

DECONSTRUCTING THE “CHINA THREAT”: AN INQUIRY INTO
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS IN INDIA AND JAPAN

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Abstract

This research has tried to answer a basic research question: When, how, and why did India and Japan perceive China as a traditional security threat? Based on the literature on threats and perceptions, three variables have been identified that can explain change: (a) military capabilities (material), (b) escalatory foreign policy acts (behavioral), and (c) identity othering (ideational). What this research has found is that escalatory foreign policy acts can best explain changing perceptions of threats. In the case of Japan, we can see significant discursive changes in 1996 (Taiwan Straits Crisis), 2005 (the Senkaku Islands conflict over oil and gas), and 2012 (the Senkaku Islands conflict over sovereignty) when it was perceived that China showed non-compromising, escalatory behavior. The main reason why “China threat” arguments in India are less common is because India feels it is able to manage the bilateral relation, partly through the confidence-building measures. Nonetheless, “China threat” arguments in India also peaked after incursions on the border (in particular in 2009 and 2013). The perceived unwillingness of Chinese leadership to de-escalate crisis situations significantly contributes to changing perceptions of threat.

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List of Acronyms

A2/AD	-	Anti-Access/Area-Denial
ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
ADIZ	-	Air Defense Identification Zone
AIIB	-	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ARF	-	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASAT	-	Anti-Satellite Weapon
ASCM	-	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile
ASEM	-	Asia Europe Meeting
BDCA	-	Border Defense Cooperation Agreement
BJP	-	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRICS	-	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
BRO	-	Border Road Organization
C4ISR	-	Command, Control, Computer, Communication, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
CBM	-	Confidence Building Measure
CCP	-	Chinese Communist Party
CCS	-	Cabinet Committee on Security
CMS	-	China Marine Surveillance
CICA	-	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures
CPR	-	Centre for Policy Research
CTBT	-	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
EAC	-	East Asian Community
EAS	-	East Asian Summit
DF	-	Dongfeng
DPJ	-	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	-	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRDO	-	Defense Research and Development Organization
EEZ	-	Exclusive Economic Zone

GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
ICS	-	Institute for Chinese Studies
IDSA	-	Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IOR	-	Indian Ocean Region
IORA	-	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IR	-	International Relations
IRBM	-	Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile
IT	-	Information Technology
JDA	-	Japan Defense Agency
JFIR	-	Japan Forum for International Relations
JL	-	Julang
JSP	-	Japan Socialist Party
JMSDF	-	Japan Maritime Self Defense Force
JWG	-	Joint Working Group
LAC	-	Line of Actual Control
LACM	-	Land Attack Cruise Missile
LDP	-	Liberal Democratic Party
MEA	-	Ministry of External Affairs
METI	-	Ministry of External Trade and Industries
MIRV	-	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle
MOD	-	Ministry of Defense
MOF	-	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
MSR	-	Maritime Silk Road
NFU	-	No First Use
NIDS	-	National Institute for Defense Studies
NDPG	-	National Defense Program Guidelines
NDPO	-	National Defense Policy Outline
NPT	-	Non-Proliferation Treaty

NSA	-	National Security Advisor
NSAB	-	National Security Advisory Board
NSC	-	New Security Concept
ODA	-	Official Development Aid
ORF	-	Observer Research Foundation
PLA	-	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	-	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	-	People's Liberation Army Navy
PM	-	Prime Minister
POK	-	Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir
PPP	-	Power Purchasing Parity
QDR	-	Quadrennial Defense Review
RCEP	-	Regional Cooperative Economic Partnership
RIC	-	Russia, India, China
RMA	-	Revolution in Military Affairs
SCD	-	Standing Committee on Defence
SCO	-	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDP	-	Social Democratic Party
SED	-	Strategic Economic Dialogue
SIT	-	Social Identity Theory
SLBM	-	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles
SSBN	-	Ballistic-Missile Submarine
SU	-	Sukhoi
TAR	-	Tibetan Autonomous Region
TMD	-	Theatre Missile Defense
TGIE	-	Tibetan Government-In-Exile
UAV	-	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNCLOS	-	United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Seas
UNSC	-	United Nations Security Council
UPA	-	United Progressive Alliance
WTO	-	World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Main Points

- The purpose of the study is to explain when and why India and Japan's political elite view China's rise as a security threat.
- IR theories offer divergent explanations about how threats emerge. The aim is to find out which theory can best explain changing perceptions of threat in Japan and India.
- The existing "China threat" literature focuses on China's material (offensive/structural realist) and behavioral (defensive realism, institutionalism) developments and how they impact perceptions of threat. This research adds ideational (constructivism) factors to the research design.
- This research aims to empirically find out when and why China's rise has been considered a security concern to Japan and India and how this is framed in the elite discourse.
- By uncovering the determinants of threats, this research aims to contribute to the literature on threat perception.

The purpose of the study is to explain how concerns over China as a security threat in India and Japan are perceived. The question I aim to answer is when and according to what logic China's rise is considered a reason for concern in both countries. It is often argued that India and Japan have a similar perception when it comes to China's rise. The reasons mentioned for this perception include the facts that (a) both countries have a dispute with China regarding their borders, (b) both countries are concerned about China's growing military power, (c) and both are witnessing a more confident China, willing to pursue its claims more "assertively."¹

¹ In official documents, India and Japan often stress that both countries are "natural allies" because of their shared values (democracy, market economy, open societies, human rights, and rule of law) and shared strategic interests (in particular, regional peace and stability and maritime and energy security); see for instance Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India*, October 22, 2008, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/pmv0810/joint_d.html (accessed, November 23, 2013) or Shinzo Abe's speech in the Indian Parliament: Shinzo Abe, *Confluence of the Two Seas*, Speech at the Parliament of the Republic of India, August 22, 2007, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> (accessed November 22, 2013); for a more recent version of the similar argument, see Taro Aso, *Japan's Revival and the Japan-India Global Strategic Partnership*, Speech at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) May 4, 2013, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/25/pdfs/easo_230504_2.pdf (accessed November 23, 2013).

This research aims to empirically find out to what extent those commonly held assumptions are valid and in what ways threat perceptions in both countries are different. From 2001 onward, Japan and India have stepped up their security cooperation with each other, partly as a result to hedge against China's rise.² The results of this research aim to provide a better understanding of each country's individual concerns on China and serve as valuable input for policy coordination between the two countries.

This first section of this chapter will provide an introduction of the topic and a motivation on why the abovementioned research question is important. The second section will look at the existing literature on the topic and what this research aims to contribute to it. In the second section, the research framework will be presented, including an introduction of the explanatory variables and hypotheses used. The methodology and limitations will be discussed in the fourth section of this chapter. This chapter will end with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Introduction and Motivation

In the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the world has witnessed the fastest redistribution of wealth and power in history, with the center of economic gravity shifting eastward, mainly due to the rise (or re-emergence) of China. Along with China's economic development and growing power came growing anticipations about whether China would accept and integrate in or reject and try to supplant the existing international rules-based order. A vigorous debate has been taking place among academics, policymakers, and other experts who argue that China has revisionist intentions and those who say China is a status-quo power that can be socialized into the existing institutional frameworks. This research does not aim to give a comprehensive overview of this debate. In general, (institutional) liberalism stresses the importance of multilateral institutions and economic interdependence that raises the cost of conflict and induces China to become integrated into the world economy and work in cooperation with its neighbors on matters of shared interests and concerns.³ On the other hand, realists tend to argue that the redistribution

² There is increasing talk of "the convergence of economic and security interest" among the United States, India, and Japan, in particular after the leadership change in the latter two countries; see, for instance, Richard Bossow, Brad Glosserman, Toru Ito, and Anupam Srivastava, "US-Japan-India Cooperation: A trilateral whose time has come," *PacNet* #76, October 20, 2014, available at <http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-76-us-japan-india-cooperation-trilateral-whose-time-has-come> (accessed January 14, 2015).

³ On the effect of trade and institutions, see for instance Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little Brown, 1989; Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the*

of power and wealth will make China increasingly unhappy with the status quo, which would automatically lead to an increase in tensions, revisionist behavior, and, potentially, conflict.⁴

This dichotomy between status quo and revisionism has polarized and simplified the debate to a certain extent. For one, in the ongoing debate, there is no clear definition of what a status-quo power or revisionist power actually is.⁵ Moreover, in international relations, it is considered natural for all rising powers to aspire for a greater say in regional and global matters. The question is whether such powers want to make use of existing institutions and abide by dominant international norms and rules or whether they seek to supplant and/or bypass them. Finally, in the case of China's rise, (liberal) institutionalist and realist dynamics are occurring at the same time. For instance, China's multilateral and cooperative approach to regional security (as put forth in the New Security Concept) from 1997 onward coincided with the ongoing process of its military modernization.⁶ Increased economic interdependence between

Trading State, New York: Basic Books, 1986; Alastair Iain Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 45, No.4 (December, 2001): 487–515; on China in particular, see for instance Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions 1980-2000*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008; David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order" *International Security* 29 (3), 64–99; David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 3–12 and 50–76; Amitav Acharya "Power Shift or Paradigm Shift? China's Rise and Asia's Emerging Security Order" *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 58, No. 1 (March 2014); and Chia Siow Yue, "The Rise of China and Emergent East Asian Regionalism," in Kokubun Ryosei and Wang Jiji (eds.) *The Rise of China and a Changing East Asian Order*, Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2004, 49–76.

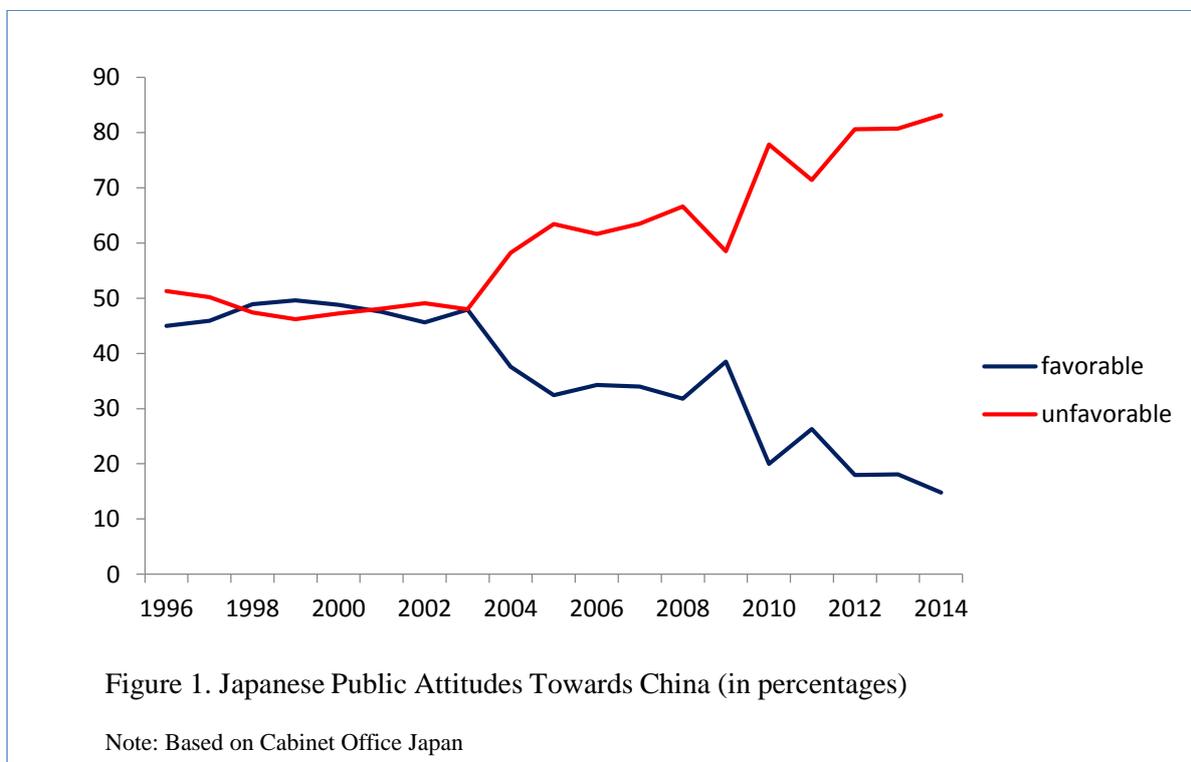
⁴ On the dissatisfaction of rising states and primacy of material capabilities, see A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980, 20–23; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1979; John J. Maersheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: Norton, 2001; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. On China in particular, see for instance Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; Denny Roy, "The 'China Threat' Issue: Major Arguments," *Asian Survey* 36 (8), (August, 1996), 758–771; Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets America*, Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2000; Edward Timperlake and William Triplett II, *Red Dragon Rising: Communist's China's Military Threat to America*, Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1999; Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011; Robert Kagan, "The illusion of 'Managing' China" *The Washington Post*, May 15, 2005, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/13/AR2005051301405.html> (accessed on September 24, 2013).

⁵ In his seminal book, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*, London: MacMillan, 1940, Edward Hallett Carr used the term "status quo power" 14 times without giving a definition. Although there is a consensus that a revisionist power is dissatisfied with the status quo and wants to change "the rules of the game," this again raises the question about what these rules are and exactly when they would be considered to be broken. For an analysis on China, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?" in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carson (eds.), *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power and Efficiency*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 34–96.

⁶ On China's National Security Concept (NSC), see for instance Denny Roy, "China's Pitch for a Multipolar World: The New Security Concept" *Asia-Pacific Security Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, available at <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/APSSS/ChinasPitchforaMultipolarWorld.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2013); for the official Chinese explanation on the NSC, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept*, Beijing: Government of China, 2002, available at <http://www.china-un.org/eng/xw/t27742.htm> (accessed February 23, 2013).

China and countries in the region is occurring while at the same time security concerns over China are growing.⁷

Another reason to look beyond the expansionist/status quo dichotomy is that countries in the region each have their own specific bilateral relationship with China, which makes a one-size-fits-all approach to how countries behave, perceive, or are willing to openly discuss China unconvincing.⁸ This study aims to better understand how China’s rise has been interpreted in India and Japan, two major neighboring countries that are affected to a great extent by China’s rise, economically as well as politically. As can be found in Figures 1.1. and 1.2., public perceptions in India and Japan have changed significantly in recent years.



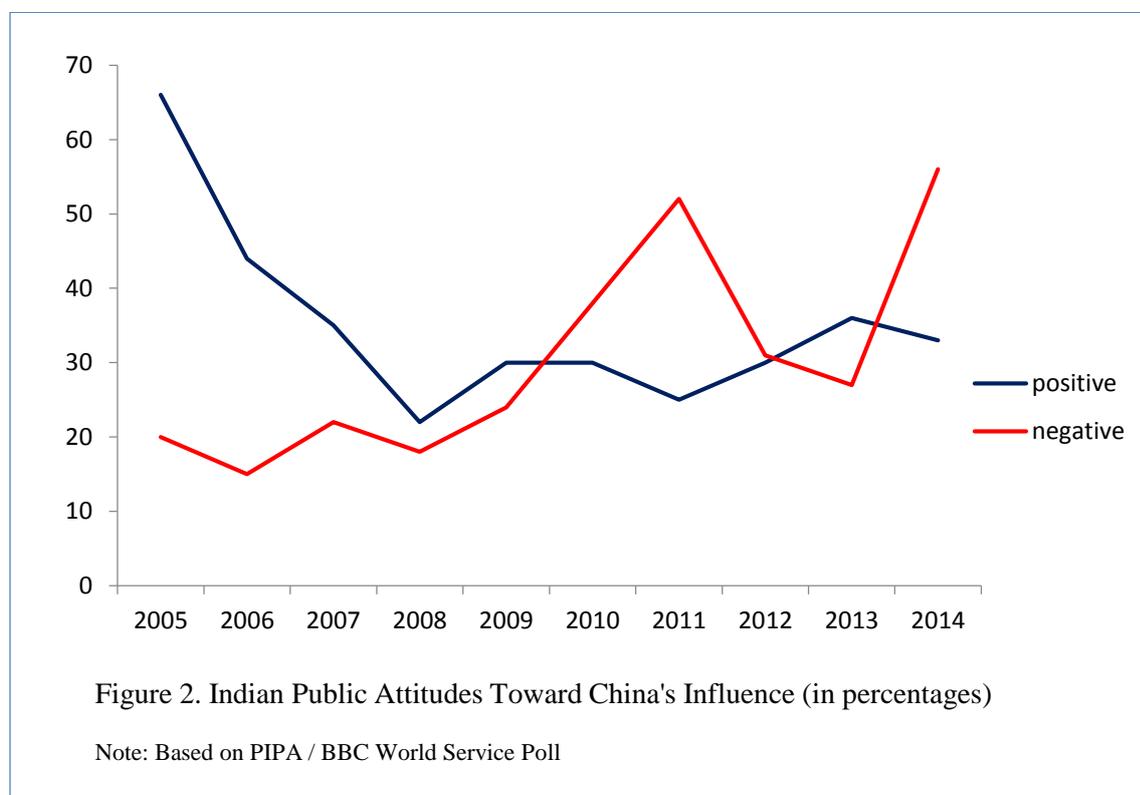
The annual polls by the Japanese Cabinet Office showed that in 1996, for the first time, unfavorable views on China were in the majority. For almost a decade, the Japanese public was divided in its views on China, until the mid-2000s, when we can see a sudden increase of

⁷ For a contemporary overview of regional responses to China’s military challenge, see Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2012-13: China’s Military Challenge*, Washington D.C.: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012.

