

Spatial Context in Ontological Security

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Abstract

Ontological Security is derived from the ability of the Self to anchor its identity on biographical narratives and routines. Without these anchors, the stable sense of self would be disrupted, impeding the realization of agency of an individual. Furthermore, both narratives and routines are sourced in the social and temporal environment in constituting the integrity of the Self – the relationship to oneself and to others across time. However, there is relatively little to no analysis on the spatial-material environment as a source of ontological security. Even one of the prominent scholar who have become the basis for the ontological security theory in International Relations acknowledged that the ‘sense of space’ is vital in sustaining the ontological security. In this respect, this thesis engages on the possibility of spatial context as an additional anchor to the Ontological Security needs of the state. As such, it raises the questions: How does spatial context constitutes identity? and how does it satisfy the ontological security needs of state? I examine this in the case of territorial conflict particularly of People’s Republic of China’s persistent claim over Taiwan. The thesis aims to provide new perspective on the source of ontological security. Throughout the research it maintains that states are both temporally and spatially bounded.

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Introduction

The end of Cold War in the 1990s have introduced new and profound security questions. Questions of economic, social, environmental, and even cyber processes and changes have set the productive research agenda in Security Studies.¹ Moreover, these questions challenge the view that security provisions usually in military terms are not solely a state function and privilege. The Critical Security Studies as the name suggests, attempts to question the traditional understanding of security. This led to the re-examination of many questions that were previously left unanswered. The main aim is to develop new perspectives in light of the new emerging security issues in the world.

The relationship between identity and security gained traction in world politics. The conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa as well Eastern Europe are bitterly fought in the name of ethnic, tribal, national identities. On the other hand, the European integration also presents how national and regional identities dynamics inform the security policies which provides a cooperative space for the members. In light of these developments, Scholars turned their attention to the identity-security relationship as a productive lens in thinking important outcomes in world politics.²

In Critical Security Studies, Ontological Security serves as one of the framework where identity and security intersect. Ontological Security refers to the ability to have a coherent and stable sense of Self to confidently deal with the uncertainties and chaos that pervades the everyday life. As Mitzen noted, “the specific intuition behind ontological security is that all social actors

¹ Barry Buzan, “Rethinking Security After the Cold War,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, no. 1 (1997): 5-28.

² Catarina Kinnvall and Jennifer Mitzen, “An Introduction to the special issue: Ontological securities in world politics.” *Cooperation and Conflict*. 52, no. 1 (2017): 3.

feel that they need a stable sense of self in order to get by and realize a sense of agency in the world.”³ Inversely, failure to anchor the Self to sources of ontological security results to divided and disabled Self. As a result, states as Ontological security seekers draws from the social environment to maintain and establish a degree of control over life. So far, it focuses on the temporal context particularly of relational and reflexive sources. Routines are characterized by regularized interactions among agents whereas narratives draw sources from the past experiences and its visions of Self. Yet, there has been relatively little to no analysis on the spatial context of ontological security. Thus, the main aim of this research is to fill this gap in literature.

In this thesis, I argue that spatial sources may become an additional anchor to the identity needs of the state, especially in fostering its ontological security needs. I utilized the theoretical framework developed by Ejodus (2017) where the Self could be discursively link to material-spatial environment known to be as *ontic spaces* defined as the extension of the collective Self. I also integrate Berenskoetter’s (2014) framework particularly of experienced and envisioned space. Together these frameworks provide a strong analytical lens in the possibility of spatial context in ontological security. I used these frameworks to demonstrate the case of territorial/spatial conflict between China and Taiwan. This case presents a good empirical study as among the borders and territorial conflicts, Taiwan is symbolically and emotionally embedded at the core Chinese biographical narrative: First, it is one of the ‘core territories’ alongside Hong Kong and Macau who had been seceded from China, Taiwan is the only territory who has yet to be integrated to mainland China. Secondly, the civil war had resulted to the creation of ‘Two Chinas’ were both governments claim to be the legitimate ruler over the other.

³ Jennifer Mitzen and Kyle Larson, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 3-4.

I argue that the People's Republic of China seeks to achieve ontological security through the reintegration and reclamation of its 'lost territories.' In particular, Taiwan as a 'breakaway province' has become an *ontic space* where the unfolding Self occurs. The sense of place has provided constancy and certainty by providing the Self with knowledge about its place in 'the world,' specifically to meaningfully situate the Self and delineate its existence in time and space, to provide with necessary sense of orientation about where we come from and where we are, or could be going.⁴ The existing socio-temporal sources cannot fully capture the overall picture of the ontological security process. Instead, the material-spatial source may supplement in the attempt to understand the behavior of states.

The research aims to contribute on revisiting of the Ontological Security Theory in the early conception by Giddens – which he asserted that “a sense of place seems of major importance in sustaining of ontological security.”⁵ Yet, there has been few attempts to provide an account on spatiality. Hence, the main questions that will guide this research are: how do spatial context shapes the national or collective identity? Most importantly, how does spatiality constitute ontological security?

This thesis is structured in the following: First is the literature review of the development ontological security, its applicability in International Relations and a review of the related studies. Secondly, the analytical framework clarifying how territories are conceptualized in International Relations, followed by the extrapolation on the development of the spatiality context. The last chapter examines the empirical case of China territorial dispute with Taiwan.

⁴ Felix Berenskoetter, “Parameters of National Biography,” *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 1 (2014): 269.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 367.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The chapter is structured to elaborate as well as situate the study in the extant scholarship on ontological security. Firstly, it discusses the conceptual origin of ontological security from sociology and psychology. Secondly, it examines the application of ontological security in international relations and security studies. Thirdly, it will elaborate the source of ontological security. Lastly, it proceeds to elaborate on how the material-spatial environment is used in ontological security in different studies at varying levels.

1.1 Conceptual Origins of Ontological Security

Ontological Security is the sense of a self in having a continual narrative and uninterrupted routines that creates certainty and a degree of control across time. It refers to the capacity of individual to confidently deal with day-to-day activities especially the multitude of risks and anxieties it accompanies. Two influential authors: Giddens and Laing, had laid fundamental groundworks of Ontological Security that was later on applied in International Relations. In sociology, Giddens examined the production and reproduction of self-identity in light of modernity. He asserts that modernity has introduced changes on day-to-day human experience which replaces traditions and old habits, and in the process, introduced ‘risks’ that affects the integrity of the self. Under these external changes, individuals produce and reproduce its self-identity to preserve its own healthy existence – which relates to the theory ontological security. Ontological Security is the sense of ‘self’ that is routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.⁶ Routine provides a ‘formed framework’ for the cultivation of sense of being and its separation from non-being.⁷ The establishment of ‘self’ is established as early in

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Polity Press, 1991), 52.

⁷ Ibid., 39.

infancy, to which the daily routines and attendance of the caregiver to the child established core connections that wards of anxiety and dangers that threatens the self. This is possible through the establishment of trust relations. Basic trust is a “protective cocoon which normal individuals carry around with them as the means whereby they are able to get on with the affairs of day-to-day life.”⁸ Moreover, Ontological security is also reflexive. As Giddens asserted, modernity has introduced new information and knowledge that is yet to be filtered by individuals. New modes of experience created a multitude of day-to-day actions that poses questions to self-identity. Within the scope of reflexivity is the idea of self-regarding effort in sustaining the stable sense of self through the biographies or narrative we tell ourselves. In other words, Ontological security is the idea of a stable self, through trust relations and biographies, established as a defensive mechanism which ‘filters out’ many dangers that which in principle threaten the integrity of self.⁹

Key to understanding ontological security is the centrality of anxiety. R.D Laing (1960) provided key insights on different anxieties that ‘divides the self.’ He focused on cases of psychotic and schizophrenic individuals. Accordingly, they “do not experience themselves as a complete person, but rather ‘split in’ various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as to or more selves and so on.”¹⁰ They are known to be ontological insecure caused by the unaddressed anxieties. Anxieties are chaotic features of life. The ‘divided self’ is caused by the inability to assess and filter the new information and knowledge that of everyday interactions. According to Laing, psychotic and schizophrenic individuals experience the world differently. Instead of taking-life-for-granted as ordinary individuals do, they are more concern on preserving

⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁹ Ibid. 54.

