentation by senior Chinese diplomat, workshop at the School of International Studies, Peking University, Beijing, China, 18 - 19 Dec 2004.

⁴⁵ Presentation by South Korean strategic thinker, Beijing, China, 18 Dec 2004.

⁴⁶ Interview with South Korean diplomat, Seoul, South Korea, Feb 2008.

"...need to speak with the same voice. Then it is easy. Now there are at least two voices. There is an agreement about the nuclear issue, yes. It is to be resolved by peaceful means. But there is a difference in emphasis."⁴⁷

South Korea and Russia have leaned towards the Chinese stand, and Japan towards the U.S.'. The positive impact of a common voice has been observed in the post-2006 developments with the talks. Indeed, when the five parties reach a consensus, it enhances the ability for successful negotiations with Pyongyang. There is a need for other efforts as well. Beijing's willingness to punish North Korea, and to use the UN as a tool, constitutes two of the more important efforts in this regard.

Underlying these problems of the six-party talks is a discrepancy between Beijing and Washington's perception of the main issue. From Washington's perspective, it is clear that the Korean nuclear conflict includes the broader question of nuclear proliferation, the prevention of a general proliferation of weapons of mass destructions and the safeguarding of the NPT regime (see e.g. Xia 2006). For China, it is a question of de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and the safeguarding of a nuclear-free neighbourhood in Northeast Asia; i.e. no nuclear acquisitions by Japan, South Korea or Taiwan.⁴⁸ Furthermore, there is a difference in perceived relative importance of peace and the nuclear issue. As described by a South Korean expert, "[f]or the U.S., the nuclear issue is worth more than peace. Some instability is ok. For China, peace is more important than the nuclear question".⁴⁹ These discrepancies create a difference in what is perceived as acceptable compromises and solutions, and what North Korean behaviour is perceived as acceptable. These discrepancies have received even more prominence during the 2000s, with the U.S. attempts to outsource the conflict to China. With an enlarged role for China, the Chinese perspective by default has to be given a more prominent role and be accounted for in the negotiations.

Focusing on the extent to which the six-party talks have been positive for the level of peace, it becomes clear that the talks have been important for moving the normal state of affairs from a level of crisis to an unstable peace. This is an important change, because when crisis was the normal state of affairs, the conflict repeatedly escalated to the brink of war. At an unstable peace level, the conflict "only" regularly escalate to the crisis level. In other words, a buffer has been created which prevents the conflict from reaching a war threshold. The existence of the talks has also helped tune down Washington's level of hostility. They have created a structural constraint on the range of possible U.S. policy options, as it is diplomatically problematic to express an intention for war when peace negotiations are ongoing. This logic also applies at times when pre- or back-channel negotiations are undertaken to restart peace negotiations.

The actual negotiations in the six-party talks have been important for mitigating the main issues of the conflict. The deals have repeatedly been violated, but the six-party talks have meant that negotiations can be restarted from square one and a half, rather than from square one. In addition, the main issues have been mitigated as the talks also keep intergovernmental communication open. Sometimes this happens through China's secret shuttle diplomacy, other times through more open bi- and/or multilateral meetings to get the talks restarted, or in the form of a new

⁴⁷ Interview with South Korean expert, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁴⁸ Interview at government think tank, Beijing, China, Mar 2007. (Also see Shi 2008.)

⁴⁹ Interview with expert on Sino-North Korean relations, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

session or round of the six-party talks. Holding this form of bi- and multilateral talks has also given North Korea a form of desired diplomatic recognition and has kept the conflict continuously high on the agenda. Both the recognition and being on the agenda is important for North Korea.⁵⁰ Limitations can be identified with regard to the longer-term resolution. The problem is that the talks do not include, or link to, long term peacebuilding. For example, one analyst at a government think tank in Beijing argued that

*"Softer things need to be added to the six-party framework, [including] economic aid, other security questions [than the nuclear issue]. Also track two may be necessary [to be able to discuss the issues in another framework before put on the 1st track agenda]."*⁵¹

Overall, the six-party talks must be seen as a positive factor for peace, even as it has yet to reach its goal of resolving the nuclear problem. Among the interviewees, the assessment of its usefulness has varied from "useful to keep up dialogue",⁵² to the more positive view that it is a "unique and most positive consortium" which is the only alternative for peace.⁵³ The six-party talks have clearly contributed to upholding the negative peace, and have worked at least as a forum in which the two main parties, China, and the neighbours have been able to meet and discuss the problems at hand. The talks have also, among the five parties, created a shared interest in ensuring the success of the talks and ultimately resolving the Korean nuclear conflict.

The interactions in the six-party talks, and through other meetings facilitated by China, have been an important socialisation and learning process for the U.S., as well as for North Korea. It has been an important part of the explanation for the shifts in how the U.S. perceives its interests with regard to North Korea, and how, in turn, changes in policy and behaviour has occurred.

5.5 The role of U.S. policy behaviour

The United States has been both a conflict preventing and a conflict escalating force in the Korean nuclear conflict, but never a peace builder. An underlying and fundamental problem in Washington's policy towards North Korea is the lack of interest in constructive measures to resolve the conflict beyond keeping the negative peace. The U.S. regional interest is limited to preserving *status quo* and keeping a negative peace in the region and the U.S. does not do much to reduce the underlying issues or to develop conditions for a stable peace. This has led to a situation where the U.S. is not interested in resolving the conflict and shows reluctance to get to deeply involved.⁵⁴ This is the same pattern as has been observed in the previous two case studies. In principle, the U.S. impact on the level of peace in the Korean conflict can be traced directly to changes in its policy standing and behaviours towards North Korea. Three factors have been of central importance: 1. the level of flexibility in the U.S. approach to North Korea, 2. the level of acceptance of the North Korean regime, and 3. the level of demonstrated respect for North Korea.

The U.S. policy and behaviour towards North Korea has more often than not been negative for the level of peace. Its refusal to accept the Pyongyang regime as legitimate and acceptable, has

⁵⁰ Interview with Chinese experts involved in Sino-North Korean relations, Dec 2004.

⁵¹ Interview at government think tank, Beijing, China, Mar 2007.

⁵² Interview with Chinese expert involved in Sino-North Korean relations, Shanghai, 12 May 2007.

⁵³ Interview with South Korean expert, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁵⁴ Interview with East Asian expert, United Kingdom, 18 Jan 2008.

resulted in friction between Pyongyang and Washington. The U.S. emphasis has been, especially during the Bush period, on regime change. Up until the U.S. became too constrained by the war in Iraq, there was also a lack of respect for the Pyongyang leadership. This lack of respect and explicit preference for regime change undermined any possibility for a more sustainable peace. A normalisation of Pyongyang-Washington relations has been identified as key for peace in the Korean peninsula, as North Korea's behaviour is a response to U.S. behaviour.⁵⁵ This argument gets strong support both in the interviews undertaken and from observing the course of events.⁵⁶ There is a clear link between relatively good U.S.-North Korean relations, and normalised relations (i.e. the existence of basic respect and channels of communication) between the two parties. In fact, some have even argued that it is the U.S. that is the problem, not North Korea. This is a viewpoint with relatively strong support among policymakers and academics in China.⁵⁷

The varied success of different U.S. policies shows that there is truth to the argument that North Korea's approach to international relations is that "it just wants respect" and "as long as it is taken serious, as a respected independent state" it will be willing to negotiate.⁵⁸ The need for respect is an important aspect of understanding North Korea. This can also be seen in how Pyongyang has shown appreciation of high-level visits, such as U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit in 2000. It is also part of the reason for former president Jimmy Carter's success when visiting Pyongyang in 1994.⁵⁹ This need for respect and symbolism was also learned by the Bush Administration towards the end of its second term when Washington understood that you need to treat North Korea with respect if you are to make any progress.⁶⁰

Over time, the U.S. has altered its interests by moderating its policy and behaviour, moving towards a more flexible and comprehensive approach towards North Korea. These changes should be understood in relation to China becoming more open to pressure and punishments for bad behaviour. These changes have worked hand in hand: China's willingness to use the "stick" has increased as U.S. flexibility has increased. Over time, a partially shared understanding of North Korea and how to handle the Korean nuclear conflict has developed in Beijing and Washington, making it possible to find a common coordinated approach towards North Korea. This coordination has undermined North Korea's ability to be successful in its brinkmanship negotiation approach. It can no longer play the U.S. against China, nor conduct brinkmanship negotiations and just expect China (or South Korea who also over time opened up for punishing bad behaviour) to come to its rescue with food and energy aid without any reciprocal requirements.

The importance of the abovementioned respect and acceptance, together with increased flexibility for peace, was seen after Clinton's reversal of U.S. policy in 1993. Clinton de-facto accepted the

⁵⁵ Interview with expert on Sino-North Korea relations, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.

⁵⁶ Interviews with experts at Chinese government think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁵⁷ Interview at Chinese government think tank, Beijing, China, Mar 2007.

⁵⁸ Interview with senior East Asian expert, United Kingdom, 25 Jun 2008.

⁵⁹ Another reason for his success was Carter's close connections with the Chinese, whom according to himself at the time shared a lot of their information with him and gave him advice. (For an in-depth description of Jimmy Carter's visit see Creekmore 2006.)

⁶⁰ The U.S. new flexibility is arguable largely a result of its engagement elsewhere (Iraq and Afghanistan). One Chinese interviewee even suggested that if the U.S. would not have been engaged in Iraq, it would have taken military actions towards North Korea. (Interview with expert on Sino-U.S. relations, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.)

North Korean regime and the need to negotiate directly with Pyongyang. He also showed symbolic respect through the assignment of a high-level negotiator. This, in combination with Clinton's new flexible "through and broad" (comprehensive) approach, succeeded in moving the conflict towards more stable peace (Oberdorfer 2001: 296; Wit, Poneman et al. 2004: 112). Respect, acceptance and flexibility were important for the 1994-2001 momentum, including the initial negotiation of the 1994 Geneva agreement and in creating the KEDO protocol.

These positive developments can be contrasted with how Washington since then has shown a lack of flexibility, acceptance, and respect, which has been negative for peace. Bush's more specifically focused and less compromising policy after his election in 2001 turned out to be counterproductive and conflict escalating. This strategy was seen by Pyongyang as "unilateral and conditional in its nature and hostile in its intention" (KCNA 2001). The fact that George Bush expressed his personal views on Kim Jong-Il, calling him a "pygmy" who "acts like a spoilt child at the dinner table" did little to deescalate hostilities (Becker 2005: 254).

In the last five years or so, the U.S. administration has understood the reality of North Korea, which has contributed to moving the conflict in a more positive direction. The U.S. now understands that it needs to engage North Korea to uphold peace and even more to move forward towards a more stable situation. This engagement has been positive also for longer term peace, as it has made Washington increase its understanding of North Korea, its interests, and the logic underlying its behaviour. For example, Washington has increased its understanding about how to avoid provoking and pushing North Korea to a brink of war situation. This learning process has been a dual one, and over time North Korea also enhanced its understanding of, and ability to engage and negotiate with, the outside world.

The U.S.-North Korean interactions have also been a confidence building exercise, as both sides have increased their ability to interact. For example, there have been important changes in language. In the 2006 crisis when Bush once again urged North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programs and nuclear weapons by using the phrasing "in a verifiable fashion in return for a better way forward for her people" (White House - Office of the Press Secretary 31 October 2006). This is a very different phrasing than during the early phase of the Bush Administration, as discussed above. There has also been what can be perceived as diplomatic recognition, in so far as the U.S. agrees to meet and negotiate with North Korea and shows a certain level of trust and flexibility in these negotiations. These changes might be perceived as minor, but they are essential from a North Korean perspective. Together they have created an increased perception of security in Pyongyang. Taken together, the changed U.S. policy has helped move the conflict towards a situation of unstable peace, rather than of crisis or brink of war.

Over time, the U.S. has also accepted an East Asian approach in negotiating the conflict. Many of the features identified in the "ASEAN-way" can also be found in the way the Korean nuclear conflict is handled. There has been an increased acceptance of the role and need for informality and an emphasis on process over results. Back-channel negotiations and informal communication and discussion have become not only prominent features in trying to resolve the conflict, but also accepted as useful in their own right as opposed to merely being substitutes for official negotiations. Over time, it has also become apparent and accepted that the Korean nuclear conflict is a long term one, and that there are benefits from keeping up communication despite the lack of success. The U.S. has understood the importance of saving face, i.e. not humiliating the North Koreans. With the more flexible approach that has developed, there has also been an ounce

of conflict avoidance in Washington's behaviour. They have tried not to trigger North Korea, and have practiced avoidance in their reactions to North Korean provocations. The U.S. is no longer reading the worst into North Korea's actions, and did for example not threaten, but instead used a conciliatory voice towards North Korea when it missed a number of deadlines after the February 2007 six-party talks.⁶¹

5.6 Economic integration and interdependence

North Korea does not enjoy a high level of economic integration and interdependence (EII), as the concept is traditionally used. Nevertheless, North Korea shows a strong economic dependency on its neighbours, and the economic integration – both official and unofficial - that has occurred is important for North Korea's survival. The economic sector has, out of necessity, become an important link to the outside world for the economically fragile North Korea. In turn, the economic link, and level of dependency, has given the outside world a certain level of influence and leverage over North Korea. The EII has also ensured that there are at least some channels into the otherwise closed state. Even more important from a peace perspective, EII has helped to ensure North Korean internal stability. On its own, it is not unlikely that North Korea by now would have been a failed state, which would have undermined stability both on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

5.6.1 North Korean economic dependencies

After a decrease in economic engagement with the outside world after the end of the Cold War, North Korea has increased in its level of economic integration since the 1990s famine period. This economic interaction has, over time, also become more legitimate, and the North Korean dependency on illicit trade has decreased.⁶² There has also been an increase in direct investments, even though North Korea is still dependent on aid to finance its imports (Haggard and Noland 2007). In quantitative terms, economic integration and interdependence is low, but from the North Korean perspective, it is relatively speaking substantial. It is also important to note that China has, what Beijing refers to as normal trade, relations with North Korea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2007). North Korea is largely dependent on Chinese economic cooperation and aid, as China is North Korea's only, albeit reluctant, ally. In 2005, 39% of North Korea's trade was with China, U.S.\$ 1,6 billion (Imports U.S.\$ 1,1 billion, exports U.S.\$ 0.5 billion) out of North Korea's total trade volume of U.S.\$ 4 billion (Imports U.S.\$ 2.7 billion, exports U.S.\$ 1,3 billion) (Helgesen and Christensen 2007: 32). Furthermore, since 1990 China has sustained a cumulative deficit of more than U.S.\$ 4 billion (Helgesen and Christensen 2007: 32). In addition to trade, after economic reforms were initiated in 2002, North Korea has also received direct investments from China. In 2005, the non-financial direct investments was about U.S.\$14 million.⁶³ This was up from U.S.\$ 1 million in 2003 (Helgesen and Christensen 2007: 32).

⁶¹ For a review of the post-February developments see International Crisis Group 2007.

⁶² For an in-depth review on North Korea's illicit activities see Perl and Nanto 2007.

⁶³ Data from the Chinese Commerce Ministry, cited in Tsai 2006. Helgesen and Christensen cites an estimate of U.S.\$ 100 million (2007: 32).

The increased economic engagement with the outside world has been important for peace, as it has helped create internal stability. It has been a catalyst for economic growth and has helped address the economic weaknesses of the country, since North Korea has become more self-sufficient with economic growth and market-based trade relations.⁶⁴ This has, in turn, created hope in North Korea of a situation where it will no longer be dependent on outside goodwill for handling its chronic food and energy shortage. This kind of feeling was particularly strong in the early 2000s, when the North Korean economy reached a level where Pyongyang asked for investment rather than aid.⁶⁵ It did not turn out as Pyongyang hoped, but it exemplifies the importance of an image of independence; with a working economy, or the perspective of a future working economy, North Korea did not have the same incentive for brinkmanship foreign policy to secure regime survival. In this way, the (relative) economic prosperity contributed to altering North Korea's foreign policy interests and behaviour, as it saw benefits from economic engagement. However, this positive trend did not continue for long, as the country's economy turned to the worse.