⁸ Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (eds.), *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2002; Takashi Shiraishi, “The Rise of China and its implications for East Asia” in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.) *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational Processes beyond East and West*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, 120-150.

unfavorable views. This trend continues through today, with the 2014 poll showing that 83.1% of respondents answered that they view China unfavorably, and 14.8% seeing China favorably.

India's views on China have sharply deteriorated as well. At the same time, the available data have indicated that perceptions in India are more volatile than in the case of Japan. For instance, in 2011, there were more than twice the number of respondents answering that they viewed China's influence negatively (52%, as opposed to 25% positive views). Two years before and 2 years later, we can see that positive views are prevalent over negative views. Despite the downward trend in both countries, we can thus already observe some major differences in public perceptions of China.



Differences in perceptions were also captured in a 2011 BBC World Poll on China's rise, which found that 53% of Indians saw "China becoming more powerful economically" as a positive development (21% negative views), and 44% of the respondents viewed "China becoming more powerful militarily" positively (24% negative views).⁹ In the same poll, the numbers for Japan were 31% positive (30% negative) on economy and 88% negative (1% positive) on

⁹ BBC World Service Poll, "Rising Concern About China's Increasing Power: Global Poll," March 27, 2011, available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mar11/BBCChina_Mar11_rpt.pdf (accessed June 22, 2013).

military. To better understand these differences and trends, I argue that we have to closely look at how the security threats from China are framed. That is why this research will focus on when and why China's rise has been considered a security concern to Japan and India and how this is framed in official and public discourse. After all, it is impossible to crawl inside the minds of decision makers. Relying on publicly available documents and tracking changes through time provide ample indications of how threats are perceived and how they change.

Japan and India were chosen as case studies not only because of their shared concerns over a rising China; they are also the major economic players in the increasingly connected Indo-Pacific. The economic rise of Japan, the People's Republic of China, and in recent years India has shifted the balance of economic power and gravity significantly toward the East.¹⁰ The increasing openness of these countries' economies and their integration into regional and global networks and institutions has facilitated continued economic growth and development. Although this thesis will mainly discuss military and political developments, it is important to note that politics and economics cannot be artificially separated.¹¹ Japan, for instance, argued that China stopped the export of rare-earth minerals in response to the arrest of a Chinese captain in 2010 during the Senkaku fishing boat incident. Another example is India and China's scramble for resources essential to the further development of both countries' economies.¹² The economic development of the region and, with it, a desire for political stability, is to a large extent dependent on how these three countries behave toward each other, which comes from the way they perceive each other. Already, in terms of PPP, China, Japan, and India are ranked as the second, third, and fourth biggest economies in the world, respectively. Moreover, the shift of economic gravity toward the East, and with it their growing political importance, is expected to continue for years to come.¹³ Besides this broad trend of an eastward shift in the

¹⁰ Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York: Public Affairs, 2008; Asian Development Bank, *Asia Rising – Growth and Resilience in an Uncertain Global Economy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2013; Asian Development Bank, *Asia 2015: Realizing the Asian Century*, Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2011; International Monetary Fund, *Regional Economic Outlook, Asia and Pacific: Sustaining the Momentum: Vigilance and Reforms*, Washington: International Monetary Fund, 2014.

¹¹ Edward Luttwak, "From Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *National Interest*, 20 (Year): 17–23.

¹² P.R. Kumaraswamy, "India's Energy Cooperation with China: The Slippery Side" *China Report*, No. 43, p. 349–352.

¹³ PricewaterHouseCoopers (PwC) predicts that the Chinese economy will overtake the U.S. economy by 2015 in terms of PPP and in 2030 in terms of market exchange rates; see PwC, *Global Annual Review 2014*, available at <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/global-annual-review/assets/pwc-global-annual-review-2014.pdf> (accessed January 19, 2015). It must be noted, however, that there remain many domestic obstacles to sustain high levels of economic growth in China; see for instance Wayne M. Morrison, *China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States*, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014, available at <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf> (accessed January 12, 2015).

global balance of power, there is also increased India–Japan security cooperation as a result of China’s rise. An important driver of closer security cooperation between India and Japan is their publicly professed shared strategic interest in regional peace, stability, and maritime security.¹⁴ Stability and security (e.g., the maintenance of open sea lines of communication [SLOCs]) is considered paramount by the Japanese and Indian governments to secure their national interests and broader regional economic development. In that sense, strategic and economic interests are, again, closely linked.

By identifying the factors that affect India and Japan’s changing perceptions on China, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of regional dynamics and serve as input for policymaking. The comparative analysis in Chapter 9 will be followed by policy recommendations, which in turn are based on the findings in the empirical chapters. Moreover, by empirically process-tracing when and why perceptions of threats change, this research will also add to the existing theoretical literature on threat perceptions. The next section will discuss the existing literature on the topic and what this research aims to contribute.

1.2. Literature Review

The topic of “China threat” has an impressive body of scholarship. In 1992, Ross Munro published an influential article in *Policy Review*, in which he warned that the emerging communist and expansionist China would—in time—pose a strategic challenge to the United States.¹⁵ Influenced by the shock of IMF redefinitions in 1993, which suddenly made the Chinese economy third in the world (in terms of PPP), the issue of China as a strategic challenge gained popularity among scholars. Most of these early works looked at the long-term strategic implications of China’s rise for the region and well as for U.S. unipolarity.¹⁶ Theoretically, these works combined historical determinism with realist logic; if the Chinese

¹⁴ These shared interests have been articulated since early 2000; see for instance Vijay Sakhujia, “Indo-Japanese Maritime Security Cooperation,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 187-189. After reciprocal visits, in particular the 2007 Abe visit to India, such discussions became more pronounced, up until the point that many experts think the Japan–India security relations are underdeveloped.

¹⁵ Ross Munro, “Awakening Dragon: The Real Danger in Asia is coming from China,” *Policy Review*, No. 62, p. 10–16.

¹⁶ See for instance, Aaron Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No.3, p. 5–33 or Denny Roy, “Hegemon on the Horizon: China’s Threat to East Asian Security,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No.1, p. 149–168 or Robert Ross, “Assessing the China Threat,” *National Interest*, Fall 2005. Denny Roy also summarized the major arguments on the “China threat” in another article: see Denny Roy, “The ‘China Threat’ Issue: Major Arguments,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 8, p. 758–771. A more recent example of scholarship on this issue is Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

economy would continue to develop as quickly as it had in the years before, it would, at a certain point, start to challenge the primacy of U.S. power, at least in the Asia-Pacific region.

Soon, the idea of a “China threat” was widened to include dimensions such as military modernization, proliferation, trade and economy, ideology and politics, and non-traditional threats (such as food security and pollution).¹⁷ Moreover, there was a distinction between scholars who focused on Chinese capabilities to threaten its neighbors and U.S. supremacy and those who looked at China’s intentions to do so.¹⁸ What these studies have in common was that all of them looked at China as a growing security concern, if not in the short term, then in the longer term, and if not as a direct concern to the United States, then at least as a strategic concern for U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific. The rationale was that to maintain the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific, a U.S. military presence in the region was deemed essential.

There are a number of limitations in the explanation power of these studies. First, they tend to disregard how countries in the region actually perceived or reacted to the rise of China. In particular, the early works simply assumed that, as realist logic would suggest, countries would self-evidently be concerned over China’s growing power. As a result, they focused mostly on developments in China (and U.S. responses) and did not look at reactions or perceptions of regional countries. Second, in the cases in which studies did look at how countries in the region reacted to a rising China, they mostly focused on exactly that: They described actual changes in security policies. In the cases of Japan and India, there have been numerous studies that have looked at these countries’ security policies’ evolution as a result of the China factor.¹⁹ In those studies, threat perception is used as an independent variable to explain change in actual policies. The number of scholarly works on perceptions, perspectives,

¹⁷ On military modernization, see Edward Timperlake and William Triplett II, *Red Dragon Rising*, Washington D.C.: Regency, 1999 or Ross Munro and Richard Bernstein, *The Coming Conflict with China*, New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1997 or Bill Gertz, *The China Threat*, Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2000. Specifically on maritime modernization, see Ronald O’Rourke, “China Naval Modernization: Implications for the US Navy Capabilities,” *Report to Congress*, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007.

¹⁸ For capabilities, see John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2001; on intentions, see David Shambaugh, “Containment of Engagement of China: Calculating Beijing’s Responses,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No.2, p. 180–209 or Jeffrey Legro, “What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2007, p. 515–534 or Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 5–56.

¹⁹ On Japan, see for instance, Akio Takahara, “The Rise of China and Security in East Asia: China’s New Concept of Security and Multilateral Diplomacy,” in Glenn Hook and Harukiyo Hasegawa (eds.), *Japanese Responses to Globalization, Politics, Security, Economics and Business*, New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2006 and Mike Mochizuki, “Dealing with a Rising China,” in Thomas Berger, Mike Mochizuki, and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama (eds.), *Japan in International Politics, The Foreign Policies of an Adaptive State*, Boulder: Lynne Rieder, 2007 and Christopher Hughes, “Japan Responds to China’s Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No.4, p. 837–856.

and interpretations are much fewer. Third, studies that do focus on perceptions and similar concepts tend to look not at a specific topic but rather general analyses on a country's worldview, its place in the world, and, related to that, its role and identity.²⁰ The gap in the literature was partially filled with Chikako Ueki's dissertation on "China threat" arguments in Japan, in India by Harsh Pant and Steven Hoffmann, and more recently, by Lora Saalman's article and Tien-sze Fang's book on asymmetrical China–India threat perceptions.²¹ However, there are some important points left unaddressed in the literature that this research aims to address.

In the case of Japan, Chikako Ueki's research stopped in 2006. Moreover, Ueki's research did not look at how ideational factors (i.e., identity politics) have affected arguments over a "China threat." There have been publications after 2006 on Japanese perspectives of a "China threat"; however, these are either single-issue oriented,²² lack theoretical underpinnings,²³ or simplify the issue by arguing that China is both an economic opportunity and a strategic concern. Moreover, none of them (except Ueki's work) process-trace changing perceptions or debates. In the case of India, there are several publications that deal with the threat coming from China; however, they often lack a theoretical foundation.²⁴ Steven Hoffman's article addresses India's perception and policy toward China, but (a) his article dates back to 2004, (b) it does not address changes in perceptions, and (c) it does not discuss how China's policies toward India have been interpreted in New Delhi.²⁵ Mohan Malik's 2003 article has similar shortcomings and additionally focuses most on how different stakeholders in India think about China.²⁶ Lora Saalman and Tien-sze Fang have both compared China and

²⁰ See for instance Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

²¹ Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, 2006, Lora Saalman, "Divergence, Similarity and Symmetry in Sino-Indian Threat Perceptions," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 169–187, and Tien-sze Fang, *Asymmetrical Threat Perceptions in India-China Relations*, New Delhi: OUP, 2014.

²² See for instance Masuhiro Matsuda, "Japanese Assessments of China's Military Development," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2007 or Francine Frankel, "The Breakout of China-India Strategic Rivalry in Asia and the Indian Ocean," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 1–17.

²³ Emi Mifune, "Japan's Perspectives towards a Rising China," in Herbert Yee (ed.), *China's Rise – Threat or Opportunity?*, London: Routledge, 2011,

²⁴ Indian newspapers and popular journals, such as the *Indian Defense Review* and *Defense Security Alert*, have repeatedly published works on this issue. These articles are often short in terms of length, deal with current issues, and have a high degree of sensationalism.

²⁵ Steven A. Hoffmann, "Perception and China Policy in India," in Francine Frankel and Harry Harding (eds.), *The India-China Relationship: What the United States needs to know*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 33–58.

²⁶ Mohan Malik, "Eyeing the Dragon: India's China Debate," *Asia's China Debate*, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, December 2003, available at http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/ChinaDebate/ChinaDebate_Malik.pdf (accessed June 13, 2013).

India's perception of one another. In the case of Saalman's research, her research was limited to writings of non-official security elites. Tien-sze Fang analyzed several themes of the China–India relationship but did not make any inferences on how perceptions have changed and what factors have contributed most to the existence and development of a “China threat.”²⁷ In short, there is no recent work on the “China threat” that process-traces changing perceptions in India and Japan.

More importantly, there is little attention in all of these studies paid to the identity variable. Most of the IR theories neglect this variable and only focus on how threats in the international system emerge as a result of changing power relations or aggressive behavior. This is because most security studies still rely on a rationalist–positivist logic, which tries to seek deterministic regularities in favor of understanding the intersubjective, linguistically mediated social construction of political meaning-making.²⁸ One of the few exceptions is David Rousseau's work on identity and threats. Rousseau presented a theory for the construction of threat in which he posed four questions: (a) How do individuals form groups? (b) How do people create beliefs and ideas? (c) How and when do such ideas spread and become institutionalized? (d) Are there differences between societies in the construction of ideas?²⁹ He concluded that power asymmetries can be mediated if states have a sense of a shared identity.³⁰ Unfortunately, Rousseau did not systematically apply his model in separate case studies. His elaborate theory, based on computer models, is inherently difficult to apply in social realities. Nonetheless, the thrust of Rousseau's argument will be tested in this research: to what extent identity matters in shaping perceptions of threat.

In particular, this research will look at how the identity variable shapes the frame of the intersubjective context in which public and official discourse in the case-study countries materialize.³¹ Research has shown that policymakers use simplified theories and belief systems

²⁷ Tien-sze Fang, *Asymmetrical Threat Perceptions in India-China Relations*, 2013.

²⁸ Ursula Jasper, *The Politics of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: A Pragmatic Framework for Analysis*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 12. The critical-security-studies school, mostly the European (Copenhagen) School, has embraced this idea of the power of discursive security; see Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Other notable works include Ken Booth, “Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist,” in Keith Krause and Michael Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, London: UCL Press, 2003, p. 83–121 or Matt McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 563–587; Michael Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4, p. 511–537.

²⁹ David Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Neoclassical theories use domestic variables to explain certain choices in policy preferences or outcomes; see for instance Randall Schweller, “Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing,”

to understand a complex reality.³² I argue that such belief systems are influenced not only by the changing balance of power but also by a shared, institutionalized understanding of China's identity (in relation to its own).³³ Although there might be some levels of perception differentiation among different political actors within the state, research has shown that threat perceptions are formed in social milieus and are often shared and collectivized.³⁴ In the case of the Cold War, for instance, the Soviet threat became "culturally routine, embedded in political institutions, and acquired an almost taken-for-granted quality. Under these conditions, collective threat perceptions become highly resistant to change."³⁵ In the cases of Japan and India, there are indicators that similar mechanics are at work.³⁶

Another gap in the literature is the absence of comparisons based on identical explanatory variables. There have been edited volumes on how countries in the region respond to China, and there are even some that look at regional countries' perceptions of a rising China.³⁷ The problem with those volumes is that the authors use different approaches and theoretical frameworks to analyze the "China threat." The key to understanding threat perceptions in India and Japan is thus to identify which signals within the same analytical framework are dominant in shaping the intersubjective image or perception of China. By doing so, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of how different factors affect threat perceptions. Added to that, this research's other contribution will be to contribute to the empirical understanding of both countries' concerns over a rising China by making a comparison between India and Japan. Ultimately this research aims to give policy recommendations based on a comparative analysis of both Japan and India's concerns over a

International Security, Vol. 29, No. 2 or William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993; for an overview of neoclassical works and their contributions, see Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No.1.

³² See Chapter 2 on perceptions.

³³ For an account of the influence of language and socialization on mental constructs like perception, see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, New York: The Free Press, 1995, in particular p. 59–78.

³⁴ There is a host of political psychological work on this; see for instance Andrew Ross, "Coming in From the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 197–222; Caroline Barthel and Richard Saavedra, "The Collective Construction of Work Group Moods," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 197–231.

³⁵ Janice Gross Stein, *Threat Perceptions in International Relations*, available at <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/politics/research/researchareasofstaff/isppsummeracademy> (accessed March 18, 2012).

³⁶ See for instance Linus Hagstrom and Bjorn Jerden, "East Asia's Power Shift: The Flaws and Hazards of the Debate and How to Avoid Them," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 38, No. 3, p. 337–362.

