



ISSN: 1500-0713

Essay Title: A “Normal” Japan and the Externalization of China’s
Securitization

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Source: *Japanese Studies Review*, Vol. XX (2016), pp. 157-178

Stable URL: <https://asian.fiu.edu/projects-and-grants/japan-studies-review/journal-archive/volume-xx-2016/garcia-zenel-a-normal-japan-and-the-externalization-of-chinas-securitization-3.pdf>

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A “NORMAL” JAPAN AND THE EXTERNALIZATION OF CHINA’S SECURITIZATION

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Introduction

Despite having one of the most prolific bilateral trades in the world,¹ China and Japan have maintained a tenuous relationship which some have characterized as “warm economics and cold politics.”² This is not a particularly new phenomenon however. In fact, within months of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the two countries established trade links despite the fact that Japan was still occupied by the United States, the San Francisco Treaty had not been signed yet, and more importantly, that both countries were in opposite sides of the ideological and strategic struggle being waged in the Cold War.³ This dynamic persisted even as the two countries reached a rapprochement and established formal relations in the 1970s. Therefore, while trade between China and Japan began to grow exponentially, particularly after the full normalization of trade relations in 1974, the political dimension of the relationship continued to be undermined by lingering suspicions, ideological, political, and strategic concerns.⁴

In other words, “warm economics and cold politics” have a historical precedent and reveal that Sino-Japanese relations continue to be informed by two crucial characteristics: (1) a pragmatic approach to bilateral economic relations, (2) and a political and strategic rivalry because of historical grievances. These historical grievances can be observed in issues

¹ “Japan: Trade Statistics,” *GlobalEDGE*, 2014 (accessed March 4, 2016, <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/japan/tradestats>).

² Michael Green, “Japan’s Role in Asia,” in David Shambaugh & Michael Yahuda, eds., *International Relations of Asia* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2014), 204.

³ Amy King, *China-Japan Relations after World War Two: Empire, Industry and War, 1949–1971* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 50.

⁴ Hong N. Kim, “Sino-Japanese Relations Since the Rapprochement,” *Asian Survey* 15/7 (1975): 559–573.

concerning war reparations, conflicting interpretations of the Second Sino-Japanese War, territorial disputes involving the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and, more recently, overlapping claims to exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the East China Sea.

The historical grievance dimension of the Sino-Japanese relation continues to fuel enmity between the two states. This consequently results in their mutual securitization, and feeds their growing strategic rivalry in East Asia. Understanding this rivalry is important to fully grasp the security dynamics in the region for a number of reasons: (1) China and Japan possess great power status; (2) the two states are geographically proximate; (3) and both reside in the most economically dynamic region in the world. Therefore, the Sino-Japanese relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the twenty-first century because their actions have region-wide effects.

While numerous works focus on the material dimension of the Sino-Japanese rivalry, such as the military build-up of the two powers, it is the social dimension, in this case securitization, that give meaning to extant material capabilities, reveal a state's threat perception, and exposes its preferred choice to resolve the challenges it encounters. In addition to this, many works have predominantly focused on China as a result of its dynamic economy and its decade-long double-digit defense expenditures. As a result, Japan is often largely ignored due to its relative systemic decline since 1989, or referenced only in the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

More grievously, however, Japan has often been depicted as largely reactive in its policy towards China.⁵ In reality, while Japan may demonstrate reactionary tendencies in its foreign policy, there has been a clear trend, especially since Shinzo Abe's second term, to make Japan's policy towards China, and regional security in general, more proactive. Consequently, this study aims to illustrate how Japan's "normalization" process has been galvanized by China's assertive policies, but more importantly, how a "normal" Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China in East Asia. In other words, to reveal both the reactionary and proactive dimension of Japan's China policy.

⁵ See Edward J. Lincoln, *Japan's New Global Role* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995); Curtis, Gerald L., ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy After the Cold War: Coping with Change* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Securitization Theory and Politics

Securitization is a speech-act that raises both the non-politicized and politicized issues to the security realm.⁶ In effect, these speech-acts allow an actor, usually a state representative, to declare a referent object as existentially threatened. For that reason, securitized issues become differentiated from politicized issues through a heightening of the sense of urgency and by opening the possibility to take extraordinary measures. In other words, actions outside the bounds of societal and international norms become justified.⁷ A securitization speech-act transforms the realm of security into an act itself. Put differently, the statement itself becomes an act. Thus, it moves security to an arena that requires immediate action.⁸ This is referred to as the illocutionary dimension of securitization and remains the foundation of Securitization Theory, as developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations.⁹ Furthermore, the Copenhagen School approach to securitization remains focused on the act that the speech itself creates and not the actual effect of those acts. In other words, securitization, as understood by the Copenhagen School, is constitutive, but not causal.¹⁰ However, more recent literature on securitization has deviated from the original focus on its illocutionary dimension and sought to focus on the perlocutionary aspects. That is, the actual effect that the securitization speech-acts have.¹¹ This refocus allows the Securitization Theory to make causal explanations rather than purely constitutive ones. It also marks a distinction between the philosophical approach of the Copenhagen School's version of securitization, and the more sociological approach proposed by Thierry Balzacq.¹² Therefore, while the two approaches to securitization

⁶ Michael C. Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 511–531.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Ole Waever, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” in Ronnie Lipschutz, ed., *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 46–86.