North Korea's economic weakness has been useful for trying to resolve the nuclear issue. It has been important for making negotiations possible, as this weakness keeps North Korea negotiating.⁶⁶ North Korea simply needs to keep its economic channels open to survive (see China's role as lifeline above). The negotiation leverage from economic weakness has increased as North Korea, over time, has shifted from being dependent on (state controlled) illicit trade to legitimate trade (Haggard and Noland 2007). In fact, one South Korean expert on Sino-North Korean relations argued that the expanded official trade dependency, in combination with lower levels of aid, and increased longer term investments, has further increased the outside control and dominance of North Korea.⁶⁷ This way, the economic weakness and foreign dependency has been providing leverage also when negotiating the main issue, including Pyongyang's general willingness to make concessions and to negotiate in the first place. The use of North Korea's economic needs for negotiation leverage is not without problems, however, as it has encouraged North Korean brinkmanship.⁶⁸ For example, when using aid to reward good behaviour, as has been done in the North Korean case, it rewards and encourages brinkmanship behaviour. This pattern has made North Korea conclude that it suits its interests to repeatedly provoke and escalate the conflict in order to, thereafter, be able to gain rewards for stopping with its bad behaviour.

⁶⁴ North Korea's annual GDP growth has after its economic engagement with the outside in increased by an average of 1.9% (ranging from 6.2% in 1999 to -2.3 % in 2007), up from an annual decline averaging 3.9 % between 1992 and 1998.⁶⁴ Also the GNI increased throughout the 1998 - 2007 period, with the exception for a minor dip in 2001 in the run up to the 2nd nuclear crisis. (Data from Bank of Korea, in Korea Economic Institute 2008.) For a good review of the North Korean economic sector see Helgesen and Christensen 2007 (esp. ch. 3).

⁶⁵ Presentation by European diplomat, Stockholm, Sweden, May 2006.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Interview with expert on China's role in North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁶⁸ Interview with Chinese expert involved in Sino-Korean relations, Beijing, China, Dec 2004.

5.6.2 The China model

China has worked for what it perceives as the path to a durable peace by trying to convince North Korea to adopt the Chinese socialist economic model (or possibly Vietnam's).⁶⁹ This way it has been trying to transform North Korea's social identity and interests to be more similar to the other socialist states in the region. This is a long term process that aims to engage North Korea to become a part of the regional economy. It is an attempt to develop a feeling of shared identity and interests with its neighbours, thereby making it North Korea's own interest to change and engage in the region.

As part of this strategy, Kim Jung-Il and other North Korean leaders have visited China to learn of their model and have reportedly been impressed with what they have seen (International Crisis Group 2006a: 24-27).⁷⁰ Still, little progress has been made to either make North Korea part of the regional economy, or to open up its markets. China has been frustrated with Kim Jong-Il's stubbornness, and a lot of efforts have gone into convincing North Korea to change.⁷¹ One expert on China's foreign relations explained that

*"We Chinese always think that we should encourage DPRK to open up to the outside world. We show them our experiences. That was what we did when Kim visited [China], including Shanghai. [He] seemed to be impressed. There have been changes in DPRK. Now they allow existence of free market places and they seem to like it, the people. I was there last year [with a delegation from a Chinese government think tank] and we went to one of these places. Normally you cannot see many people in DPRK, but there it was many. There were things to eat, drink, snacks, fish, rice. It will be hard for the government to resist that kind of change for long. For the regime, regime stability [is important]. A middle ground [has to be found]."*⁷²

Although frustrated, the Chinese leaders do understand the North Korean problems connected to the opening up of its markets, and see it as a long process.⁷³ There has also been a certain opening up since 1998.⁷⁴ Although an active government policy in the beginning, the opening up seems to have become driven by market forces rather than government policy. In fact, the North Korean government only had limited success in its attempts to restrict the petty commerce in North Korea in 2005 (Lankov 2008; Lankov and Kim 2008: 70). It therefore seems like North Korea's exposure to the market has had some transformative effects. It is of course a different thing to assess how deep they are, and how much it is a question of necessity to ensure survival (also see "People-to-people contacts through grey area cross-border trade" below).

⁶⁹ E.g. interview with expert on China's North Korea policy, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006. The same argument has been made in numerous interviews at government think tanks and universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁷⁰ This has also been confirmed in interviews in China Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁷¹ Interviews with experts in China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2007; United Kingdom Oct 2007 - Jun 2008.

⁷² Interview with expert on Chinese foreign relations, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.

⁷³ Interview at government think tank, Beijing, China, Mar 2007.

⁷⁴ After formally taking power in September 1998, Kim Jong-Il approved plans for economic reforms and replaced the bulk of the main economic bureaucrats (16 out of 23). The underlying reason for this was that he thought economic reforms would help resolve North Korea's food problems and thereby safeguard his power. The plans for economic reforms were finally implemented in July 2002. (Pinkston and Saunders 2003: 85)

Some interviewees have pointed to the dual blessing of engagement, and question if it is a good thing for peace to possibly have saved the Pyongyang regime.

"On the one hand it is positive, but it has a dark side. What is peacebuilding? If Kim continues for a long time, is it peace? I do not think so. Peace is a broad concept. South Korea – North Korea economic cooperation is only a small peace. Economic cooperation makes the regime continue."⁷⁵

Arguments that engagement aiming at making North Korea a capitalist state instead has helped rebuild the communist system were fashionable in South Korea at the time of the author's fieldwork in Seoul February - March 2008.⁷⁶ The argument has some validity, even though the humanitarian and political consequences of not supporting North Korea are hard to assess. It is also difficult to know how another path would have worked. History has shown that the North Korean regime is better at surviving than many analysts and politicians have thought.⁷⁷ Moreover, even without the sunshine policy, it is highly unlikely that China would have let North Korea collapse because of its strategic interests (see e.g. Scobell 2004; Wang 2004). At least for the period 1990-2008, economics has been a positive force for preventing war and keeping up at least an unstable peace.

5.6.3 Unofficial cross-border trade

In addition to the official EII, North Korea has become dependent on grey area economic interactions through un- and semi-official cross-border trade since the 1990s. It has been estimated that since 1997 as much as 20-30% of the total Sino-North Korean bilateral trade is grey area trade.⁷⁸ Most of the trade occurs over the China-North Korean border. This is a result of geography as well as the Chinese privilege of good access to the North Korean market and its regime, allowing for hands-on economic cooperation and trade.⁷⁹ The main actors are ethnic Koreans in China. They have the dual benefit of ethnicity and language, and Chinese access. They can either simply bypass official channels and "go local" making negotiations with local governments to set up business unofficially, or first get permission in Pyongyang and then negotiate locally.⁸⁰

The grey area cross-border trade has been identified as an important agent for societal change in North Korea.⁸¹ The trade has been important for creating conditions for longer-term peace, as it

⁷⁵ Interview with South Korean North Korea expert, Seoul, South Korea, Mar 2008.

⁷⁶ Interview with expert on China's role in North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁷⁷ Presentation by European diplomat, Stockholm, Sweden, May 2006.

⁷⁸ Interview with Chinese expert on Sino-North Korean relations, Beijing, China, Jan 2005.

⁷⁹ Interview with researcher working on North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, 4 Mar 2008.

⁸⁰ Interview with expert on China's role in North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, 27 Feb 2008.

⁸¹ Interview with Chinese expert on Sino-North Korean relations, Beijing, China, Jan 2005.

has opened up North Korea by developing an infant market system in North Korea.⁸² For example, it has been estimated that by the early 2000s there were more than 350 market places in North Korea where more than 500 commodities were traded, providing more than 90% of the daily necessities for ordinary North Koreans.⁸³ The growth of the market system and the cross-border trade has been a dual process where the opening up of small markets in North Korea creates an incentive for cross-border trade, and the often foreign produced goods help keep the markets going.⁸⁴ The markets are of direct importance for peace, as they prevent an North Korean economic collapse by increasing economic growth and stability (Kim 2003a). The benefit of this *de facto* economic integration has been acknowledged in Seoul, where they see benefits in the Chinese way of a strong local engagement, as opposed to the industrial zones approach used by South Korea.⁸⁵ In addition, the unofficial cross-border trade has been an important catalyst for people-to-people contacts, which will be discussed in its own section (see "People-to-people contacts through grey area cross-border trade" below).

5.7 Elite interaction

5.7.1 Engaging the North Koreans

The North Koreans generally fear and are suspicious of the outside world and of foreigners. This makes the potential impact of elite interaction substantial.⁸⁶ Elite interaction occurs in different contexts where elites meet and socialise. These range from more formalised settings such as different forums, in the training of bureaucrats, academic exchange, and in functional collaborations. The fact that North Korea's contact with the outside world is uniquely small has been seen as a major problem for peace, both in China and elsewhere.⁸⁷ Behind the attempts to engage North Koreans is a belief in the need to prepare them for a reintegration with the outside

⁸² The grey area sector has shown to be a slippery slope. This can best be exemplified by the transformation of markets. The markets have been transformed from being a question of allowing farmers to have small 0.03 acre garden plots in 1998, through the development of secret farmland cultivation in the mountains, to where it is today with extensive cross border petty-trade as a large part of the products of the markets are of foreign origin and rampant corruption and chronic capitalism resulting in North Korean factories engaging in grey area trade. The chronic capitalism and level of corruption does show that there have been a societal effect coming from the economic engagement. The force of petty trade/private sector was seen in 2005 when attempts were made to shut them down showed to be problematic, and the grey area/second economy kept going. (Kim 2003a; Lankov 2008; Oh and Hassig 2000)

⁸³ The main sources of goods are: 1. Farmers' private gardens and illicit mountain farms; 2. Household goods and stolen marketable goods from private or public sources sold by city dwellers to buy basic necessities; 3. civilian factories and their workers; 4. "bundle merchants" roaming the country side bartering semi-manufactured goods for food; 5. Individual factories; 6. Goods obtained as bribes, especially foreign luxuries; and 7. Household goods brought by the 94,000 Korean expatriates in Japan. (Kim 2003a)

⁸⁴ Andrei Lankov and Kim Seok-hyang have, through interviews with North Korean market vendors who have defected to South Korea, found that often the merchandise sold in the markets are imported (2008).

⁸⁵ Interview with South Korean North Korea expert, Seoul, South Korea, Mar 2008.

⁸⁶ In the North Korean case virtually all people-to-people contacts with the outside world is done by people from the elite, hence the term elite interactions is used. There is very limited people-to-people interaction on a grassroots level. This form of interactions occurs mainly as a result of the grey area cross-border trade. However, also grey area trade has been found to be very much an elite endeavour (Lankov and Kim 2008).

⁸⁷ E.g. interview with South Korean diplomat, Seoul, South Korea, Feb 2009. The same point have been made by the interviewees in China, Jun - 2006 - Jul 2007; Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2008; Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom, 2004 - 2008.

world.⁸⁸ Underlying this belief is a consensus that "North Korea will have to change fundamentally, as it can't stay the way it is forever".⁸⁹ In other words, there is a belief that a transformation of North Korean identities and its ideational and normative structures are needed, and the way to succeed with such a change is through engagement. Among the Chinese, there is also a belief that engagement allows them to influence the North Korean government, and that it prevents conflict by making North Korea avoid provocative policies.⁹⁰

Elite interactions are best understood as part of a long term peacebuilding process and a force for transformation of North Korea. All forms of people-to-people interactions are seen as important, as they "keep [North Korea] in contact with the outside world. The more North Korea learns about the outside world, the better. The more contacts the better".⁹¹ It is perceived as a long term process, in the end of which there will be peace dividends.⁹² To get the North Koreans to engage has been a difficult process, but a task that over time has become easier than it was in the 1990s.

The North Koreans are less positive to engagement. This was something that the U.S. realised when negotiating the possibility for North Korea to open an embassy in Washington in 1994. The following quote from one of the U.S. policymakers at the time exemplifies both the importance given to people-to-people contacts in the U.S., and the North Korean reluctance.

"I used to think a North Korean embassy would be most beneficial, and was working on it in DC in 1994. It was a missed opportunity, to get the North Koreans to engage in interpersonal exchange. It would have been excellent for people-to-people contacts, have North Koreans in the same High Schools as my children etc. However, they were afraid and it was not a core thing for them to get an embassy. We thought it was more important than it was for them."⁹³

A similar reluctance can be found in the case of KEDO, discussed below.

5.7.2 Functional cooperation

Despite being a closed state, North Korea is involved in a range of functional cooperation activities. The most extensive ones have been through its economic cooperation particularly with China and South Korea, including establishing joint industrial parks, tourism, and joint projects such as the cross-border railroad with South Korea (see e.g. International Crisis Group 2004, 2005; Jonsson 2006). In addition, the six-party talks and the related working groups, the organisation of different trainings and exchanges, as well as foreign visits and delegations have created a need in North Korea to cooperate with outsiders on functional issues. Functional cooperation has also been inherent in the implementation of agreements reached in negotiations, such as KEDO.

Even if the direct peace impact of functional cooperation has been limited, it has created a need for communication and coordination and thereby forced interactions and socialisation among the

⁸⁸ In the Chinese case, to make them open up and embrace the Chinese path, and in the South Korean case, to make unification possible.

⁸⁹ Interview with Chinese expert involved in Sino-North Korean relations, Beijing, China, Jun 2007.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Interview with Chinese expert, Shanghai, China, 18 Dec 2006.

⁹² Interview with South Korean diplomat, Seoul, South Korea, Feb 2009.

⁹³ Presentation by former U.S. policymaker, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, 28 Sep 2006.

participants. To organise any form of activity requires some form of negotiations, followed by functional cooperation to implement the negotiated agreement. These force the two sides to cooperate and to socialise with the other side. In the case of KEDO, the role and impact of mid-level bureaucratic cooperation and socialisation has been found to be substantial. It can be logically assumed that if explored in depth, a similar positive effect could be found also with regard to other forms of functional cooperation that results in elite interaction.

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization is a prime example of the peace impact of engagement and the following elite interaction in functional frameworks.⁹⁴ KEDO did not achieve its objectives, but it is nevertheless a regional organisation and a process that has been important for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. KEDO has had a short term conflict preventive impact by defusing the first Korean nuclear crisis. In a passive sense the Agreed Framework and KEDO ended the nuclear crisis at the brink of war and restored normality (i.e. unstable peace) (Jun 2002). KEDO has also had a longer-term peace impact, through its engagement virtues, confidence enhancement, and as an example for future cooperation.

Interviewees who have worked in KEDO emphasised its large confidence enhancement effect through both its contact-building role and of the cooperation itself.⁹⁵ This impact comes from a previous lack of contacts during the 1990s, which KEDO reversed. In the words of the interviewees, there were "massive amount of contacts. 10's, 100's, 1000's of contacts".⁹⁶ KEDO is thus a concrete example of how the socialisation of elites creates trust and understanding of the other side, despite previous suspicion and a North Korean reluctance to engage. One South Korean diplomat explained that

*"North Korea was very scared of contacts with South Korea. They did not like us. [But with time] [t]hey learned that South Korea was not trying to absorb North Korea. They also thought they would be infected by capitalism. Now they saw that this was not the case. That is why North Korea decided to open up (including opening two industrial parks). They saw that they could manage contacts with South Korea. This was learned through the window of KEDO."*⁹⁷

This socialisation process has enhanced confidence and trust, and worked to decrease fear and increased communication and ability to cooperate. One diplomat observed that he/she "...did not think the North Koreans wanted to learn, but they did".⁹⁸ KEDO has not only been a learning process for the North Koreans, but for all sides. The outside world knew little about the North before working together in KEDO. KEDO has been described as creating a

*"feeling of relief to have contacts and relations. ... [whereby] [w]e learned about their needs etc. ... We learned what North Korea wanted. ...[and] Now we have no fear, but confidence in relations."*⁹⁹

⁹⁴ The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization is a multilateral international organisation established on March 9 1995 to implement two projects specified in the 1994 United States - North Korea agreed framework: firstly, to finance and construct two light water reactors in North Korea; and secondly to provide 500,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil annually pending the completion of the first reactor. (Jun 2000)

⁹⁵ Interviews with experts and former policymakers, Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2008.

⁹⁶ Interview with former diplomat working in KEDO, Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2008.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

In other words, the interaction transformed perceptions and understandings of the other side. It also enhanced the ability to cooperate.