¹⁰ R.D Laing, *The Divided Self*. (Tavistock: Penguin Books, 1960), 18.

themselves. Hence, they cannot share the reality with other people and does become alienated from others as well as dissociated from their bodies.¹¹

1.2 Ontological Security in International Relations

Questioning the ‘meaning of security,’ Huysmans (1998) introduced Ontological Security as part of critique of ‘widening agenda’ in the security studies. The widening agenda refers to the establishment of different sectors – societal, environmental, political, economic, and military sectors, as well as various referent object like human security.¹² Huysmans contends that this broader framework of security had resulted in adding these adjectives – economic, societal etc., to the noun ‘security’ without delving further into the actual meaning of security.¹³ Instead, security should be understood as ‘thick signifier’ – by which Huysmans meant that the interpretation of security story should not just require the definition of threats or referent objects, but also how security has come to define our relations to nature, to human beings and to the self.¹⁴ In other words, treating security as thick signifier leads us to understanding how ‘security’ as a category, articulates a particular way of organizing forms of life.¹⁵

Huysmans illustrates security as an ordering principle through the *double mediation* of life and death namely; daily security and ontological security. Daily Security ‘articulates a strategy of survival, which consists of trying to postpone death by countering objectified threat. Here the ‘enemy’ is the objectified threat, unto which the security policy is directed against it. The classification of friends and enemy has become a part of ‘political identification’ of the state,

¹¹ Ibid. 43.

¹² Barry Buzan, *People, State and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007).

¹³ Jef Huysmans, “Security! What do you mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier” *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 2 (1998): 231

¹⁴ Ibid., 231

¹⁵ Ibid

whether his actions should be of amity or enmity, therefore it is driven by social relations and identification. However, ontological security is a strategy of managing the limits of reflexivity – death as undetermined – by fixing social relations into the symbolic and institutional order.¹⁶ Unlike daily security which refers to the threat definition of the ‘enemy,’ here Ontological Security is concern in the question on how to order social relations amidst the uncertainty brought about the ‘strangers.’ Accordingly, the figure of the strangers connotes a challenge to the categorizing practices through the impossibility of being categorized.¹⁷ They challenges the possibility of ordering itself – hence the principle of determinacy or the acceptable degree of certainty unto which states can act confidently.

In much broader sense, Ontological Security is applied in International Relations to provide an alternative paradigm on the traditional notion of security. This traditional understanding of security rests on the idea of rational-objectivist behavior of states which is advocated by the realist school. Realist theory argues that states are primarily motivated to ensure ‘survival’ above anything else.¹⁸ In doing so, they act rationally by calculating costs and benefits of pursuing course of actions that is vital in ensuring its existence. Moreover, states based their assessment on the acquisition and distribution of power in the international system. Power as the currency of realist is based on the objective assessment of material capabilities mainly advanced technologies and military. Understood in this way, survival is about *physical security*. Yet, these normative assumptions are limiting. It failed to take into account why states pursue actions that endangers its own physical security. Ontological Security fills this gap in providing an explanation on the behavior of states. Accordingly, Ontological Security is defined as the ‘security of self’ – of the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 241

¹⁸ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1979), 26.

subjective understanding of who one is, that which enables and motivates action and choice.¹⁹ While it is noted that physical security is important for the state, ontological security is equally or even more important because its fulfillment affirms a state's self-identity – primarily how the state perceives itself, and by the others.²⁰ In other words when a state has a stable sense of 'self' or its own identity, then it act confidently and realize its agency.

To reiterate, the main critique of Ontological Security theory lies on the idea that realists failed to account the self-defeating behavior of states. This is particularly evident in the security dilemma where states are entangled on the conflictual relationship. According to Herz (1950), Security Dilemma operates under anarchy and it is when:

Groups or individuals ... are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.

As we can see, realist argue that Security Dilemma is caused by anarchy. The uncertainty it brings that one could never be safe unless you accumulate power or material capabilities sufficient enough to fend off potential threats. Consequently, Security Dilemma illustrates how this worst-case thinking leads states to be trapped in a conflictual relationship that runs against their ultimate goal - survival. However, Mitzen (2006) in particular explored this scenario. She argues that this kind of relationship that perpetuates the physical insecurity can provide ontological security, by which this suppresses uncertainty and make the world knowable.²¹ In Security

¹⁹ Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in International Politics: State Identity and Security Dilemma" *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 344.

²⁰ Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self Identity and the IR State*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

²¹ Mitzen "Ontological Security in International Politics," 354.

Dilemma, states identify their ‘enemy’ or ‘rival’ and in the process, it objectifies the threat unto which security policies may be directed. Security policy such as arms race in the security dilemma are sites of certainty. Because as Huysmans asserted, security policies open a space within a political community can represent and affirm itself.²² It is a practice of agency to which states are able to define the ‘friends and enemies,’ therefore are able to order whether an object is threatening or not. This meant that Security Dilemma may fulfill the ontological security needs of the states as it is the condition when an individual has a confident expectation, about the means-ends relationship that govern her social life.²³ Therefore, states might actually prefer their ongoing certain conflict to the unsettling condition of deep uncertainty.²⁴

As previously noted, ‘objectification of threats’ facilitates a degree of certainty as to whom security policies be directed against and reaffirm the sense of ‘self.’ As such it explains why some states might eventually be attached to the conflict and it implies that conflict resolution is hard for the actors. This is echoed by Rumelili (2015) who asserts that at times conflicts contained anxieties. As such, conflict transformation may unleash these anxieties by diminishing and eliminating fears, undermining certitude, generating moral ambiguities, and most importantly by disrupting routines and habits through which these anxieties are contained in everyday life.²⁵ She referred to this as ‘Peace Anxieties.’ Giddens reminded that anxieties should be understood not only as a specific phenomenon associated to risks and dangers but most importantly how the individuals develops and perceives their security system. In short, how security meaning is

²² Huysmans “Security!,” 238.

²³ Mitzen “Ontological Security in International Politics,” 345

²⁴ Ibid., 342.

²⁵ Bahar Rumelili, “Ontological (In)security and Peace Anxieties: a Framework for the Conflict Resolution,” in *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*, ed. Bahar Rumelili (New York: Routledge, 2015), 13-14.

understood in its social relations.²⁶ Moreover, it is important to distinguish fear and anxiety as both of this is associated with uncertainty but entails different meanings. Fear is a response to a specific threat and therefore has a definite object.²⁷ By the identification of a specific threat enables human beings to postpone or, the least, mediate their relations with death by countering or moderating the pressure of death.²⁸ On the other hand, Anxiety is the absence of object, what threatens is both nowhere and everywhere which questions the ‘sense of being’ as it questions the capacity to order things particularly in the potentiality of countering or delaying death. It removes the agency of actors as the uprush of anxiety happens when the person is unable to carry out or is prevented from carrying out their goals.²⁹ In sum, anxiety cripples and paralyzes the ‘self,’ or have become ontologically insecure.

1.3 Sources of Ontological Security

To keep anxiety at bay, routines and narratives serve as the sources of ontological security.³⁰ However, the extent to which these sources constitute the self-identity of states is a point of contention in the literature. Mitzen (2006) puts emphasis on the routines. She defined routines as a regularized interaction that creates predictability and in effect agency: “From a platform of stable routines, aspiring agents come to know who they are and therefore can act. Because routines anchor identity, actors become attached to, or invested, in their routines.” By abandoning routines, means sacrificing agency. States are therefore attached to routines because it is hard for states to forgo this relationship as it would open a Pandora’s box – the anxieties brought

²⁶ Huysmans “Security!,” 233.

²⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 43.

²⁸ Huysmans “Security!,” 235.

²⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 44.

³⁰ Ibid., 52.

about by the undefined dangers. Individuals cannot possibly process the innumerable dangers that pervades the everyday life. Additionally, Mitzen explains that:

Constant awareness of such chaos would generate tremendous anxiety, making it extremely difficult to reconcile competing threats and take any action at all. Even if the actor could imagine every possible contingency, the attempt to hold all threats at bay would be exhausting. Knowing she cannot possibly imagine the universe of contingencies only compounds the anxiety, paralyzing any remaining capacity to act.

Therefore, routines are able to bring the uncertainty within a tolerable limit.³¹ Routines are able to order the cognitive environment given that it is relatively automatic and habitual, specifically it is taken-for-granted activity or not readily weighed or assessed. This means, one does not ‘choose’ but simply respond.³² This essential quality eliminates countless questions that poses threat to the self, instead routines as automatic response enables individual to focus on one task at a time. Moreover, the tendency to engage in routinized behavior is derived from the idea of developing a ‘basic trust system.’ According to Giddens, this system screens off potential future threats and dangers by allowing individuals to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might confront.³³ Basic trust system serves as the defense wall against the threat of chaos and ambivalence to identity. In short, it enables individuals reaffirms the self in a predictable activity.