⁹ B. Buzan, O. Wæver, and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

¹⁰ Thierry Balzacq and Stefano Guzzini, “Introduction: ‘What Kind of Theory -if any-is Securitization?’” *International Relations* (2014): 2–7.

¹¹ Thierry Balzacq, “The ‘Essence’ of Securitization: Theory, Ideal Type, and a Sociological Science of Security,” *International Security* (2014): 8–18.

¹² See Thierry Balzacq, “Enquiries into Methods: A New Framework for

remain explanatory in nature, they explain different dimensions of the process.

This study contends that both approaches need not be mutually exclusive as it is often portrayed in the debate. Rather, Securitization Theory can make use of both illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of speech-acts. In other words, it is possible to assess the process of securitizing an object or actor, and from there, proceed to assess the results of those actions. In order to do this, the paper will demonstrate how Japan has securitized China and why, how Japan's "normalization" process has been galvanized by China's assertive policies, and lastly, how Japan's externalization of its securitization of China has had important security consequences for the region. Externalization in this context should be understood as the process of obtaining international consensus of a state's securitization of another.

Methodologically, this involves evaluating speech-acts, in this case, statements, by Japanese representatives such as the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Defense Minister, as well as official documents such as white papers. Assessing these speech-acts will shed light on what Japan has securitized and why. Furthermore, by evaluating domestic changes in Japan, particularly constitutional reinterpretations and national opinion, it will be possible to determine their success. Lastly, a review of Japan's foreign policy should reveal its efforts to externalize its securitization processes, and its results should be reflected in the consensus and support that Japan has garnered regionally and internationally, if any exists. Revealing these processes will demonstrate that Japan's foreign policy has shifted from being largely reactive, to becoming increasingly proactive.

Japan's Securitization of China

Since the nineteenth century, Sino-Japanese relations have endured numerous periods of mutual and unilateral securitization and desecuritization. Securitization during the years 1895–1945 was more straightforward in the sense that the two countries found themselves locked in a period dominated by two wars that saw the infringement of China's

Securitization Analysis," in Thierry Balzacq, ed., *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (New York: Routledge, 2011). 31–54; Thierry Balzacq, "Constructivism and Securitization Studies," in Myriam D. Cavelty and Victor Mauer, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 56–72.

sovereignty through loss of territory, occupation, imposition of unequal treaties, and forcible payment of large indemnities. The post-war period, however, has been far more complex since China and Japan have become increasingly economically interdependent while being simultaneously beset by numerous political and strategic issues that are the result of lingering historical grievances. This dichotomy has been all the more prevalent since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office for a second term in 2012.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Securitization

Abe came into office immediately after the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands; a group of islets in the East China Sea that are administered by Japan, but are claimed by China and Taiwan. Despite of the heightened tensions between China and Japan he encountered upon becoming Prime Minister, Abe, a conservative nationalist, seemed unwilling to repeat the events of 2010 when former Prime Minister Naoto Kan released a Chinese trawler captain, who had been apprehended in Japanese waters, due to growing Chinese political and economic pressure.¹³ In fact, one of his most immediate foreign policy efforts was to call for an “Asian Democratic Security Diamond” which effectively sought the containment of China.¹⁴ Abe argued that, “Japan must not yield to the Chinese government’s daily exercises in coercion around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea” and warned that “the South China Sea seems set to become a “Lake Beijing,” which analysts say will be to China what the Sea of Okhotsk was to Soviet Russia.”¹⁵

These statements are effectively securitization speech-acts and reveal the referent objects that the securitizing actor (Abe) has identified as existentially threatened. In this case, the risk that China poses to Japan’s administration of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly the South China Sea through which 50%

¹³ Martin Fackler and Ian Johnson, “Japan Retreats with Release of Chinese Boat Captain,” *The New York Times*, September 25, 2010 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/25/world/asia/25chinajapan.html>).

¹⁴ Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project-Syndicate: The World’s Opinion Page*, December 27, 2012 (accessed June 5, 2015, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

of the world's merchant tonnage traverses.¹⁶ Prime Minister Abe also made securitizing statements at World Economic Forum at Davos in 2014. During his speech, Abe stated that he perceived China's 10% annual increases in defense spending as a provocation. He further indicated that a reduction of tensions between the two countries would not occur so long as China continued its military build-up. The Prime Minister went as far as likening Sino-Japanese relations to that of Germany and Great Britain on the eve of World War I; explaining that despite deep economic ties the two countries ultimately went to war with each other.¹⁷

Perhaps more crucial, however, is Abe's depiction of the Chinese educational system as essentially "anti-Japanese." He believes that the emphasis on patriotic education in China creates a "deeply ingrained" need to spar with Japan and other Asian neighbors over territory. This is due to the fact that the ruling Communist Party uses the disputes to maintain strong domestic support.¹⁸ These statements illustrate another set of securitizing speech-acts in which the existentially threatened referent object becomes Japan's sovereignty and safety due to the perceived threat of China's military expenditures, and the belief that the Chinese education system causes a predisposition among its citizens to cause Japan harm.