5.7.3 Training and academic exchange

For a long time China has been, and still is, the most important source for training of North Korean officials and academic exchanges. It regularly organises different forms of training for North Korean officials and academics on different subjects.¹⁰⁰ Non-Chinese NGOs and universities also organises different trainings. (For a comprehensive list of institutions including the examination of trainings see Beck and Reader 2005; Park 2000) This said, it is particularly the activities organised in China that have been important for socialising the North Koreans. In China the North Korean participants are under less strict control than elsewhere, as China is still perceived as a "friendly country".¹⁰¹

Among groups that have studied, travelled and have had access to foreign media, both knowledge and appreciation of alternative systems and the outside world has grown (Beck and Reader 2005: 34. Beck and Reader's findings are similar to what the author has been told in interviews and discussions with Europeans involved in North Korean exchanges.). Considering North Korea's isolation, this also seems logically inevitable. The fact that North Korea is very cautious about engaging in these forms of activities, as they think they might be destabilizing, support their benefit. Findings of the International crisis group even suggest that many of the exchange participants have returned as firm advocates for deeper systemic changes (International Crisis Group 2005: 19). Nevertheless, these forms of activities have not created any fundamental transformation or opening up of North Korea so far. In fact, it seems like the grey area cross-border trade discussed below has been more successful in this regard (section "5.7.4" below). The limited success has not been a surprise to many the interviewees with experience from the activities, who tend to have very low expectations. For example, one European organisation hosting North Korean researchers have lowered their expectations to a hope that the North Koreans, if left alone in their offices with unrestricted access to the Internet, would be surfing as much as possible in order to learn about the outside world.¹⁰²

At a minimum, these activities increase the understanding of the outside world and socialise, at least some, North Koreans to interact with outsiders, and vice versa.¹⁰³ This is conflict preventive as it makes the outside world and North Korea more able to understand, communicate, and negotiate in a constructive and efficient way with each other. This process is important for both sides, as they both have severe problems in comprehending and understanding the other. The training and interaction with foreigners is also beneficial for peace as it helps the North Korean to get the knowledge and skills needed for developing their country, which increases the North Korean stability. A more stable North Korea has peace benefits, as it decreases the risk for

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with people involved in organising North Korean exchanges, Beijing, China Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; experts on North Korea, Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2008; Stockholm and Uppsala, Sweden, 2005-2008; Copenhagen, Denmark, Mar 2006.

¹⁰¹ Interviews and informal discussions, Chinese individuals who have been involved in organising North Korean training, Beijing, China, Jun 2006-Jul 2007.

¹⁰² Interview with member of think tank hosting North Korean researchers, Europe, 2005.

¹⁰³ The author himself has experienced this. After having at two occasions interacted with North Koreans visiting Sweden he has a better grasp of their behaviour, thinking and perceptions of the world.

outrageous provocations to gain aid or energy, or as a way to ensure regime survival by satisfying hard-line groups (in particular within the military).

The activities and the socialisation are also helping to create a feeling of hope for a future peace in the Korean Peninsula in the outside world, including in China, South Korea, and the U.S. This has decreased the likelihood for a pursuit of a short term solution, such as a U.S. military strike or invasion. It also helps ensure that the regional states, in particular Japan, do not pursue nuclear capabilities. It has benefits by calming the general armament trends among neighbouring states, which North Korea perceives as a provocation.¹⁰⁴

The elite interaction in connection to training and exchange exercises has also created a track two umbrella for political contacts, unofficial negotiations, and semi-official meetings with government officials.¹⁰⁵ According to Kyung-Ae Park

" North Korea believes that academic exchanges should eventually lead to the improvement of bilateral relationships, and regards these unofficial visits as the key to official contacts in the future; they can use contacts and relationships established during non-official visits when official opportunities arrive." (Park 2000: 48-49)

The importance of this channel should not be underestimated as North Korea lacks official representation in most places. In addition, as there exists no free academia in North Korea, the academics are a good channel both for and (possibly) to the North Korean government.

Elite socialisation is important as it has the potential of building a pro-change constituency in North Korea. It is generally accepted that any deeper reform in North Korea will have to come from Kim Jong-Il himself.¹⁰⁶ In North Korea there is little or no space for a bottom-up reform (Feffer 2004: esp. pp. 32-33). The possible exception is the military, which according to some interviewees would be a potential changing force.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the benefits of international experiences of the elite participating in training abroad and exchanges are potentially high as it builds a pro-change constituency. The experience from other transition countries has shown a direct link between the speed and success of reforms after the decision has been taken, and the existence of pro-change constituencies (Richmond 2003). In the case of the Soviet Union, for example, people involved in cultural and academic exchanges played critical roles behind the scene during the Cold War and filled key positions after the fall of the Soviet Union (Richmond 2003). According to this logic, training and academic exchange is an important long term peacebuilding process. If this logic holds in the North Korean case is impossible to know for sure today. Nevertheless, the logic of the historical experience fits well with the North Korean setting and with the findings concerning North Koreans who have been exposed to the outside world.

¹⁰⁴ The North Korea threat has been used as a legitimisation for military build-ups. It has for example become a "catch-all proxy" for Japanese militarisation (Hughes 2009).

¹⁰⁵ For instance, in Canada there were meetings between North Korean academics and foreign ministry officials in 1995 and 1996, and in 1999 in New Zealand (Park 2000: 48). In at least a number of European countries a similar pattern can be observed (Interviews, Europe, 2005-2008).

¹⁰⁶ Interviews at government think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007. This view was shared by experts on North Korea interviewed in Sweden, 2004-2008; the United Kingdom, Oct 2006 - Jun 2007.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. interviews with a British expert with experience from working with, and in, North Korea, the United Kingdom 26 Jun 2008.

5.7.4 People-to-people contacts through grey area cross-border trade

The un- and semi-official, or grey area, cross border trade is the only area through which cross-border people-to-people contacts occur on any larger scale. This is also one of only a few areas where there is a lack of government control. These contacts have had a direct opening up effect on North Korea. It is difficult to assess the exact scale of these interactions, but they are substantial. It has for example been estimated that since the 1998 opening up process started, as many as 200,000 North Koreans near the Chinese border have started trading and working inside China (Woo-Cumings 2002).

There was a consensus among the interviewees in South Korea and China that these forms of cross-border interactions are important for peace, as the people-to-people contact and trade relationships keep North Korea in contact with the outside world, and the more they learn about the outside world, the better.¹⁰⁸ This logic is also supported by the observation that North Koreans conducting business abroad, or who live close to the Chinese border, have knowledge about and have shown an appreciation of the alternative system (Beck and Reader 2005: 34).¹⁰⁹ This indicates that the mindset is changing in the North Korean society. To understand the importance of such a change, it should be emphasised that people involved in cross-border trade and in market activities in North Korea typically are people with good official connections (Lankov and Kim 2008).

The findings also point to a major role played by foreign connections, mainly with China, as the merchandise sold on North Korean markets to a large extent comes from abroad, or was intended for export (Lankov and Kim 2008). The Chinese traders have not least complicated the possibility for Pyongyang to restrict information flows as they have introduced mobile phones, which have opened a new way to communicate with the outside world.¹¹⁰ For example, it has been estimated that as many as 20,000 North Koreans have access to mobile phones (MacKinnon 2005). The government has not been able to stop this, largely because it is the North Korean elites that use the cell phones to conduct business with the Chinese traders (MacKinnon 2005).

Part of the grey area cross-border trade is best described as semi-official commerce, rather than unofficial. This commerce takes place through Chinese businesspeople setting up business and trading with North Korea on a local level. These activities have a deeper impact on higher levels, as they require engagement with local officials and, to some extent, officials in Pyongyang to get the permits needed to conduct business.¹¹¹ Hence, through the semi-official commerce, local and national elites get exposed to the outside world, including market based trade and production. This mid-level participation with official connections is important, as it creates a more direct impact on the leadership and elite than the petty trade.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with experts on China's relations with North Korea, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007; Seoul, South Korea, Feb - Mar 2008.

¹⁰⁹ These findings are in line with what the author has been told in interviews conducted with strategic thinkers in the United Kingdom, Oct 2007 - Jun 2008.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Chinese expert involved in Sino- North Korean relations, Beijing, China, Dec 2004.

¹¹¹ There is also a grass root impact, as the Chinese factories need workers. Here it can be assumed that the control will be less strict than in the big official industrial complexes.

5.8 Conclusion

The Korean nuclear conflict fluctuated between crisis and unstable peace in 1990-2008. Until 2003, the conflict regularly escalated to the brink of war. During this period, crisis can be said to have been the normal state of affairs, with periods of unstable peace. Since 2003, after the set-up of the six-party talks, the normal state of affairs moved to a level of unstable peace. There still are regular escalations into crisis, but there have been no brink of war situations since 2003. The existence of the six-party talks has helped to create a buffer zone. When looking beyond the negative relations between North Korea and the U.S., the conflict has showed somewhat more positive developments. There has been a slow transformation towards more positive relations, and over time conditions conducive for peace have been built. In particular, the increased level of cross-border communication and cooperation with the outside world has been important, not least the economic interactions and the official and unofficial elite interactions. As opposed to the overall U.S.-North Korea political relations, these are areas that have been less volatile. It has been a slow development with regular downturns, but overall there has been a move in a positive direction.

A number of processes have been identified as central for successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Korean peninsula. These are: 1. personal networks; 2. economic integration and interdependence; 3. back-channel negotiations; 4. U.S. foreign policy behaviour; 5. the six-party talks; and 6. elite interactions. These processes have been important independently, but have mainly had an impact on peace through being mutually reinforcing. The first three processes are directly linked to China, with the Chinese peace impact mainly being a result of the combined forces of the three processes.

China has had a crucial impact on the overall peace, including crisis management, shorter term conflict prevention, and longer term peacebuilding. Its influence over North Korea has been dependent on, and exercised through, personal networks between the Chinese and North Korean leaderships. The personal networks have been important both for the ability to put informal pressure and signal to Pyongyang, and to be a successful and trustworthy back-channel negotiator, mediator, and facilitator. These networks are also needed for opening channels of communication to the Pyongyang leadership. Here, also the EII between China and North Korea has been of importance, as China's role as a lifeline and security guarantor is founded on EII, which in turn gives substance to its the pressure and signalling. The abilities to put informal pressure, send signals, work as a back-channel negotiation, mediate and facilitate, are mutually reinforcing processes. At the same time, without the negotiation channels, the pressure and signalling, China would lose much of its role and be difficult to understand for North Korea.

In theoretical terms, China has created a structural framework influencing and constraining the construction of both U.S. and North Korean behaviour and interest. As China is North Korea's only ally, and a great regional power, no progress can be made without taking China's behaviour and policy into account. China is the actor that has made intergovernmental negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington possible. Its willingness to facilitate and mediate between the two has been dependent on the respective party's behaviour and policy stands, where a lack of sincerity (U.S.) and excessive brinkmanship and disregard for Chinese interests (North Korea) has been punished.

The U.S. peace impact has been directly related to its continuously changing behaviour and policy stance, which has had impact on the level of success in negotiations with North Korea on the nuclear issue. All attempts to address the main issue have to take the U.S. into account. The U.S. is not only one of two conflicting parties, but North Korea's and to some extent China's behaviour is also much dependent on U.S. actions and policies. When the U.S. has been perceived as sincere, it has been positive for the success in negotiations, and vice versa.

The overall success in crisis management and conflict prevention, and hence the fluctuation in the overall level of peace, has in principle come down to a function of the China - United States - six-party talks tripod. It has been a formula including: 1. the role of China as a mediator, facilitator, and communicator; 2. the level of U.S. acceptance to negotiate, flexibility, and respect for North Korea; and 3. the six-party talks as a framework for multilateral negotiations. When these three factors have been compatible and a common stance has been found between China and the U.S., and to some extent South Korea and the other parties in the six-party talks, there has been successful prevention of conflict, and sometimes even longer term peacebuilding. When not compatible, a crisis has been more likely, as it creates room for North Korean brinkmanship games. The six-party talks have been important as a buffer before war. Furthermore, the talks have also mitigated the nuclear issue and worked as a successful crisis and conflict prevention mechanism. Not the six-party talks maintain a hope of a future resolution, and provide a permanent platform for handling North Korean matters.

When looking for longer term peacebuilding effects, or beyond the main issue, EII and elite interactions have played an important role for peace. Both have also been of indirect importance for the above tripod, as they give leverage and increase the understanding and ability to negotiate within the set framework. The EII, both official and unofficial, has kept North Korea alive and willing to negotiate. The EII has created internal stability, and hope for the future both in and outside North Korea. Not least has EII, in particular the unofficial part, shown signs of contributing to a societal transformation in North Korea. EII has also had spill over effects as a catalyst for elite interactions and functional cooperation.

Elite interactions have been important for exposing and opening North Korea to the outside world. This has been the case regardless of whether it has been a result of economic and functional cooperation, or other types of exchanges. Elite interactions have increased North Koreans' understanding of, and ability to, efficiently interact and negotiate with the outside world. Although often forgotten, this has been an important and mutually beneficial process. The outside world can now better understand, interact, and negotiate with North Korea. For example, the U.S. has a very different knowledge about, and ability to negotiate with, North Korea after two decades of regular interaction with North Koreans. The interactions also help keep channels of communication open, which is important since North Korea has an otherwise limited presence abroad. The socialisation inherent in elite interactions is also found to have affected the participants' mindset, having developed a certain level of confidence and trust, and having been a mechanism for decreasing fear of the outside world among the North Koreans. There has also been a transformation of perception and understanding among people who have engaged North Koreans, at least among South Koreans. Elite interactions are also important for peace by keeping up hope in the outside world for a possible peace, which is important for the sake of normalising an unstable peace, and for showing that there are other options visible than regime change or violence. In short, there is hope for a future transformation in North Korea. Interaction through

the grey area cross-border trade is important in this context, as it *de facto* creates links and channels to the outside world that go beyond government control.

Part III: Conclusions

6 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the East Asian peace. The study addressed the paradox of why there has been and continues to be a relative peace in post-Cold War East Asia. This is indeed a puzzle given the many factors pointing in the direction of military conflict, and the lack of any security organisations or other formalised mechanisms to prevent conflict escalation and/or build peace in the region. The focus on informal processes was based on a general presumption that informal processes and the related mechanisms are at least part of the explanation of the East Asian peace. To solve this puzzle, this study applied a case study approach to explore to what extent informal processes, and related mechanisms can help explain the East Asian peace, what these processes look like, and how they work. In order to identify, categorise, and develop an understanding of these processes and the related conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms (CPPBM), an embedded case study design was used, which allowed for a soft comparison between three selected cases within the East Asian security setting. The three embedded cases were the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea, and the Korean nuclear issue.

The three case studies show that informal processes exist, that they have been important for peace, both in preventing conflicts from escalating into war, and for building conditions for a stable longer term peace. Thus, the basic presumption that informal processes, and related mechanisms, have been important for the relative peace in East Asia has been confirmed: different informal processes and mechanisms can help explain the relative peace. Virtually all of the processes and mechanisms identified as important for peace in the three case studies were informal rather than formal. That is, on the formal-informal continuum they have been located somewhere between the two extreme ends, but leaning towards the informal side. A number of them have been institutionalised, despite showing a lack of formalisation. The institutionalisation of some of these processes has made them even more important for peace, especially in the long-term perspective, since they work as structures that influence and constrain actors. Some processes have been identified as important for peace in all three cases, while others only in one. The cases also show similar versions of the same type process, yet manifested differently. For example, elite interactions have been found to be a central process in all cases, but the way such interactions are manifested differs between the three cases.

At the beginning of this chapter, the empirical findings of the three case studies are placed in a constructivist framework. Thereafter, in section 2, the findings from the three embedded case studies will be compiled and analysed in order to answer the three research questions set out in chapter 1. Q1. What processes can help explain the relative peace?; Q2. To what extent have the processes had a positive peace impact on the security setting?; and Q3. What are the conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms through which the processes have a positive impact?) At this stage, the range of processes identified as important for peace in the three embedded case

studies will be drawn together to develop an understanding of the case of East Asia. The processes will be categorised (Q1), where after their respective peace impact (Q2) and related conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms (Q3) will be analysed. Section three and four begin with a discussion on how the different processes are linked and how they influence each other. Thereafter the focus is on how the different CPPBMs together have built conditions for a relative peace in East Asia. In section five, a schematic model of the East Asian peace is presented, which compiles the findings of the previous sections. Thereafter, in section six and seven, the broader theoretical implications of the findings and areas for future research are discussed.