Routines are the intersubjective activity which constitutes the identity of states. This premise is a critique against the realist assumption of state as atomistic and has pre-given interests and goals. Where states are presumed to ultimately pursue their ultimate ends – survival. Yet, the identity of the state is dependent of the role ascribed to it in their interactions: “Role identities get

³¹ Mitzen “Ontological Security in International Politics,” 246.

³² Jennifer Mitzen, “Anchoring Europe’s Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security.” *Journal of European Public Polity* 13, no. 2 (2006): 273, <http://doi.org/10.1080/13501760500451709>.

³³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 39.

their meaning from the role positions in the social order and therefore are not understandable in terms of qualities individuals have along.”³⁴ Routines are not only able to reduce uncertainty and anxiety, but it shapes the identity of the states. For example, the Cold War characterized by a security dilemma has defined the identities of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. The construction of the political self of US is dependent on the identification of ‘other’ as threatening in this case USSR and vice versa.³⁵ The definition and sustenance of role identities is dependent on the other, in sum, relationally constituted.

Yet, Steele (2006) contends that Mitzen’s excessive focus on mutually constitutive identity identities endangers its agency: “The fact that when agents are swamped by social dependencies they are actually sacrificing their agency.”³⁶ States are constrained to realize their “transformational possibilities” within the Self of states. Although he agreed that the social world is essential for the agent to be ontologically secure, it should not be completely embroiled on relationality. Steele then focuses on the reflexive understanding of self, arguing that:

The screening of “relevant” elements of that social world is in part constituted by the agent’s sense of self and what those elements are, what produces them – in short, how agent “make sense” of those elements – is in part dependent upon an agent’s updating of information.³⁷

The role of the agent in constituting its own identity is prime significance. Steele favors the self-regarding behavior of states. The agent is responsible unto oneself. It is the one who filters which inputs are relevant and most likely will be building/re-building which part would be significant for the ‘self’. We are not we are, but what we make of ourselves.³⁸ The self-identity of

³⁴ Mitzen “Ontological Security,” 357

³⁵ Huysmans “Security!,” 239

³⁶ Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*. 59

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 75.

self is an ongoing reflexive project. He defined ontological security as the process whereby states create meaning for their actions through the “biographical narrative:” defined as the capacity of actors to decide upon certain actions to promote a healthy vision of the self to others, how internal dialectic of divided or severed Self overcomes (but not always) insecurity, and how all of this influences the place of the national ‘self’ in an international context – lends to an interpretive approach.”³⁹

Narratives are formed through the historical account of ‘self’. The individual appropriates his past by shifting through the light of what is anticipated for an organized future.⁴⁰ Individuals create a self-trajectory based on his/her experiences that serves to be integrated into his on narratives. This is manifested in keeping a journal, diary or an autobiographic account as they espoused ‘what you were’ and reminding you ‘what have you become in the present.’ Thus, forming a sustained sense of self. In other words, autobiography – particularly in the broad sense of an interpretive self-history produced by individuals concerned, whether written down or no – is actually at the core of self-identity in modern social life.⁴¹

Memories play a key role in creating these narratives. “Memory thus emerges as a vital self-identity need as it is invoked to constitute the central narrative of a state about its past in order to form a core part of its consistent sense of the self in the present. The intactness of a collective actor’s mnemonic vision of itself and its place in the world thus becomes apparent as a prerequisite for an internally cohesive self.”⁴² Berenskoetter (2014) clarified that “biographical narrative is not a record of everything that ever happened to the Self, but highlights experiences that matter.” –

³⁹ Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*. 6.

⁴⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, 75.

⁴¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴² Maria Mälksoo, “‘Memory must be defended’: Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security,” *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (2015): 224.

This entails not only of selection of special experiences but also how agents form meanings in a creative way that which provide a sense of self. “The parameters along which this occurs emerge out of the purpose of the narrative: to provide the Self with knowledge about its place in ‘the world’, specifically to meaningfully situate the Self and delineate its existence in time and space, to provide us with a necessary sense of orientation about where we come from and where we are, or could be, going.”⁴³

Both Mitzen and Steele approaches on the sources of ontological security are situated on relationality and reflexivity respectively. While they are not mutually exclusive per se, the emphasis on each camp on how these sources constitute the identity of state, therefore their ontological security needs, differs considerably. Zarakol contends that “neither a fully intersubjective approach nor one that focus solely on the reflexive construction of self-identity captures the full picture.” She took the middle approach and illustrate it in the case of historical crimes of Japan and Turkey and their refusal or lack of apologies. She argued that the apology and admittance of the past crime is influenced by the ‘self-narratives and self-regarding normative commitments of the state.’ Moreover, admitting such crimes is simply not a verbal act but rather challenges the narrative of the self. Apology in this sense is a reflexive act. However, the notion that a dishonorable act should be attended with apology by the state stems from the normative demands of the international society, specifically that which is stipulated by international laws and norms. The ‘apology’ both from Turkey and Japan is primarily derived from the intersubjective demands in the international society that which posing a danger to their self-narratives thereby threatening to their ontological security.⁴⁴

⁴³ Berenskoetter, “Parameters,” 269.

⁴⁴ Ayse Zarakol, “Ontological (in)security and state denial of historical crimes: Turkey and Japan,” *International Relations* 24, no. 1 (2010): 8.

1.4 Material Sources of Ontological Security: Spaces and Places

The existing scholarship on ontological security have focused exclusively on the role of social environment. Therefore, the role of material environment has been overlooked as part of ontological security process. This follows Giddens original conception of the concept where both social environment and material environment plays a key role in the unfolding experience of ‘Self’. As evident in the literature, scholars have been investigating how the reflexive source through the biographical narratives as well as relational source through the routines, are vital in achieving ontological security. Yet as noted by Berenskoetter (2014) noted, IR scholars have been lagging on offering a spatial understanding on collective identity.⁴⁵ The source of Ontological security have exclusively focused on social environments in investigating how the collective identity of state is (re)formed.

In Giddens words, these narratives and routines are situated in certain locales – called ‘settings of interaction.’ These locales could be everywhere ranging from streets, to towns, cities and even territories and nation-states. Moreover, space should be understood not in the geographical/metric sense but rather, as the particular place from which the Self unfolds, where experiences were made and which it knows best.⁴⁶ The locales or ‘spaces’ are more or less symbolic and sentimental to the Self experience, whether it is to some degree traumatic or fulfilling. Studies from different academic fields have explored ‘spaces’ on the constitution of self.

The reliability of persons and things amidst the threatening world forms the core of Ontological Security. As such, it is important to not only anchor the stability of Self in social relations, but also in the space where the Self occupies. At the individual level, ontological security

⁴⁵ Berenskoetter, “Parameters,” 274.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 275.

in spaces is explored in the 'home.' Dupius and Thorns (1998) identified the conditions where ontological security is maintained at home, namely: as a site of constancy where day-to-day routines occur, a place of autonomy, and as a secure base which identities are constructed.

First, Home serves as a site of constancy of the material and social environment. This entails two things: First, by ascribing an affective and symbolic meaning into it. It is a process of 'making a house into a home'⁴⁷ The sense of familiarity is derived by being well-settled. Over time, the occupants have established their routines that creates predictability and patterns in living. Home has become a space where one is familiar with the everyday routines – eating, sleeping, bonding with family, studying etc. Secondly, home have become a *haven*.⁴⁸ A retreat place from the fast-paced hassle life outside. It established a feeling of comfort, understood not as an immediate sensory satisfaction rather by feeling of 'at ease' from the larger world. In other words, a sense of security.

Second, Home is also a space where people exercise a degree of control. In this context home is about autonomy: "autonomy is a mixture of freedom to do what one wants and to express oneself as well as freedom from any need to have one's actions approved by others and from any need to conform to others' expectations of oneself." As a bounded space, home is free from the surveillance of the public by being private⁴⁹, where one can be himself/herself without the fear of judgement.

⁴⁷ Ann Dupius and David Thorns, "Home, home ownership and the search for ontological security," *Sociological Review* 46, no. 1 (1998): 31

⁴⁸ Rosemary Hiscock, Ade Kearns, Sally McIntyre and Anne Ellaway, "Ontological Security and psychological benefits from the home: Qualitative evidence on issues of tenure." *Housing Society* 18, no. 1-2 (2001): 53

⁴⁹ Ann Dupius and David Thorns, "Home, home ownership,"³⁵

Lastly, Home is a space where Self is constructed and reconstructed. By offering a place of constancy and autonomy the Self is able to safeguard the meaningful things in which one sees the stories of one's self embodied, and rituals of remembrance that reiterate those stories.⁵⁰ Our Self-understanding is produced and reproduce to the meanings we attached on the daily routines as well as the introspection that happens in the home.