³⁷ Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (eds.), *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

rising China. The next section will discuss the research framework of this study, including the hypotheses to be tested and the methodologies used.

1.3. Variables and Hypotheses

For this research, I have identified three independent variables based on the IR literature that can explain changing perceptions of threat.³⁸ They are (a) China's military capabilities, (b) escalatory foreign policy acts, and (c) China–Japan/India identity divergence/convergence. They will be explained in more detail below. Grounded in realist, institutional-liberalist and constructivist theory (as further discussed in Chapter 2) these factors can, to a large extent, explain how threat perceptions are formed:

- (a): In general, offensive and structural realists stress the distribution of power in the anarchical system as the principal logic for state behavior. To them, threats within the international system emerge from asymmetries in capabilities. In the case of China, its power (in terms of both economic and military capabilities) has been growing steadily over the past 2 decades. Since this research deals with threat perceptions in a traditional, military sense, it will focus on what is the most critical and existential form of power in this regard: offensive, military capabilities (as used by Stephen Walt).³⁹ Each case study chapter will therefore look at how Chinese military modernization has affected the military balance, the subjective feelings of susceptibility, and how China's ability to harm India or Japan have been the cause of perceptions of threat. According to offensive-realist theory, countries that can potentially be affected by this change in offensive power all have reason to be concerned about it. This leads to Hypothesis I: "The more China becomes capable of harming others, the more threatening it will become."

Others have argued that capabilities alone do not create threat perceptions. Japan, for instance, does not fear the predominant military power of the United States, because it believes such military power will not be used against it. The Dutch threat perception of Germany, France, or the United Kingdom is virtually non-existent as well. If the estimated intent to use such capabilities is close to zero, the perception of threat is close to zero as well. Clearly, there must be another mechanic involved that triggers perceptions of threat. This suggests that power by itself can be an enabling factor for threat perceptions but is not a decisive one.

³⁸ IR theories will be covered more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

³⁹ Stephan Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

(b): Defensive realists argue that threats do not necessarily come from power asymmetries but rather from how these capabilities are used.⁴⁰ Liberal institutionalism suggests that regimes and institutions can play an important role in creating norms and restrain unilateral behavior.⁴¹ These assumptions bring us closer to behavioral factors that affect perceptions of threat. For this research, I will look at the effect of escalatory foreign-policy acts on threat perception. What I mean by this is acts that are perceived to alter the status quo and that, despite prompting the concerns of others, are not retracted, negotiated, or compromised.

For this, it is not only necessary to analyze the instigation of escalatory events per se: The behavior of parties involved during and after crises (and their willingness to de-escalate or compromise) will also affect perceptions of threat. If country A clearly signals its concerns about country B's behavior and country B decides to ignore it or justify it without taking into consideration the concerns uttered by country A, then I expect this to gravely affect perceptions of country B. If, on the other hand, country B takes country A's concerns into consideration and changes its behavior, then de-escalation can occur. Therefore, it is important to analyze not only the events that shape perceptions but also whether and how countries can find a way to de-escalate a precarious security situation. Robert Jervis found that "statesmen take recent behavior of others as important sources of information"; moreover, he continued that decision makers "take the pattern they think they observe and project it into the future."⁴² This brings us to Hypothesis II: "The more China acts in an escalatory, non-compromising way, the more threatening it will become."

(c): The third factor that, according to constructivist theory, contributes to perceptions of threat is identity divergence or othering. What I mean by this is a differentiation of self and other based on "personality traits," such as regime type, nationalism, and values. SIT holds that people and countries have an inclination to associate themselves

⁴⁰ Many constructivists actually do not go as far as Wendt (ideas all the way down). Rousseau, for instance, argued that power matters but that a shared identity between states can ameliorate perceptions of threat irrespective of material factors up to a certain extent; *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: the Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

⁴¹ See for instance Peter Wallensteen, "Universalism vs. Particularism: On the Limits of Major Power Order," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 243–257.

⁴² Robert Jervis, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Strain (eds.), *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985, p. 14.

and others with certain groups: the “Axis of Evil,” “rogue nations,” and the “Free West,” just to name some examples. In addition to this categorization, SIT posits that people have a propensity to have a more positive view of in-group members than of out-group members.⁴³ This is related to the constructivist argument that holds that a shared identity or shared values and norms can ameliorate perceptions of threat. On the other hand, a non-shared identity can lead to divergence in world views and interests, which in turn can affect expectations of future conflict. To understand the level of China othering, it is not enough to only look at how such developments in China are debated but also how “China images” are constituted in relation to one’s own self-perception. Identity formation on the agent level is a social process that requires states to recognize each other’s national identities. How people see others thus depends not only on how they view others but also on how they see themselves.⁴⁴

In this research, I will look at two distinct factors of agent-level self–other differentiation. First, I will look at regime type. China’s autocratic regime type makes it distinctively different from the case-study countries, which both have a rich tradition of democracy. Democratic peace theory holds that democracies do not fight against each other, which in turn suggests that non-democratic countries are peace spoilers. Moreover, democracy promotion has become an important tool of foreign policy for many countries, in particular for the United States. This “democratic-values” diplomacy could augment the ideational distance between those who practice it and those who do not.

The second factor I will look at is nationalist sentiments. For this research, I operationalize nationalism in two separate dimensions: historical mythmaking and great power ambitions. Regarding the first, I will look at how Japan and India on the one hand and China on the other have engaged in historical mythmaking and how this affects ideational divergence. Regarding the latter, many China watchers have argued that the CCP relies on its legitimacy in nationalist discourse that underlines the fact that the CCP made China great again.⁴⁵ China’s ambition for a great power status has come to the forefront, in particular from the 1990s

⁴³ Henri Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior,” *Social Science Information*, 1974, No. 13, p. 65–93.

⁴⁴ Christopher Meyer, “Perceptions and Responses to Threats,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 4.

⁴⁵ Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers*, New York: HarperCollins, 2010, p. 229–262; Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen: From Deng Xiaoping to Hu Jintao*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 140–164; and Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 79–104; Peter Hays Gries argued that China’s nationalism is not simply fabricated by the CCP, but rather has its roots in China’s history and interaction with foreign powers, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p.116–150.

onward.⁴⁶ So far, it is unclear what this greatness will actually entail. Chinese leaders speak of “Chinese exceptionalism” and “big country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics,” which gives rise to the idea that Beijing is increasingly becoming a rule maker instead of a rule follower and that it is challenging “Western” conceptions of international norms, juxtaposing them with their own value sets and ideas for reshaping the global order. I will look at how these great power ambitions align or contrast with India and Japan’s ambitions.

Based on the above, I hypothesize that “the more China is defined as a significant other, the more threatening it will become.” Clashes of interests could then spur confrontational and possibly belligerent behavior. Consequently, I expect that once such expected behavior is observed, it justifies and reinforces self–other differentiation and makes threat perceptions more impervious to change.

I thus differentiate among material, ideational, and behavioral factors that can explain changing perceptions of threat. To test the hypotheses listed above, this thesis makes use of quantitative and qualitative methods to study a vast collection of official documents, statements, and speeches; journal articles; reports; media coverage; and interviews with policymakers and experts to see how perceptions of a “China threat” have evolved in both of the case-study countries. I will process-trace the debates over military modernization, escalatory foreign-policy acts, and identity othering in both case-study countries and determine how they affect perceptions of threat.

1.4. Methods, Definitions, and Limitations

This research focuses on the “China perception” of political elites in Japan and India. Since it is impossible to crawl inside the mind of policymakers, in particular when going back in time, this research makes inferences to a large extent regarding information written down in statements, in governmental publications, digital archives, online databases, journal articles, newspaper clippings, and secondary literature. Speech is not only observable and falsifiable but also important, because more than one’s individual perception, which we might never really know, speech acts to persuade people, convince them, and has the potential to force an idea upon them.⁴⁷ China-threat arguments can take many different shapes and forms. For the purpose of this research, threat arguments are categorized in three groups:⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Gilbert Rozman, “China’s Quest for Great Power Identity,” *Orbis*, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 384.

⁴⁷ Thomas Risse, “‘Let’s Argue!’: Communicative Action in World Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No.1, p.1–40.

⁴⁸ For the purpose of clarity, the examples used in this table all relate to China’s military modernization.

Table 1: Categories of threat arguments		
	Content	Example
Low	Neutral in tone, mostly descriptive, with little or no mention of direct or long-term challenge or threat.	“China is transforming the Navy to defend coastal areas into one able to defend more distant offshore waters.” ⁴⁹
Medium	Long-term uncertainties; no direct threat but an unwelcome development and a challenge for the future if trends continue.	“If you ask the Chinese, they will explain that it is not an increase but a renewal and modernization of weapons. But I think we must observe (the change) with even greater caution.” ⁵⁰
High	A direct threat; a sense of imminent danger.	“When one of our neighbors has more than one billion population and atomic bombs, and its military expenditure has increased for 17 years, and its contents are extraordinarily opaque, what will happen? It is becoming a considerable threat.” ⁵¹

The examples above show that there is a wide variety of China-threat arguments, and it is impossible to capture them all. Therefore, this research focuses on statements from policy elites: politicians, governmental publications, their affiliated think tanks, the mainstream media, and renowned experts in the field.

Richard Bush summarized that to understand China–Japan relations, the first step is “to examine how each country assesses the actions and intentions of the other.” Further, “Various public statements provide a reliable indicator of private conclusions, because they are formulated through a systematic and periodic institutional process.”⁵² That way, they allow for reliable process-tracing. Statements, speeches, and (official) documents, such as annual publications by relevant ministries and their affiliated think tanks, serve as a starting point for

⁴⁹ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2001*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2002.

⁵⁰ Foreign Minister Kohno as quoted in Ueki, “The Rise of “China Threat” Arguments,” p. 354.

⁵¹ Quoted in Kanako Takahara, “China posing a threat,” *Japan Times*, December 23, 2005, available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/12/23/national/china-posing-a-threat-aso/#.VH7 fdKUeSo> (accessed May 13, 2013).

⁵² Richard Bush, *The Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 25.

this chapter but are also compared with findings from interviews with key stakeholders, secondary literature, press statements, media reports and commentaries, and research reports and policy proposals by independent think tanks. Wherever possible, the results of public opinion polls will be added to the analysis to get a better understanding of the public's perception and to better understand the domestic political context in which policymakers can utter China-threat arguments.

Bilateral relations between both of the case-study countries involve many policy domains and are very complex. This study only looks at the perceived traditional military threat coming from China. Therefore, any references to economic, cultural, and environmental or other non-traditional security threat will not be taken into account as long as it is not relevant. For instance, I will not address how China is a potential economic threat to both countries. On the other hand, the economic interdependence between India and China, as well as between Japan and China, is likely to have effects on official discourse and possibly also on perceptions. The timeframe is set for 1996–2014, a period of 18 years in which the rise of China has become the most significant strategic challenge for both India and China. The year 1996 was an important year in both India and Japan's relations with China. For India, the year was marked by the first visit of a Chinese head of state to the country and the signing of what has been labeled the No-War Pact.⁵³ For China–Japan relations, 1996 was an important year because of the Taiwan Straits Crisis, incidents at the disputed Senkaku Islands, and the revision of the U.S.-Japan guidelines: events that had a long-lasting effect on the bilateral relationship.⁵⁴ It is no coincidence that the 1996 Defense of Japan, other than any other similar publication in the 1990s, had a subtitle. It was called “Response to a New Era.” The year 2014 was chosen primarily because of the availability of research materials up to that time.

The goal of this study is thus to map the elite perceptions over China's rise, primarily based on observable, changing discourses on the factors that have been identified in the previous section. This thesis will not scrutinize Japan or India's China policy nor give an analysis or historical overview of their bilateral relations.

⁵³ The term No-War Pact was used by China expert K. Natwar Singh, who would go on to become Minister of External Affairs in India (2004–2005); see also Thanga Rajesj, “Revisiting Sino-Indian Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) On the Eve of 60th Anniversary of Panscheel,” *C3S Paper* No. 2119 (July 2014).

⁵⁴ This research does make an argument for or against Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. However, since the Japanese government has administrative rights over the islands, they will be referred to in their Japanese name. When referring to the escalation over the islands, I will use the term “dispute,” which is also contested. Again, by doing so, I do not intend to take sides on the issue.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

The second chapter will discuss the dependent variable of this research, threat perception, in depth. It will discuss how, according to the mainstream IR theories, threats within the international system emerge. The second part will focus on signals and perceptions and the importance of studying discourse in IR.

The third (India) and sixth (Japan) chapters will discuss the first independent variable of this research: China's military modernization. It will discuss how India and Japan have discussed and interpreted this trend separately. The first section of the chapters on China's military modernization will look at how India and Japan have looked at China's growing military power in general terms. Secondly, it will look at to what extent Japan and India feel a sense of susceptibility to these changes in military capabilities. The chapters will end with hypothesis-testing and conclusions.

The fourth (India) and seventh (Japan) chapters will discuss the second independent variable of this research: perceptions of China's revisionist, self-centered foreign-policy behavior. First, the chapter will examine how both case-study countries have perceived China's behavior in general, and in the second section of the chapter, I will focus on China's behavior on the most contentious bilateral issue for both countries: the contested (territorial and maritime) borders. Finally, the chapter will end with hypothesis testing and conclusions.

Chapters 5 (India) and 8 (Japan) will look at the third independent variable: China's identity traits. It will discuss if, and if so, how, great power mentality, nationalism, and othering in both of the case-study countries have affected the perception of a developing China threat and how this has affected the overall intersubjective understanding of China as a potential security threat. This chapter, once again, will end with hypothesis testing and conclusions.

Chapter 9 will make a comparative analysis between the two case-study countries, looking at which factors have contributed most to the development of a China threat in India and Japan. This chapter will also include conclusions and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2: Threats and Perceptions

Main points

- The chapter will look at the debates in IR theories regarding threats and perceptions.
- David Singer introduced threat as a quasi-mathematical model: threat = capability x estimated intent.
- Realists tend to look at the material side of this equation and stress that threats come from power asymmetries.
- Liberal institutionalism stresses that regimes can make cooperation possible through repetition and predictable behavior.⁵⁵
- Constructivists underline the ideational side of the equation and argue that a feeling of a common identity can ameliorate perceptions of threat.
- Political psychologists add to the debate by pointing out that perceptions of threat are not formed rationally and are seldom a reflection of the complex reality but are often simplified theories, heavily influenced by personal attributes and past experiences. They have shown that even without others' capabilities and intent, perceptions of threat can manifest themselves.
- To understand how threat perceptions over a rising China are formed, it is imperative to understand which clues, signals, or character traits are selected to shape the intersubjective understanding of a rising China as a security concern in both of the case-study countries.
- This research will take the key elements of these debates to empirically determine to what extent they have been influential in shaping threat perceptions in India and Japan.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the theoretical debates on threat perceptions. It summarizes the theoretical underpinnings of realist, liberal institutionalist, and constructivist arguments regarding how threats manifest themselves within the international state system. The second section will take a closer look at the importance of perceptions and biases that affect how people in general and policymakers in particular view the world around them. The

⁵⁵ Stephen Krasner, *International Regimes*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

third section will discuss why it is important to study discourse. Most research in the social sciences focuses on positivist methods and in the case of political science, on policy outcomes. This section will explain the purpose of studying discourse. The last section will thus argue why it is also important to study the discursive context in which such policies are discussed and given their meaning.

2.2. Threats in IR Theories

When do states feel threatened? How do threats manifest themselves? Threat perceptions are a vital yet understudied component within the field of international relations. Cohen argued that threat perceptions are the decisive, intervening variable in foreign policy between action and reaction, “For when a threat is not perceived, even in the face of apparently objective evidence, there can hardly be a mobilization of defensive resources.”⁵⁶ Threat perceptions influence states in making their foreign and security policies; threat perceptions affect alliance behavior, arms procurements, regime membership, and economic cooperation. In the existing academic international-relations literature, threat perceptions are often used as an independent variable to explain foreign-policy behavior. Few studies deal with analyzing threat perceptions as a dependent variable. Even though the importance of threat perceptions is widely recognized, scholars debate on how (perceptions of) threats manifest themselves.

The Singer definition

In 1958, David Singer published a highly influential paper in which he introduced a quasi-mathematical model for threat perception: threat perception = estimated capability x estimated intent.⁵⁷ The formula holds that threats to states come from a combination of estimated capabilities and intent. At first glance, the formula appears beautiful in its parsimony. If states do not have the perceived ability (capability) to do harm, they cannot convincingly threaten others, since there will be no repercussions if the threat is ignored. If state A does not have the perceived willingness (intention) to harm state B, state B can be assured that the capabilities of state A will not be used against it. When it comes to assessing state-based threats as carried out by intelligence communities, Singer’s focus on capabilities and intentions has

⁵⁶ Raymond Cohen, “Threat Perception in International Crisis” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 93, No. 1 p. 93.