6.1 A constructivist reading of the East Asian peace

When compiling the empirical findings of the three case studies, it is clear that informal processes have, over time, contributed to the relative peace in East Asia. A constructivist interpretation of why this is the case, points to a positive shift of individual and collective (state) identities and norms among the actors in the three cases. The same pattern can be observed in the case of the perceived interests of the actors, and in turn their behaviour. These findings are in line with the preliminary reading of the informal processes and peace in chapter 2 (section 2.2.3.2). The underlying reason for these transformations are the informal processes, which facilitate interaction and socialisation. In short, focus has shifted from conflict, suspicion, and/or fear, towards more cooperative perceptions and behaviour.

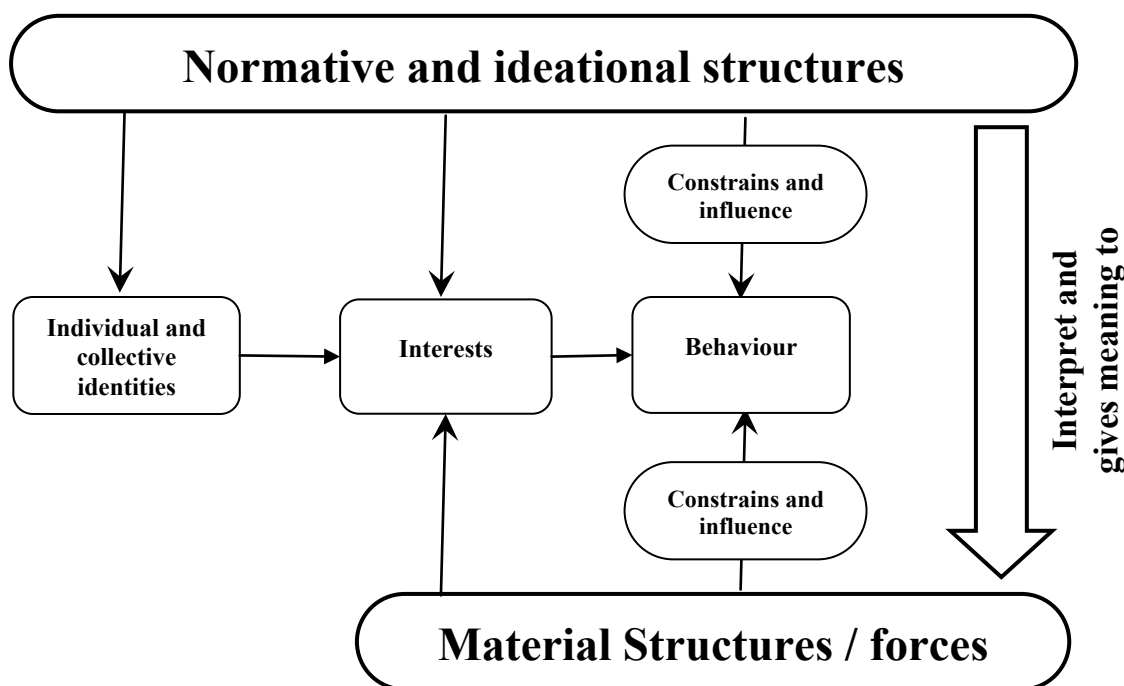
More concrete manifestations of how perceived interests and behaviour have developed reveal that there was a positive transformation in 1990-2008. There are even indications of shared identities and norms in progress of being developed. On the individual level, these positive effects can largely be attributed to the different forms of elite interaction. Indeed, there is a correlation between the level of interaction and the degree of change in interests and behaviour. In the interviews, this change was to a large extent attributed to elite interactions. When it comes to changes on the collective level, the key processes identified were economic integration and interdependence (EII) and the larger regionalisation process.

Informal processes have been important for peace by contributing to the building of trust and confidence, and by enhancing the level of understanding between the conflicting parties. In particular, different forms of elite interactions have clearly contributed to an increasing understanding of mutual perceptions and interests. Understanding is important for the ability to prevent conflict and for building longer term peace, as it decreases the risk for misunderstandings and miscalculations between the actors. There have also been changes in the perception of self and other, often including an increased level of respect for the other. The changes of perceptions resulting from these mechanisms were most obvious in relations between Mainland China and Taiwan, and between China and the ASEAN. On the collective level, EII and regionalisation have also been important catalysts for this change. Trust and confidence are not only critical for successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding, but have also had a positive influence on cooperation. Here, not only elite interactions, but also EII and more formalised functional cooperation have been important. Over time, the increased understanding, altered perception of self and other, and increased trust and confidence have affected individual and collective identities, norms, and interests. This includes a development of certain shared identities and

norms. The new identities, norms, and interests, in turn, influence and constrain behaviour and actions.

In theoretical terms, the actors have re-constructed the normative and ideational structures, which in turn are important for how they construct their own identities, norms, interests, and behaviours (see "Figure 1: Normative and ideational structures" below). In East Asia, since 1990, these structures have transformed in a, for peace, positive way, and by 2008 the relative peace in East Asia was largely institutionalised in the form of normative and ideational structures. In terms of Reus-Smith's mechanisms (2005: 198), the imagined realm of possibility has changed, and actors have altered their thinking regarding their own actions and the imaginable strategies to achieve objectives. Changes to norms and conducts also change the way actors seek to justify their actions. Indeed, this has led to a transformation of acceptable behaviours, which in turn has created constraints for the regional actors. Today, there is less room for justifying conflictual actions in East Asian inter-state relations, compared to earlier periods. The clearest examples of these transformations are seen in the acceptance and institutionalisation of the "ASEAN-way" and in China's pursuit to become accepted as a peacefully rising country and a good neighbour, which imply practical limitations for how China may communicate, behave, and act.

Figure 1: Normative and ideational structures



Material structures are also constraining and influencing behaviour and action. These are thus relevant for the construction of interests among the actors. However, as set out in the theoretical framework, the material structures are only important as far as they are given meaning by the

actors. The "new" normative and ideational structures have altered the interpretation of the material structures and what meaning they are assigned by the actors. With the development of new and more peaceful, or at least peace encouraging, norms and ideas, the meaning of material forces in the region have been positively transformed. For example, Chinese military developments are generally not interpreted according to a worst-case scenario, as was common in the early 1990s. The same applies to Beijing's perception of the U.S. military presence in East Asia, which over time has become less threatening.

To a certain extent, a shared understanding of the social, moral, and cultural dynamics of conflict, conflict management and peace has developed. A mutual interest in peace has developed through the pan-regional economic policy focus, except in North Korea. Across the Taiwan Strait, consensus has been reached to leave the resolution of the Taiwan issue for the future, and instead focus on cooperation and confidence building. In the SCS, and the broader East Asian region, a shared understanding has been institutionalised in the "ASEAN-way", which is manifest in principles of non-interferences, conflict avoidance, face saving, and an incremental approach to conflict resolution through consensus and dialogue. This shared understanding is the result of the combined forces of elite interaction, EII and the regionalisation process in APT.

Results of the case study analyses support the argument of the possibility for trust-transfer between spheres and that borders between spheres are changeable. Clearly, trust and understanding built through interactions in non-sensitive areas, can be transferred into more sensitive issue areas. A telling example of this is the way personal trust between KMT and CCP leaders, which was built through informal channels, could be utilised in negotiations on political issues. In the cases, there are also examples of previously sensitive political and military issues that, eventually, have become negotiable. For example, new issues have been accepted on the agenda in multilateral forums (by China), issues of joint exploration and military CBMs have been discussed with regard to the SCS, and China has resolved all its land border disputes with its ASEAN neighbours. Moreover, previously non-negotiable functional issues, such as charter flights and direct links between the Mainland and Taiwan, have over time been incorporated in the negotiation across the Taiwan Strait.

6.2 Processes behind the relative peace

A number of different types of processes and related mechanisms have been identified, which can help explain the relative peace in the respective case studies. The contrasting and cross-relating of the findings in the three cases, made possible the development of an in-depth understanding of processes, categories of processes, and related mechanisms behind the relative peace in the East Asian security setting. As set out in chapter 1, a process is a flexible concept that includes different inter-personal and inter-collective interactions found to be of importance for understanding the East Asian peace. Mechanisms indicate routine, and answer

Table 4: Categories of processes

1. Elite interactions and back/channel negotiations
2. Economic interdependence & integration, and functional cooperation
3. Multilateralism and institutionalisation
4. Formalised conflict management mechanisms
5. The U.S. presence

the question of how the identified processes impact peace, for example by acting as crisis management, conflict prevention, and/or peacebuilding mechanisms.

It should be noted, that a process may become manifest in different ways, and be of varying importance, in the three cases. Nevertheless, as a *type* of process, they have created a category that has been important for peace. For example, the manifestations of elite interactions have varied greatly between the cases. It is also concluded that a number of processes, which have not been identified in all cases, still have been important for the overall East Asian peace, and may well be important in other conflicts in the future.

In the three embedded case studies, a total of eight different types of processes have been identified (elite interactions, back-channel negotiations, economic interdependence and integration, functional cooperation, (Chinese acceptance of) multilateralism, institutionalisation (of peaceful relations), formalised conflict management mechanisms (FCMM) (the six-party talks), and the U.S. presence). When drawn together in the case of East Asia, the identified processes can, in turn, be divided into five different process categories. These are: 1. Elite interactions and back channel negotiations; 2. Economic interdependence and integration, and functional cooperation; 3. Multilateralism and institutionalisation; 4. Formalised conflict management mechanisms; 5. The U.S. presence. Category 1-2 and 5 were found to be of direct or indirect importance for peace in all three cases. This has been the case also when not presented as a specific category in each one. Categories 3 and 4 were only identified in one case study respectively: the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, they were found to be of importance for the overarching East Asian peace. Multilateralism and institutionalisation, category 3, have been important for driving the overall peacebuilding process in East Asia. Formalised conflict management mechanisms, i.e. category 4, have been of more specific importance for peace on the Korean peninsula where the six party talks played a central role in preventing the Korean nuclear conflict from escalating into war.

Each respective category's relative importance for peace, and the related CPPBMs, will be discussed in the coming five sections. The relative importance for peace have been summarised in the form of a matrix of the relative importance of the categories of processes for the relative peace in East Asian and the three embedded case studies in Table 5 below. In this matrix, the relative importance of the five process categories is coded according to an ordinal scale with four levels of importance: "no", "low", "moderate", and "high". None of the processes were deemed of "no importance" on the East Asian level: if so, they would not have been included in this conclusion. However, as the matrix includes both the East Asian case and the three case studies, "no importance" is needed as not all types of processes were found important in all cases.

Table 5: Matrix of the relative importance of the categories of processes for the relative peace in East Asian and the case studies

Category of processes	Case			
	East Asian peace	Taiwan issue	South China Sea	Korean nuclear conflict
Elite interactions and back channel negotiations	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Economic interdependence and integration, and functional cooperation	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE
Multilateralism and institutionalisation	HIGH	NO DIRECT, LOW INDIRECT	HIGH	NO DIRECT, LOW INDIRECT
Formalised conflict management mechanisms	LOW	NO IMPORTANCE	NO IMPORTANCE	HIGH
The U.S. presence	LOW	MODERATE	LOW	LOW

A common feature of many of these processes is that they can be understood as manifestations of the East Asian regionalisation process. Indeed, elite interactions, including back channel negotiations, are best understood as both manifestations of, and catalyst for, regionalisation. On the one hand, these forms of interactions are an unavoidable result of regionalisation. At the same time, elite interactions are important for driving regionalisation. This applies both to market and state driven regionalisation, as regionalisation can happen regardless of ideological motives. EII is, in the East Asian context, foremost an example of market driven regionalisation. This is the case even though state governments, over time, have tried to incorporate EII into their ideologically driven APT process and in the pursuit of different trade related agreements. EII can thus be contrasted with multilateralism and institutionalisation, which are prime examples of state driven regionalisation. Functional cooperation is in itself indeed state driven, since it by definition requires inter-governmental agreements.¹ However, in the East Asian context, it has often been the result of market driven EII, which has created a need for functional cooperation. Here the relationship across the Taiwan Strait is a good example: despite great reluctance from Taiwan, a certain level of functional cooperation has been required to handle issues and tensions caused by the *de facto* integration of the two sides. The development of functional cooperation has also been part of the state governments' attempt to catch up with the market driven regionalisation process.

¹ During most of the 1990-2008 period, cross-strait functional cooperation was conducted through quasi-official bodies, given the lack of official links between the two sides. However, these bodies are controlled by the state government.

6.2.1 Elite interactions and back channel negotiations

This category consists of three interlinked processes: personal networks, track two diplomacy, and back channel negotiations. These are all aspects of elite interaction. Different forms of elite interactions have been of paramount importance in all three case studies. The importance of elite interactions has been pan-regional.

East Asian societies are, in general, elite based. High levels of trust in leader(s), and the acceptance of hierarchical structures, are culturally embedded characteristics of the region. In addition, there are few, if any, grassroots movements. The pan-regional role of elite interactions is also supported by the importance of informality and informal processes, including personal networks and track two diplomacy, as identified in chapter two. Elite interactions are also inherent in the "ASEAN-way". The central importance of these interactions to the three cases, and the rest of Asia, has also been stressed by virtually all interviewees.

Personal networks among the elites, including top leaders, bureaucrats, and military personnel are important forms of elite interactions and were found to be important for peace in their own right in all three case studies. Their importance was not only emphasised in interviews, where it was a reoccurring topic, but the interviewees themselves also emphasised the importance of personal networks in Asia, even when not specifically asked.

Track two diplomacy has been key for the ability to prevent conflict escalation, for moving the conflict towards a sustainable peace in the South China Sea, and for the positive developments in Sino-ASEAN relations more generally. The same is the case across the Taiwan Strait. In the Korean nuclear conflict, track two diplomacy has been limited, but it does exist in the form of academic exchanges and training exercises. In general, North Korea's participation in track two meetings has been *ad hoc* and infrequent. At the same time, the findings on the role of elite interactions in the Korean case show that when these interactions take place, they are important. Hence, the lack of an identifiable peace impact of track two diplomacy in regards to the Korean conflict, does not undermine the argument that track two diplomacy is important for peace. This is supported by the fact that track two diplomacy is envisioned as a good way to eventually resolve the nuclear issue, maybe in the form of back-channel negotiations or as secret workshops, or more openly as in the South China Sea working group case. Moreover, the six-party talks have themselves many features of a track two framework.²

Back-channel negotiations (BCN) are closely linked to, and dependent on, elite interactions. Different forms of BCN have been important in all cases. BCN were identified as a key feature in the Korean case, especially regarding the Chinese approach to handling the conflict. BCN have also been important in cross-strait relations and in the South China Sea. In the latter, their role has been less visible, but it is nevertheless clear that they have been central for the South China Sea workshops. On a more general level, BCN are deeply embedded in East Asian international relations, not least as an inherent practice in the "ASEAN-way", with its focus on behind-the-door diplomacy, the preference for informal or secret settings, conflict avoidance, and face saving. Indeed, these four preferences are catered for by BCNs.

² A number of the Chinese interviewees also referred to the talks as a being both a track two and track one process (interviews with members of government think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007).

The importance of elite interactions for peace can often be traced to their role in inter-personal socialisation. This is true, especially with regard to track two diplomacy. The importance of elite socialisation was evident in all three cases. For the closed North Korea, any interactions with the outside world have had important socialisation effects. Elite socialisation has in this case been an (at least for North Korea) unintentional consequence of participation in functional cooperation and the existence of grey area cross-border trade. Socialisation has also taken place in connection to training and academic exchanges. In the South China Sea, elite socialisation has been central for the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism, and it has also been an important aspect of track two diplomacy and personal contacts among the leaders. In the Taiwan case, the impact of elite socialisation on peace was observed in a range of processes where inter-personal elite contacts occur. In sum, the relative importance of elite interactions was high in all three cases, as well as its importance for the overall relative peace in East Asia. The exact forms may have varied, but the peace impact of elite interactions have been general (see Table 5 above).