China in Japan's Defense White Papers

The Prime Minister's securitization has in many ways reflected in Japan's defense white papers even before he took office for his second term. Japan's Ministry of Defense (MoD) has released white papers on an annual basis since its formation in 2007.¹⁹ While China has been part of Japan's

¹⁶ Ralf Emmers, *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

¹⁷ Linda Yueh, "Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Urges Asia Military Restraint," *BBS News Asia*, January 22, 2014 (accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25851960>).

¹⁸ Chico Harlan, "Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe: Chinese Need for Conflict is 'Deeply Ingrained,'" *The Washington Post*, February 20, 2013 (accessed March 23, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japan-prime-minister-shinzo-abe-chinese-need-for-conflict-is-deeply-ingrained/2013/02/20/48adb80-7a87-11e2-9a75-dab0201670da_story.html).

¹⁹ "About Ministry," Japan Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/about/history.html>).

white papers even under the Japanese Defense Agency, the MoDs predecessor, the reports have become more comprehensive and the perceived threat of China has been more clearly illustrated. A recurring trend in these white papers has been Japan’s concern with China’s lack of military transparency, in particularly “specific information on possession of weapons, procurement goals and past procurements, organization and locations of major units, records of main military operations and exercises, and a detailed breakdown of the national defense budget.”²⁰ Another point regularly addressed in these publications has been China’s defense budget and the opacity surrounding it, specifically the fact that China does not include all aspects of defense spending. In other words, the official defense budget released by China is not an accurate figure according to international standards.²¹

Perhaps more importantly, these white papers reveal the country’s concern for China’s maritime operations in waters near Japan, as well as waters which are considered Japan’s internationally recognized waters, particularly in waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.²² These numerous encounters are depicted as a concerted effort by China to turn exception into normality. The white papers contend that China’s goal is to desensitize Japan’s alertness and make the international community accept changes in the situation on these waters.²³ The implicit claim being made in these white papers is that China, through its constant deployment of civilian and naval vessels, as well as aircraft, in the vicinity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, is attempting to challenge Japan’s administrative control of these islets and undermine Japan’s long-standing position that no dispute exists over the islands and the surrounding waters.

²⁰ Citation comes from “Defense of Japan 2015” but the exact quote has appeared in white papers dating back to at least 2011. “Defense of Japan 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_1-1-3_web.pdf), 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

²² See “Defense of Japan 2007 through 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/index.html.)

²³ See “Defense of Japan 2012,” Ministry of Defense (accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2012/07_Part1_Chapter1_Sec3.pdf), 36.

Echoing one of the main concerns expressed by Abe when he called for “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” as of 2013, all Japanese white papers have expanded their scope beyond Chinese activities in waters near Japan to include other areas.²⁴ In this regard, the South China Sea has garnered significant attention by Japan as Japan’s most critical Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC) traverse those waters. In essence, Japanese officials have increasingly identified maritime stability in the East China Sea and the South China Sea as a matter of national security.²⁵

An example of this linkage appears in Japan’s 2015 white paper, which states that China “continues to act in an assertive manner, including coercive attempts to change the status quo, and is poised to fulfill its unilateral demands high-handedly without compromise.”²⁶ These white papers disclose numerous instances of securitization of China’s actions. The issues highlighted range from mistrust as a result of China’s opacity regarding its military modernization and its defense budget, to more serious concerns regarding the sovereignty and strategic challenge posed by China’s civilian and military deployments in and around Japanese waters and airspace. In effect, Japan perceives these referent objects as existentially threatened because of China’s actions.

Domestic Effects of Securitization

Securitization, if successful, should have tangible effects on the target audience. In other words, speech-acts do not occur in an echo chamber, they are intended to result in action. As a result, the audience plays an important role in the successful securitization of another actor.²⁷ The audience does not always need to be the general population of a country,

²⁴ “Defense of Japan 2013,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2013/11_Part1_Chapter1_Sec3.pdf), 44.

²⁵ Celine Pajon, “Japan and the South China Sea: Forging Strategic Partnerships in a Divided Region,” *Institut Francais des Relations Internationales, Center for Asian Studies*, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=7555>), 7.

²⁶ “Defense of Japan 2015,” Ministry of Defense (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2015/DOJ2015_1-1-3_web.pdf), 33.