⁵⁷ David J. Singer, “Threat Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma,” *Journal of Conflict*, Vol. 2, No. 1 p. 94.

endured up until today.⁵⁸ There are, however, problematic views over Singer's formula, coming from different schools of thought on international politics.

First, scholars have debated over the relative weight of each of the components of the formula. Structural and offensive realists tend to focus on the material side of Singer's formula, while defensive realists and constructivists stress the importance of the intentions side of the equation. Second, the Singer formula appears to be too focused on the other, with little attention on the lens through which the self observes and interprets stimuli. Although Singer mentioned that a combination of recent events, historical memory, and socio-cultural differences might turn out-group suspicion into downright hostility, only a few scholars have taken up the daunting task of understanding how emotional and cognitive dispositions of policymakers affect perceptions of threat.⁵⁹ These two problems with the Singer definition will be further discussed below. The next section gives an overview of the theoretical debates on threats, while the questions on signaling and perceptions will be reviewed further in Section 2.3.

The material side of the Singer equation: Realist arguments

For most realist scholars, threats arise from power discrepancies. In his seminal work, Hans Morgenthau downplayed the role of intentions or motives. His theory of IR is based on concepts of interests defined in terms of power. A balance of power, a situation in which states maintain or try to overthrow the status quo and seek coalitions to protect their interests, is what logically follows. Morgenthau considered trying to understand an other's motives or ideas through signals or cues as "both futile and deceptive."⁶⁰ Such an endeavor is pointless, and he went on that even if we had complete knowledge of one's motives and desires, such knowledge would not be helpful in foreign-policy analysis, since good moral behavior does not correlate with good foreign policies. Instead, realists assume that states act as if "all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers."⁶¹ Morgenthau's theory made use of these Machiavellian convictions and envisioned a

⁵⁸ Charles Vandeppeer, *PhD-Thesis: Rethinking Threat: Intelligence Analysis, Intentions, Capabilities, and the Challenge of Non-State Actors*, Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2011, p. 21–29.

⁵⁹ Singer, "Threat Perception," 94. The most important books on perception and information processing mostly give anecdotal evidence that supports general observations and hypotheses, see for instance Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976; Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition and Perception in Foreign Policymaking*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

⁶⁰ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Knopf, 1954, p. 11.

⁶¹ Machiavelli as quoted in Jack Donnely, *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 9.

competitive state structure in which the main desire of states is to increase their own power relative to others. On the other hand, when there is an opportunity to expand, in case the balance of power is in a state's favor, states will try to change the status quo. For Morgenthau, international behavior comes from states' desire for power.

A contemporary to Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr, categorized three different kinds of threats: actual, potential, and systemic.⁶² Actual threats are clear and present, made obvious through clear signaling or behavior by one party toward the other. Potential threats are threats that have the capability to inflict harm, although it is still unclear whether the threatening party has the intent to harm others. These two categories deal with threats on the agent-level; states are reacting to others when they perceive an aggressive military buildup or expansionist behavior. The two categories are not unproblematic, something Knorr recognized, since they do not imply how states take certain cues as signals of intent and to what extent those signals are important, which are matters of perception. However, Knorr argued that even without actual or potential threats, states are always suspicious of one another, since each can quickly change its intentions and capabilities.⁶³ What Knorr called "systemic threat" is an integral part of the modern state structure.

This ever-present threat, which is embedded in the international system, forms the foundation of the structural-realist approach to threats. In an anarchical world, there is no place for gauging whether others have benign intentions. Anarchy fosters anxiety, fear, and suspicion. Different from classical realists who focus on egoistic state goals, Kenneth Waltz argued that the absence of a "higher power" will drive states toward a state of war even when they desire peace.⁶⁴ Without the presence of a supranational authority that can effectively settle disputes among states, states will always have to be conscious of their security and thus aware of others, in particular in times of geopolitical change.⁶⁵ What follows is that states are in a situation of permanent mistrust. In such a world, states prepare for worst-case scenarios to prevent others from maximizing their power and achieving hegemony.

Maersheimer agreed with Waltz that anarchy creates security competition between states, but he took realist theory a step further by arguing that states do not look only for security but also that they ultimately desire power and seek regional hegemony. Maersheimer's

⁶² Klaus Knorr, "Threat Perception," in Klaus Knorr (Ed.), *Historical Dimensions of National Security*, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, p.78.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, p. 159–186.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 111–228.

definition for a hegemon is “a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system.”⁶⁶ While this quest for hegemony might be true for big powers, it is highly unrealistic for middle-sized or small countries to achieve this goal. Maersheimer’s focus on major powers thus enables him to distinguish himself from defensive or classical realists.⁶⁷ Despite the differences between the different strands of realist theory, all emphasize the material side of Singer’s formula. Like classical realists, Waltz and Maersheimer sidestepped the issue about intentions when they argued that all states that are considered to disrupt the balance of material capabilities will be perceived as a threat. Changing perceptions of threats thus closely correlate with changes in power relations. There is little room for other factors that can ameliorate these perceptions. Following these realist propositions, states in an anarchical and self-help world react in similar ways and to material incentives and will design their foreign policies to balance against more powerful states. Thus, the rise of new powers is bound to cause instability in the existing international system, and there is little that such powers can do to ameliorate rising threat perceptions.

Intentions and behavior

Robert Jervis dismisses the notion that states only react to material incentives. Jervis introduced offense–defense variables to explain how states can reassure each other while expanding their military assets.⁶⁸ As long as weapons can only be used for defensive purposes, it can be argued that those weapons would not constitute a threat to other states.⁶⁹ In another book, Jervis mentioned how the influence of intentions can also have the opposite effect. Unsuccessful deterrence and spiral models can be explained by factors other than power discrepancies, such as when states care about their reputation or when states bypass moderation and conciliation in order not to appear weak or appeasing.⁷⁰

Another defensive realist, Stephen Walt, agreed with Waltz that power matters but also maintained that states do not only balance power, but instead balance threat, which also

⁶⁶ John Maersheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2001, p. 40.

⁶⁷ A point well made by Chikako Kawakatsu Ueki; see “The Rise of ‘China Threat’ Arguments,” *Thesis (PhD)* Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dept. of Political Science, 2006, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 167–214.

⁶⁹ It could also be argued, however, that the acquisition of defensive capabilities changes the military balance in such a way that offensive weapons of other states have reduced impact. In cases of mutual vulnerability, the acquisition of such weapons could heighten perceptions of threat as the one side becomes more exposed than the other. The Strategic Defense Initiative, for instance, would have reduced American vulnerability to Soviet missiles, while the Soviet side would remain exposed to American attacks.

⁷⁰ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 59. On reputation, see also Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1996.

includes assessments of other states' (offensive) intentions and their geographic proximity to the other state.⁷¹ Walt found that states do not necessarily balance against the most powerful state, but rather that states take into account the perceived aggressive intentions of other states. By including (offensive) intentions as a key variable, defensive realists opened Pandora's box and put renewed emphasis on unit-level explanations as to why states regard others as threatening or not. Walt's contribution rekindled earlier debates over Singer's formula, most notably the difficulties of discerning someone else's intention and the many subjective variables that would have to be taken into account.⁷² Walt does not offer a way to measure intentions nor how states evaluate the offensive nature of the other state's intentions.⁷³ For some realists, Walt's balance-of-threat model—although it might add explanation power—makes too many compromises to earlier parsimonious balance-of-power models.⁷⁴ Despite the fact that Walt is widely considered to be a realist, his seminal work paved the way for a renewed focus on the intentions (behavioral) side of the Singer formula.

Rules of the game

Liberalist theory holds that states can adopt cooperative strategies toward each other if both believe that their enduring interaction will be beneficial. Because there is a risk that states will lie in order to get an advantage over an other, it is important for states to institutionalize their interaction in order to confirm their commitment.⁷⁵ States have no incentive to play by the rules of the game if the game is played only once. However, if there is a realistic prospect of repetition, then states are likely to act in a different manner, considering their reputation and thinking about gains in the longer run. Institutions thus play an important role in managing expectations, in particular when they prescribe limits for inappropriate conduct.⁷⁶ In such cases, institutions constrain states and set markers for future, expected behavior. If such institutions successfully prevent unilateral behavior on issues, they can serve as “threat reducers.”⁷⁷

⁷¹ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring, 1985), p. 3–43.

⁷² Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p. 46.

⁷³ Here again we encounter the problem that social science favors “hard” empirical proof and positivist logic.

⁷⁴ See for instance Robert Keohane, “Alliances, Threats and the Uses of Neorealism,” *International Security*, Vol. 13, No.1.

⁷⁵ Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, in particular Chapter 2 on credible commitments.

⁷⁶ Raymond Cohen, “Threat Perception in International Crisis,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 96, No.1, p. 93–107.

⁷⁷ In the case of India–China relations for instance, Indian leaders repeatedly state that both countries can eliminate tensions by means of their CBMs; see the Hindu, “India, China Do Not Consider Each Other a Threat: Pranab,”

The ideational side of the Singer equation: Constructivist arguments

From the early 1990s, constructivist thinking developed partly as a response to the perceived inadequacies of the existing IR theories to explain political change.⁷⁸ The collapse of the Soviet Union brought a sudden end to the bipolar rivalry of the Cold War. In the Cold War setting, threat assessments were heavily focused on the capabilities side of Singer's formula. The number of Soviet bombers, rockets, and submarines dominated intelligence estimates; those objective and easily quantifiable facts would to a great extent determine the level of threat. Measuring intentions from an "evil empire" was not deemed necessary. They were perceived as hostile, fixed, and non-malleable.⁷⁹

The end of the Cold War meant that the actual (Soviet) threat had disappeared. Although systemic threats would always remain and new potential threats would appear over time, the realist school of IR struggled to make sense of the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the cooperative partnerships that were established in the following years. Alexander Wendt argued that the end of the Cold War "caught scholars on all sides off guard but left orthodoxies looking particularly exposed. Mainstream IR theory simply had difficulty stemmed from IR's materialist and individualist orientation, such that a more ideational and holistic view of international politics might do better."⁸⁰ Scholars like Alexander Wendt, Nicholas Onuf, and Friedrich Kratochwil explored and developed constructivism as a social theory for international relations, a theory that emphasizes the power of ideas.⁸¹ They questioned realist assumptions on anarchy, power, and interests in several ways.

First, according to constructivist thinking, national interests of states are ideationally, not materially, determined. Although states have some generic interests, like state survival, constructivists argue that "many national security interests depend on a particular construction

June 14, 2006. For a more theoretical argument see Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁷⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of World Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), p. 391–425; Jeffrey Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (January, 1998); Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer, 1998), p. 171–200.

⁷⁹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Assessing the Adversary: Estimates of the Eisenhower Administration of Soviet Intentions and Capabilities*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991, p. 51.

⁸⁰ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 4.

⁸¹ Nicholas Onuf argued that speech acts form rules—or permissible social actions—which in turn give shape to structural concepts (hegemony, heteronomy, and hierarchy), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1989; Friedrich Kratochwil argued that norms and rules influence decision making, rather than being a product of decisions, *Rules, Norms and Decisions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others.”⁸² In this regard, identity is defined by constructivists as “the mechanism that provides individuals with a sense of self and the means for comprehending the relationship of the self to the external environment.”⁸³ To understand state behavior, it is therefore imperative to know how states see themselves and how they see others, going beyond a mere materialist exploration. To better understand these ideational notions, constructivists put emphasis on concepts like identity, norms, and values. Identity, in this regard, is closely related to role theory. Roles are social positions “that are constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group.”⁸⁴ Roles come with conceptions of self and expectations about others signaled through language and behavior.⁸⁵ In other words, the concept of self cannot exist without an other. States do not form their identity in isolation, but rather through a process of reciprocal identity construction. Moreover, in such processes, the other can face negative typecasting to make the self look better. Susanne Klein found that “negative aspects [are] emphasized to let the Self appear in a more advantageous way.”⁸⁶ According to constructivist theory, states thus redefine themselves and each other in relation to one another.

This process of identity construction does only not occur at the agent level. Domestic forces, in particular feelings of belonging and nationalist sentiments, give direction to identity construction and shape the creations of self and other.⁸⁷ Nationalism is a very potent force in this regard, which has been defined as “any behavior designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of that national community.”⁸⁸ In such national communities, there is a sense of a deep, horizontal comradeship, which can result in people giving their lives for this abstract idea of the nation: an “imagined community” where most people will always be strangers to one another.⁸⁹ Therefore, some constructivists have argued that foreign-policy analysis should

⁸² Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security” in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 60.

⁸³ Glenn Chafetz, Michael Spirtas, and Benjamin Frankel, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy,” in Glenn Chafetz, Michael Spirtas and Benjamin Frankel (eds.) *The Origins of National Interest*, Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999, p. ix.

⁸⁴ Sebastian Harnisch, “Role Theory: Operationalization of Key Concepts,” in Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank and Hanns W. Maull (eds.), *Role Theory in International Relations*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, p. 8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9–15.

⁸⁶ Susanne Klein, *Rethinking Japan's Identity and International Role: An Intercultural Perspective*, Routledge: New York, 2002, p. 5.

⁸⁷ Peter Hays Gries, 2004, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p. 9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 2002, p. 7.

start at home, by analyzing and reconstructing the often many discursive formations that together shape domestic formations or the self.⁹⁰

Other constructivists do not emphasize the constitutive effects of domestic forces or bilateral interaction, but look at structure–agent-level effects. Social interaction between states not only has effects on their bilateral relations but also has constitutive effects on the structural level. Wendt identified three cultures of anarchy: a Hobbesian, a Lockean, and a Kantian one. These different cultures are shaped by the way states view each other. In a Hobbesian world, the logic of anarchy takes the form of a fight to the death; states view others as enemies, hence there are no limits on the use of violence to maximize one’s own power. It emphasizes self-help, survival, and zero-sum. A Lockean world is shaped by competition and rivalry but also self-restraint. Its logic is one of “live and let live.” What Wendt meant by this is that the intrinsic property of the state, which is its sovereignty, is sufficiently guaranteed. In a Lockean world, states do not have to make worst-case assumptions since “almost all states *know* that almost all other states recognize their sovereignty.”⁹¹ Sovereignty is the ordering principle of the Lockean culture of anarchy in which states will advance their own interests but will refrain from killing each other. Finally, a Kantian culture of anarchy would be one in which mutual aid is its shaping principle, based on a logic of perpetual peace.⁹² States perceive each other as friends and cooperate to face common and shared threats. States can move from one culture of anarchy to another, but this is often a long process that involves reciprocal costly signaling, especially when it involves moving toward a more “peaceful” culture of anarchy. This closely relates with the last point this section makes.

Constructivists thus assume that national interests are not similar and fixed but rather vary among agents and are susceptible to change.⁹³ As Peter Katzenstein argued,

History is more than a progressive search for efficient institutions that regulate property rights. And history cannot be reduced to a perpetual recurrence of sameness, conflict and balancing. History is a process of change that leaves an imprint on state identity.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities, & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 37.

⁹¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, p. 281.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 298–307.

⁹³ Leonard Williams, “Abundance, Lack and Identity” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol.12, No.2, p. 297–312.

⁹⁴ Peter J. Katzenstein, “Introduction” in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 23.

Through continued interaction, states create social contracts in which they define their own and the others' identity and interests. Those images of others will become relatively fixed over time, causing a certain degree of institutionalization. Changing one's image in such cases often requires convincing (and costly) signaling. Change therefore generally does not occur suddenly but usually occurs in small steps. Abrupt change can lead to perceptions of unpredictability. Therefore, for constructivists, changes in identity of self and/or other have to potential to strongly affect a states' perception of threat. In fact, it has been argued that the current state of Sino–Japanese relations is the result of an identity crisis: a situation in which both countries are struggling to make sense of their own identity and role conception in the quickly changing Asia-Pacific.⁹⁵

To summarize, according to Wendt, the absence of a centralized authority does not inevitably correlate to a system of self-help and balance of power. The logic of anarchy depends on what we put inside it. To use Wendt's famous quote, "Anarchy is what states make of it."⁹⁶ Constructivists thus use identity to distinguish between friend and enemy. States not only react to material incentives, but more importantly, how these changing power relations make sense in a socially constructed world.⁹⁷ For instance, in a Kantian culture of anarchy, rising military expenditure would be welcomed by other states, as there would be an increase in the capabilities to fight shared threats. Moreover, the constituting effects that agents have on the structure also work the other way around. States that find themselves in a Hobbesian culture will tend to view others as enemies, thereby reinforcing internalized conceptions of self and other into a self-fulfilling prophecy. States become "locked" in a certain culture, taking others' identity and interest as given. According to constructivists, states learn through interaction and adopt certain roles and patterns to reproduce appropriate behavior that fits those images. It has been argued for instance that once the shared ideas about the Cold War were institutionalized on a structural level, both the United States and the Soviet Union behaved in such ways that were seen as threatening to the other, reaffirming their hostile intentions toward each other and reproducing the Cold War.⁹⁸ As mentioned above, changing one's role in a socially constructed

⁹⁵ Christian Wirth, "China, Japan and East Asian regional cooperation: the views of 'self' and 'other' from Beijing and Tokyo" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 496–496.