Elite interactions have impacted peace through a number of conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms (CPPBM). They have contributed to the development of a more in-depth understanding of the other, and their perceptions and interests. This includes increased transparency through direct or indirect access to information. An increased understanding of the other decreases the risk for miscalculations and misunderstandings. It also decreases the risk for unintentional negative simplifications, whereby a scurrilous portrait of the other risk being created. Understanding increases even when underlying hostilities persist. Moreover, it is closely related to the building of trust and confidence. Taken together, trust, confidence and understanding are essential for successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding. For example, the success of BCN and preventive diplomacy is impossible without confidence and trust, and a certain level of understanding. In addition to understanding, trust and confidence building, elite interaction also has a positive impact on the level of respect for, and perception of, the other. Overall, there is a general correlation between increased understanding, confidence and trust, and changes in perception and increased respect. This way, elite interactions strengthen the voice of moderation among the conflicting parties, and give "the enemy" a human face. The latter aspect can be seen as a result of elite interaction in all the cases. The former aspect has been seen most clearly across the Taiwan Strait, where the elite interactions have transformed mindsets and perceptions. Similar changes can be seen in Sino-ASEAN relations, but the link to elite interactions is less clear in the empirical material collected for this study.

Elite interactions were also identified as important for transforming how regional elites perceive their interests. As a consequence, this eventually changes how state interests are perceived, since such interests ultimately are defined by the individuals in power. Elite interactions have also been important for fostering nascent shared regional identities and norms. The importance of shared regional identities for long term East Asian has been emphasised in many interviews, and is theoretically well founded in the role of normative and ideational constraints, and the link between identity, interests, and behaviour. For example, participation in different frameworks for elite interactions, such as think-tank networks, has moved the participants towards shared identities. Not least have they gathered around the idea that "we are all East Asians" or "Asians". There have also been changes in how the elite individuals perceive their interests. Cooperation and engagement has become the preferred path, and the perceptions and respect of others have improved. This, in turn, has turned many of the individuals into strong proponents of regional integration and cooperation in all spheres. This is most clearly seen in Sino-ASEAN relations and

the APT process, but also in the Taiwan case ("we are all Chinese", "we should cooperate for a peaceful future and economic development on both sides of the strait").

Over time, the identities and interests of these individuals will have an influence on state level policy. For example, the elite individuals often influence policy decisions, or are part of the policy making process, directly or as advisors. A good example is the idea of cross-strait economic integration as a way of building conditions for a durable peace that became the official government position after the 2008 Taiwanese election. Over time, thinking and mindsets, ideational and normative structures, which constrain and influence regional actors, are transformed in a way conducive for peace. These transformations also enable the signing of FTA agreements, cooperation on security issues, and the resolving of border disputes.

Elite interactions also result in a number of more immediate benefits for conflict preventive and crisis management. For example, elite interactions and in particular track two diplomacy, have improved the ability to interact peacefully and constructively also on conflicting issues, for preventing new conflicts from arising, and existing ones from escalating or spreading. Elite interactions have also helped keeping lines of communication open, by working as hidden, or open, channels of communications between conflicting parties. Personal networks and track two diplomacy have in this regard worked as platforms for pre-negotiations and back-channel negotiations, and other direct conflict preventive measures. For example, personal networks and track two diplomacy have made informal discussions possible ahead of official negotiations, for example by allowing back-channel negotiations and mediation to defuse issues and tensions, thereby making official negotiations possible.

In themselves, BCN have a peace impact by working as channels of communication, both as a platform for pre-negotiation and as direct conflict prevention measures. BCN have also worked as a way to build trust and confidence, which is often needed to open up for official negotiations. This can, for example be seen in the Korea and Taiwan case, where the conflicting parties are highly suspicious of each other. BCN have also, at times, facilitated policy innovation, which often is needed to get official negotiations started, and to find new ways to resolve conflicts.

Elite interactions, in particular track two diplomacy, have also been important for policy innovation. For example, track two diplomacy has been beneficial for developing new ideas and ways of thinking, by working as a platform for policy discussions and a testing ground for official policies (sometimes referred to as track one policies). The participation in track two frameworks also signals a preference for, and commitment to, peaceful relations and peaceful conflict resolution. This is most clearly seen in the Chinese participation in these frameworks, where they have moved from being reluctant participants to becoming one of the driving forces. Track two diplomacy is also one of the driving forces of East Asian regionalisation and community building.

6.2.2 Economic integration and interdependence, and Functional cooperation

Economic integration and interdependence (EII) has been identified as a central process for peace across the three cases. EII has been a driving force in the development of positive inter-state relations in East Asia. It has furthermore been important for fostering and sustaining structures and processes that strengthen the prospects for a peaceful coexistence. EII has been fundamental for the market driven regionalisation process, which works as a cornerstone for peaceful coexistence and the development of a pan-regional "economics first" policy. EII is an important

driver of the East Asian community building project and is, by many, seen as the best way to ensure peaceful relations across the Taiwan Strait. To some extent, even in the Korean nuclear conflict, EII is seen as a possible solution for how to move the conflict towards durable peace. The underlying idea is to export the Chinese, or possibly Vietnamese, development model to North Korea with the aim of transforming its social identity and interests and make it more in tune with the other socialist states in the region and, over time, integrate North Korea into the regional economy.

EII is also important for decreasing the likelihood of conflict escalation. EII has been creating common interests and goals among regional actors. It also has more direct impact by increasing the incentives to avoid conflict escalation, given that EII directly raises the cost of conflict. In addition, there is also a risk that conflict escalation threatens economic development and prosperity. EII thus works as a barrier to military confrontation, since such a development would have exceptional costs and most likely undermine economic development. In the Taiwan Strait, EII has served as a bridge to overcome tense political relations. In the Korean case, despite limited EII, it has helped create negotiation leverage. In short, the East Asian region without EII would most likely have taken a different path. From the case studies, it is clear that EII has worked as a driving force for the East Asian regionalisation process. It has both paved way for, and increased the speed of, regional integration and community building in all spheres. It has also had spill over effects on many of the other processes, which will be discussed below.

It should be emphasised that it is not the quantitative level of regional trade *per se* that has been important for the relative peace in East Asia, but rather the quality of the economic integration and interaction. The conflict preventive and peacebuilding effects are traced to the depth of, belief in, and commitment to EII, rather than its actual size. Across the region, both states and individuals are committed to EII, and there is a belief in East Asian economic integration as the way to build a peaceful and prosperous East Asian community. This is not the same thing as arguing that quantity is irrelevant. The sheer size and the demand of trade drive the actual EII process, as well as the broader regionalisation process. It is the mutual economic gain of cooperation that works as an incentive for cooperation and creates a business community in favour of EII. In short, without a critical mass of EII, the traced peace impact would most likely be more limited.

In conclusion, EII has been fundamental for the post-Cold War developments, and in many cases also important for the chosen policy paths. The relative importance of EII and functional cooperation for the relative peace was high in the Taiwan and SCS case, as well as in the overall East Asian case. In the Korean nuclear conflict, it is somewhat more difficult to assess the impact. Since these processes create hopes for the future, ensure internal stability in North Korea, and create negotiation leverage vis-à-vis North Korea, their relative role for peace is arguably rather substantial. Together with their importance for peace through spill-over effects on elite interactions, as well as negotiation leverage in the six-party talks, the relative importance of EII and functional cooperation for peace in the Korean case is argued to be moderate (See Table 5 above).

In regards to its role as a CPPBM, EII has most importance through its role as a driving force for regionalisation and East Asian community building. Actively engaging in EII has been a way for conflicting parties to signal a preference for, or commitment to, peaceful relations and an eventual peaceful resolution of conflicts. To keep up hope for a peaceful future, in this way, has

been fundamental for building and sustaining the relative peace in East Asia. The long-term view on regional integration and community building, and the policy priority of economic growth and prosperity, are common features not only in the case studies, but across the region. This is most clearly in the pan-regional APT process, but economic cooperation has been of central importance also in Sino-Japanese relations. EII has also contributed to the increase in cooperation and by making cooperation itself a routine, both of which are important to build trust and confidence.

On a theoretical level, EII has worked as a CPPBM by contributing to a transformation of regional perceptions, from fear, suspicion, and worst-case scenarios, to peace and cooperation. EII has increased the mutual benefits of cooperation, thereby enhancing the perceived interest in cooperation. Cooperation, together with the related socialisation, does in turn decrease suspicion and fear. In addition, the incentive to avoid planning for worst-case scenarios increases, as scepticism or hostility towards cooperation has direct costs: by not cooperating, you miss out on possible gains. In turn, this has affected perceived foreign policy goals and behaviour. The SCS and Sino-ASEAN relations illustrate this clearly: the respective parties have, since the early 1990s, fundamentally transformed their foreign policy goals and interests. Also in the Taiwan case, the economic interests have bound the two sides together, and have worked as a venue for security and development across the Strait. There are also signs that EII has contributed to the strengthening of the voice of moderation between the conflicting parties. Moreover, it has been significant in the development of shared identities and norm systems with the goal of economic growth and prosperity and the adherence to free market principles and a market economy.

The high level and importance of EII has increased the incentive for avoiding triggering confrontation, unless key interests are at stake. This development is in line with the expectations of liberal theory. In constructivist terms, this development is a result of the changes that EII has brought about on normative, ideational, and material structures in the region. The altered normative and ideational structures have, in turn, affected how states perceive their interests and how they act. Smooth relations and conflict avoidance has become the preferred path. The increased interdependence strengthens conflict avoidance *per se*, as this affects how interests are perceived: i.e. ongoing cooperation and good economic relations provide material incentive for conflict avoidance. (Also see "A constructivist reading of the East Asian peace" above.)

According to a constructivist interpretation, EII can be understood as a structure that has influenced the interests and behaviour of the East Asian states by altering what is perceived as imaginable strategies to achieve objectives in interstate relations. For example, the idea of a common East Asian market and an East Asian community today seem like a possibility. EII has also been important for the transformation of the perception of China, from a threatening rising power, to a rising, and concurrently, peaceful neighbouring power. Also across the Taiwan Strait, EII has opened up for new and innovative developments based on the mutual benefits of EII. EII has transformed the norms and conduct in communication, and the norms and ideas that constrain behaviour. In 1990-2008, one party thus became perceived as cooperative and non-threatening, both in its communication and actions. Regional governments are supposed to uphold an economically focused policy, including adhering to a (relatively) non-protectionist and (relative) free market/trade approach in their foreign policies and relations. They are also expected to separate between political and economic issues, and to favour a deeper economic integration

regardless of other inter-state conflicts and tensions. (Also see "Multilateralism and institutionalisation" below.)

Interlinked with EII is functional cooperation. Functional cooperation has a less clear and more varied importance for the level of peace in the three cases. As opposed to what mainstream liberal theory would predict, only little spill over between the different spheres has occurred. In the three cases, no, or at best limited, spill over into the traditional security sphere was identified. The same pattern applies for the overall relative peace in East Asia.

With the exception of the Taiwan issue, most of the peace effects are not derived directly from functional cooperation as such, but through other processes where functional cooperation serve as a catalyst. In the South China Sea and Sino-ASEAN relations, functional cooperation is part of the regionalisation process. It has been particularly important for the acceptance of multilateralism and for the institutionalisation of peaceful relations. It has here been an important catalyst for the APT process, as it has allowed for integration on less sensitive issues. The peace impact of functional cooperation is found in its role as a catalyst for elite interaction, personal networks, and regionalisation. Although functional cooperation plays a role as catalyst, to say that EII was depending on functional cooperation would be to overestimate its importance. Functional cooperation is, of course, making economic cooperation work more smoothly, but economic integration has for a long time taken place and expanded through international production networks and informal networks (especially among ethnic Chinese). In Korea, functional cooperation tends to be linked to the management of aid and other forms of external support, or to the management of different agreements. The peace benefits are also somewhat different, and functional cooperation has in this case been beneficial for peace mainly by creating space for elite socialisation.

When looking specifically at the CPPBM of functional cooperation, it is clear that it has increased the general ability for cooperation by smoothing day-to-day interactions and making cooperation routine. Functional cooperation is also an important trust and confidence building mechanism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to separate between the impacts of the actual functional cooperation and its indirect spill over effects that happen through elite interaction: Is it the cooperation itself or the necessary interactions and socialisation that increase the ability to cooperate and build trust and confidence?

On the East Asian level, EII and functional cooperation were institutionalised with the APT regionalisation process. EII and functional cooperation were also central for building peaceful relations within both Northeast and Southeast Asia, as well as with extra-regional actors. Manifested in regionalisation, EII and functional cooperation have been fundamental forces behind the East Asian peace, which have prevented conflicts from escalating and moved policy focus to economic growth and prosperity. This way EII and functional cooperation have worked as an underlying peacebuilding process, which has transformed other relations despite stalemated conflicts and political tensions. The findings point to the existence of a tipping point, after which EII and functional cooperation drives peace. When cooperation has reached a certain critical level and is perceived as mutually beneficial, EII and functional cooperation work as underlying peacebuilding processes, even when political relations are tense. This pattern is most obvious in the Taiwan Strait, where "political chill" has been overcome by "economic zeal". In sum, if Johan Galtung is correct that "the most promising way to reduce negative relations to a minimum is via an increase of positive relations" (1967: 14), EII and functional cooperation should be the way

towards a durable peace in East Asia. The nascent stable peace that has developed despite underlying political conflicts indicates, so far, that Galtung is right. This tendency is supported by the findings from the SCS case, where there has been a transformation of relations, which at least partly can be attributed to the high levels of EII and functional cooperation that have developed between ASEAN and China.

6.2.3 Multilateralism and institutionalisation

Multilateralism and institutionalisation are examples of state driven regionalisation. In this study, multilateralism and institutionalism are confined to the South China Sea case, but have impact beyond the specific case study.³ The Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of Sino-ASEAN relations are essential for the peaceful developments not only in the SCS and between China and ASEAN. They have also been important for the overall relative peace, as they have allowed for, and contributed to, the institutionalisation of peaceful relations among East Asian states, in particular within the APT process. Multilateralism and institutionalisation have had positive spill over effects on the other two case studies. Across the Taiwan Strait, it has increased the Chinese incentive for developing peaceful relations, as a conflict across the Taiwan Strait would have negative effects on its general foreign relations, and would risk undermining the goodwill China has built towards its East Asian neighbours and the world since the 1990s. In the Korean case, it pushed the Chinese to get involved, and remain involved, in the attempts to reach a peaceful resolution, not least since this is expected from a peacefully rising regional great power and a "responsible stakeholder". This positive spill over has occurred although the pattern of multilateralism and institutionalisation has been different across the Taiwan Strait compared to the other two cases.⁴ Multilateralism and institutionalisation have also contributed to the phenomenal EII in the region. The state driven regionalisation, manifest in multilateralism and institutionalisation, has in combination with the EII been important to ensure that China remains a peacefully rising power, and that it retains its "economics first" focus. Although there are synergy effects, the two consequences are mainly results of a regionalisation driven by the state and the market respectively. In short, by becoming engaged in an ideological project for regional integration, you are expected to have an interest in peaceful relations. At the same time, multilateralism and institutionalisation will lock you into a web of institutionalised multilateral practices, agreements, and norm systems.

The Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of Sino-ASEAN relations have been at the core of the state driven, and over time institutionalised, East Asian regionalisation process. This regionalisation has been beneficial for the peaceful developments in

³ The Korean nuclear conflict is handled through a multilateral forum, but it is not considered an example of multilateralism in this study since China is not a party. However, the experience China has gained from participating in other multilateral frameworks has increased its willingness and ability to organise the six-party talks.

⁴ Beijing considers the Taiwan issue a domestic affair, and does not, under any circumstances, want it to be included in any multilateral settings. This rejection, together with the tense relations across the strait during Chen's rule, has limited the institutionalisation of relations across the Taiwan Strait. In the case of North Korea, the failure of multilateralism can be seen both in the lack of consensus among the six parties, the failure of KEDO, and the lack of success in the Tumen River Area Development Programme (later known as the Greater Tumen Initiative). In fact, as North Korea prefers to negotiate only with the U.S., the six-party talks is basically a tri-lateral affair between North Korea, the U.S., and China. Since North Korea rejects opening up to the outside world and uses a brinkmanship negotiation style, institutionalisation building becomes problematic and limited.