Home is treated not in a physical sense, but rather as a process whereby occupants continuously build a familiar environment in guarding the 'self.' This is echoed to what Heidegger philosophized as the '*Dasein*' which comes from the German word that means '*existence*' that '*is-there*.' By doing so, Heidegger is able to draw attention in which existence is indeed a matter of situatedness – to exist, to be “in the world,” is to have a concrete ‘there.’⁵¹ Individuals occupy a space to orient itself in a bubble to which one understands oneself, temporarily protected from outside dangers. Moreover, making a house into home is a practice done to what Heidegger refers to as “dwelling.” To dwell is not merely to be contained and boxed in the place in a physical sense, rather it means orienting one-self in having a place there in having a sense of belonging. Malpas (2008) captured the notion of dwelling referred to as:

The way in which our situatedness in the world is indeed something that cannot be separated from what we are and what is closest to us, from what which is most familiar and with which we are already engaged.⁵²

This is also seconded by Kronsell (2002) on her similar concept on 'Homesteading' which is a strategy employed in making and shaping a political space for ourselves in order to go beyond

⁵⁰ Iris Marion Young, “On Female Body Experience: “Throwing like a Girl” and other Essays” *Oxford Scholarship Online* (2006): 35.

⁵¹ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place and the World*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2008), 47.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 75.

and surpass life contradictions and anxieties.⁵³ Heidegger's and Kronsell's concept delineates the orientation on space not of the physical but of existential.

Just like in a home where the situatedness of 'self' is established, individuals and groups have also drawn affinity towards material environment of a larger scale. Public spaces of symbolic and historical significance may (re)affirm the ontological security. Grenville (2007) examined how communities cope up with the changing times through either conservation or construction of key built environment. The decision to conserve or completely reconstruct public spaces rests on the socio-political context of communities. High levels of disaffection on the communities leads to change the surrounding, either by completely getting rid of the structure or rebuilding another. However, when 'existential questions' pervades, the decision would be the opposite. Communities would retain the built structures in serving as the 'bulwark against the untrustworthy external world.'⁵⁴ She suggests that this is evident on societies' in crisis or transition. In a post-war condition, victorious societies insist to return on the normal 'routine' and familiar environment. She cited a personal account from a member of British local community that: "*people returning from war service wanted their familiar lives in familiar surroundings rather than face massive disruptions.*"⁵⁵ On the other hand, defeated societies where there is disorientation struggle to come in to terms on their sense of identity. Mostly, rather than preserving, communities resorted to building new ones. In Germany for instance, the omission of traces of Nazi-affiliated symbols on buildings are completely eradicated and erecting new buildings.⁵⁶ In these two instances, spaces

⁵³ Annica Kronsell, "Homeless in Academia: Homesteading as a strategy of Change in a World of Hegemonic Masculinity." *Women in Higher Education: Empowering Change* (2002): 7.

⁵⁴ Jane Grenville, "Conservation as psychology: ontological security and the built environment," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 13, no. 6 (2007): 451.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 455-456.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,

are used to situate the identity of the collectivities. The decision to either preserve or construct built environment is a matter of how should spaces be of ‘familiar’ value.

Other studies have turn to natural landscapes as a way of situating the collective identities. Kauffman and Zimmer (1998) examined how Canada and Switzerland have come to define their national identity in their natural environment. Both these countries have diverse ethno-linguistic identities which poses a challenge in forming a distinct nationhood. As a result, intellectuals and leaders of the country turn to the natural landscapes which cuts across the ethnic lines, as opposed to culture, which divided the nation along such lines.⁵⁷ By using the natural landscapes, they were able to situate a distinct shared experience which becomes a force of moral and spiritual regeneration capable of determining the nation and giving it a compact, homogenous, unified form.⁵⁸ Yet, spaces could also be a source of division and conflict. At the heart of Israel-Palestinian conflict are the landscapes with symbolic status founded on long ancient history of both Jewish and Arabs that occupies the land. Jerusalem is considered to be sacred sites for both groups. Israel in particular, used archeological practices to strengthen their claims on the occupied lands. It is founded on the idea that Jewish people are destined to return back to their ‘promised land.’ As such, “Israeli settlements are found in places identified as the sites present in the Bible, shaping a contemporary Jewish landscape in assumed continuity with the ancient one.”⁵⁹ This gave rise to Zionism, a nationalist movement on the search for state that has a strong connection to the land.

⁵⁷ Eric Kauffman and Oliver Zimmer, “In search of the authentic nation: landscape and national identity in Canada and Switzerland.” *Nations and Nationalism* 4, no. 4 (1998): 502.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 487.

⁵⁹ Maja Gori, “The Stones of Contention: The Role of Archeological Heritage in Israel-Palestinian Conflict.” *Archeologies: Journal of the World Archeological Congress* 9 no. 1 (2013): 216-217.

Lands have become a main feature of identity formation not only because of its physical attributes, but to the symbolic meaning it provides to the community.

1.5 Conclusion

The conception of Ontological Security has come a long way. The research projects develop new insights in examining how the state behave and how it can achieve its ontological security need. The point of this chapter is not only to discuss the development of Ontological Security but most importantly to situate the gap in the literature. Spatial context in Ontological Security has been explored in many other studies especially in home studies, yet it is the aim of this thesis to join the few attempts in adding spatiality as an additional anchor in the ontological security needs. In sum, this literature review outlined the research problem and the proposed point of inquiry of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

So far, the sources of Ontological Security in International Relations have exclusively focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic derivatives particularly on social context. As discussed earlier, Giddens (1984) have stated that the importance of the sense of space understood not in a passive way rather in a more active way. Humans not only shape their environment, but the same way goes to the other. This starting point provides a solid basis unto which spatial analysis in of the case study becomes a fruitful endeavor. The following section will engage on the concepts essential on the analysis of the case. As such it will first, engage on the conceptual definition and development of territory in International Relations. Second, on the discursive linking of the Self to the space, followed by the synthesis of theoretical framework.

2.1 Territory in International Relations

The political and social primacy of territory is tied with the formation of states. Territory serves as a prerequisite of statehood alongside a legitimate government, population and sovereignty.⁶⁰ Territory is the space where interaction happens. it is derived from the Latin word “terra” which translates into “earth” or “land”. It provides the natural resources and a place of dominion essential in the sustenance of the community. However, territory should be understood not only in a physical sense but also as a concept generated by people organizing space for their own aims.⁶¹ The political aim of order and stability serves as a starting point in the formation of ‘modern’ states. This can be traced back in the enlightenment period. The 17th century Europe saw the change from faith to reason; from divine thinking to humanist thinking. This is supported by

⁶⁰ Daud Hassan, “The Rise of Territorial State and the Treaty of Westphalia,” *Yearbook of New Zealand Jurisprudence*, 9 (2006): 62.

⁶¹ Jean Gottman, “The Evolution of the Concept of Territory” *Social Science* 14, no.3/4 (1975): 29.

two key turning points: First, the social contract zeitgeist which had increasingly calls for the relationship of man to the state. In this view, individuals have consented the state to rule over for their security in exchange of some of their freedom. As a result, this grant the legitimacy of states. Secondly, the Peace Settlement of Westphalia in 1648 cemented the separation of kings and queens from the Christendom. It rejected the idea of universal authority of Pope or Emperor and established the sovereign equality of states.⁶² The internal legitimacy of social contract thinking as well as the sovereign equality of state established the ‘territorial state.’ Hassan pointed out that “In the context of sovereign territorial division, the Westphalia settlement is notable. As a first treaty of modern International law, it opened the door to and legitimized the territorial practice of exclusive authority and sovereign State equality.”⁶³ The outcome of these turning points makes the territorial spaces as rigid and fixed.

The role of territory is a point of divergence in International Relations theory. The major advocate of the Westphalian system is Realism. The Realist ontology defined the states as territorial units. These units are autonomous and understood to be well-closed and delineated entities.⁶⁴ As such, the extent to which state survival is assured depends on securing the borders through amalgamation of its capabilities. As previously discussed, these are mostly material and physical in nature. States’ highest priority is to provide territorial and constitutional integrity.⁶⁵ In security dilemma, the offense-defense calculations rest on the geography of the state. In times of potential invasion, geographical features serve to constraint and delay the choices of the enemy:

⁶² Daud Hassan, “The Rise of Territorial State,” 64.