²⁷ Balzacq, ed., “Enquiries into Methods,” 31–54.

although they generally have an important role to play, particularly in democratic states. An audience may belong to any sector of a state's society, or it may be the international community itself. In the case of Japan, numerous groups play the role of the audience. However, the general population plays the most important role, especially since Japan is a mature democracy. Successful securitization of China can be observed in the perception that the average Japanese citizen holds about China. In Japan, only 9% of the population have favorable views of China as a result of “long-standing historical animosities and recent territorial tensions.”²⁸ Meanwhile, 83% of the population is concerned about the ongoing territorial disputes with China.²⁹

Moreover, the constitutional reinterpretations sought by the Abe administration that allows Japan to participate in collective self-defense have proven polarizing for a country whose public continues to identify with a pacifist defense policy. Nevertheless, the numerous polls conducted prior to and after Abe's cabinet decided to reinterpret the constitution, clearly reveal that the public has not yet fully formed an opinion on the issue.³⁰ Interestingly however, the data demonstrates that there has definitely been some shift in Japanese public opinion regarding constitutional reinterpretation due to the “aggressive conduct by China in recent years around the Senkaku Islands on the East China Sea and in the South China Sea that could be described as eccentric.”³¹ In effect, the more pacifist voices in Japan's electorate and political cadre have gradually lost their ability to influence public opinion and policy as a result of the growing perception that China is a legitimate threat to Japan's sovereignty and interests. This shows that the securitization of China has had measurable success among the Japanese electorate.

²⁸ Bruce Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders,” *Pew Research Center*, September 2, 2015 (accessed December 12, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/09/02/how-asia-pacific-publics-see-each-other-and-their-national-leaders/>).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Kamiya Mataka, “Japanese Public Opinions about the Exercise of the Right to Collective Self-Defense,” *Japan Foreign Policy Forum*, September 25, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/archives/politics/pt20140925231907.html>).

³¹ *Ibid.*

A “Normal” Japan

China’s growing assertiveness along its maritime periphery has produced tangible effects on Japan’s “normalization” process. However, to make the claim that Japan is “normalizing,” it is necessary to make a case for its “abnormality.” In essence, Japan has been the only sovereign country in the world that has relinquished its rights to wage war or maintain armed forces in its constitution. In addition to this, despite enjoying widely recognized great power status, Japan has not been a key player in the provision of regional and global security.³² Together, these points make the case for “abnormality” since there has been no historical precedent for a country with similar material and discursive capabilities as Japan to abstain from claiming greater regional and international roles. However, Japan has been undergoing a gradual “normalization” process for over two decades, and, as this study claims, this process has been intensified due to China’s assertive policies in recent years.

The “normalization” of Japan encompasses two interrelated sectors: (1) political, (2) and military. The political dimension of the “normalization” revolves around making the Japanese government more responsive to regional and international developments, whereas the military dimension is focused on the legality of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), the defense budget, doctrinal reforms, and weapons acquisitions. Japan’s “normalization” process has its roots in the passage of the Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peace Keeping Operations and Other Operations. This is commonly referred to as the PKO Law. The PKO law was the first piece of legislation that permitted the deployment of the JSDF beyond Japanese territory.³³ Regarding the legality of the JSDF, the issue has been addressed through a flexible interpretation of the constitution. Whereas the constitution forbids Japan from establishing a “war potential,” it does not expressively prohibit the state’s right to self-defense. Therefore, so long as the established forces are not greater than the minimal required for self-defense, they do not constitute “war potential.”³⁴ It is for this reason that the

³² Yoshihida Soeya, Tadokoro Masayuki and David A. Welch, *Japan as a ‘Normal Country’?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

³³ Sayuri Umeda, “Japan Article 9 The Constitution,” *Library of Congress*, February 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, [http://www.loc.gov/law/help/Japan Article9.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/Japan%20Article9.pdf)).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

JSDF has maintained a primarily defensive doctrine and avoided the acquisition of weapons that would be perceived as capable of projecting power or were offensive in nature. However, acquisitions made in the past decade reveal that this stance has gradually shifted.

Political “Normalization”

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been a key vessel for Japan’s “normalization” process. Since the Korean War, the U.S. has sought greater commitments from Japan to develop capable armed forces to play a greater role in the security of the region. As the Cold War came to a close and the U.S. began to reduce its defense expenditure, it sought greater contributions on the parts of its international allies to provide public goods. Consequently, efforts to incentivize Japanese “normalization” intensified. Through its alliance guidelines updates of 1997 and 2015, the U.S. has been able to push Japan into a more flexible security posture. In many ways, this would lend support to the argument that Japan continues to be a reactive power. However, the fact that Japan has made significant political reforms to become more flexible in its approach to security, indicates that the effectiveness of the U.S.-Japan guidelines for defense cooperation is dependent on Japan’s ability to actually perform the goals outlined in the agreements. In other words, the guidelines would be ineffectual if Japan was not proactively reforming its political institutions.