East Asia since 1990. This has been a case of soft institutionalisation that by now has reached high levels. The institutionalisation has been largely informal, founded in the "ASEAN-way" and manifested in the APT process. It lacks the formalised and legalistic framework expected from such high levels of institutionalisation. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation has stabilised relations and created a framework for regional integration. Here, the general acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" as the norm system for diplomatic relations, and the striving towards the common goal of an East Asian community, have been important. The soft regional institutionalisation of the APT process has also been of foremost importance, and it has been central in the development of a routine of positive inter-state relations in East Asia. Furthermore, the institutionalisation of a policy focused on economics has importance also beyond Southeast Asia, and it works as a positive force also in relations with its Northeast Asian neighbours, the U.S., and other important extra-regional actors such as India and Europe.

China's acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of peaceful relations have also been of great importance for peace in the South China Sea and Sino-ASEAN case study. This has been of major importance also for the overall East Asian peace. In the two other embedded cases, there was no direct peace impact, which means that this category is unique for the South China Sea case. However, multilateralism and institutionalisation have had indirect importance by working as incentives for China to ensure peaceful relations across the Taiwan Strait and to stay involved in the Korean conflict. Thus, an indirect low importance for peace can be identified also in these cases.

There has been an institutionalisation of positive interstate cooperation, diplomatic relations and practices. A structural framework for cooperation has been created in the APT process, which has made peaceful relations and peaceful conflict resolution the regional norm. This is manifested most clearly in the common goal of developing an East Asian community and in the "ASEAN-way". China's encouragement and pursue of an institutionalisation of multilateral frameworks and peaceful relations have reassured the other regional actors of China's continued peaceful intentions and behaviour. This has resulted in mutual trust and confidence building, and over time, improved perceptions of, and respect for, China. These changes should be contrasted to the fear of the "China threat" that existed in the early 1990s. The engagement of China by its neighbours increases Beijing's incentive to remain on the positive and mutually beneficial path. A deviation would be costly in both economic and political terms. It would also destroy the trust that China has gained in the region

In conclusion, multilateralism and institutionalisation have been beneficial for peace. They have been of particular importance in the development of a long-term durable peace. They have been directly beneficial for positive intergovernmental relations, and indirectly by creating incentives for conflict avoidance. The developments of Sino-ASEAN relations and the greater APT process also show that institutionalisation can be efficient without being formalised in the legalistic sense.

6.2.4 Formalised conflict management mechanisms

The six-party talks are the only formalised conflict management mechanisms (FCMM) in the region. The talks, and hence FCMM, have played a role for the East Asian peace insofar that they have contributed to the success prevention of the Korean nuclear conflict from escalating into war. This is also why FCMM is included as a process of importance for the East Asian peace, although it is confined to the Korean conflict. It is obvious that FCMM have had limited

importance for peace beyond the Korean nuclear conflict. Furthermore, very few scholars in the region believe that the six-party model will be useful outside the Korean case. Indeed, it is unlikely that the two major regional powers, China and Japan, will accept such a mechanism in any conflict in which they are involved. In addition, from the Chinese perspective, it is still perceived as a risk to accept the use of FCMM even in cases where China is not a party since it may set a "dangerous precedence". The reason for this fear is the Taiwan issue and the Chinese interviewees always emphasised that it is unthinkable to use the six-party mechanism in the Taiwan case.⁵ The model may be useful for smaller conflicts in Southeast Asia, but in such cases the ASEAN is more likely to be used, rather than inventing a new FCMM.

Even if the six-party talks have failed to resolve the Korean nuclear issue, it has relatively speaking been of high importance for ensuring peace on the peninsula. The conflict has been critical, and the FCMM have been important both to prevent a war and to keep up hope for an eventual peaceful resolution. In the two other cases, there have been no FCMM, and the six-party talks have not had any influence, or clear impact, on peace. For the East Asian peace, the importance of FCMM has been limited to the prevention of war on the Korean Peninsula. Thus, it has had a role for peace, but its relative impact must be seen as low.

As a CPPBM, the six-party talks have worked as a platform for direct conflict prevention. There has been, and continues to be, a general agreement that this is the framework that will be applied for resolving the Korean nuclear conflict. The commitment to the talks by (five of) its participants has also been an important signal of a devotion to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The talks have also been of importance for developing an understanding of the other side, although in this case, this has primarily meant that the other parties have increased their understanding of North Korea's odd negotiation style.⁶

Despite the lack of other FCMM in the region, similar CPPBM can be identified in other institutionalised practises in the region, such as the institutionalisation of the "ASEAN-way", in particular in the practice of conflict avoidance, the "1992 consensus" as a base for cross-strait negotiations, and the 2002 "Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea". These have worked as platforms for conflict prevention, and as starting points and/or frameworks for negotiations. Their existence has also kept up hope for an eventual peaceful resolution of the underlying issues. The 1992 consensus on the "one-China" principle has at times it has been accepted by both sides allowed for negotiations. The "ASEAN-way" has worked as a framework and set of principles for negotiation, and implies that a non-confrontational and conflict avoiding approach to conflict resolution has been institutionalised, not only among the ASEAN members,

⁵ Interviews with members of think tanks and universities, Beijing and Shanghai, China, Nov 2004 - Jan 2005, Jul 2006 - Jun 2007.

⁶ A strong argument can be made that the six-party talks have been a form of channel of communication between the U.S. and North Korea, as well as a platform for policy innovation. However, as these two CPPBM have not been clearly identified in the empirical material of this study, they are not included here. This (possible) weakness of the empirical material is due to the data collection, which focussed primarily on either the role of the informal influence of China, back-channel negotiations, the role of Sino-North Korea networks for negotiations with North Korea, or China's general role in negotiations and as a mediator. During the research process no explicit separation was made between the six-party talks and other examples and forms of negotiations/mediations. This makes it difficult to separate between channels of communication and policy innovation within and outside the six-party talks in the final analyses. (This is also why the section on the six-party talks in chapter five is a subsection of "Chinese mediation and the six-party talks".)

but also in the broader East Asian region. (Compare discussions on ASEAN and conflict management in chapter 1.) A similar case can be made regarding the 2002 declaration, which also keeps up hope for a future resolution and works as a platform for conflict prevention. In the longer term perspective, these CPPBM have also affected how China identifies itself and its interests, since the acceptance of the "ASEAN-way" has been important for the Chinese learning and self-redefinition process (also see "Multilateralism and institutionalisation" above).

In conclusion, although these mechanisms do not qualify as FCMM, they are nevertheless institutionalised practices that have worked as a framework for preventing conflict escalation and for building long-term peace. This is the case, in particular, with the "ASEAN-way" and the 2002 declaration. A strong argument can be made that the two have worked as *de facto* conflict management mechanisms. In all but name, they have worked as if they were formalised. They have worked as structures, defining the constraints and communication of actors. In the case of the "ASEAN-way", it has also had a clear effect on how possibilities are perceived. Among the actors accepting the "ASEAN-way", it has worked as a structure. Indeed, it has influenced and constrained how actors think they should act and what they consider to be acceptable strategies (cf Reus-Smith on normative and ideational structures (2005: 198)). If only looking at the 2002 declaration itself, it could be argued that it has the same structural effects. However, in practice, this is not the case. The declaration does not have the same influence on the actors as the "ASEAN-way". Rather, it is a declaration of good intentions. In fact, the upholding of the declaration depends on the actors' adherence to the principles of the "ASEAN-way", and it can, in a sense, be seen as a case specific application. These examples also illustrate that formal agreements not necessarily are better than informal. As argued in the section on informality and formality in chapter two, the level of formality is not important, *per se*, for compliance, but rather one of many attributes deciding whether rules and regulations are followed.

6.2.5 The U.S. factor

The U.S. presence and its interests need to be taken into account in policy decisions across East Asia. This is not the same as policy being dictated by Washington, or that the U.S. is of major importance for peace. Despite having superior military power in the region, the role of the U.S. for peace was found to be limited in this study. In the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, the U.S. has, at best, worked as a short term conflict prevention and crisis management mechanism. This has been particularly important in the Taiwan case, as the conflict between Mainland China and Taiwan has stalemated at a higher level of conflict intensity and thus been more critical. This has increased the need for U.S. short term conflict prevention and crisis management measures. The role of the U.S. for the development of positive relations is more limited. This is largely due to the lack of interest to get involved, as long as the negative peace or other key U.S. interests are not threatened. In the Korean nuclear conflict, developments have been directly linked to U.S. policy behaviour. In this case, Pyongyang's behaviour is largely a reaction to actions by the U.S.. At times, this linkage has been positive for peace, but occasionally, it has had a negative effect.

On the regional level, the U.S. peace impact is arguably best understood as a crisis management and short term conflict prevention mechanism that has prevented conflicts from escalating into war, and crises that risk threatening U.S. national interests. As long as war is absent, safe sea lanes are open, and the existing bilateral security architecture is in place, the U.S. will not engage. Thus, a more stable peace has to be built by the regional parties themselves. It should be noted in this context, that many of the interviewees doubted that the U.S. will safeguard even a minimal

level of stability in the long-term perspective. The underlying reason for this scepticism was the perceived lack of an inherent and deep interest, on behalf of the Americans, in the wellbeing of East Asia. This was made clear by many of the interviewees in discussions concerning the South China Sea and a possible greater role for the U.S.

In conclusion, the role of the U.S. for the relative peace is most obvious in the Taiwan case, where its importance is estimated to be moderate. It is assessed as moderate since there are no expressions of longer term peacebuilding that can be traced to the U.S. In the SCS, the U.S. has been positive for the relative peace, but only at a low level. There has simply not been a need for short term conflict prevention and crisis management. As stated in chapter five, the U.S. has been both a conflict preventing and a conflict escalating force in the Korean peninsula, but never a peacebuilder (see "The role of U.S. policy behaviour" in chapter 5). Altogether, the relative importance of the U.S. for peace is positive and the more flexible approach adopted during the 2nd Bush Administration has pushed the scale towards a more positive than negative impact. However, to attribute more than a low overall impact to the U.S. would be to overstate its role for sustaining and building peace. For the relative peace in the East Asia, the U.S. has been an overall positive force, although its impact has been limited. Its relative importance for the relative peace in East Asia is low, and many other processes are of greater importance.

As a CPPBM, the U.S. presence, and its interests, is best understood as an externally imposed frame for acceptable behaviour among the regional actors.⁷ According to a constructivist perspective, the U.S. presence imposes structural constraints both in material and ideational terms. Its material (i.e. military) forces is unquestionable and superior, and need to be taken into consideration by the regional states when defining their own interests and actions. How the U.S. material forces are interpreted depends on the existing ideas and norms of the regional actors, as was argued in section 6.1. The U.S. also works as an ideational and normative influence, given that it is not only its material forces that matter, but also how its interests and policy behaviour in East Asia develop (or rather, how the regional actors understands the interests and behaviour of the U.S.). As argued in the SCS case study, given that the U.S. is perceived as important, it is induced with centrality. In theoretical terms, the U.S. presence, in combination with how its interests are perceived, not only constrain behaviour, but also determines what actions and solutions that are seen as possible.

However, this is a structure that is applicable mainly at times of crisis, in particular when a crisis risk escalating into war. In situations when regional conflicts have escalated to near-war situations, the U.S. has worked as a crisis management mechanism safeguarding stability. It has been decreasing the risk for provocations from the regional states that risk upsetting the Washington. The U.S. has, for example, at times helped calm the rhetoric coming from Taipei. However, results have been varied, save when conflicts have reached critical levels. On a more overarching level, the U.S. presence has created a feeling of security in the region that has been of relevance for peacebuilding. The perceived security has created space for the development of positive interstate relations and has opened up for economic, as well as state driven, regionalisation. Put differently, the U.S. decreases the need for preparing for worst-case contingencies.

⁷ The role of the U.S. as a channel of communication has only been identified in the Taiwan case study.

6.3 How the processes are linked and how they influence each other

The identified processes are mainly informal, sometimes institutionalised, but seldom formalised. The lack of formalisation has not hampered their ability to move the region towards a stable peace, nor to prevent regional tensions and disputes from escalating into war. Instead, a number of interlinked processes have worked together to prevent conflict and build peace in East Asia. They are often each others' cause and effect and the synergy effects between them are substantial. Together they contribute to the building and safeguarding of the East Asian peace.

Economic integration and interdependence have, together with functional cooperation, worked as a catalyst for other types of processes. EII has been the driving force behind the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism, the following institutionalisation of peaceful Sino-ASEAN relations, and the broader East Asian regionalisation process. In fact, EII has been a catalyst for all other categories of processes, with the possible exception of the U.S. presence and the creation of a formalised conflict management mechanism to resolve the Korean nuclear conflict.⁸

Functional cooperation has provided an allowing setting for socialisation among the regional elites and the development of personal network among its participants. Functional cooperation and institutionalisation are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing processes. In itself, functional cooperation has also been beneficial for the level and speed of regional economic integration and interdependence. This said, in East Asia, it has neither been necessary for, nor a driving force behind, EII. The East Asian EII has instead been driven mainly by market forces, informal production networks, and inter-personal networks, which all have disregarded political desires. In fact, it is rather the speed of the economic integration and interdependence that has created the need and political incentive for functional cooperation.

The different types of elite interactions are interlinked, with strong synergy effects between them. Track two diplomacy has been a framework for elite socialisation and the building of personal networks among the participants. Elite socialisation is, in itself, a process of network building. This said, the processes spur each other. For example, personal networks facilitate the optimal selection of participants for track two diplomacy, which enhance both the quality of outcome and the socialisation effects. These effects also benefit from pre-existing networks, as the existence of such networks creates a higher level of trust and understanding as a starting point for discussions and socialisation. Experience of elite socialisation, in turn, increases the willingness of the individuals to participate in track two frameworks.

Track two diplomacy and personal networks contribute to the ability to use BCN. Indeed, the two are pre-requisites for successful BCN. Without the trust, confidence, and channels created through track two diplomacy and personal networks, BCN would not have been possible in most cases, or at least much more difficult. BCN, in combination with personal networks, made it possible to set-up the six-party talks.

⁸ However, it could be argued that the importance of economics have increased the incentive for the U.S. to stay in the region also in the two latter cases, and for China, Japan, and South Korea to ensure that a military confrontation is avoided in the Korean peninsula, given that such a development would be negative for their economic developments.

Elite interactions were found to be of central importance for regionalisation. It has been important for both market and state driven regionalisation. This includes being important for the Chinese acceptance of multilateralism and the institutionalisation of peaceful relations. Despite the fact that elite interactions, multilateralism, and institutionalisation are mutually reinforcing, the socialisation that occurs through interaction has been the pre-requisite for the latter two. Elite interactions have also been important for driving EII. Interaction among business people is essential for successful economic integration and interactions among the political elites have, in turn, created an environment suitable for business. This includes both concrete measures such as opening up for investment and reaching free trade agreements, and more abstract components such as the development of trust and confidence, which is needed in the absence of formalised structures (or when formalised structures are not being trusted). Furthermore, as already discussed, personal networks have played a key role for EII. This is the case, in particular, in regards to ethnic and family based networks.

6.4 Understanding the dual process of conflict prevention and peacebuilding

The conflict preventive and peacebuilding mechanisms (CPPBM) behind the East Asian peace identified above are best understood as working together within different time frames. These CPPBM range from crisis management and short-term conflict prevention mechanisms, to longer term peacebuilding mechanisms that build conditions for moving towards a durable peace in East Asia. Together, the different CPPBM have simultaneously prevented conflict escalation, and built conditions for a longer-term durable peace. It should be emphasised that the mechanisms are working together at all times. Despite the level of conflict intensity regarding the main political issues, there is, and has always been, room and need for both short term and long terms CPPBM. Needless to say, it is essential for peace to prevent tension and issues between states from escalating, and thus hinder negative relations from escalating or spreading. At the same time, it is important to work for longer-term peace, by enhancing positive relations in other areas. This dual process is clear in East Asia where the existence of negative relations, e.g. political conflicts of high conflict intensity has not hindered the development of positive relations. In fact, this pattern of developing positive relations despite the existence of conflicting issues has been institutionalised in the "ASEAN-way", with its sensitivity for avoiding confrontation, focusing on conflict avoidance and face saving while building consensus.

A number of key CPPBM, central both in the short and long-term perspective, have been identified (see "Table 6: Conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms"). These are: trust and confidence building; increased understanding of other; changes in perception and respect of other; and an increased ability for cooperation. These mechanisms are central for any form of successful conflict prevention and/or peacebuilding. The mechanisms are central for avoiding misunderstandings and miscalculations, and for successful direct conflict prevention, as well as for the transformation of perceived interests, policy behaviour, and identity and norm systems. That is, they are essential for positive developments at times of crisis as well as at unstable and stable peace levels. In short, these three mechanisms have been of foremost importance both in the short, medium and long term perspective, and at all levels of conflict. Also, the increasing ability over time to cooperate has been important for building peace and preventing conflicts.