⁶³ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁴ Felix Berenskoetter, “Parameters,” 264.

⁶⁵ Jack Levy and William Thompson, “Balancing on land and at sea: Do states ally against the leading global power” in *Realism Reader*, ed. Colin Elman and Michael Jensen (New York: Routledge, 2014): 94-95.

“Oceans, large rivers and mountain ranges serves... as buffer zones. Being hard to cross, they allow defense against superior numbers.”⁶⁶ Therefore, as first line of defense. Realist assumes that a well-fortified and guarded territory intuitively secure the states. That being said, territorial boundaries are solid and well-demarcated. On the other hand, Liberalism theory subscribe to the idea of permeable territory of states. Rather than viewing solely as territorial states, it argues that states among other actors such as multinational corporations, civil society and international organizations have linkages that circumvent the states’ boundaries. This is best viewed in the Globalization where the flow of information, goods, capital and people had facilitated interdependence which makes cooperation likely.⁶⁷ International Institutions such as World Bank, United Nations, World Trade Organization plays a key part in facilitating cooperation among states operating across borders virtually overcoming the territorial boundaries of the state as opposed to realist ontology. The prevalence of globalization and the role of international institutions lead many scholars in arguing that the new era ushers in a ‘borderless’ world stating the end of the nation-states.⁶⁸ Yet, Newman (1999) pointed at some reservations on this. He recognized the “functions and roles of boundaries have, indeed, changed as they become more permeable to transboundary movements”⁶⁹ but also arguing that the resurgence of national and ethnic communities in seeking self-determination and independence is also part of a broader dynamic

⁶⁶ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the security dilemma,” in *Realism Reader*, ed. Colin Elman and Michael Jensen (New York: Routledge, 2014): 137-139.

⁶⁷ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, “Power and interdependence,” *International Organization* 41, no. 4 (1987): 725-753.

⁶⁸ See Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press: 1995).; Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990); Susan Strange, *The Retreat of State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁶⁹ David Newman, “Geopolitics Renaissance: Territory, Sovereignty and World Political Map” in *Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity*, ed. David Newman (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999): 3.

process of socio, economic and political system of the world. He adapted the term “glocalization” whereby groups are seeking their own alternative identities both at a regional and global level. The notion of a rigid as well as permeable territories is still up for debate. As argued the intensification of economic, cultural and cyber linkages among states challenges the traditional boundaries of the state, yet the post-cold war era and the increased national and ethnic identity outcries has also solidified political reordering and establishment of new states.

Both Liberalism and Realism theorizing of ‘territory’ illustrates the symptomatic view on the territorial state and narrow perspective on the broader socio-economic and political changes in the world. Agnew (1994) noted that that international relations theories have so far ‘dehistoricize and decontextualize processes of state formation, its integration and disintegration.’ Case in point, the view that globalization would create a borderless world and in the process, makes territory obsolete. For Agnew, different scales and levels of spatiality provides different context in understanding and examining these processes. It echoes what Newman have pointed out that both the global force and reemerging forces at the regional level can be examine. The hasty conclusions about the borderlessness of the world falls into the “territorial-trap” based on the idea that the “debate [in the mainstream International Relations Theory] is overwhelmingly in terms of the presence or absence of the territorial state rather than its significance and meaning as an actor in different historical circumstances.” The demarcation of borders serves to distinguish the stable inside as well as the dangerous outside. The foreign or outside serves to be the space for competition in realist terms, where one state’s gain is the loss of another or cooperation in liberal term, where states could be mutually benefit on working together. In this sense, states are assumed to be fixed and homogenous whereby the boundaries that separate ‘within’ and ‘beyond’ the state is largely a function of determining which actor should be accorded in amity or enmity. The

territorial state should not be viewed solely in terms of the rigid or permeable borders. Rather the exploration of spatio-temporal at varying nodes, scales and levels reveals a more comprehensive way of analyzing processes and changes in International Relations.

2.2 *Linking the Self to Space*

Space and Place are integral part on the formation and reaffirmation of the national identity. When states and nations mold, reshape, and take control of the territory, they make sure that the 'place' mirrors their own identity. By ascribing meaning and symbols to the places they are sub-consciously reaffirming their national identity which serves as 'repositories of memories.'⁷⁰ This also implies that individuals and humans get emotionally attached to the places.⁷¹ Examples are historic sites of battles and birthplaces are great manifestation of national identity representation especially if the monuments are erected reminding the future generations - or even the current ones on who they are.⁷² Some built environment could also become linked to Self, such as religious centers, seat of governments and educational institutions.

As have been discussed, Ontological Security sources lack the spatial context in explaining why conflicts involving a specific built or natural environment persist over time. As a starting point in an attempt to reconsider the role of spaces in the ontological security process, Ejodus (2017) developed a framework to which the 'Self' could be extended symbolically into important material environments. He called it '*Ontic Spaces*' which he defined as the spatial extensions of the collective self that causes the state identities to appear firm and continuous. He illustrated it in the case of General Staff Headquarters in Belgrade where the building has remained in the center of

⁷⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974): 145.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷² George White, *Nation State, and Territory: Origin, Evolutions and Relationships*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004): 58-59.

the city since it was destroyed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1999. Accordingly, the ruins and rubles of the Headquarters remained for a very long time as this site has become the *ontic space* in Serbian national identity.

The incorporation of the Self to the spaces is made possible through identity narratives of introjection and projection. *Projection* is the extrapolation of the self onto the material environment as if it were a screen.⁷³ A nation projects onto the environment certain values as though onto some blank screen, and then reads itself back into that environment, and sees itself symbolically reflected in that environment, invested as it now is with certain values.⁷⁴ Actors sees itself in the reflection made on its environments. The held values such as courage, resilience and honor are best articulated on different symbolic sites. Here the material object has not inherent meaning, but states tries to ‘project’ a symbolic meaning that reflects its held values and its national identity. The same way how inscribing meaning and symbol in *Introjection*, yet this means the appropriation and incorporation of physical objects into the collective self-identity narratives.⁷⁵ The widely practice of introjection is by designating a particular place with “special status” where imaginary or nation-forging event happen. In the case of territories, States assign “a core territory” where places of greatest national significance and / or with the greatest variety of importance be it religious, political or cultural.⁷⁶ Core territory could also be identified by maintaining significance over time and by being struggled for very tenaciously.⁷⁷ As have been discussed, this is evident in

⁷³ Filip Ejodus, “Not a Heap of Stones’: Material environments and ontological security in international relations.” *Cambridge University Review of International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2017): 27.

⁷⁴ Neil Leach, “9/11,” *Diacritics* 33, no. 3/4 (2003): 84.

⁷⁵ Ejodus, “Not a Heap of Stones,” 28.

⁷⁶ George White, *Nationalism and Territory: Construction Group Identity in Southern Europe* (Lahman: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.): 40-41.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

the case of Israel-Palestinian Conflict as well as Case in Kosovo where it is ascribe to be symbolically important in Serbian Identity.⁷⁸ Both projection and introjection is incorporated to the Self through the narratives ascribe to by the State. Objects and Places have no inherent meaning unless there is a purposive and intentional effort on the part of the agent. In this case we see that sites and places of symbolic importance is derived from the narratives as well as historical background of the state.

2.3 Conceptualizing the Space

While Ejodus' framework offers a way to which the collective self could be extended to material environment, it does not fully explain how the spaces and places would make the states' identity appear "firm and continuous" or how it would be a source of ontological Security. Spaces are not just sites of interaction, rather it is also constitutive of the collective self. Accordingly, spaces could be theorized as *center, order, and horizon*⁷⁹ where it could reaffirm the agents' ontological security.

The *center* pertains to the where the orientation occurs. It should not be viewed in geographical or metric sense rather as a particular place which the Self unfolds.⁸⁰ It is the idea that being-there that is not identical with the spatiality, but rather a form of spatiality that is "existential."⁸¹ As discussed in the literature review, this relate to 'dwelling' and 'homesteading' where the inhabitants create a familiar environment unto himself that which creates comfort where the self can be himself, free from the pressures of the outside. Kinnvall noted, this constitutes the political spaces where the Self not only performs its activities but informed its identity. This is the

⁷⁸ Ejodus, "Not a Heap of Stones," 30-31.

⁷⁹ Berenskoetter, "Parameters," 275.

⁸⁰ Ibid.,

⁸¹ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*, 77-78.

place we considered the most significant due to the fact that it is we are most familiar and feels a strong connection with.⁸² Therefore, this is where the narratives are grounded that is essential in creating a coherent sense of self and stability.