⁹⁶ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2.

⁹⁷ In this socially constructed world, interactions between states shape identities; see Maja Zehfuss, "Constructivism and identity: A dangerous Liaison," in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander (eds.) *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and His Critics*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 93–117.

⁹⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 375.

world requires convincing and often costly signaling. The more states become locked in a certain culture, the more difficult and costly it will be for them to signal role change.

Despite the scholarship and the growing acceptance of constructivism as a well-established theory for IR, the issue of identity remains something of a slippery slope.⁹⁹ Scholars disagree over the building blocks of identity and the difficulty of including many variables to measure and give meaning to this complex phenomenon.¹⁰⁰ Other critics simply argue that using identity as a variable unnecessarily overcomplicates the parsimonious theories that have dominated the field of IR without convincingly adding explanatory power.¹⁰¹ This study does not aim to give a theoretical contribution to these discussions. What this study aims to achieve is to empirically test whether a state's perception of threat can be explained best by material or non-material factors and whether realism or constructivism can be used as theoretical tools to explain changing perceptions of threat in the selected time period for each of the case-study countries.

What we have established above is identifying the main factors that IR theories use to explain the emergence of threats. However, this research aims to include not only which signals China is sending and how this affects perceptions of threat in each of the case study countries but also to understand the intersubjective context in which such cues are scrutinized. In other words, to better understand threat perception, we have to understand the theories, ideas, and beliefs that underlie the assessments of such incoming signals, and how such ideas are susceptible to change. The next sections will address the contribution of political psychology in particular on these issues, first on signaling and second on perceptions.

2.3. Signaling

People and states respond to stimuli (i.e., “signals” in IR literature), although how and when depends on many variables. In game theory and political-psychology literature, signals are often broadly divided in two categories: cheap talk and costly signals. Costly signaling—as the term implies—implies a cost on the sender. This can be either a domestic cost (e.g., giving in

⁹⁹ The main difference between constructivism and the other dominant IR theories (liberalism and realism) is the fact that constructivists in general do not consider states as rational actors. Instead, constructivists stress intangible, hard-to-measure factors (culture, history, identity) that shape behavior of states. The problem with the current constructivist research agenda is that there are few methodologies that can be used to measure such nebulous factors. It requires scholars and students of IR to adopt new ways of finding answers to their research questions.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, “Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise,” Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 451–497.

¹⁰¹ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’,” *Theory and Society*, No. 29, p. 1–47.

to international demands) or an international cost (e.g., losing reputation for resolve when not intervening in certain international crises). Costly signals can change the minds of policymakers on the receiving side, although this depends on the cost of the signal, the reputation of the sender, and the institutionalized beliefs of the receiver.¹⁰² Signals can be considered costly by the sender but fail to change the minds of the receiver. IR theories tend to give primacy to and study these costly signals (mostly in the forms of actual foreign-policy behavior), since they are thought to be the main indicators that reflect how states really think. In this research, concrete foreign-policy behavior by China, such as its actions in and around the East China Sea and the IOR, will be analyzed regarding how this affects changing perceptions of threat in the case-study countries.¹⁰³

Cheap talk, on the other hand, traditionally refers to threats or promises that incur no direct cost on the sender.¹⁰⁴ Political leaders might promise to cut taxes or to help allies in times of need or to threaten adversaries. In general, there is no direct consequence to such statements, and so they are often considered as hollow rhetoric.¹⁰⁵ Diplomacy has been called the “epitome of cheap talk” and, if the above assumptions were to be true, a “monumental waste of time.”¹⁰⁶ Even more than making false promises, some scholars stress that speech is used to deliberately distort reality in an effort to keep others in the dark about their own strategic intentions.¹⁰⁷ A pessimistic view then argues that because states misrepresent their willingness to fight, diplomatic exchanges become pointless. As a result, states resort to risky and provocative behavior, since “less public diplomacy may not allow them credibly to reveal their own preferences concerning international interests or to learn those of others.”¹⁰⁸ Based on such assumptions, inconsequential cheap talk is not likely to have any effect on the minds of policymakers. The counter argument to such claims is that by making promises or statements,

¹⁰² Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

¹⁰³ The difference is that in this thesis, I will not look at how China can potentially affect Japan or India’s security, but I aim to analyze which behavior shapes intersubjective understandings and which behavior is used in a narrative context to shape a certain image of China.

¹⁰⁴ This traditional approach to signaling is based on an economic study of the job market; see Michael Spence, “Job Market Signaling,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 87, No.3, p. 355–376.

¹⁰⁵ James Faeron, “Domestic political audiences and the escalation of international disputes,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (September, 1994), p. 577–592; James Faeron, “Rationalist Explanations for War” *International Organization* Vol. 49 (summer, 1995), p. 379–414; Kenneth Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crisis,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 92, No. 4 (December, 1998), p. 829–844.

¹⁰⁶ Anne Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ On the topic of strategic misrepresentation, see Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

¹⁰⁸ James Faeron, “Domestic political audiences and the escalation of international disputes,” p. 578.

states commit themselves to behave accordingly or face being considered untrustworthy or unreliable. That is something that states, in particular in peacetime, will try to avoid.

Not just “cheap talk” but important discursive bargaining

Following the logic presented above, there are growing numbers of scholars who consider speeches, statements, and other forms of diplomacy as more than hollow and meaningless rhetoric.¹⁰⁹ Finnemore and Sikkink for instance argued the following:

IR scholars have tended to treat speech either as “cheap talk,” to be ignored, or as bargaining, to be folded into strategic interaction. However, speech can also persuade; it can change people’s minds about what goals are valuable and about the roles they play (or should play) in social life.¹¹⁰

Moreover, promises and threats create obligations to act in a particular way; they create expectations about future behavior.

If promises or threats are not followed up with concrete measures, this will affect the sender’s reliability, trustworthiness, and resolve, in particular in situations of high uncertainty. Consequently, there are costs involved in uttering threats and promises. Sartori argued that “states often use their diplomacy honestly in order to avoid losing their reputations, or acquiring reputations for bluffing that would harm their ability to use diplomacy in the future.”¹¹¹ Jervis also found the following:

Signals are important contributors to predictability because states often find it important to convince other that they will act in a given way and lacking – or unwilling to use – means of proving to others what their policy is they must rely on signals.... Thus they all have a stake in the collective honesty of the signaling system.¹¹²

Levels of trust and expectations of future behavior in bilateral relations are shaped by experiences and the images people have formed over the years. States that are repeatedly caught

¹⁰⁹ Another landmark work in economics refuted some of the findings on cheap talk; see Vincent Crawford and Joel Sobel, “Strategic Information Transmission,” *Econometrica*, Vol. 50, No.6, 1431–1451. See also, Joseph Farrell and Matthew Rabin, “Cheap Talk,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 10, No.3, p. 103–118.

¹¹⁰ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “Taking Stock: the Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 4 (2001), p. 402.

¹¹¹ Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy*, p. 44–45.

¹¹² Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, p. 71.

lying will therefore be perceived as non-trustworthy and not reliable. That is why speech—in particular in times of no conflict—is an important tool for statecraft and not just inconsequential chatter.

Assuming that speech is the easiest and quickest way to send out signals to others and that lying will affect a state's reputation for honesty and its reliability, we can conclude that there are good reasons to study speech acts. In cases of high uncertainty, for instance in times of fast geopolitical change, language becomes even more important. It is in their official narrative context that certain policies are framed, explained, or justified.¹¹³ Through language, states show to others their concerns, intentions, and worldviews, whether curtailed in diplomatic niceties or not. Key publications by governments such as the U.S. QDR or the Chinese Defense White Paper are carefully reviewed by domestic and international audiences, and small changes are often subject to heated debates in politics, the media, and strategic communities.¹¹⁴ Along with actual foreign-policy behavior, the discursive context in which such policies are explained and justified affects how states perceive each other.

2.4. Perceptions

Signals are not necessarily taken at face value. How they are scrutinized and given meaning depends on the dominant perceptions of the receiver. Political psychologists have shown that threat perceptions are not the product of a rational, perpetual cost-benefit analysis made by well-informed policymakers. Instead, perceptions of threat are heavily influenced by simplified theories, emotions, beliefs, and predispositions.¹¹⁵ Cohen said that threat perception is a “cognitive process of appraisal”.¹¹⁶ In the eight case studies he examined, Cohen identified

¹¹³ For a good overview on the socially constructed nature of reality and discursive politics involved in this, see for instance Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberate Practices*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, in particular Chapter 3, p. 48–73. For a recent study on strategic narratives, see Lawrence Freedman, “The possibilities and limits of strategic narratives,” Beatrice de Graaf, George Dimitiu, and Jens Ringsmose (eds.), *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion, and War: Winning Domestic Support for the Afghan War*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

¹¹⁴ The QDR (since 1996) is released every 4 years and describes the U.S. military doctrine and gives an overview of the international security situation. In Japan, the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), formerly known as National Defense Policy Outline (NDPO, first publication in 1976) sets out Japan's strategic posture for (in principle) a decade. The first Chinese Defense White Paper was released in 1998 and described China's military goals and objectives. The Indian government publishes annual reports, which reflect on the past year and highlight changes in the security environment and in India's defense policies. Such publications give clues about how policymakers see the world around them and are often debated in the media and epistemic and strategic communities.

¹¹⁵ Randall Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 46.

¹¹⁶ Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis*, p. 7.

a shared feature on threat perceptions, which is (coming from the observer's predispositions) "the inability of the observer to look beyond one particular, obsessive image of disaster." Some dangers, he continued, "are selected by experience as especial objects of concern, and even before any crisis develops these dangers have been imaginatively rehearsed and planned for. They are expected." In the case that a danger does materialize, then "signals are interpreted in the light of anticipations and images of disaster dominate decision makers' thoughts. Other possibilities are neglected."¹¹⁷ Tetlock and McGuire stated that although policymakers may act rationally, they only do so "within the context of their simplified, subjective representations of reality."¹¹⁸ Buzan added that perceptions differ "according to where the observer is located in relation to the thing viewed and according to the internal constitution of the viewer."¹¹⁹ Hence, states can react to signals in different ways in similar (structural) circumstances because of variances in decision makers' dispositions or belief systems.

Scholars have identified a couple of cognitive processes that affect how people in general, and in particular decision makers who have to deal with a complex reality, see the world around them. According to Vertzberger, the most elementary cognitive tools policymakers use "to clarify and impose meaning on, the complex and uncertain environment are beliefs, values, and stereotypes."¹²⁰ For instance, if policymakers are disposed toward a value orientation toward conflict, they will overemphasize aspects that focus on dissimilarities and will look for clues that reaffirm a priori expectations and predictions.¹²¹ This is closely related to the need for what Jervis called "cognitive consistency," or the assimilation of information to pre-existing beliefs.¹²² The search for cognitive consistency and the use of stereotypes can affect the accuracy of perception. Moreover, stereotypes in particular are deeply ingrained beliefs, often with a strong normative content that makes them even more resistant to change.¹²³

Besides the search for cognitive consistency, two other pervasive biases that have been singled out that can distort threat perception are the "fundamental attribution error" and the "actor-observer" bias.¹²⁴ The first bias explains behavior of others more on dispositional

¹¹⁷ Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis*, p. 160.

¹¹⁸ Philip Tetlock and Charles McGuire, "Cognitive Perspectives on Foreign Policy" in John Ikenberry (ed.), *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, New York: Longman, 1999, p. 506.

¹¹⁹ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991, p. 343.

¹²⁰ Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p. 113.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 117–202.

¹²³ Yaacov Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p. 127.

¹²⁴ Janice Gross Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," p. 22.

attributes, rather than on the constraints that the other faces.¹²⁵ Conversely, the second bias makes people overestimate the role of the situation and underestimate how their decisions and behaviors are the result of dispositional attributes.¹²⁶ This creates a double standard in which one's own behavior is rationalized based on situational circumstances and the other's behavior is explained based on personality traits. Dominant beliefs and theories about one self's and one other's character thus affect the way its behavior is interpreted.¹²⁷

The main contribution of political psychology is that threat perceptions are not just shaped by external stimuli but also by internally held ideas. In order to study threat perceptions, it is thus important to study how certain developments in each of the case study's bilateral relationship are given meaning through interdependent meaning-making in order to understand why and how certain clues, signals, or character traits shape the intersubjective understanding of a rising China.

2.5. The Purpose of Studying Discourses

In order to make such intersubjective understandings clear, it is important to see how political actors shape the discourse over a rising China. As mentioned above, policies or foreign-policy behavior are explained in certain discursive context. Communication is an important way to signal concerns, intentions, and worldviews to domestic and international audiences. In particular, in cases of high uncertainty speeches, statements are studied thoroughly to uncover possible underlying changes in strategic thinking. Even though such statements are carefully constructed bearing in mind international and domestic audiences, they are not hollow rhetoric. They serve a purpose, for instance to persuade, bargain, show concerns, share worldviews, or make threats. That is why it is important to study these discourses.

In the current information age, such scrutiny has become even more pervasive. Information dissemination made possible through the use of the Internet has changed the way speeches and statements are being analyzed.¹²⁸ Official speeches and statements are now widely distributed and often available online. The audience for a speech does not only include

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: US-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 22.

¹²⁸ See for instance David M. Faris, "From the Age of Secrecy to the Age of Sharing: Social Media, Diplomacy, and Statecraft in the 21st Century," Shanthi Kalathil (ed.), *Diplomacy, Development and Security in the Information Age*, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, 2013, p. 35–51. On the influence of new media, see in that same publication Gerard Hyman, *Complicating the Already Complicated: Diplomacy, Development, and the New Media*, p. 63–79.

the people present in the room listening in but also everyone with an interest or a stake in the particular issue that the speech is about, domestically as well as internationally.¹²⁹ This creates complications regarding what can be said to whom. Whereas in earlier, less transparent times, it was possible to cater to specific audiences with a certain message or tone, policymakers, especially those in the central government, now know that even a small slip of the tongue can have serious diplomatic consequences.¹³⁰

On the other hand, certain political parties might shore up their rhetoric for domestic purposes. An essential point here is that policymakers have to be concerned not only with international but also domestic pressures. Robert Putnam labeled these twin dynamics a two-level game; a national political leader sits on the international table with his diplomats and foreign counterparts and on the domestic table with key interest groups and political advisors.¹³¹ Public opinion might shape the way politicians are willing to address a certain issue. Media exposure can have similar effects on the official discourse over contentious issues.¹³² Whatever statements policymakers make is not only the result of diplomacy between the countries at stake but also depends on the message national leaders might want to send to their own constituents. This research aims to uncover these narratives and to see how and when they change in relation to China's rise.

¹²⁹ The use of new media and information dissemination in the blogosphere has changed the “constitutive rules of the discipline,” see Charli Carpenter and Daniel Drezner, “International Relations 2.0: The Implications of New Media for an Old Profession,” *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 11, p. 255–272.

¹³⁰ Eytan Gilboa, “Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.12, No. 2 (June, 2001), p. 1–28; Richard Grant, “The Democratisation of Diplomacy: Negotiating with the Internet,” *Discussion Paper in Diplomacy*, The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2005, available at http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20050900_cli_paper_dip_issue100.pdf, accessed February 18, 2013, pp 1–38.

¹³¹ Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3. p. 427–460.

