Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to assess three recognized theories of international relations (the offensive realist theory by John Mearsheimer, the defensive realist theory by Charles Glaser and the liberal theory by John Ikenberry) and determine which of them best corresponds to the development in East and Southeast Asia in the past three decades (1989-2016). This theory-testing case study first introduces the three theories, their basic assumptions and what they predict for the region, especially with regards to actions of the People’s Republic of China. The independent variables established by the theories (power, motivation, environment and participation in the global order) are then compared with the dependent variables that represent various aspects of China’s behavior. Military spending, economic disputes within the WTO and territorial disputes with Chinese participation are all analyzed with the goal of including a wide range of Chinese behavior in the international sphere. Correlations between the independent and dependent variables determine which theory is the strongest. The theory with the most correlations is pronounced as the most successful. Subsequently, a brief prediction is added: the most successful theory is then utilized to construct a short-term prediction for the region of East and South East Asia.