The *order* refers to the designation of space who is assessed based not on only on the normative and cognitive assessment as to what is the right thing to do, but ordering of space also occurs on the emotional plane. “Whereas norms can be neutral and do not necessarily inscribe a space of structures of meaning to which the Self is emotionally attached, values guide orientation through moral judgments and understanding of the Good.”⁸³ Groups designate a place where they feel that have meaningful impact for them, it is made possible through the value the Self places on it. This value-orientation happens especially on the emotional attachment to the place such as memories of either good or bad. In particular, States feel honorable on its deeds and past glories whereas shameful when the state was unable to achieve its goal or was precluded from taking any action. Therefore, this ordering of space as a site of national importance could be observed in terms of the shameful or honorable value the agent ascribe to certain places.

Shame and honor are important factors in the ontological security. According to Steele (2008), shame and honor are both inverse of each other and is closely tied to the self-identity and ontological security of the state. Shame bites at the roots of self-esteem or as a form of embarrassment.⁸⁴ It is derived from the inability to meet one’s expectation or the idea of personal inadequacy. It is important on the self-identity as it is essentially anxiety about the adequacy to which the individual sustains its coherent biography. Moreover, Shame is used to explain why states pursue self-defeating behavior such as forgoing their physical security over the ontological

⁸² Berenskoetter, “Parameters,” 275.

⁸³ Ibid., 276.

⁸⁴ Giddens, “The Constitution,” 55.

security. While it may be viewed negatively, shame is essential if the state is going to confront its disrupted self-visions, and therefore regain their ontological security.⁸⁵

Honor pertains to the redemption of the self. As the inverse of Shame, it is the project by which the Self reinforce on what he or she stands for or who she or he really is. Accordingly, honor is self-reflected as contrast to what Lebow's (2003) version of honor as "only meaningful if recognized and praised by others."⁸⁶ This means that Steele is pertaining to the *internal honor* in fulfillment of one's shortcomings and inadequacy: Steele (2008) perfectly captures this by stating that: "The honorable is enacted when we perform an action which fulfills a commitment about what we have been, who we are now, and who or what we wish to be in the future."⁸⁷ It draws on two important categories: experiences in the past and expectation in the future. Koselleck (2004) defined the two: Experience is the "is present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered," whereas "expectation also takes place in the today; it is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed."⁸⁸ He argued that time is contingent with the spatial context or the *horizon of possibilities*. The third aspect of spatial context, *horizon* draws the line that which constraints but at the same time emancipate the agent. It is the line which define the limits of seeing and knowing the world, yet concomitantly it invites exploration and allows the Self to shift these limits.⁸⁹ This means that the space provides a starting point about the possibilities that is realistic. The honor of reclaiming the Self is primarily

⁸⁵ Steele, *Ontological Security*, 3.

⁸⁶ Brent Steele, "The Ideals that were really not in our possession: Torture, Honor and US Identity." *International Relations* 22, no. 2 (2008): 245, quoted in Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 272.

⁸⁷ Steele, *Ontological Security*, 97

⁸⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past*, (New York: Columbia University): 259.

⁸⁹ Berenskoetter, "Parameters," 276 – 277.

imagining the Self in a much better place. It is the imagined possibilities of Self that is grounded on its experience to which the state aspires for. As the third aspect in the spatial context, this meant veering toward the envisioned space to ward off uncertainties and anxieties that challenges the Self. The horizon is the envisioned space.⁹⁰ This means that the Self is spatially bounded on the horizon with which it is self-reflected about ‘its place in the world’ to the ‘the place to be.’

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter have outlined the concepts and analytical framework concerning the spatial source of ontological security. The main aim of this thesis is to examine the possibility of the spatiality as constitutive of ontological security through the empirical case study of People’s Republic of China claims over Taiwan. This chapter first provided the debate about the notion of territory as it is treated in International Relations. Territory is conceptualized as the either rigid or permeable entity. However, Territory should be treated not in a physical sense but rather as a space where meanings are created and forms the identity of the agent. Secondly, the possibility of constituting the self-identity of built, natural and imagine spaces is possible through the projection and introjection through the designation of symbolic meaning derived from historical memories essential in nation-building. Lastly, if spatial context is of any value as a source of ontological security, it should be conceptualized as *center* where the Self unfolds, the *order* which enables agents to classify spaces which matters through emotional ordering based on shame and honor, the horizon that which time and space are contingent based on the experiences and expectation of the Self to the who she/he was, and who it can become based on experienced space to the envisioned space.

⁹⁰ Ibid.,

Chapter 3: China's Ontological Security Seeking

This chapter examines the empirical case of China's claim over Taiwan. It proceeds by discussing the historical background of century of humiliation of China and how this informed its biographical narrative. Followed by the introjection of Taiwan as the ontic space. This thesis argued that reclaiming Taiwan is satisfying the ontological need of China. Taiwan presents symbolic and significant meaning over China's identity: First, it is the "core territory" which important national historical event unfolded. Secondly, it is a standing reminder about the 'shame' it experienced and the honor in reclaiming it. Lastly, the conflict presents a horizon of possibility whether resolution turns into China's favor as in reunification or secessionism which may start a domino effect on other 'independence movement' in China. The former being the most viable in keeping the national unity and therefore making the Self have a sense of stability and continuity even at the risk of its own security.

3.1 Century of Humiliation

The century of humiliation is derived from long national defeat faced by the imperial China against the imperialist powers in the 19th Century. It dealt a huge blow to the national identity of China as is perceived to be a 'great nation' or the middle kingdom – the center of civilization to whom all other nations and cultures are subordinated.⁹¹ The five millennia of great accomplishments has suddenly been out shadowed by the continuous defeats at the hands of the imperial powers. The century of humiliation could be divided (Albeit overlapping in the middle of the century) into two phases: The first half involves the Western Power and the other half involves mainly of Japanese invasion.

⁹¹ Robert Weatherley and Qiang Zhang, *History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China*, (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2017): 15.

The First Opium War (1840-1842) marks the beginning of the national humiliation. As many scholarly materials had mentioned, the war between Imperial Powers and Chinese had resulted to the many unequal treaties. First of which is the Treaty of Nanjing where Great Britain sets various demands. China was forced to repay on damages on Opium and the British soldiers who were imprisoned and threatened with death by the Chinese Officials. The treaty also reinstated the trade of British Opium but most importantly it forcibly opened up port cities namely: Shanghai, Ningbo, Xiamen, Fuzhou and Guangzhou and ceded Hong Kong to Britain. This treaty marks the waning power of Qing Dynasty in the face of powerful West. Moreover, while the British was granted extraterritorial rights the British Citizens over the newly controlled ports many imperial powers followed suit. Over the years, similar treaties were signed with other powers: Treaty of Wanghia with the United States as well as Treaty of Whampoa with France both in 1844. Each treated expanded upon the rights of territoriality and, as a result the foreigners obtained an independent legal, police, judicial and taxation system within the treaty ports.⁹²

Another defeat occurred which further violates the territorial and sovereign rights of China. The Second Opium War (1856-1860), this time with the combined strength of Britain and France. While the first treaty caved in at the coastal cities, this time the demands involved the opening the major waterway, Yangtze river to foreign navigation, right to travel in the interior of China and opening of ten new ports to foreign trade and residence.⁹³ Another separate treaty was signed with Russia, the Treaty of Aigun amounted to an estimated two million miles of new territory for Russia. In addition to territory, Russia gained more control over regional trade and near exclusivity in the

⁹² “Unequal Treaty” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Unequal-Treaty#ref286061>

⁹³ Ibid.

use of the Amur, Ussuri, and Sungari Rivers.⁹⁴ Later on, another treaty has formalized the border between Russia and China which was previously agreed to be as economic exclusive rights over the rivers.