¹³² There have been several studies on how media reporting, public opinion and official discourse relate to each other, in particular on the topic of terrorism and the US-led War on Terror. See for instance, Pippa Norris, Montague Kem and Marion Just (eds.), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

Chapter 3: India and China's Military Capabilities

Main findings

- Asymmetry in capabilities has been a recurring theme in India's "China threat" ever since the explosion of a nuclear device by China in 1964.
- Despite India going nuclear, Indian feelings of susceptibility persist.
- The asymmetry in military capabilities has been growing rapidly in favor of the PLA since the first decade of the 21st century.
- This gap in capabilities was uttered as a source of concern within the Indian security community in the early 2000s but was not articulated as such in official discourse.
- In 2008, the argument of a "new" and "more powerful" China, which was pursuing its national interest in a more assertive manner, found its way in the Indian official policy discourse. This development also allowed a shift in discourse and exacerbated "China threat" arguments on the capabilities gap.
- The asymmetric nature of the Chinese–Indian relationship is also increasingly felt along the disputed border in the form of infrastructure projects that can be used by China for troop transports.
- Along with sources of concern in traditional areas, there are also new ways in which China's military presence is increasingly witnessed, in particular in the global commons: the Indian Ocean, cyber, and outer space.
- Despite all the ongoing concerns and new challenges, the official discourse shows very few mentions of China actually being a security threat to India.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will look at how China's military modernization is discussed in Japan and perceived in India. In this chapter, I will first process-trace perceptions and debates on China's growing military expenditure and military modernization in general. Then, I will look at what (new) capabilities are considered the most threatening to India. India's MOD and MEA both publish annual reports, which include an overview of regional and bilateral developments. Unfortunately, these documents give only limited indications of India's foreign-policy goals and ambitions or assessments of its international surroundings. In the words of India's foremost

strategic thinker, the late Krishnaswamy Subrahmanyam, “In India, in spite of our functioning democracy for five decades, there is no system of government coming out with white papers and documents, sharing its assessments, spelling out goals and objectives and our policies to achieve them.”¹³³ Others have argued that the absence of documents that should spell out India’s strategic course is just a logical consequence of the overall lack of any strategic orientation within the Indian government.¹³⁴ Fortunately, there are quite many collections of official speeches, documents, and statements bundled in annual MEA publications, such as the *Foreign Affairs Record* and *India’s Foreign Relations*. Added to that, the MOD- and MEA-affiliated think tanks have provided a host of documents that are meant to serve as input for policymaking. They give valuable insights on Indian perceptions over a rising China.

3.2. Military Modernization and Spending

The asymmetry in military capabilities has been growing rapidly in favor of the PLA since the first decade of the 21st century. Until the early 2000s, India had been able to keep up with China’s military modernization, partly because it spends a higher percentage of its GDP on defense. Nevertheless, China’s modernization efforts were recognized early, and some in the Indian strategic community already argued that it led to a more aggressive China. Sujit Dhutta, who worked at the IDSA, already wrote in 1996 that during the Taiwan Crisis, “The growth of Chinese power, both economic and military, has led to an assertive foreign policy, the use of force or threat of use of force.”¹³⁵ Within the strategic communities, China’s growing military power was much recognized and debated, well before the Indian government started to comment on it.¹³⁶ Lora Saalman found a sudden increase in the number of articles appearing

¹³³ Krishnaswamy Subrahmanyam, “Grand Strategy for the First half of the 21st Century,” in Krishnappa Venkatshamy and Princy George (Eds.), *Grand Strategy for India: 2020 and Beyond*, New Delhi: Pentagon Security International, 2012, p. 13.

¹³⁴ George Tanham, “Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretative Essay,” Santa Monica, RAND, 1982, available at <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R4207.pdf> (accessed December 22, 2013). See also Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, New Delhi: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999. Kanti Bajpai argued that India actually has different forms of strategic thinking, based for instance on Kaitilya’s Arthashastra, see Kanti Bajpai, “Indian Strategic Culture,” Michael Chambers (ed.), *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, Carlisle: United States Army War College, 2002, available at http://kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ESDP/101069/ichaptersection_singledocument/01e74d56-d2f2-43b3-8a13-7f0e6fec4099/en/11.pdf (accessed December 27, 2013).

¹³⁵ Sujit Dhutta, “Main Currents in Asia-Pacific: Indian Ocean Region and Prospects of Cooperation,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.19, No. 2, p. 33.

¹³⁶ See for instance, Lt. Col. Lavinderpal Singh, “China’s Security and Military Modernization,” *USI Journal*, Vol. 118, No. 491, New Delhi: United Service Institute, 1985, Srikanth Kondapalli, “Modernization of the People’s Liberation Army,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, No.2, New Delhi: IDSA, 1996, M.V. Rappai, “Chinese Military Exercises: A Study,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, No.4, New Delhi: IDSA, 1996. Air Commodore R.V. Phadke, “Assessing Chinese Air Power,” *USI Journal*, No. 84, New Delhi: United Service Institute, 2002, G.V.C.

in India's strategic journals that commented on China's military modernization. In the 1990s, the themes that were discussed were mostly related to land, air, and nuclear modernization, areas that could potentially have a bearing on India's own security. In the 2000s, the naval dimension became more salient.

While "China threat" arguments in Indian strategic commentaries became more pronounced, Indian officials refrained from making such statements. Instead, they worked hard to improve bilateral relations with China. The year 1996 marked the first formal visit of a Chinese head of state to India. President Jiang Zemin's historical visit gave Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma the opportunity to reiterate the positive developments in bilateral relations since Rajiv Gandhi's trip to China in 1988. He said that "the co-operation and friendship of Asia's two largest nations would be a powerful and enduring factor in promoting peace and stability in our continent and the world." By working together, he added,

We can explore a long-term vision of China-India relations oriented to deal with the challenges of the 21st century. We can explore how our two nations should proceed along the path of good neighborly relations that we have embarked upon. For our part, India seeks a relationship of constructive cooperation with our largest neighbor, China.¹³⁷

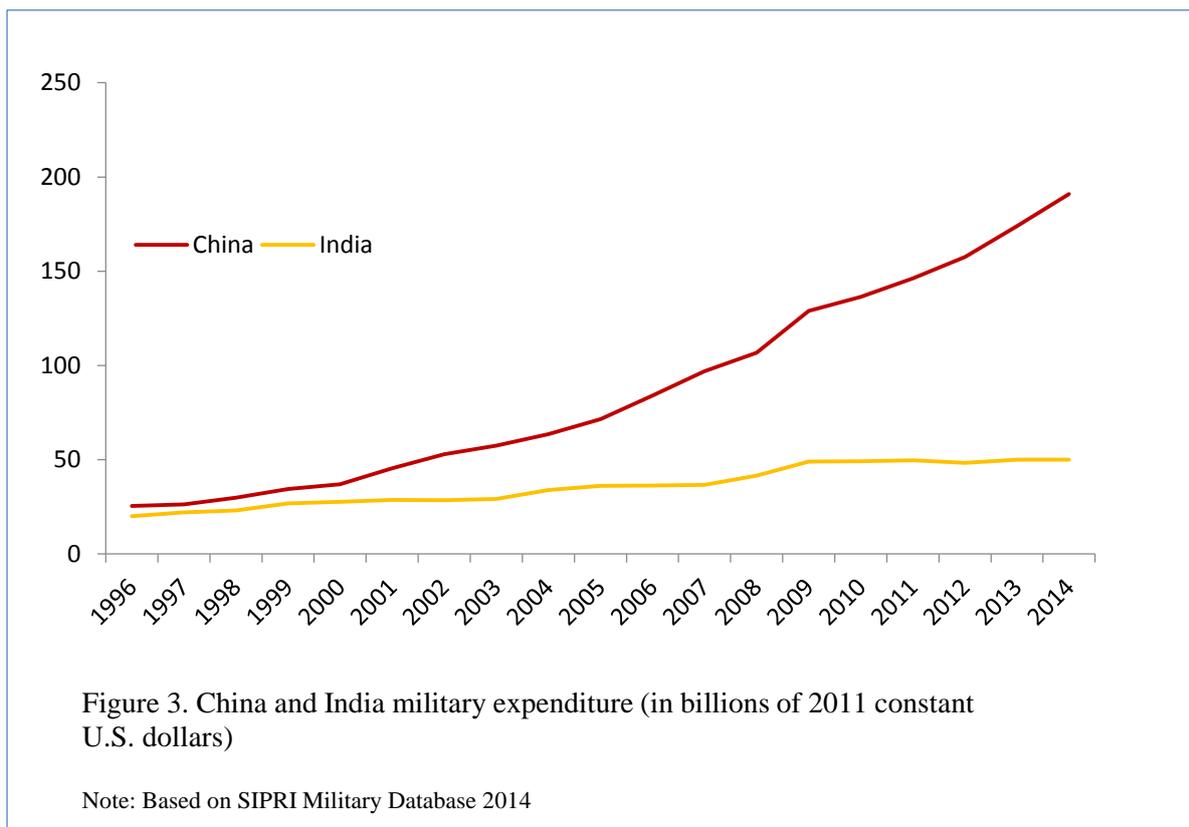
For a long period of time, this rhetoric has dominated the Indian official discourse on bilateral relations. Even though there were areas of disagreement and disputes, the main argument was that through a policy of engagement and dialogue, India and China would be able to resolve misunderstandings and create a deeper, broader, and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship.

Naidu, "Naves of Major Asian Power and Security in South-East Asia: Part 1," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, No.3, New Delhi: IDSA, 1996, Swaran Singh, "China's Arms Acquisitions," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 20, No.1, New Delhi: IDSA, 1997, p. 1769–1773, Rao Sreedhar, "China Becoming a Superpower and India's Options," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 20, No.4, New Delhi: IDSA, 1997, Swaran Singh, "China's Naval Build-up," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 201, No.6, New Delhi: IDSA, 1997, Big. Subhash Kapila, "The China Threat is Real," *USI Journal*, New Delhi: United Service Institute, 1998, p. 518–520.

¹³⁷ Shankar Dayal Sharma, as quoted in "India Ready to Work for a Fair and Reasonable Solution to Border Dispute with China" Rediff, November 29, 1996, available at <http://www.rediff.com/news/1996/2811chin.htm> (accessed April 12, 2014).

Military expenditure

From the early 2000s onward, China's rapidly increasing military expenditures and—as a result—the growing gap in military capabilities found their way into India's official publications. The MOD remarked that China's buildup of comprehensive national power caused both “awe” and “nervousness” in some quarters, and active officers from the armed services started to utter their concerns on the quickly growing gap in military power.¹³⁸ Figure 3 shows the trends in military expenditure from 1996 to 2014.



As the graph shows, the gap in military expenditures started to grow rapidly after 2002. Four years later, in 2006, China's defense expenditures would already approximately double India's. To a large extent, this rapid change can be explained by China's economic growth, which allowed it to raise its defense expenditure significantly in the 1990s and 2000s. Additionally, China's military modernization was focused mostly on upgrading its naval and

¹³⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2004-2005*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2005, p. 8, on the growing asymmetry see for instance, Brig. (rtd) Gurmeet Kanwal, “China's Rising Defense Expenditure: Implications for India,” *IPCS Issue Brief*, No. 65, New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2008.

strategic-missile forces, whereas India's military modernization lacked a clear vision or direction.¹³⁹

Even though the MOD and retired officers in New Delhi's vibrant strategic community frequently articulated their concerns over China's military modernization, the MEA remained largely silent on the issue. It maintained that China-India relations should not be scrutinized through the realist prism of power politics and the unilateral pursuit of national interests. MEA Minister Natwar Singh insisted on the following:

There are many who look at China-India relations with the old mindset of "balance of power" or "conflict of interests" and see East Asia as a theatre of competition between these two countries. Such theories are losing relevance in today's fast-emerging dynamics of Asia's quest for peace and prosperity.¹⁴⁰

For the time being, liberal arguments of growing interdependence and trade and a certain confidence in China's benign intentions vis-à-vis India (as evidenced by the ongoing peace and tranquility on the border) lulled realist apprehensions over China's increased military capabilities, at least in India's official rhetoric.¹⁴¹ It must be said that this is not idiosyncratic for the China-India relationship. In general, Indian politicians refrain from talking in terms of power politics. India's foreign policy is more based on the power of idealistic arguments than in terms of power projection. This has created what Harsh Pant acknowledged as a visible continuity in India's official position on China. Pant argued that despite the growing power of China, New Delhi's default policy line was aimed at (a) improving relations, (b) resolving differences through dialogue, and (c) expanding economic cooperation.¹⁴² In efforts to further the relationship, Indian and Chinese leaders regularly meet to stress their mutual interest in expanding economic development and resolving outstanding, sensitive issues. They advocate the dawn of the "Asian Century" and reiterate that there is enough strategic space for the mutual

¹³⁹ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 143-164, see also Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, Houndsmills: McMillan Press, 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Natwar Singh "Inaugural Address at the 7th Asian Security Conference," *IDS*, New Delhi: January 27, 2005, available at <http://www.idsa.in/node/1553> (accessed April 7, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Such ideas were also expressed in publications by the ICWA, for instance on the issue of cooperation on mutual development; see R.N. Chopra, "Looking towards Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *India Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No.1, p. 8 or Badar Alam Iqbal, "India, China and the World Economy," *India Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No.1.

¹⁴² Harsh Pant, "Indian Foreign Policy and China," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 30, No.4, available at http://www.idsa.in/~idsa/strategicanalysis/IndianForeignPolicyandChina_hvpant_1006.html (accessed March 12, 2014).

development and cooperation of both countries.¹⁴³ However, Indian leaders also stressed the need for stronger political cooperation between the two sides in order to strengthen trust and understanding. Openly securitizing China's military modernization did not fit in this approach and thus remained largely suppressed.

Moreover, China's military spending was made possible first and foremost by its economic growth and not by a significant, greater allocation of government resources to the military. In that sense, it can be argued that inherently, such developments were only logical and there was nothing really wrong with military modernization.¹⁴⁴ Talking about a growing gap in the military budget itself would—in India's case—also be an indirect critique on India's own slowed-down economic development. Indian defense expenditure as part of GDP has hovered between 2.5 and 3.1 percent over the last 2 decades and has been consistently higher than China's.¹⁴⁵ In order for India to close the asymmetry gap in military capabilities, it is vital for the country to develop its own comprehensive national strength, something that defense experts duly recognize. However, the financial constraints make it difficult to balance China's capabilities. Indian politicians favor an approach similar to China in which increased military spending goes hand in hand with economic development. Additionally, discussions about the lack of transparency are virtually non-existent because of the problematic nature of India's own opaque defense acquisitions and modernization.¹⁴⁶ The nature of Indian diplomacy, the rejection of power politics, and the fact that addressing China's military modernization might backfire on India's policymakers all contributed to the fact that the issue remained a diplomatic taboo, at least as long as it was perceived that China–India relations were moving in the right direction.

A new, confident China and rising anxieties

In 2008, there was a sudden shift in the official narrative when MEA Minister Pranab Mukherjee mentioned China as the first of India's most pressing, immediate security concerns. "We are today faced with a new China. Today's China seeks to further her interests more aggressively than in the past, thanks to her phenomenal increase in capabilities after thirty years of reforms." As a response, he continued that, India should "develop more sophisticated ways

¹⁴³ These points are made throughout official documents, statements, and speeches throughout the period under review. Not only does it emphasize the potential of the bilateral relationship, it also expresses a shared perspective on a global order, beyond U.S. unipolarity.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with senior MEA government official, New Delhi, March 21, 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Taken from the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with senior MEA government official, New Delhi, March 21, 2014.

of dealing with these new challenges posed by China.”¹⁴⁷ One day after Mukherjee’s comment, the MEA issued a statement that it was not meant to imply that China was a threat to India. The statement, however, was not a slip of the tongue or solely aimed at domestic consumption. Mukherjee’s comments resembled growing anxieties in India over the deterioration of bilateral relations, which had come as a result of China’s growing power and influence in the region. The Annual Report of the MOD in the same year mentioned for the first time that China’s military modernization needed to be “monitored carefully” and that it was an “obvious concern” with a direct bearing on India’s security.¹⁴⁸

Similar to Mukherjee’s statement, the Annual Report noted that “China’s rising power supported by burgeoning economy is reflected in its confidence, which will have an impact on regional and international security contours and power equations.”¹⁴⁹ China’s increased power-projection capabilities along the border and its military presence in the Indian Ocean (more on this in Section 6.3) have contributed to the idea of “competition” or “concern” in the official narrative and what is often called “rivalry” or “direct threat” in the non-official writings. It shows that in the mainstream perception in India, the China–India power differential has become more problematic. China has already risen to great-power status, and India did not want to be left behind. In the words of a senior government official, “We want to develop a relationship further and faster, but we want to assure that our pride is not hurt in the process because China has risen and India is still rising.”¹⁵⁰ This power asymmetry thus became a major theme after 2008, and it was not only coming from within the strategic communities but also from the officialdom and the mainstream media. It influenced mainstream Indian perceptions, in particular because China’s growing power, regional influence, and strategic interests were directly impinging on India’s geopolitical space.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Pranab Mukherjee, “Aerospace Power in Tomorrow’s World,” in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.), *India’s Foreign Relations - 2007*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2008, p. 156.

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2008/2009*, New Delhi: Government of India, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2011*, New Delhi: Government of India, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ As quoted in Arun Sahgal, “China’s Military Modernization: Responses from India,” Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2012-13: China’s Military Challenge*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012, p. 286.

¹⁵¹ See for instance, Jagannath Panda, “Competing Realities in China-India Multilateral Discourse: Asia’s Enduring Power Rivalry,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 22, No. 82, p. 669–690. The asymmetric nature of India–China relationship also figures prominently in an authoritative study by a group of non-official Indian security experts; see “Non-alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty-first Century,” New Delhi: Center for Policy Research, 2012, available at http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/working_papers/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf (accessed January 11, 2014).