Table 6: Conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms

Crisis management and short term conflict prevention mechanisms	Medium to long term peacebuilding mechanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The U.S. as a frame for acceptable behaviour - Channels of communication - Policy innovation - Platform for direct conflict prevention and pre-negotiations and BCN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signalling preference for and/or commitment to peaceful relations and peaceful resolution of conflicts - Feeling of security - Hope for the future - Strengthened voices of moderation - Institutionalisation of peaceful relations - Regionalisation and community building - Development of shared identities and norm systems - Transformation of perceived interest and foreign policy goals
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust and confidence building - Increased understanding of other - Perception and respect of other - Increased ability for cooperation 	

The key mechanism for short-term and direct conflict prevention and crisis management was the U.S. role as a frame for acceptable behaviour. The U.S. has, in this way, safeguarded stability and ensured that conflicts do not escalate over the war threshold. By its presence, the U.S. has also helped create space for positive long-term developments in the region. In addition, channels of communication, policy innovation, and platforms for pre-negotiations and back-channel negotiations and other direct conflict prevention measures have been essential for upholding the East Asian peace in the short term. These mechanisms have also been important for developing more positive intergovernmental relations, but less so than the long term peacebuilding mechanisms discussed below.

In the medium to long-term perspective, a number of mechanisms are important. Firstly, the demonstrated preference for, and/or commitment to, peaceful relations and peaceful resolution of conflicts, together with a growing sense of security, has been important for, in particular, the medium term perspective. Under certain circumstances, hopes for the future and strengthened voices of moderation have been important for attempts to move towards peace. These CPPBM are of particular importance for conflicts at the crisis and unstable peace levels.

In the long-term perspective, in particular at the unstable and stable peace levels, a number of mechanisms related to regionalisation are central. The institutionalisation of peaceful relations and the regionalisation and community building processes are the two most vital mechanisms. There are also indications that shared identities and norm systems have developed, and that perceived interests and foreign policy goals have been altered. There is clearly a general acceptance of, and focus on, a market economy/free trade system as a form of common identity and norm. In a similar fashion, there has been a transformation of interests towards a focus on economic growth and development, both on the state and individual levels. In addition, multilateralism, although not applied for all issues, seems to have become a common norm. However, the findings in 1990-2008 are inconclusive. These developments and transformations are starting to show, but so far, their impact on peace is difficult to trace.

Taken together, the East Asian peace is the result of a range of processes and mechanisms that together safeguard peace in the short to medium term perspective. At the same time, the same processes develop conditions for moving the region towards a long-term stable peace. Without serious attempts to resolve the existing conflicts, these are processes that over time transform perceptions, and affect identities and interests. These have moved, and continue to move, the East Asian region towards peace without relying on formalised mechanisms or organisations. This is clearly observable in the East Asian setting. It might not be quick, and maybe not the most efficient way, but it works.

6.5 A schematic model of the East Asian peace

In its most simple form, the East Asian peace can be understood as being a result of the combined forces of regionalisation, the U.S. presence, and elite interactions and BCN. Regionalisation is in here understood as the sum of EII (market driven regionalisation), multilateralism and institutionalisation (state driven regionalisation), and functional cooperation (both state and market driven), which are essential parts, and the driving forces, of East Asian regionalisation. Thus, EII, multilateralism and institutionalisation, and functional cooperation are both the causes and manifestations of the regionalisation process. Regionalisation is important for peacebuilding since it builds conditions that facilitate positive relations in a medium to long term perspective (i.e. promotion of conditions conducive to peace).⁹ The U.S. has been important in the short term perspective by preventing negative relations from escalating. It has thus worked as a crisis management and short term conflict prevention mechanism (i.e. the prevention of conditions conducive to violence). The U.S. and regionalisation can be said to create a short term and a longer term framework respectively, by constraining and influencing the behaviour of actors in the East Asian security setting. Within these frames, the different identified processes have worked as catalysts for each other. In this context, elite interactions and back-channel negotiations have often been the means through which the East Asian peace has been created and sustained.

The regionalisation process has been of foremost importance for the overall foreign policy behaviour of all the East Asian states, including China. China has re-interpreted its role as a rising regional great power, and has engaged in the APT process and embraced multilateralism and the "ASEAN-way". Regionalisation has also ensured that the Chinese (and others) adhere to a foreign policy that puts "economics first", and that the overall peaceful relations in East Asia have developed and been institutionalised. Although multilateralism and institutionalisation only have been identified in one of the cases, it still impacts the Chinese behaviour in other conflicts, as has been argued above.

The U.S. presence has worked as a frame for acceptable behaviour, thereby safeguarding against conflict escalation. It has ensured that negative relations do not escalate into or beyond (temporary) crisis. This is important, as little is done to address and resolve the underlying

⁹ Although a part of regionalisation, the different forms of elite interactions are here excluded as they are treated separately. Functional cooperation has been contributing to the economic integration and interdependence, and worked as a catalyst for multilateralism and institutionalisation. But it is not in itself part of the long term frame. Safeguarding functional cooperation per se is not perceived as of central importance among the East Asian states.

incompatibilities, tensions, and disputes, since the states focus on conflict avoidance rather than conflict resolution. By its presence, the U.S. also provides space for positive relations to develop. Given that the U.S. is perceived as a safeguard against violent confrontations, the regional parties can focus on developing good relations and continue their cooperation in, for example, the economic sector.

The economic integration and interdependence, and the interlinked functional cooperation, have been a necessary catalyst for other processes, as they create incentives for contact and cooperation. EII is here understood both as actual integration and interdependence, as and the prevailing "economics first" policy across the region. EII is also the driving force for regionalisation. It has been important for peace directly, as it has pushed positive relations towards a durable peace. This includes not only increasing cooperation, economic growth and development, but also developing a feeling of security since economic integration and interdependence decrease the fear of others. EII and functional cooperation also encourage and create a need for diplomatic relations and intergovernmental communication and agreements. This is most clearly seen in Sino-ASEAN relations and the APT, but also across the Taiwan Strait where it was one of the reasons for the power shift in 2008.

Elite interactions have been essential both on the official and unofficial levels. Firstly, these interactions have been essential for trust and confidence building, which is of high importance in a region where trust and confidence building not only are key features of the accepted diplomatic norm, but also inherent features of regional culture(s). Elite interactions were essential in all three cases. In the Taiwan case, these interactions were essential for peace given the high tension and the limited official communication. In the Korean case, they worked as a way to overcome the barriers that are closing North Korea to the outside world. In the South China Sea case, and for Sino-ASEAN relations, elite interactions were an essential component for handling the SCS flashpoint, and for developing peaceful relations. On the East Asian level, they have been essential components for the greater APT process and East Asian community building. Secondly, these interactions have been a prerequisite for back-channel negotiations, which in turn has been an essential process in all the cases. Thirdly, they have been essential for the development of multilateralism and institutionalisation. This would not have been possible, at least not as successful, without the interactions that increased China's confidence in multilateral settings. This worked as a reciprocal process, where multilateralism and institutionalisation worked as a positive spiral for elite interactions.

6.6 Looking beyond East Asia

When looking beyond East Asia, a number of patterns in the findings arguably have a possible general bearing. The findings show that the importance of formal and legalistic processes should not be overemphasised. Firstly, it is clear that peace can be built and upheld despite a lack of security organisations or other formalised conflict management mechanisms (FCMM). It is clear that informal practices, rules, and norms not necessarily are less credible than formal ones. Nor need formal rules be more credible than informal ones. This is most clearly in the discussion on FCMM, where it becomes clear that the impact of the six-party talks not necessarily is due to its formalised framework. The general importance of informality and informal interactions was also

supported by most of the interviews, which emphasised informal elite interaction and socialisation also in non- East Asian settings and across different regions and nationalities.¹⁰ The terms used may have varied, but the interviewees have stressed the weight of different manifestations of the category "elite interactions", by referring to, for example, "people-to-people contact", "friends", "under or off-the table discussions", or "informal networks". In conclusion, informality should be included when analysing peace, conflicts, or relations in other security settings. It will add to our understanding, also in cases where it may be less important than in East Asia. Certainly, the role of informality and informal processes is, to some extent, linked to the cultural context in East Asia. However, the trust and confidence that is a prerequisite of informality are important elsewhere as well. It should be emphasised that one reason behind the success of formalised and legalistic structures in Europe, for example, is the culturally and historically embedded trust in, and role of, written legal rules and regulations. In fact, informality is more deeply embedded in East Asia, than in Europe and most other parts of the world. In analyses of, for example, Central Asia or the Horn of Africa, informal relations and interactions must be taken into account.

The findings with regard to CPPBM as a result of elite interactions are argued to have a general bearing. The understanding of other actors and their perceptions and interests also has a general bearing when trying to prevent conflicts and/or to build peace. Miscalculations and misunderstandings always risk escalating existing conflicts, or triggering potential conflicts. The link between socialisation, increased confidence, and trust building can also be assumed to be general, as is the link between increased understanding and trust and confidence. Trust and confidence are generally accepted as important mechanisms for successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The same is the case with respect and improved perceptions of the other. In addition, that elite interactions open up for BCN is an unquestionable fact, as BCN is largely based on personal networks. The identified transformative effects of elite interactions are also expected to have a general bearing. Similar transformative patterns can, for example, be seen in Europe where regional integration has transformed perceptions. The same tendency is also found in different forms of governance and think-tank networks, which affect their members. It should also be noted that in other settings outside the elite spheres, grass-roots interactions could give rise to similar patterns which may also have an impact, although not identified in this study.

The identified CPPBM are also expected to have a general bearing beyond the three cases and East Asia. This is the case with the CPPBM that proved important for both short-term and long-term peace, i.e. trust and confidence building, increased understanding of other, enhanced perception and respect of other, and increased ability to cooperate. These are all CPPBM that should be promoted in all forms of inter- personal and group relations. Also the short-term conflict prevention mechanisms are important beyond East Asia, as channels of communication, ability for policy innovation, and the existence of platforms for direct measures, such as pre-negotiations and back-channel negotiations are not unique to East Asia or the embedded cases. The crisis management and conflict prevention mechanisms, which were found to be a result of the U.S. presence, show that external powers may be a positive force in preventing further conflict escalation in cases where a conflict already has reached a critical level. This is the case at least when the external power is perceived to have such a role by the local actors. In sum,

¹⁰ This has been a general pattern regardless of the origin of the interviewee.

different processes and measures that facilitate the identified short-term mechanisms should be sought for, both when analysing cases and when designing conflict prevention measures. For example, it would be most beneficial to explore new forums for communication and pre-negotiations. It also shows that an external balancer, to use realist terminology, can under certain circumstances be beneficial in both the short and long-term perspective.

The long-term CPPBM that have been identified are possibly the most interesting mechanisms for generalisation. They are beneficial since they take a long-term view on inter-group relations, despite the existence of high intensity and/or stalemated conflicts. The actors should always be encouraged to signal a preference for, and commitment to, peaceful relations and peaceful conflict resolution by engaging in different processes, in East Asia as well as within other regions. The same applies to measures that create hope for an eventual conflict resolution in the future, and activities that strengthen voices of moderation. These long-term CPPBM show how importance engagement and interactions really are, regardless of form. In this regard, it is particularly important to observe that engagement and interactions in the three cases have been beneficial, and are important to pursue, regardless of conflict intensity or type of conflict. Also the observed ability of an external power to enhance the level of peace by creating a feeling of security, and thus space for the progression of positive relations is expected to have general bearing. Although the same phenomenal regionalisation process that has been observed in East Asia cannot be expected in all cases, more space for developing positive relations can be created by decreasing the perceived risk for, and fear of, an escalation of negative relations.

Regionalisation has, in the case of East Asia, been identified as one way to pursue peace and create incentives for avoiding conflicts. To initiate and develop regionalisation is expected have a potential peace impact, in particular as a mean for developing conditions for moving towards a long-term durable peace. The findings in the three cases indicate that any form of regionalisation can be beneficial, including deep but informal soft regionalisation as in the Sino-ASEAN case, or market driven *de facto* cross-border regionalisation as in the Taiwan Strait, or small scale unofficial cross-border trade as in the North Korean case. When analysing the importance of regionalisation for peace, attention should be paid to the important synergy effects of the different aspects of regionalisation. Indeed, it is the combined force of many integration processes that, taken together, benefit peace, rather than certain aspects or specific sub-processes. Regionalisation, together with other processes and mechanisms with a positive impact on actors, will over time have the potential to transform the behaviour, interests, and identities of the actors. In East Asia, the beginning of such a transformation can be seen in the developments of Sino-ASEAN relations and the broader APT framework, which over time have created a shared vision of a future East Asian community. In sum, it is not the form of regional integration that is of primary importance for peace, but the process.

Lastly, it is argued that the features of the "ASEAN-way" have a general bearing. Indeed, if adopted in other situations of hostility, many conflicts could be avoided and higher levels of peace be reached. The "ASEAN-way" shows that an accepted practice can work as a conflict management mechanism. This is not to argue that the whole model is exportable, but rather that the model offers a number of CPPBM of general value that can be applied. For example, consensus building is almost always beneficial when trying to prevent conflict and build peace. However, possibly even more can be learned from the non-confrontational and conflict avoiding features of the "ASEAN-way". To avoid conflict and to avoid offending others (face saving)

while negotiating, is a good way of safeguarding against conflict escalation and unnecessary tension. It allows for downplaying sensitive issues and moving the focus to positive relations, which has been illustrated by the developments in East Asia. To some extent, these features may be difficult to apply in more democratic settings, which require principles and transparency, and considerations of public opinions and future election outcomes. However, most parts of the world are non-democratic. In fact, these features could be useful in many conflicts. Even if the underlying tensions and issues may not be ripe for resolution, there is nevertheless a need to prevent conflicts and develop trust and confidence, needed for longer-term peacebuilding.

6.7 Future research

Given that this study focuses on the role of China for the relative peace in East Asia, it would be beneficial to test the findings on conflicts where China is not a main actor. It would for example be beneficial to analyse one or several intra-ASEAN conflicts, or conflicts that include Japan, the other great power in East Asia. It would also be interesting to investigate to what extent the findings are applicable to intra-state conflicts, and within sub-regional security settings. Within East Asia, the findings regarding "soft power diplomacy" and "constructive engagement" between China and ASEAN deserve more attention. It is clear that a new regional order is emerging in East Asia and that it is being built around China's engagement with ASEAN. Against this background, it would be beneficial to explore China's soft power diplomacy towards ASEAN and its impact on peace and security.

Elite interactions were found to be of central importance across the cases, and gains can be derived from an in-depth study on CPPBM linked to elite interactions. This includes, in particular, the role and impact of personal networks, track two diplomacy, and elite interactions in different functional settings. In the context of elite interactions and peace, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, it would be particularly important to explore the dynamics and impact of elite socialisation with regard to identity, interests, and behaviour, on both individual and collective levels. To trace the dynamics and impact of different forms of elite interactions, which is largely inside knowledge, requires further in-depth interviews (and more extensive participatory observations) than were possible in this study. It may also be beneficial to map rigorously, perhaps by quantitative means, the webs of networks that are a result of elite interactions. This would allow for a deeper understanding of the vast number of networks and their impact on the identity, interests, and behaviour of individuals, and consequently also the policymaking process. In addition, one type of interaction that has not been explored in greater depth in this study is grass-root socio-cultural exchange. As elite interactions have had an impact, it is valid to ask what role socio-cultural exchange might have. This is, for example, widely discussed in both Taiwan and South Korea, although there is a lack of systematic research on the effects socio-cultural exchanges.

As has been discussed, there is no reason to assume that these dynamics are unique to East Asia. Thus, there is a need for comparative studies. By exploring the role of informality and informal processes, in particular elite interactions, in different settings, it would be possible to draw broader conclusion on these findings, and to gain a better understanding of other security settings. The same applies to regionalisation. It would be interesting to make a comparative study on the role of regionalisation for peace, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding in Europe and East Asia.. The two regions are successful cases, although they have experienced very different forms of

regionalisation processes. It would be particularly interesting to explore in what way the East Asian experiences may be beneficial for Europe, given that most existing studies focus on what East Asia can learn from Europe, using the European experiences as a blueprint. It would also be most interesting to compare different regions in Africa or Central Asia since these are, not only, conflictual cases, but also cases without efficient formal structures. In addition to comparative studies, the findings of this study could also reveal new insights if incorporated in a multi-case study (large-N) design, which would be a good way to test the general bearing of the findings.