The gunboat diplomacy employed by the Western Powers also forced Japan into leaving its 250 years of self-isolation into the world. US Commodore Matthew C. Perry with his ‘black ships’ arrived in Japan and forced to open its ports. The Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854 grants the United States the right to use Shimoda and Hakodate as trading ports and had since open up other coastal cities. Unlike Imperial China, Japan was fast to adapt to the changing environment and openly embraced the situation which further reinforced in the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The new Meiji government turned its attention in catching up in the West technologically, and in ending the unequal treaties granting the Western powers extraterritorial rights.⁹⁵ Japan had successfully integrated into the Westphalian system from a vassal state. Decades after the Meiji restoration, Japan follow suit in the Western imperialist policies which forced China into unequal settlements after the 1895 Sino-Japanese Wars. The Treaty of Shimonoseki stipulated the cession of the notable territories such Penghu or Pescadores Islands as well as Formosa (Taiwan) in perpetuity.⁹⁶

Twenty years later in the outbreak of World War One in the European theater, Japan sent and ultimatum to China for the sake of preserving peace in the ‘far east’ and avoiding further escalation on an all-out war. Japan sent “Twenty-One Demands” which virtually grant further territorial rights in special provinces particularly in parts of Manchuria and Liaodong Peninsula as

⁹⁴ “Treaty of Aigun” Russi in Global Perspective, accessed May 15, 2018
<http://dighist.fas.harvard.edu/projects/russiaglobal/items/show/23>

⁹⁵ Eric Johnston, “Opening Waters: Opening of ports 150 years ago,” accessed May 15, 2018,
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/09/national/history/open-waters-opening-ports-150-years-ago-remains-watershed-moment-nations-history/#.Ww6ZJi-B3-Y>

⁹⁶ “Treaty of Shimonoseki” USC US-China Institute, accessed May 21, 2018
<https://china.usc.edu/treaty-shimonoseki-1895>

well as control of police, political and economic affairs of China through Japanese advisers. While China adheres to these demands, as expected the outcome is a growing anti-Japanese sentiment which lead to mass protests and demonstration. In 1932 further intrusion had occurred, Japan established a puppet state in Manchuria known as “Manchuoko” installing the last emperor of China, Puyi after the monarchy was overthrown in 1912 Xinhai Revolution. The revolution successfully ended the imperial dynastic rule in China. The prominent leader, Sun Yat Sen, became the first provisional president and was hailed as the “Father of the Nation.” However, amidst the foreign invasion. China is internally fragmented due to warlordism. The second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) broke out as a result of further advancement of Japanese in China,⁹⁷ because full control of Manchuria was never established due to the resistance of Chinese rebels. After Japan’s surrender in World War II, Sino-Japanese relations has been in unsteady terms, this could be attributed on the traumatic experience in the conflict particularly of Nanjing Massacre which killed hundreds of thousands of Chinese Soldiers along with the death of helpless ‘comfort women.’

The overarching theme in this hundred years of humiliation entails the loss of sovereignty and territorial rights of China. From the ‘prosperous’ advanced civilization, it was taken down by outsiders whom it perceived to be peripheral. The shift from commemorating the glorious past to the traumatic experience led one commentator to note that China has become preoccupied with the “psychological syndrome with the debilitating sentiments of weakness, insecurity and humiliation.”⁹⁸ Paradoxically, this victimhood narrative serves to redress the disabled Self of

⁹⁷ “Second Sino-Japanese War” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed last May 21, 2018
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War>

⁹⁸ Orville Schell, “China’s Victimization Syndrome” accessed May 15, 2018
<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-s-victimization-syndrome?barrier=accesspaylog>

China. It may be argued that China still harbors this syndrome, yet it serves a greater purpose. I argued in this thesis that this narrative serves to satisfy China ontological Security needs.

Today, the ‘elites’ or the state leaders in the Communist Party of China had utilized this discourse as central part of People’s Republic of China’s founding mythology.⁹⁹ In particular, the Chinese Communist Party employed this discourse in two ways: First, in mobilizing nationalist sentiments targeted on the youth who have the exhibit tendencies on demonstrations who seeks greater freedom from control and censorship. Secondly, as a legitimizing discourse by portraying that the Chinese Communist Party as the only political power who were able to end the humiliation and ushered in a new hope for the country. Consequently, this instrumentalist approach in historical remembrance has informed the national identity of China. As noted by Wang (2012), group identity is shaped in large by certain struggles that a group has endured.¹⁰⁰ He argued that groups especially their leaders are responsible in selectively utilizing the struggles that informs the social and political cohesion of their polity. ‘Chosen glories and traumas’ are mythologized. These narratives are highly selective and purposely constructed.¹⁰¹ Where parts of the story are either omitted or altered to fit the purpose which it meant to serve that is to fosters social cohesion among the member by the idea of shared experience.

⁹⁹ Matt Schiavenza, “How Humiliation Drove Modern Chinese History” accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/10/how-humiliation-drove-modern-chinese-history/280878/>

¹⁰⁰ Zheng Wang “Never Forget National Humiliation,” (New York: Columbia University, 2012): 21.

¹⁰¹ Jelena Subotic “Narrative, Ontological Security and Foreign Policy Change.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, (2016): 612.

3.2 Introjecting Taiwan into China's Self

“Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up!”¹⁰² as Mao Zedong addressed the political leaders and delegates in the first plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in June 21, 1949. the year nineteen forty-nine is a turning point in Chinese history. On one hand, it marks the beginning of the contemporary China. The newly ascended Communist party established the People's Republic of China in the mainland while at the same time the former ruling power, Kuomintang fled to the province of Taiwan after the Civil War. As Mao Zedong noted, the CCP and the People's Liberation Army defeated “the reactionary Kuomintang government backed by U.S. imperialism that this great unity of the whole people has been achieved.” After decades of division and chaos, unity is finally achieved. On the other hand, it also marks the end of hundred years of humiliation. Yet, Kauffman notes “There remain several vestiges of that period that, in the mind of many Chinese, must be rectified before China's recovery will be considered complete.”¹⁰³ – The most significant and unyielding of this is the reintegration of Taiwan back to the mainland.

As I argue in this thesis, People's Republic of China introjected Taiwan as ontic space in threefold: First, it has become the ‘core territory’ which important national struggles and nation-forging event occurred. Secondly, it is emotionally and symbolically attached to the Self-identity of China as space of shame and honor. Lastly, it represents the various possibilities of China's envisioned space.

¹⁰² Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol 5. (Beijing: Foreign Languages, 1977): 17.

¹⁰³ Alison Kauffman, “Century of Humiliation” accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11Kaufman.pdf>.

3.2.1 Center

The center is to be understood as the association of a particular place, in this case territory, to where the narratives and stories about the Self unfolds called as the *space of experience*.¹⁰⁴ Taiwan serves as the “core territory” meaning that it symbolizes the national struggles of China. Two interrelated narratives that pervades the nationalist discourse: First is the hundred years humiliation, and secondly the Chinas Reunification. Both narratives are linked to Taiwan as object of appropriation or the remaining ‘lost territory’ that is to be reintegrated to the mainland. In the recent speeches by Xi Jinping he affirmed that any attempt to further push for independence will be dealt with accordingly – “We will never allow anyone, any organization, or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China,” In fact, the use of force to reunify Taiwan in mainland shows how PRC places value on it. The 8-Point Proposition made by President Jiang Zemin on China's Reunification elaborate on the proposal to the unyielding statement of unifying Taiwan:

“Adherence to the principle of one China is the basis and premise for peaceful reunification. China's sovereignty and territory must never be allowed to suffer split. We must firmly oppose any words or actions aimed at creating an "independent Taiwan" and the propositions "split the country and rule under separate regimes...”¹⁰⁵

In the 1990s, the discourse in China’s reunification have become mainstreamed on the new term “Greater China,”¹⁰⁶ the view being that economic and cultural ties would eventually lead to political reunification. This encompass former territories such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and

¹⁰⁴ Reinhart Kosseleck, *Futures Past*, 260.

¹⁰⁵ “The 8-Point Proposition Made by President Jiang Zemin on China's Reunification” China Embassy, accessed last May 16, 2018. <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/9999999999/t36736.html>

¹⁰⁶ David Shambaugh, “The Emergence of “Greater China”” *The China Quarterly*, no. 36 (1993).

Macau.¹⁰⁷ In 1997, Hong Kong was handed over by Great Britain since its secession in the Opium Wars, Macau later on followed suit in 1999. China's strong stance towards appropriating Taiwan is spatially founded as it is the only remaining territory. As previously discussed, the Chinese Communist Party used the century of humiliation as the 'master narrative' to purposely reinforced the ruling regime, this was used to guide and legitimize the courses of action and provides ontological security.¹⁰⁸ In reiterating, these narratives are constituted in the spaces where the Self creates its own meaning and representation. Taiwan is the space tied to the experiences that unfold in it. Therefore, these stories and discourses are not only temporal as in the case of memories or histories but also spatial where the "Self takes place." Time and Space is contingent that informs the narrative. As Somers noted, narratives are *ontological conditions of life*, this experiences in time and place enables agent to create stories that guide their actions. By situating China's Self into the Taiwan and the experience that goes with it becomes a 'space of experience.' the narratives of trauma and glories provide a basis to reinforce the social cohesion of the state that goes with it translating to the collective identity via shared experiences.