Public-opinion polls confirmed that Indians became much more concerned with China in the late 2000s. Views on China hardened significantly in the late 2000s and early 2010s; in 2013, 60% of Indian people saw China as a major threat. Another 22% thought China was a minor threat.¹⁵² This shows that the positive attitudes of the policy elites did not trickle down. At the same time, the respondents expressed their desire to pursue stronger relations with China; 63% wanted to have closer relations with China, whereas only 9% opted for a weaker relationship.¹⁵³ This dual approach of continued engagement and a heightened perception of threat were also reflected in India's official position. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, New Delhi started to increasingly hedge against a preponderant China, whose increased power was felt in traditional (the disputed border and nuclear asymmetry) and new areas (Indian Ocean, outer space, cyber).

3.3. Susceptibility

India's concerns over China's military capabilities resemble Japan's to a certain extent. Traditionally, India has been concerned with China's possession of a nuclear weapon. Such apprehensions did not dissipate after India's acquisition of a nuclear bomb. Also similar to Japan is the fact that China's growing power has impacted India's concerns over the disputed border. In particular, China's potential dual use of infrastructure-development projects close to the contested border area have raised anxieties over China's ability to quickly project power in the area. At the same time, China's growing power has been felt in new areas, such as in the space, cyberspace, and maritime domains. These issues will be discussed separately in this section.

Old threats: (a) Nuclear asymmetry

Despite the upward trend in China–India relations and their simultaneous rise in power in the early and mid-1990s, there continued to exist an obvious asymmetry in their bilateral strategic relations, most obviously China's possession of a nuclear weapon. Traditionally, the issue of nuclear asymmetry and China's active cooperation on nuclear technology with Pakistan has dominated strategic discourse over China's capabilities. Table 1 shows that in

¹⁵² It should be noted that the face-to-face interviews of the India Poll 2013 by the Lowy Institute were held before the Depsang Incident. It is thus likely that perceptions hardened even more during 2013.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Indian academic and strategic journals, the most discussed topics on China's military capabilities were all related to nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.

Table 2. Themes and systems in Indian strategic and academic journals (1991–2009)¹⁵⁴			
Strategic journals	References	Academic journals	References
Cooperation (Chi-Pak) missiles	78	Nuclear weapon modernization	101
Cooperation weapon (Chi-Pak) technology	50	Cooperation (Chi-Pak) in nuclear equipment	92
Military / civil infrastructure Tibet	45	Cooperation (Chi-Pak) M-9 / M-11	65
Cooperation (Chi-Pak) M-9/M-11	41	DF-15	17
Defense expenditure	13	Cooperation (Chi-Pak) WMD	16

India's anxieties over nuclear disparity started in 1964, when China exploded a nuclear device and from then on started to upgrade and modernize its nuclear capabilities and delivery systems. As a result of this asymmetry, China's missile development has become a long-running concern in Indian defense circles. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were repeated accusations of China targeting India through the deployment of missiles in the TAR, although these allegations have been systematically denied by the Chinese.¹⁵⁵ Indian officials said they were "aware" of the threat of nuclear missiles from Tibet,¹⁵⁶ and even though the possibility that China would use nuclear weapons against India or in the border areas seemed remote, there was a feeling within Indian defense circles that this asymmetric relationship could be exploited by the Chinese to put certain strategic pressure on India.¹⁵⁷ NSA Shivshankar Menon mentioned that before its nuclear tests in 1998, India faced implicit or explicit nuclear threats

¹⁵⁴ The strategic journals were *Strategic Analysis* by the IDSA and *India Quarterly*, published the ICWA. The academic journals were the *United Service Institution Journal* and *Indian Defense Review*; see Lora Saalman, "Divergence, Similarity and Symmetry in Sino-Indian threat Perceptions," p. 174 and 186.

¹⁵⁵ Narendra Gupta, "Nuclear Missiles in Tibet," *The Times of India*, March 24, 1988.

¹⁵⁶ Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit, as quoted in Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*, Arlington: RAND, 2001, p. 60.

¹⁵⁷ Sisir Gupta, "The Indian Dilemma," in Alastair Buchan (Ed.), *A World of Nuclear Powers?*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966.

from other powers on at least three occasions.¹⁵⁸ Halfway during the 1990s, the MOD's Annual Report stated that given the continuing proliferation "of nuclear weapons and missiles in our neighborhood, adequate defensive measures are inescapable, much as India may have wished otherwise."¹⁵⁹

At the same time, the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 had divided the world into "nuclear haves" and "nuclear have-nots." In India's words, the extension of the NPT "has legitimized a major weapon of mass destruction and has allowed a few countries total monopoly over it."¹⁶⁰ The CTBT, aiming to confine testing nuclear devices, added further restrictions to nuclear aspirant powers such as India. In the mid-1990s non-proliferation regimes, practices, and norms became more widely accepted and embraced by the international community but were rejected by New Delhi. India's Ambassador to the CTBT negotiations, Arundhati Ghose, said that signing the treaty would compromise India's security interests.¹⁶¹ It was the first time Indian policymakers used "security" arguments to withdraw from arms-control agreements.¹⁶² From the Indian perspective, the non-proliferation regimes had put global pressure on the country to develop its own nuclear option and missile programs. With the new BJP in power, which was more sympathetic to the hyperrealist school of thought (more on this in Chapter 4), the momentum for "going nuclear" was there. Within two months of taking office, India successfully completed a series of nuclear tests, and it de facto joined the nuclear-possession states. The arguments justifying the need for a nuclear weapon were in line with expressions in earlier official publications; in India's neighborhood, there were nuclear-power states, and India going nuclear could actually restore the balance and have a stabilizing effect.¹⁶³ It was the leaked letter of PM Vajpayee that openly singled out China as the reason for India's quest to go nuclear. It stated:

I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, especially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear

¹⁵⁸ "Nukes have deterred world powers from threatening India: Menon" *The Hindu*, August 22, 2012, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/nukes-have-deterred-world-powers-from-threatening-india-menon/article3805220.ece> (accessed February 12, 2014).

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1995-1996*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1996, p.2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.4.

¹⁶¹ Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2010, p. 103.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Yashwant Singh, "India's Foreign Policy in the New Millennium" *Strategic Digest*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2002, p. 1243

weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962.¹⁶⁴

Anxieties linger on even after Pokhran-II

After the successful nuclear test in 1998, the NSAB, a group of non-governmental, independent security experts, was asked to come up with a draft nuclear doctrine. The draft was published 14 months later in 1999. It was supposed to be a subject for public debate among policymakers and experts and would serve as input for the official doctrine. The official nuclear doctrine was accepted by the Indian cabinet in 2003. Although it is not public, the Indian government stated that, in line with the draft doctrine, India would pursue a minimum credible deterrent, a no-first-use policy, and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states.¹⁶⁵ One important change between the draft doctrine and the doctrine as accepted by the CCS was how India would react against a nuclear first strike. The draft doctrine stated that “any nuclear attack on India and its armed forces shall result in punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons to inflict damage unacceptable to the aggressor.”¹⁶⁶ The officially accepted doctrine of 2003 specified that “nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.”¹⁶⁷ This change has had an effect on the credibility of using nuclear weapons against a tactical or limited strike, in particular in the border areas.¹⁶⁸ China is the only other country besides India that upholds the principle of no-first use; however, some in the Indian strategic community make a point that it is unclear to what extent this norm applies to the disputed border. The change by the Indian government in the content of the nuclear doctrine could be explained by either (a) the lack of strategic thinking on nuclear issues at the governmental level or (b) the lack of concern over the possibility of the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the disputed border.¹⁶⁹ In either case, critics argued that this change in the nuclear doctrine contributed to a weakened deterrence credibility vis-à-vis China.

¹⁶⁴ “Nuclear anxiety: Indian’s letter to Clinton on the nuclear testing,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1998, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/13/world/nuclear-anxiety-indian-s-letter-to-clinton-on-the-nuclear-testing.html> (accessed March 7, 2014).

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of External Affairs, “Draft report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian nuclear doctrine,” New Delhi: Government of India, August 17, 1999, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18916/Draft+Report+of+National+Security+Advisory+Board+on+Indian+Nuclear+Doctrine> (accessed March 9, 2014).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

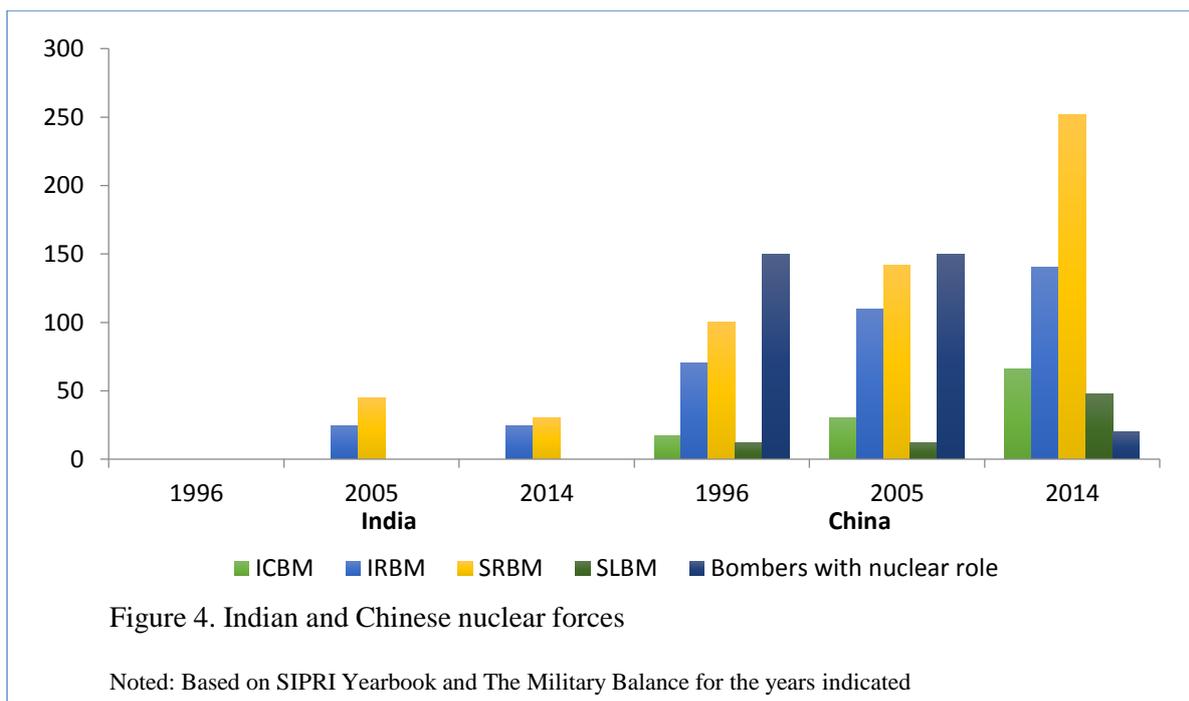
¹⁶⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, “Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India’s Nuclear Doctrine,” New Delhi: Government of India, January 4, 2003, available at <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreleng/1yr2003/rjan2003/04012003/r040120033.html> (accessed March 9, 2014).

¹⁶⁸ Barnad Karnad, interview by author, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, February 24, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Srikanth Kondapalli, interview by author, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, March 14, 2014.

India's quest for a nuclear weapon has been attributed to factors other than security concerns alone.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the official discourse repeatedly singled out India's security concerns and the fact that India needed a nuclear weapon in order to restore the regional military balance. The successful nuclear test clearly did not dampen India's nuclear apprehensions. China's nuclear proliferation remained a source of concern. The Annual Report of 1999 stated that "the presence of Chinese SSBNs in the Indian Ocean may soon be a reality."¹⁷¹ In the years following Pokhran-II, India still felt exposed to China's nuclear arsenal, in particular around the turn of the 21st century, when it still had little defense against potential nuclear attacks and little retaliation capabilities.¹⁷² The 2000 Annual Report stated the following:

Every major Indian city is within reach of Chinese missiles and it is reported that this capability is further augmented to include Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). The asymmetry in terms of nuclear forces is strongly in favor of China.¹⁷³



¹⁷⁰ See for instance George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, or Priyanjali Malik, *India's Nuclear Debate: Exceptionalism and the Bomb*, Routledge: New Delhi, 2010 for an analysis of international pressure on India; Karsten Frey, *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006 on status, prestige, and India's struggle for international recognition; or Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006 on state leaders' conceptions of national identity and their decision to pursue nuclear weapons.

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1998-1999*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1999, p. 5.

¹⁷² Bharat Karnad, interview by author, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, February 24, 2014.

¹⁷³ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2000-2001*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2001, p. 3.

The reality was that China's sole nuclear Xia class submarine at that time was hardly operational and had never left China's coastal waters. It seemed that anxieties over China's naval nuclear capabilities were exaggerated at best. Nonetheless, China's naval development (including its nuclear submarine component) was in full swing and added to a decades old Indian feeling of susceptibility to potential nuclear attacks and psychological pressure from a nuclear-capable China.

India's nuclear balancing act

The first Indian Maritime Doctrine of 2004 argued that strategic nuclear capabilities were vital in order for India to adopt a truly independent foreign policy. Compared to the other great powers, "India stands out alone as being devoid of a credible nuclear triad."¹⁷⁴ The doctrine called for a submarine-based nuclear deterrent to strengthen India's second strike capability. In 2009, India launched its first ballistic nuclear submarine, the INS Arihant, which can carry K-15 SLBMs with a range up to 750 kilometers or four K-4 SLBMs (under development) with a range of 3,500 kilometers. The Indian Navy expects the Arihant to enter service in 2016, with four more similar submarines planned to enter service before 2023, which would result in a capable sea-based nuclear deterrent. Given the past and current delays and setbacks, it is expected that such a capability is likely to be a matter of decades, instead of years.

India has also been developing and upgrading its missile delivery systems, with the Agni II IRBM becoming operational in 2001. A publication by the Press Information Bureau of the Indian government stated that the delivery of the Agni II "means that India can hold its head high without fear of being bullied in a hostile security environment." It goes on to say that the development of the missile was not Pakistan-centric but that new the Agni II was instead "at the heart of deterrence in the larger context of Sino-Indian equation."¹⁷⁵ Rajiv Nayan argued that the Agni missiles were from the start much needed to bolster India's deterrence vis-à-vis China, since both countries indirectly aim their nuclear weapons toward each other.¹⁷⁶ Development of delivery systems continued with the Agni III successfully being tested in 2007. With a range of 3,000 kilometers, India would finally be able to hit high-value targets deep in

¹⁷⁴ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, INBR 8. *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, New Delhi: Indian Navy, 2004.

¹⁷⁵ Information Bureau, *Testing Agni-II*, New Delhi: Government of India, April 23, 1999, available at <http://pib.nic.in/feature/fe0499/f2304991.html> (accessed March 21, 2014).

¹⁷⁶ Rajiv Nayan, "Agni III," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 489-492.

China's mainland, including Shanghai. Despite the successful tests, the Agni series suffered from setbacks and delays. The DRDO released press statements on successful tests, but the MOD has remained silent on which of these capabilities are actually operational. Estimates of India's capabilities vary, not only regarding India's missiles but also the nuclear role of some of its bombers.¹⁷⁷

Cohen and Dasgupta noted that strategists in India continuously stress the existing China–India nuclear asymmetry and the vulnerability of India's strategic assets.¹⁷⁸ The authors argued that India feels secure that its nuclear weapons pose a credible deterrent against Pakistan. In the case of China, however, Indian strategists are less certain about the credibility of their deterrence capabilities. They suggest that new missiles that could strike deep into China's mainland (such as the Agni V and Agni VI currently under development), a sea-borne nuclear capability (with long-range SLBMs), or the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons along the Himalayas, either in the Aksai Chin or the Ladakh area, could significantly enhance India's nuclear posture.¹⁷⁹ Despite the internal balancing efforts, India's nuclear capabilities and delivery systems still lag behind China's. Chinese missiles in the TAR, China's test firing of new arms (Dong Feng-31, Dong Feng-41), the possibilities of a Chinese nuclear-armed submarine in the Indian Ocean, and the 2007 anti-satellite test have made India aware time and again of its nuclear vulnerability vis-à-vis China. Despite all the new and planned capabilities, Indian strategists are still unsure whether (a) India's nuclear arsenal provides enough assurances for credible deterrence against China and (a) India has a second-strike capability in case of a Chinese attack on Indian nuclear installations.¹⁸⁰ It is unlikely that anxieties over the asymmetry in nuclear weapons will dissipate as long as India lacks a reliable second-strike capability that is able to hit high-value targets deep in China's mainland.