Examples of these reforms can be observed in the replacement of the Japanese Defense Agency for the Ministry of Defense in 2007. The elevation of the defense department from agency to ministry level allows for more power concentration and influence in security policies. In addition to this, in 2011 Japan eased its export ban and set forth a new set of criteria for arms sales and production. The new criteria for transfers of defense equipment emphasize the need to cooperate with the U.S. and other countries in the development of defense equipment. It also allows for the sale of military equipment for peaceful uses on a case-by-case basis.³⁵

In 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved legislation to create a National Security Council (NSC) based on the American system. This new

³⁵ “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on Guidelines for Overseas Transfer of Defense Equipment, etc.,” Kantei, December 27, 2011 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/others/201112/___icsFiles/afie1dfile/2012/01/31/20111227DANWA_e.pdf).

body would replace the existing nine-member Security Council and provide a more centralized decision-making body composed of the Prime Minister, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defense.³⁶ “The reduced membership is intended to facilitate prompt decision-making in national security and crisis management.”³⁷ Another objective of the new NSC is to make the NSC a ‘headquarters’ for the numerous intelligence agencies that are spread out among the different ministries. This would allow for better communication and information sharing among the different bodies and subsequently facilitate better policy making during a crisis.³⁸ Lastly, of course, is the reinterpretation of the constitution that allows Japan to participate in collective self-defense, as indicated above. All of these reforms were heavily influenced by concerns over China’s rise, and more specifically, the assertive policies that have resulted from such a rise.

“Normalization” of the JSDF

The aforementioned political developments have been matched with important military reforms as well. For example, in 2010 Japan began a realignment within the JSDF to relocate assets from Hokkaido to the Southwest island chain, normally referred to as the Ryukyu Islands.³⁹ This realignment was motivated by the increasing perceived threat of China along Japan’s remote southern islands and places greater emphasis on deploying surveillance platforms and strengthening Japan’s maritime presence in the adjacent waters. Furthermore, in order to address a major amphibious capability gap, in 2014, the JSDF formed an Amphibious Preparatory Unit.⁴⁰

³⁶ Toshiya Takahashi, “Abe and a Japanese National Security Council,” *East Asia Forum*, July 16, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/16/abe-and-a-japanese-national-security-council/>).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Eric Sayers, “The “Consequent Interest” of Japan’s Southwestern Islands: A Mahanian Appraisal of the Ryukyu Archipelago,” *Naval War College Review* 66 (2013): 45–61.

⁴⁰ “Defense Programs and Budget of Japan: Overview of FY 2014 Budget Request,” Ministry of Defense, August 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/pdf/251009.pdf).

The development of this unit allows Japan to become more effective in amphibious operations, which would be more pertinent in a conflict scenario in the East China Sea. These developments are supplemented by the weapons acquisition of the navy that, in recent years, has commissioned its largest vessel, the *Izumo*-class Helicopter Destroyer,⁴¹ since the end of World War II, and continues to operate key platforms like the *Hyūga*-class Helicopter Destroyers and the *Ōsumi*-class Landing Ship Tanks (LST). These ships not only possess power projection capabilities but they are also intended to address the concerns regarding China's growing submarine force. For example, the *Ōsumi*-class LSTs have participated in numerous peacekeeping operations,⁴² while the *Hyūga* and *Izumo*-class Helicopter Destroyers are optimized for anti-submarine warfare.⁴³ These capabilities demonstrate not only a defensive capability, but also the capability to project power if necessary.

Collectively, Japan's political and military reforms are known as a “normalization” process and demonstrate that the country has become more proactive and aware of its regional security role. While this process was not primarily motivated by China in its early stages, China's assertive policy in recent years has effectively galvanized this process. This is more evident after the 2007 when the securitization of China begins to become more visible, thus facilitating the domestic reform agenda of Japan's political elite. However, concurrent with domestic reforms, Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China as it attempts to obtain consensus of its securitization of China, acquire greater security roles in the region, and develop strategic partnerships in East Asia.

Externalizing Securitization & Seeking Consensus

As part of its more proactive foreign policy, and cognizant of the need to establish regional consensus in order to deter Chinese assertive policies, Japan has sought to externalize its securitization of China. The

⁴¹ Matthew Gamble, “Japan's Izumo-Class Helicopter Destroyer: An Aircraft Carrier in Disguise?” *Center for International Maritime Security*, April 11, 2016 (accessed May 1, 2016, <http://cimsec.org/japans-izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer-aircraft-carrier-disguise/24130>).

⁴² Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy* (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008).

⁴³ Gamble, “Japan's Izumo-Class Helicopter Destroyer.”

externalization of securitization entails careful assessment of potential regional and international partners in order to ascertain which states Japan can more effectively form consensus with. This requires Japan to focus on specific dimensions of its securitization of China rather than the whole spectrum. In practice, this means that Japan's claim that China presents an existential threat to freedom of navigation, regional stability, and the status quo, is more salient to regional and international actors than its claim that China is a direct threat to Japan and its people. In its search for viable partners, it appears that Japan has identified five key states. These include the U.S., Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and India.