On a more theoretical level, the CPPBM linked to regionalisation deserve more attention. It would for example be beneficial to explore how the identified CPPBM can be operationalized into direct measures that can be applied to prevent conflicts and build peace. There are also indications of identity changes within the findings, but they remain inconclusive. This deserves more attention, both by tracing the mechanisms on a theoretical level and by conducting further in depth studies where these can be better traced. This could be done by using a historical case, e.g. Europe, or by going deeper and be more focused on identity changes in another case study on East Asia.

Finally, it would be beneficial for our knowledge, and for our ability to build a more peaceful world, to study the possible role of the identified processes and CPPBM also in active militarised conflicts. As the large majority of today's violent conflicts are intra-state in nature, it is also essential to explore the applicability of the findings in these conflicts. For peace, it would be most valuable to know to what extent the identified processes and CPPBM are useful to end active wars, prepare for, and handle post-war situations.

The author expects informality and informal processes to be important for the successful handling of wars also on intra-state levels. Thus, more research is needed on the role and impact of informality and informal processes in these two areas. In fact, given that intra-state conflicts tend to be correlated with a breakdown of existing structures, regulations, and laws, it seems reasonable that informality and informal processes are of high importance in these conflicts. In addition, the areas of the world that are most conflict prone today often lack formal structures from the beginning. By furthering our understanding in these areas, we would not only progress our theoretical knowledge, but also our possibilities to prevent conflicts, and move parts of the world towards a future of less conflict, and possibly even a more durable peace.

Part IV: References

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Sammanfattning (Summary in Swedish)

Det övergripande syftet med denna avhandling är att genomföra en empirisk studie av Östasien sedan det kalla krigets slut (perioden 1990-2008).¹ Målet med studien är att förstå varför en relativ fred i Östasien existerar trots att regionen hyser några av världens längsta pågående militära konflikter varav ett antal är olösta kritiska "flashpoints". Den östasiatiska mellanstatliga freden är en paradox. Det har inte bara varit mindre krig än förväntat, utan regionen visar även flera tecken på en utveckling mot en mer varaktig fred. Detta trots att regionen enligt gängse uppfattningar förväntas stå inför en militär konflikt.

Det för regionen dominerande forskningsparadigmet - neorealism - har målat upp en dyster bild av den förväntade utvecklingen efter kalla krigets slut, där ständiga konflikter har dominerat förutsägelseerna. Ur ett neorealistiskt perspektiv, dominerat av geopolitik och hård makt, är den östasiatiska regionen på väg mot konflikt på grund av expanderande stormakter, som förutspår förskjuta maktbalansen och skapa ett maktvakuum. Flera av de mest kritiska konflikterna rör territorium, vilka enligt en neorealistisk logik är de som både är de mest sannolika att leda till krig, samt de mest svårlösta. Att territoriella konflikter är de mest sannolika att leda till militär konflikt finns även belagt i historiska studier. Utöver detta har Östasien höga och snabbt ökande militära utgifter. Trots detta har inga våldsamma mellanstatliga konflikter brutit ut sedan kalla krigets slut. Även andra teorier inom internationella relationers (IR) huvudfåra har problem att förklara den östasiatiska freden, även om de målar upp en mindre dyster bild.

Ett av de största problemen för gängse teorier är deras oförmåga att förklara fred i en region som likt Östasien saknar säkerhetsorganisationer, eller andra formaliserade konflikthanteringsmekanismer. Detta leder oss till det forskningsproblem som denna avhandling försöker lösa:

"Varför existerar en relativ fred i Östasien trots en avsaknad av säkerhetsorganisationer eller andra formaliserade mekanismer för att förhindra att existerande konflikter eskalerar till våld?"

Forskningsproblemen har operationaliserats i form av tre forskningsfrågor:

1. Vilka processer kan bidra till att förklara den relativa freden?
2. I vilken utsträckning har processerna haft en positiv inverkan på fred i Östasien?
3. Vilka är de konfliktförebyggande ("conflict preventive") och fredsbyggande ("peacebuilding") mekanismer genom vilka processerna har haft en positiv inverkan?

För att kunna besvara dessa frågor har en fallstudiebaserad metod använts för att jämföra tre i Östasien inbäddade fall. Syftet har varit att utforska hela skalan av informella och formella processer samt de konfliktförebyggande och fredsbyggande mekanismer (CPPBM:s) som har varit viktiga för skapandet av en relativ fred i Östasien under perioden 1990-2008. Studien

¹ Med Östasien menas i denna studie Fastlandskina och Taiwan, Syd- och Nordkorea samt de tio medlemmarna i de Sydostasiatiska nationernas förbund/the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN:s medlemmar är Indonesien, Malaysia, Filipinerna, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar/Burma och Kambodja. Taiwan har varit en *de facto* självständig stat sedan 1949. Taiwan är dock ej accepterad som en *de jure* självständig stat av mer än en handfull stater inom det internationella samfundet eller av FN.

fokuserar på Kinas roll i tre fall: frågan om Taiwans status, sydkinesiska sjön, och den koreanska kärnkraftskonflikten. Fallstudierna bygger på intervjuer med nyckelpersoner genomförda under mer än ett och ett halvt års fältarbete i Östasien med bas i Kina.

Ansträngningar har gjorts för att säkerställa att möjliga synergieffekter mellan olika processer identifieras och inkluderas i analysen. Konkret innebär detta att de empiriska analyserna har varit känsliga för kombinerade effekter av kluster av processer. Det underliggande antagandet i denna studie är att olika informella processer, och till dem relaterade mekanismer, utgör åtminstone en del av förklaringen till den Östasiatiska freden. Detta antagande är baserat på fynd i befintlig forskning samt en preliminär undersökning genomförd i Kina november 2004 - januari 2005.

Fastlandskina – Taiwans relationer och frågan om Taiwans internationella status

I fallet Taiwan har fem kategorier av processer identifierats: 1. elitinteraktioner, 2. "back-channel-förhandlingar" (Back-channel negotiations, BCN) och användandet av hemliga sändebud, 3. ekonomisk integration och interdependens (EII), 4. funktionellt samarbete, och 5. USA:s närvaro.

Olika former av elitinteraktioner har tillsammans med BCN:s skapat både mer kortsiktiga konfliktförebyggande- och långsiktigt fredsbyggande mekanismer. Ekonomisk integration och interdependens har varit grundläggande för utvecklingen av goda relationer över Taiwansundet och har varit viktiga i den meningen att de bygger förutsättningar för långsiktig fred. Inte minst har det varit en drivande kraft för att etablera positiva länkar i allmänhet, samt genom att skapa ett behov och incitament för kvasiofficiella förhandlingar och funktionellt samarbete. Funktionellt samarbete har bidragit till fred genom att fungera som en förtroende- och tillitsbyggande process, samt som en katalysator för omfattande samverkan över sundet. Slutligen har USA spelat en viktig roll för krishantering och kortsiktig konfliktprevention genom att *de facto* skapa en ram för ett acceptabelt beteende från de två sidorna. Detta har bidragit till att förhindra att nivån av fiendtlighet mellan Fastlandskina och Taiwan eskalerat till krig i kristider.

Den Sydkinesiska sjön och Kinas relationer med ASEAN

I denna fallstudie har två sammanlänkade processer med avgörande betydelse för fred identifierats. Dessa är elitinteraktioner ("track två diplomati" och personliga nätverk) och regionalisering (ekonomisk integration och interdependens och återupptagande av vänskapliga förbindelser (*rapprochement*) mellan Kina och ASEAN, Kinas acceptans av multilateralism, och institutionaliseringen av fredliga relationer mellan Kina och ASEAN (genom ASEAN+3 samarbetet).

Den explosiva ökningen av elitinteraktioner har varit viktig för såväl konfliktförebyggande som långsiktigt fredsbyggande. "Track två diplomati" har spelat en viktig roll för att uppnå ökad förståelse samt för att bygga upp förtroende och tillit efter det kalla krigets slut. "Track två diplomati" har också fungerat som en viktig katalysator för regionalt samarbete. Regionalt samarbete har i sin tur haft en positiv "spillovereffekt" på förmågan att förebygga konflikter och bygga fred i sydkinesiska sjön. De informella workshops som hållits rörande hur konflikterna i sydkinesiska sjön skall kunna hanteras har spelat en viktig roll, särskilt under den kritiska perioden under 1990-talet, då de främjat samarbete och förtroende mellan parterna. Regionaliseringsprocessen mellan Kina och ASEAN har tillsammans med den övergripande östasiatiska regionaliseringsprocessen byggt en begynnande stabil fred mellan Kina och Asean,

den sydkinesiska sjön inkluderad. Slutligen har USA haft en viktig roll genom att skapa en känsla av säkerhet i Sydostasien. Detta har i sin tur bidragit till att skapa utrymme för ASEAN att koppla in Kina, och vice versa. Det har också, vilket påminner om USA:s roll i Taiwan, skapat en ram för ett acceptabelt beteende bland de regionala aktörerna. Dock har effekterna i detta fall varit mer begränsade.

Den koreanska kärnvapenkonflikten och Kinas roll

Ett antal processer har identifierats som centrala för framgångsrikt konfliktförebyggande och fredsbyggande på den koreanska halvön: 1. personliga nätverk, 2. ekonomisk integration och interdependens, 3. back-channel förhandlingar, 4. USA:s utrikespolitiska beteende, 5. sexpartssamtalen, och 6. elitinteraktioner. Dessa processer har varit betydelsefulla var för sig, men de har framförallt haft effekt genom att ömsesidigt förstärka varandra.

De tre första processerna är direkt kopplade till Kina. Det är främst genom dessa som Kina har spelat en positiv roll för freden. Kinas inflytande över Nordkorea har varit beroende av, och utövats genom, dess ledares personliga nätverk med de nordkoreanska ledarna. USA:s roll för fred har varit direkt kopplad till sitt ständigt föränderliga beteende och politiska hållning, som har haft inverkan på hur framgångsrika förhandlingarna med Nordkorea har varit. I korthet måste alla försök att lösa kärnvapenfrågan ta USA:s utrikespolitiska beteende i beaktande.

I stor utsträckning har variationen i fredsnivå varit en funktion av tripoden Kina - USA - sexpartssamtalen. Det har varit en formel bestående av: 1. Kinas roll som medlare, kontaktkanal, och kommunikatör, 2. graden av amerikansk förhandlingsvillighet flexibilitet och respekt gentemot Nordkorea, samt 3. sexpartssamtalen som en ram för multilaterala förhandlingar. Vid tillfällen då dessa tre faktorer har varit ömsesidigt kompatibla, och en gemensam hållning har upprätthållits av Kina och USA (samt i viss mån Sydkorea och övriga parter i sexpartssamtalen), har framgång nåtts med att förebygga konflikter. Ibland har dessa faktorer även initierat mer långsiktigt fredsbyggande. När dessa faktorer å andra sidan inte varit kompatibla har konflikteskalering varit mer trolig. Sexpartssamtalen har i sig varit viktiga för att skapa en buffertzona innan krig bryter ut, samt för att mildra kärnvapenfrågan. Med andra ord, trots att sexpartssamtalen har misslyckats med att lösa kärnvapenfrågan har de fungerat som en relativt framgångsrik kortsiktig konfliktpreventions- och krishanteringsmekanism.

Slutsatser

Fallstudierna har visat att informella processer existerar, och att de har varit viktiga för fred, både genom att förebygga att konflikter eskalerar till krig, och för att skapa förutsättningar för en stabil långsiktig fred. Således har det grundläggande antagandet att informella processer och till dem hörande mekanismer varit av betydelse för den relativa freden i Östasien bekräftats. I stort sett alla de processer och mekanismer som identifierats som viktiga för fred i de tre fallstudierna har varit av informell natur snarare än formell. Ett antal av dem har institutionaliserats. Genom sin institutionalisering har de inte minst betydelse för att skapa förutsättningar för en mer långsiktig fred. Anledningen till detta är att de fungerar som strukturer vilka påverkar och begränsar aktörers handlingsutrymme. Ett gemensamt drag hos många av de identifierade processerna är att de kan förstås som aspekter eller manifestationer av den östasiatiska regionaliseringsprocessen.

Närmare bestämt åtta typer av processer och till dem relaterade CPPBM:s har identifierats som centrala för den östasiatiska freden. Dessa processer har indelats i fem kategorier som

identifierats som viktiga för den östasiatiska freden: 1. elitinteraktioner och "back-channel förhandlingar", 2. ekonomisk integration och interdependens, och funktionellt samarbete, 3. (kinesisk acceptans av) multilateralism och institutionalisering (av fredliga förbindelser), 4. formaliserade konflikthanteringsmekanismer (FCMM), och 5. USA:s närvaro. De två första kategorierna har visat sig vara av stor betydelse i samtliga inbäddade fall samt för det övergripande Östasienfallet. Multilateralism och institutionalisering har endast identifierats i sydkinesiska sjön, men har trots detta visat sig ha varit av stor betydelse för den övergripande relativa freden. FCMM har endast identifierats i det koreanska fallet (sexpartssamtalen). FCMM är av betydelse för östasiatiska freden endast i den mån den har bidragit till att förhindra att den kritiska koreanska kärnvapenkonflikten inte eskalerat till krig. USA har visat sig vara av begränsad betydelse för fred bortom sin roll som kortsiktig konfliktförebyggande och krishanteringsmekanism.

I mer teoretiska ordalag har det som ett resultat av de informella processerna över tid skett en förändring av individuella och kollektiva (stats) identiteter och normer i en positiv riktning hos aktörerna i de tre fallen. Samma mönster kan iaktas i fråga om aktörernas upplevda intressen ("perceived interests"), och deras beteende. Nyckeln till de bakomliggande orsakerna för dessa förändringar återfinns i de informella processer vilka underlättar samverkan och socialisering. Kort sagt har det skett en förskjutning från fokus på konflikt, misstänksamhet och/eller rädsla mot samarbetsstimulerande uppfattningar och beteenden.

Vid en undersökning av de mer konkreta manifestationerna för hur upplevda intressen och beteenden har utvecklats är det uppenbart att det har skett en positiv förändring under perioden 1990-2008. På individuell nivå kan dessa positiva effekter till stor del hänföras till olika former av elitinteraktioner. Det har funnits ett samband mellan graden av interaktion och i vilken utsträckning intressen och beteenden har förändrats. Till förändringarna på kollektiv nivå har de viktigaste processerna varit ekonomisk integration och interdependens och den större östasiatiska regionaliseringsprocessen.

Informella processer har varit viktiga för fred genom att bidra till att utveckla tillit och förtroende, samt genom att öka graden av förståelse mellan parterna i en konflikt. I synnerhet olika former av elitinteraktioner har tydligt ökat förståelsen för varandras uppfattningar och intressen. Det har skett förändringar i såväl självuppfattning som i uppfattningen av andra. Dessa förändringar har ofta bidragit till en ökad respekt mellan parter. Med tiden har den ökade förståelsen tillsammans med den förändrade självuppfattningen och uppfattningen av andra och ökad tillit och förtroende påverkat individuella och kollektiva identiteter, normer och intressen. Detta inkluderar en utveckling av vissa delade ("shared") identiteter och normer. De nya identiteterna, normerna och intressena påverkar och begränsar i sin tur beteenden och handlingar.

Teoretiskt sett har aktörerna omkonstruerat norm- och idéstrukturer ("normative and ideational structures") vilka i förlängningen är viktiga för hur aktörerna konstruerar sina egna identiteter, normer och intressen. I det östasiatiska fallet har sedan 1990 dessa strukturer omvandlats i en för fred positiv riktning och fram till 2008 har den relativa freden i Östasien i stor utsträckning institutionaliserats i form av norm- och idéstrukturer. Ramen för vad som uppfattas som möjligt ("realm of possibility") har förändrats, och aktörerna har förändrat sitt tänkande om hur de skall agera och vilka strategier som är tänkbara för att uppnå sina mål.