3.2.2 Order

States bears agency when its able to classify and order things. In the case of spatial context, it takes place when states organize by designating this sites that matters to them. Which means it is an exercise of pinpointing which sites or landscapes have a significant value to them, as these material and spatial environments have no inherent meaning. I applied Steele's conception of shame and honor as the ordering practice.

¹⁰⁷ William Callahan, "Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: The discourse of Greater China" *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 43 (2005). 273.

¹⁰⁸ Felix Berenskoetter, "Parameters" 279.

The Taiwan status as ontic space is evident in the preamble of the PRC's constitution stipulating that "Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China."¹⁰⁹ Taiwan is has become 'sacred territory' by the meanings and symbols attached to it as seen in the biographical narratives of humiliation and reunification. I argued that the former has become a source of shame to China's Sense of self whereas the latter meant repairing it. China's shame is rooted on its inability to prevent or at least minimize the damages of the foreigners. It has become more vulnerable as it has the capacity to avert this situation. This is echoed by Steele (2008), when he contends that powerful states are faced with the knowledge that even unintended and unforeseeable consequences may have been altered had it act differently. It's true that China is overwhelmingly lagging in terms of the technological capabilities of the West and China, but this happens on the self-perception of China that it could at least thwart the assault of the nations. By this very idea, that China at least bears agency the more he or she is vulnerable to emotional processes in particular shame.¹¹⁰ Therefore, China experience shame more deeply by the fact that it perceived to have the power to act on it. This explains why China has fervently embraced its victimhood narrative.

Honor, as the inverse of the Shame is an act of retrieving the Self-integrity tarnished by the Shame. As previously discussed, pursuing honor is shaped the sense of who we are and what we want to become. Moreover, honor-driven motives as Steele argues shapes the state's actions in pursuing self-defeating behavior. China and Taiwan has been to many military tensions in the past: (1) Taiwan Crisis of 1954-55, (2) Taiwan Crisis of 1958 and (3) Taiwan Crisis of 1994-95. More importantly, what seemed to be asymmetrical military tension between Taiwan and China is

¹⁰⁹ "Constitution of the People's Republic of China." National People's Congress, accessed May 16, 2018. http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372962.htm

¹¹⁰ Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*. 70.

balanced by the United States. US military presence have keep the peace between the two, but also serves to preclude China from invading Taiwan. In 1992, President Bush asserted that “The United states has provided Taiwan with sufficient defensive capabilities to sustain the confidence it needs to reduce those tensions.” As we can see, any attempt to forcibly integrate Taiwan would endanger its own physical security. Yet, it does not preclude China in granting the independence movement of Taiwan. In fact, the tension between China and Taiwan may actually satisfy PRCs Ontological Needs as it contains the latent anxiety of losing Taiwan completely.

3.2.3 Horizon

The horizon refers to the imagined possibilities of Self. It is agential in so far that it also informs the narratives not of the experienced space but the envisioned future.¹¹¹ It is the boundary to which the space which we occupy defines the limits but also the invites the self to explore the possibilities. In other words, it is imagination grounded in one’s reality. In the case of China, this could be two possible pathways: One is the peaceful unification with Taiwan which satisfy PRCs ontological security needs, while alternative one is the independence of Taiwan. To reiterate, China’s source of ontological security and insecurity is Taiwan. Relinquishing its claim over Taiwan would be detrimental to the unity in the mainland as it may result to a domino effect with other peripheral territories.¹¹² This would reignite separatist movements in Hong Kong, Tibet and parts of Inner Mongolia. From this, China would rather prefer the status quo over the Taiwan independence. Moreover, this persistent claim of China over Taiwan is evidence in the Anti-Secession Law in 2005. It specifically stated that “Taiwan is part of China. The state shall never allow the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces to make Taiwan secede from China under

¹¹¹ Felix Berenskoetter, “Parameters,” 277.

¹¹² Lowell Dittmer, “Taiwan as a Factor in China’s Quest for National Identity.” *Journal of Contemporary China*. 15, no. 49 (2006): 685.

any name or by any means.”¹¹³ China reserves the right to use force if all peaceful means are exhausted. This exhibits the tenacity factor of the states. According to White (2004), tenacity factor is the measure of nation’s willingness and determination to protect or seize a piece of land. This demonstrates the importance a state and nation ascribe to a given place.¹¹⁴

The horizon of possibilities in spatial context is also observed in cartography. Accordingly, maps are seen to as “political statements about reality that reinforce particular narratives, support particular identities and perpetuate particular representation.”¹¹⁵ Chinese published maps are widely used to illustrate the extent of China’s territory in a symbolic way. It is both imaginative and aspirational¹¹⁶ in that it includes the territory that is not under its control but is supposedly be part of China. In particular, some of the PRC’s official maps includes Taiwan as the province of China. This practice has been observed consistently and firmly in China. Recently, an American clothing company was criticized for selling shirts that do not include Taiwan, parts of Tibet and the South China Sea. The company had since issued a formal apology and withdrew and destroyed all the garments immediately. In the academe, an article describing the main goal of Chinese cartography: “A Century of Anticipating the Unification of the Motherland.”¹¹⁷ The practice of cartography should not solely be seen as an objective fact that reflects the world. China’s use of this maps represents how these are used to sustain and reinforced dominant narratives that informs the political project of the Self.

¹¹³ “Anti-Secession Law,” People’s Republic of China Embassy, accessed May 16, 2018. <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>

¹¹⁴ George White, *Nation State, and Territory*, 60-61.

¹¹⁵ Piers Fotiadis, “The Strange Power of Maps.” (MA Diss., University of Bristol): 47-48.

¹¹⁶ William Callahan, “The Cartography,” 144.

¹¹⁷ William Callahan, “The Cartography of National Humiliation and the Emergence of Chinas Geobody.” *Public Culture* 21, no. 1 (2009): 144, quoted in Zhao Dachuan, A Century of Anticipating the Unification of the Motherland.” *Cartography*, no. 2 (2000): 39-44.

Conclusion

The Ontological Security Theory has provided scholars and students with new starting point in thinking why the state behave they do and why at times they exhibit inconsistent behavior to the extent that it jeopardizes their own 'physical security.' The theory joins the non-traditional security theorizing against the neorealist view of 'survival' in objectivist term. Ontological Security moves our attention in rethinking that states are not 'rational' as the realist thought it would be, rather state pursues ends which satisfy their own self-integrity in having a stable and coherent sense of help.

In pursuing Ontological Security, it is shown that narratives and routines are temporally bounded. Narratives draws its stories from the memories of who we were and the vision on who we want to become. Routines are made possible by the regularized actions over time that develops the basic trust essential to the ontological security. However, as I argued here ontological security should not only be conceptualized in temporal and social terms but also in spatial and material terms. I utilized the Ejodus framework on ontic spaces, where the collective Self could be discursively linked to the material and spatial environment making the Self more 'firm and continuous' as the continued existence of the ontic spaces makes the Self more solid and concrete. Furthermore, I engaged on Berenskoetter's framework on spatiality, namely: Center, Order and Horizon.

Center is that of a space where the Self unfolds. It is the place where the Self have established and created meaning in its environment that which making it more 'home' where one can be comfortable and safe from the outside pressure. Order is the act of classifying which is good or bad to oneself, it means that the Self is left with the ability to distinguish which place or space matters the most to them, and that which constitute its being. Lastly, horizon is the line which

grounds our imagination on the possibilities of the Self. It invites the exploration of the envisioned space the Self wants to attain. The relevance of these three is viewed in two ways: First, it combines the temporal-spatial boundedness of narratives which enable the self to have a coherent biography of its own. Secondly, the self is endowed with the capacity to determine which sites are of anxiety-controlling for them. The place where the Self tenaciously fought for because it means something to them.

The case study showed that states may ascribe meaning to the ‘spaces’ where significant happening had occurred. Taiwan was introjected to Chinese identity needs. Consistent with the narrative China created for itself, the act of appropriating the last remaining ‘core territory’ in the hundred years humiliation meant recovering the ‘shame’ or identity disconnect it thought it was – China as the center of the world and China as a powerful state.

In sum, spatial context anchors the ontological security need of states through the designation of important monuments, landscapes, and territories that is tied to its national identity. Through the tenacious struggle over it, States may appear continuous and firm as it serves as a political project in maintaining and reclaiming these spaces.

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