The American Partnership

Among these five actors, the U.S. is by far the most natural partner for Japan considering the existing treaty between the two. Furthermore, the U.S. and Japan agree on the perceived threat that China poses to freedom of navigation and regional stability. Nevertheless, perhaps more important for Japan, has been its ability to push the U.S. into publicly restating its commitment to defend Japanese territory in which the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are formally recognized. Recent examples of this can be found in former Secretary of State Clinton's remarks during her 2013 visit to Japan in which she reiterated that the U.S. has treaty obligations regarding the islets.⁴⁴ Furthermore, in 2014, President Obama made similar statements in an effort to assure Japan that the U.S. was on its side of the dispute, and to deter "unilateral attempts to undermine Japan's administration of these islands."⁴⁵

Regarding the broader security concerns of the region, since 2015, the U.S. has resumed conducting freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea in order to challenge what it considers China's unlawful and destabilizing claims in the region.⁴⁶ While the U.S.

⁴⁴ Hillary R. Clinton, "Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After the Meeting," *U.S. Department of State*, January 18, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>).

⁴⁵ Scott Neuman, "Obama Assures Japan of U.S. Security Commitment," *National Public Radio*, April 23, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/04/23/306170201/obama-assures-japan-of-u-s-security-commitment>).

⁴⁶ "A Freedom of Navigation Primer for the Spratly Islands," *Asia Maritime*

spearheads these operations, they are facilitated by the diplomatic support the U.S. enjoys from regional partners, especially Japan.⁴⁷ In other words, effective conduct of FONOPs and their potential to succeed will be contingent on the ability of America’s allies playing a greater role. In this regard, Japan’s efforts to externalize its securitization of China will become a key avenue for greater support of FONOPs in the SCS.

Strategic Partners in Southeast Asia

Japan’s linkage of the ECS and SCS maritime stability has been one of the most important developments in its foreign policy in the past two decades. The motivation for linking the security developments in these two areas is centered on economic and strategic factors. Economically, Japan is cognizant that the SCS is a major global trade artery, through which it receives 80% of its oil supply and 70% of its exports are sent.⁴⁸ As a result, this SLOC is critical for the Japanese economy and any conflict between China and other claimant nations in the SCS has the potential to destabilize Japan’s economy and security.⁴⁹ Strategically, the linkages between the two areas becomes important in Japanese thinking because of the perception that China’s actions in the South China Sea will be an indicator of what it will do in the East China Sea as its capabilities improve.⁵⁰ This is a particular concern is directly tied to China’s military modernization. For the moment, Japan has been able to successfully defend against China’s maritime and airspace encroachments in the ECS. However, this is because the JSDF and the Japanese Coast Guard are well trained and equipped as well as the fact that America’s extended deterrence provides an added layer of protection. Southeast Asian states simply do not possess these things. Thus, as China’s

Transparency Initiative, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://amti.csis.org/fonops-primer/>).

⁴⁷ Benjamin Schreer, “Will Japan Join the US in Freedom of Navigation Patrols in the South China Sea?” Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 30, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/will-japan-join-the-us-in-freedom-of-navigation-patrols-in-the-south-china-sea/>).

⁴⁸ Ralf Emmers, *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

⁴⁹ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Security Relations with China Since 1980: From Balancing to Bandwagoning?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 60–61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

military and civilian maritime agencies become more capable, it has become more assertive in the SCS, and the ability of these Southeast Asian states to deter China has been undermined.

Seeing an opportunity to externalize its securitization of China, Japan has sought to deepen existing relations with key Southeast Asian states. In this regard, Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia, have been identified by Japan's Foreign Ministry as important strategic partners in their efforts to deter China.⁵¹ These states were selected because, in the case of Vietnam and the Philippines, the two countries have been the most proactive in challenging China's claims in the SCS, while Indonesia is increasingly considered a regional power in Southeast Asia through which all critical straits leading in and out of the SCS are located. Their mutual concern of China's maritime policy facilitates Japan's efforts to obtain consensus of its securitization of China.

Japan has established close relations with these key states and maintains strategic-level partnerships with each of them. In the case of Vietnam, the two countries forged a strategic partnership in 2011, and in 2014 upgraded their relationship to "Extensive Strategic Partnership" level.⁵² During this summit, as with previous Japan-Vietnam summits, the two countries expressed their concern regarding China's unilateral coercive actions, the importance of complying with international law – particularly with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – and upholding freedom of navigation and overflight.⁵³ These issues were also reiterated in the 2015 Japan-Vietnam summit in addition to the issue of China's island-reclamation in the South China Sea. During this summit, these events were portrayed as yet another example of a destabilizing, and unilateral move, made by China that ultimately erodes trust and confidence in the region.⁵⁴ It is clear from these meetings that Japan has been successful

⁵¹ Pajon, "Japan and the South China Sea."

⁵² "Japan-Viet Nam Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Extensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), March 18, 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000031617.pdf>).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁴ "Joint Vision Statement of Japan-Viet Nam Relations," MOFA Japan, September 15, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000099707.pdf>).

in its efforts to reach consensus with Vietnam over its securitization of China among Vietnam’s political elite. In many ways, the securitization of China is reflected among the Vietnamese populace. The Vietnamese have overwhelmingly favorable views of Japan (82%) while having very unfavorable views of China (19%).⁵⁵

In addition to this, 83% of Vietnamese are concerned about the ongoing territorial disputes with China. While Japan’s externalization of China’s securitization is not responsible for these poll results, the results do point to two important developments. The first is that Japan has been essentially desecuritized among the Vietnamese. This is important because Vietnam was occupied by Japan during World War II. The second development is that Vietnamese political elites have been able to successfully transmit their own securitization of China to the general population.

Like Vietnam, the Philippines entered into a strategic partnership with Japan in 2011.⁵⁶ Similarly, the two countries conduct regular summits in order to strengthen their relationship and to vocalize their concerns on a number of issues. The topic of maritime security is a recurring point raised during these summits, which highlight the importance of freedom of navigation in the SCS, the need to uphold UNCLOS, and the importance of peace and stability in the region. Although never explicitly named, China is the target of these statements. Furthermore, these summits demonstrate that the two countries share the same views on China’s assertive policies, signaling another instance of mutual securitization of China. Again, this demonstrates another instance of Japan’s success in obtaining consensus of its securitization of China among political elites in another state. That being said, the Philippines represents an interesting case regarding the general views that are held towards Japan and China. Although 82% of Filipinos have an overwhelmingly positive view of Japan, interestingly enough, 54% have favorable views of China. Even so, 91% of the population⁵⁷ are concerned

⁵⁵ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

⁵⁶ “Japan-Philippines Joint statement on the Comprehensive Promotion of the “Strategic Partnership” between Neighboring Countries Connected by Special Bonds and Friendship,” MOFA Japan, September 27, 2011 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/noda/joint_statement110927.html).

⁵⁷ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

with their territorial dispute with China in the SCS, making them the most concerned state in the region.

Among the three Southeast Asian states singled out by Japan as important strategic partners, Indonesia is the only state that has achieved recognition as a regional power.⁵⁸ In addition to this, critical straits, such as the Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and the Ombai-Weitar, are located within Indonesian archipelagic waters, giving its significant strategic advantage.⁵⁹ Consequently, Japan established a strategic partnership with Indonesia in 2006.⁶⁰ However, it was not until 2012 that Japan began to use the annual summits as an avenue to express its concerns over China's policy along its maritime periphery. This relationship was further strengthened in 2015, when Japan and Indonesia upgraded their strategic partnership.⁶¹ During this meeting the two heads of states exchanged views on regional issues, particularly those concerning with the South China Sea.

As with summits with other states, the Japanese used this opportunity to once again call for the respect of freedom of navigation in the maritime commons, the importance of UNCLOS, and the instability in the region due to the SCS territorial disputes.⁶² Yet again, while China is never explicitly referred to in the public releases of these meetings, the topics discussed indicate that China is the central actor that is being presented as a destabilizing force. Indonesia represents another case when Japan has found

⁵⁸ Mark Beeson and Will Lee, "The Middle Power Moment: A New Basis for Cooperation between Indonesia and Australia," in Christopher Roberts, Ahmad Habir and Leonard Sebastian, eds., *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and Regional Order* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 224–243.

⁵⁹ Rusli, M.H.M., "Maritime highways of Southeast Asia: Alternative Straits?" RSIS Commentaries, February 10, 2012 (accessed June 5, 2015, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CO12024.pdf>).

⁶⁰ "Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement 'Strategic Partnership for Peaceful and Prosperous Future,'" MOFA Japan, November 28, 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/indonesia/joint0611.html>).

⁶¹ "Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement: Towards Further Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership Underpinned by Sea and Democracy," MOFA Japan, March 23, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000072695.pdf>).

⁶² Ibid.

success in reaching consensus over China’s actions. However, despite a strengthened relationship, there does not appear to be a securitization of China among the Indonesian public. Based on a Pew Research Center poll, Indonesia’s have a 71% favorable view of Japan and a 63% favorable view of China.⁶³ This may be the result of two factors: First, Indonesia has maintained a “middle way” approach to foreign policy, and thus, would be more resistant to take sides in the ongoing struggle between China and Japan for regional influence.⁶⁴ Second, Indonesia’s distance from China may mitigate the threat it perceived from China’s assertive maritime policies. However, recent clashes may push Indonesia to take a more confrontational stance towards China in the SCS.⁶⁵

India as a Pivotal Strategic Partner

Out of all of the relationships that Japan has sought to strengthen, India may have the greatest role to play in Japan’s efforts to externalize its securitization of China. Similar to Indonesia, India and Japan established a strategic partnership in 2006.⁶⁶ Similarly, it was not until 2012 that this relationship began to flourish. India, a regional power in South Asia,⁶⁷ became a pivotal state in Prime Minister Abe’s efforts to establish an “Asian Democratic Security Diamond.” As part of his efforts to link the Indo-Pacific maritime commons Abe stated that, “peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Pacific Ocean are inseparable from peace, stability, and

⁶³ Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

⁶⁴ Awidya Santikajaya, “Indonesia as an Emerging Power,” *Great Insights*, April 2014 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://ecdpm.org/great-insights/emerging-economies-and-africa/indonesia-emerging-power-2/>).

⁶⁵ Chris Brummitt and Rieka Rahadiana, “Indonesia Will Defend South China Sea Territory with F-16 Fighter Jets,” *Bloomberg*, March 31, 2016 (accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-31/indonesia-to-deploy-f-16s-to-guard-its-south-china-sea-territory>).

⁶⁶ “Joint Statement Towards Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership,” MOFA Japan, December 15, 2006 (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/pdfs/joint0612.pdf>).

⁶⁷ David R. Robinson, “India’s Rise as a Great Power, Part One: Regional and Global Implications,” *Future Directions International*, July 7, 2011, (accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/indias-rise-as-a-great-power-part-one-regional-and-global-implications/>).

freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean.”⁶⁸ In this “diamond,” India underpins the western corner, and safeguards the maritime commons against any destabilizing force.⁶⁹

In 2013, the two countries agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership and in 2015 outlined a vision for the partnership for the next decade.⁷⁰ This event was used to discuss mutual concerns regarding the freedom of navigation, the importance of UNCLOS, the critical importance of the SLOCs in the Indo-Pacific region, and the denouncement of unilateral actions in the SCS that undermine stability in the region.⁷¹ The relationship between Prime Ministers Abe and Modi have played a key role in Japan’s successful Externalization of China’s securitization among India’s political elite. Curiously, however, the general population in India appears to see both Japan and China unfavorably.⁷² It is unclear as to what factors lie beneath these results, although it can be argued that Indians’ perception of China may be accurately reflected as a result of existing territorial disputes between the two countries, while the case of Japan may require more data.

In the midst of the Southeast Asian and Indian cases, a dichotomy emerges. It appears that while Japan has been able to reach consensus regarding its securitization of China’s actions within the political representatives of those states, there have been mixed results in the securitization of China among their general population. That being said, it would be unrealistic to claim that Japan is responsible for those mixed results. In fact, with the one audience in which they have a direct connection to (the political elites) Japan has had measurable success. Tokyo’s efforts to externalize its securitization process demonstrates a more proactive foreign policy, and an effort to secure greater regional influence. In fact, Japan’s success in externalizing its securitization of China among the political elites

⁶⁸ Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Visit to Japan by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and Mrs. Gursharan Kaur,” MOFA Japan, May 30, 2013 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page6e_000071.html).

⁷¹ “Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership: Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World,” MOFA Japan, December 12, 2015 (accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/in/page3e_000432.html).

⁷² Stokes, “How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other.”

in the region facilitates its efforts to play a greater political and security role in East Asia. At the same time, this success allows Japan to bolster the capabilities of regional partners in an effort to deter China’s unilateral actions.

Conclusion

The Sino-Japanese relation is one of the most important ones of the twenty-first century. As great powers in the most economically dynamic region of the world, the ability of these two states to move beyond a relationship marked by “warm economic and cold politics” is crucial to the stability of East Asia. However, the mutual securitization of China and Japan signals that the strategic rivalry between these two neighbors will endure for the near future. China’s assertive policies has allowed Japan to galvanize a long-running process to “normalize.” In effect, major political and military reforms in Japan occurred, which in turn, allowed Japan to become a more proactive state, regionally and internationally. Japan’s securitization of China at the domestic level, also paves the way for its efforts to externalize this process and obtain consensus with key regional states. This has resulted in the successful securitization of China by portraying its policies as an existential threat to freedom of navigation, as undermining international law (UNCLOS), and being a destabilizing force in the region.

Japan’s successful securitization of China has led to a number of important developments in the region. First, it has facilitated the desecuritization of Japan itself. In other words, Japan is more positively perceived among Southeast Asian neighbors and its “normalization” process more readily accepted. Second, because of its desecuritization, Japan is now able to play a more prominent political and security role in the region. This option was not formally available to Japan because of lasting historical grievances pertaining to its occupation of Southeast Asian countries during World War II. Lastly, by building consensus on what China’s policies mean for the region, Japan is effectively contributing to the American Asian Pivot. Hence, all allies and partners are on the same page regarding their perception of China as a threat to regional stability and international norms.

Although these securitization processes heighten the strategic rivalry between China, Japan and other Southeast Asian neighbors, they could be reversed. A turn towards a more prudent policy on the part of Beijing may initiate processes of desecuritization. In the same way that it was able to garner significant good will at the turn of the twenty-first century through its “Peaceful Rise” policy and a commitment to avoid unilateralism, China has

the capability and expertise to address regional concerns about the effects of its current policies on regional stability. The U.S., Japan, and their partners are betting that their policy of deterring China's unilateralism will result in a change in its policy. While the results are yet to be seen, this author is hopeful that mutual interest in avoiding armed conflict will be enough to allow both sides to pursue a more beneficial and stable relationship.