It is therefore not strange that Indian policymakers increasingly used external balancing to hedge against the rising Chinese threat. The prime example is the 2005 framework on civil nuclear cooperation between India and the United States. Critics, including the Chinese government, argued that the agreement was destabilizing to the non-proliferation regime, since India was not a signatory of the NPT. The nuclear agreement between India and the United States only deals with civilian nuclear cooperation. Nonetheless, Indian policymakers were in

¹⁷⁷ It is speculated that at least some of India's Air Force bombers have a (secondary) nuclear role, such as the Mirage 2000H, the Jaguar IS, and the Sukhoi-30MKI; see SIPRI Yearbook 2014, p. 324.

¹⁷⁸ Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2010.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Interview Bharat Karnad; see also Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 111.

a difficult position once again to show to the world its commitment to nuclear disarmament while at the same time vindicating its need for having nuclear weapons. In the discourse, arguments were skewed toward the security situation in India's direct neighborhood, and references to past aggression suffered by India were made to serve the purpose of explaining New Delhi's position. Against the backdrop of the India–U.S. nuclear agreement, Defense Minister Mukherjee and Prime Minister Singh invoked arguments similar to the ones uttered after India conducted its nuclear tests in 1998. The former said that “India is faced with an unfavorable nuclear and missile environment,” partly due to the “two declared weapon states with whom we have had a history of aggression and conflict.”¹⁸¹ Prime Minister Singh was more opaque in his statement, not making any specific references to China, but his message was quite clear: “We have, of course, security concerns, international security concerns. Nuclear proliferation in our neighborhood is something that worries us. . . . In this uncertain world, the unpredictable world that we live in, we have legitimate security concerns.”¹⁸² In short, the arguments were largely similar to the public statements that followed the Pokhran-II tests. From a strategic perspective, the move has been interpreted as an attempt from both sides to counter the growing influence of China.¹⁸³ The increased closeness between New Delhi and Washington has given India an extra balancing card that can be played against China. However, the relationship with the United States has remained fickle, and many Indian commentators question Washington's intentions and expectations from the deal. In short, increased U.S. closeness did not give Indian policymakers a realistic alternative to internal balancing.¹⁸⁴ Some commentators outright opposed the deal, saying it would have implications on the further development of India's strategic-weapon program.¹⁸⁵

The anti-satellite test

In the meantime, China conducted an anti-satellite test in 2007, making Indian policymakers and the defense establishment aware of its vulnerability in outer space. Prime

¹⁸¹ Pranab Mukherjee, “Address at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace”, *Strategic Digest*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2002, p. 858.

¹⁸² Manmohan Singh, “Statement of PM in Rajya Sabha on the India-US Nuclear Agreement,” New Delhi: Prime Minister of India, August 17, 2006, available at <http://pmindia.gov.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=355> (accessed March 12, 2014).

¹⁸³ T.V. Paul and Mahesh Shankar, “Why the US-India Nuclear Accord is a Good Deal,” *Survival*, Vol. 49, No.4, p. 111–122.

¹⁸⁴ See for instance, Hindustan Times, “A Creeping Alliance,” February 7, 2006. For an overview of the debate in India, see Vandana Bhatia, “The US-India Nuclear Agreement: Revisiting the Debate,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No.4, p. 612–623.

¹⁸⁵ Brahma Chellaney, “Deal harms Indian interests,” *The Japan Times*, January 5, 2006.

Minister Singh initially said that India's position "is not in favor of the weaponization of space."¹⁸⁶ India's Space Research Organization Chairman, Madhavar Nair, condemned China for testing such weapons against international conventions and stressed that India would not follow suit because of its principle to use space only for peaceful purposes.¹⁸⁷ On his part, Air Chief Marshal Shashi Tyagi argued that India *should* pursue its own aerospace command and invest in space warfare.¹⁸⁸ Whereas both of the former high-ranking officials might be advancing their own parochial interest, Foreign Minister Mukherjee took a more ambiguous approach and stated that, while still upholding India's principle on the peaceful use of outer space, "recent developments show that we are treading a thin line between current defense related uses of space and its actual weaponization."¹⁸⁹ The ASAT test was new evidence that China was becoming more confident with its increased power, or as Mukherjee said, more "assertive" in its foreign policy. According to him India's response should reflect this change in dealing with a "new China."¹⁹⁰

India's response to the ASAT was exemplary for how it tended to react to sudden perceived changes in the balance of power; its policy was reactionary and aimed at restoring the balance. Although there has not been a formal announcement from India to pursue its own ASAT capability, there have been ongoing developments in missile defense and delivery systems that are aimed at matching China's capabilities.¹⁹¹ The Agni V, successfully tested in 2012, has a range of over 5,000 km and will be able to strike many high-value targets deep in China. The missile is not yet ready for operational deployment. After the successful test of the Agni V, DRDO Chief Vijay Saraswat stated that "today we have developed all the building blocks for an anti-satellite (ASAT) capability."¹⁹² He continued that India is not planning on testing its ASAT capabilities in outer space but instead relying on simulations. India has also started to develop its own ballistic-missile defense system, initially as a response to Pakistan's threatening comments during the Kargil War, to serve as a defense against China's growing

¹⁸⁶ Manmohan Singh, as quoted in Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, Arvind K. John, A New Frontier: "Boosting India's Military Presence in Outer Space," *Observer Research Foundation Occasional Paper #50*: New Delhi, 2014, p. 15.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph E. Lin, "Regional reactions to ASAT Missile Test & China's Renewed Activities in the East China Sea," *China Brief*, Vol. 7, No. 3, (October 2007).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Pranab Mukherjee, "Aerospace Power in tomorrow's world," *India's Foreign Relations - 2007*, p. 156.

¹⁹⁰ Pranab Mukherjee, "India's Security Challenges and Foreign Policy Imperatives" *India's Foreign Relations - 2008*, edited by Avtar Singh Bhasin (New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2009) p. 244.

¹⁹¹ Interview Ajey Lele, March 18, 2014, New Delhi.

¹⁹² Vijay Saraswat, as quoted in Sandeep Unnithan, "India takes on China" *India Today*, April 28, 2012, available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/> (accessed March 20, 2014).

ICBM capabilities. However, the operational state of the ballistic-missile defense system remains unclear, with conflicting statements coming from the DRDO about the actual deployment of the system.

Although India maintains that it works toward a nuclear-free world, the concerns over the proliferation of nuclear weapons continue to be ubiquitous. Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai acknowledged India's historical struggle with nuclear proliferation: "We have for long recognized the challenge proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery poses for our national security and world order."¹⁹³ Again, as long as proliferation in its neighborhood continues and India lacks a credible and secure second-strike capability, such sentiments are not likely to dissipate.

China's all-weather partnership with Pakistan

China's nuclear proliferation is exacerbated because of China's nuclear cooperation with and weapons transfers to Pakistan. Beijing allied itself with Islamabad after the 1962 war with India in order to (a) contain India and (b) maintain its influence in the South Asian subcontinent. The paradox is that China–Pakistan military cooperation continued even while India and China were on a path of restoring their frayed relations. Subsequent reports and U.S. sanctions suggested that Beijing supplied components of nuclear-capable M11 missiles to Pakistan, even after it joined the NPT in 1992.¹⁹⁴ Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear program is an incessant source of concern and a rationale for India to continue its own indigenous nuclear program. Or, as the 1997 MOD Annual Report stated, "Indigenous development of missile capability by India is in response to the evolving security environment in its region."¹⁹⁵ When Pakistan tested the Ghauri missile in 1998, Defense Minister Fernandes declared that "China is the mother of this missile."¹⁹⁶

China's continued assistance to Pakistan in missile and nuclear technology not only impinges directly on the national security of India but also raises questions of what China's strategic intentions in the region truly are. In discussing whether China would be a factor for stability in Asia, NSA Bharesj Mishra stated that "[China's] profile in military alliances and its

¹⁹³ Ranjan Mathai "Keynote Address by Foreign Secretary Shri Ranjan Mathai at the Ministry of External Affairs – Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) National Export Control Seminar" April 12, 2012, available at <http://idsa.in/keyspeeches/AddressbyForeignSecretaryShriRanjanMathai> (accessed April 11, 2014).

¹⁹⁴ Jim Mann, "China Said to Sell Pakistan Dangerous New Missiles, *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1992.

¹⁹⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1997, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ As quoted in Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001, p. 49.

commitment to existing nuclear and missile technology transfer regimes would be important indicators of the direction that its role would take in this venture.”¹⁹⁷ On many occasions, Indian policymakers asked China to show greater sensitivity to India’s concerns and reconsider its military support to Pakistan.¹⁹⁸ The Chinese reaction to such requests was that China–Pakistan cooperation was well within international norms and rules and that their cooperation was not aimed at a third country. On the other hand, China has shown to become more cautious in its approach to Pakistan. Beijing does not want its relations with Islamabad to upset the process of normalization between India and China. Beijing remained neutral in the 1999 Kargil conflict and stressed that the problem should be resolved bilaterally in accordance with the Simla Agreement of 1972, a stance similar to India’s position. Even so, China’s “all-weather” friendship with Pakistan and its military technology transfers has been seen by Indian experts as a strategic calculus by China to keep India bogged down in South Asia.¹⁹⁹

(ii) Infrastructure projects and Chinese power projection close to the border

A more recent security concern is China’s infrastructure development and military deployments on its side of the contested border.²⁰⁰ Indian concerns on this were clearly articulated for the first time in the Annual Report of 2008 in which in a separate chapter on the LAC, it stated that the Indian army would “continue to realistically analyze the growing economic and military capacities of China and the infrastructural developments in the TAR. Accordingly, we are constantly reviewing and upgrading our strategic and conventional postures, so that our national security is not compromised.”²⁰¹ The 2010 Annual Report added that China’s military modernization and its infrastructure development in the TAR and Xinjiang province “considerably upgraded China’s military force projection capability and strategic operational flexibility.”²⁰²

The main Indian concern is that the roads, airports, and rail lines could serve a dual-use purpose, not only for economic development but also potentially for the quick deployment of troops in the disputed area. The Chinese rail lines and road networks are reported to reach the

¹⁹⁷ “Presentation by Mr. Baresj Mishra, National Security Adviser, Government of India on India and the Stability of the Asian Continent at Institute Françise des Relations Internationale, Paris” in Mahendra Gaur(Ed.), *Foreign Policy Annual 2002*, New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2002, p. 39.

¹⁹⁸ Tien-sze Fang, *Asymmetrical threat perceptions in India-China relations*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.

¹⁹⁹ Singh Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India, Cooperation or Conflict?*, p. 45–79.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Prashant Kumar Singh, Associate Fellow at IDSA, March 25, 2014, New Delhi.

²⁰¹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2007-2008*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2008, p.23.

²⁰² Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2009-2010*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2010, p.26.

LAC, whereas India’s roads stop 60 to 80 kilometers short of the disputed border. Furthermore, China is allegedly constructing hyperbaric chambers and oxygen-enriched troop barracks to facilitate the acclimatization of troops coming from the lower regions.²⁰³ These developments would enable China to deploy and sustain 30 to 32 divisions along the border, all year round, within a period of six weeks.²⁰⁴ Since 2007, China has also been flexing its muscle in the TAR by holding war games, troop transports, live-fire exercises, and air sorties.²⁰⁵ This operational flexibility and increased capabilities—including deployment of DF-21s in Delingha and main battle tanks, the Construction Corpse Workforce, and Rapid Reaction Forces in Tibet—all shift the balance in the case of a contingency situation on the LAC strongly in favor of the PLA.

Map 1. Infrastructure projects close to the China-India border



Note: Based on Federation of Non-Violent Alternatives

²⁰³ Arun Saghal, “China’s Military Modernization: Responses From India,” Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2012-13: China’s Military Challenge*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013.

²⁰⁴ Such estimates vary. The China study group set up by the Indian government, for instance, anticipates that China can move over 10,000 troops into disputed territory within the time span of 20 to 25 days; see Harsh Pant, “India comes to terms with a rising China,” in Ashley Tellis and Taylor Fravel (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2011-2012: Asia responds to its rising powers: China and India*, Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, p. 117.

²⁰⁵ Namrata Goswami, “Chinese Intrusions Across the LAC,” *IDSIA Issue Brief*, December 17, 2013, p. 5.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the LAC, India's own roads are in a "dismal state," as noted by the SCD.²⁰⁶ In 2006, the decision was made to invest in infrastructure on its own side of the border area and to increase the conventional standing force with two extra divisions, which were finally approved by the CCS in 2008. Work, however, has been delayed, and out of the 73 planned roads, only 19 had been completed by 2014.²⁰⁷ The proposed 14 strategic railways did not materialize either. The BRO responsible for the new infrastructure development plans suffered from red tape and lacks of funding and expertise to deal with the terrain.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the deployment of a 90,000-troop mountainous strike corps was scaled down as the result of budget cuts.

China has also stepped up its presence on India's western border, in Aksai Chin, and in POK, where after the earthquake of 2005 Chinese construction and telecommunication companies were involved in restoration and rehabilitation efforts. The Chinese presence was speculated not only to help Pakistan in the recovery of the earthquake but also to create a "strategic corridor" by laying rails, roads, and oil pipes and linking the Xinjiang province with the Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea. It was reported that in order to support the reconstruction efforts and secure the safe delivery of oil, Beijing was planning to open military bases and airports in Gilgit-Baltistan, a region under dispute and considered by the Indians to be part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁰⁹ Although such media reports turned out to be inaccurate, China's increased presence in the disputed area ramped up trepidations in New Delhi, in particular because the engineer troops were, according to Army Chief Singh, "part of the PLA."²¹⁰

The Chinese presence in the area further complicated the Kashmir dispute. It is believed that there is an understanding between Pakistan and China that each one recognizes each other's claims at the expense of India.²¹¹ China's military presence also raised the question of

²⁰⁶ *The Times of India*, "House panel rings alarm bells over border readiness against China, Pak," February 20, 2014.

²⁰⁷ DNA India, "Improvement on the border is non-negotiable," May 2, 2015.

²⁰⁸ Mail Online India, "Army's border roads in trouble: The planned road network along the border with China is stuck in red tape and impeded by terrain," August 27, 2013.

²⁰⁹ Bidanda Chengappa, "Why China is setting up military bases in PoK," *DNA India*, November 15, 2011, available at <http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/comment-why-china-is-setting-up-military-bases-in-pok-1612612> (accessed March 22, 2014).

²¹⁰ "Chinese troops in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir: Gen VK Singh" *The Economic Times*, October 6, 2011, available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-10-06/news/30250574_1_chinese-presence-chinese-troops-pok (accessed March 15, 2014).

²¹¹ Senge Sering, "Expansion of the Karakoram Corridor: Implications and Prospects," *IDSAs Occasional Paper*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2012, available at www.idsa.in/system/files/OP_Karakoramcorridor.pdf (accessed March 22, 2014).

how China would react in the hypothetical case of hostilities between Pakistan and India in POK. When asked about the presence of Chinese troops in POK, External Affairs Minister Krishna replied that the government “closely and regularly monitors all developments along our borders, which can have a bearing on our security.”²¹² Defense Minister Antony went a step further, saying the Chinese presence is a concern and asked Beijing to cease its activities in POK.²¹³ Such arguments fell on deaf ears in Beijing. Instead, China argued that the development of the economic corridor from Gwadar to Xinjiang Province and through POK (the Karakoram Highway) would bring stability and economic development to the region. Indians were not convinced. At an address at the ORF, Foreign Secretary Rao summed up the sensitive features of the China–Pakistan relationship: (a) China’s role in POK, (b) China’s Jammu and Kashmir policy, and (c) the China–Pakistan security and nuclear relationship.²¹⁴ Infrastructure projects close to India’s contested borders added to the fear of an increasingly powerful China aiming to draw South Asia into its economic and strategic orbit and to encircle India and prevent or forestall its rise.²¹⁵ Sinologist John Garver, acknowledging the importance of China’s western development for its successful economic rise in the 21st century, observed that “greater Chinese presence will create Chinese interests that will require protection.”²¹⁶ In short, the asymmetric nature of the Chinese–Indian relationship is increasingly felt along the disputed border, which has resulted in increased anxieties over this bone of contention.

Besides the problem of military-power projection, the economic growth on the Chinese side of the border, which resulted from increased connectivity, poses additional problems for the Indian government.²¹⁷ Traditionally, the central government has weak jurisdiction and legitimacy over the tribal communities in northeast India. The eight northeastern states also suffer from insurgencies, inter-state strife, and ethnic conflict. The lack of any successful industrialization or agricultural development has resulted in a growing economic gap between the mainland and the northeast. As a result, New Delhi is blamed for being insensitive toward

²¹² “Response of External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna to questions on reports of presence of foreign troops in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir” in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.), *India’s Foreign Relations - 2011*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2011, p. 846.

²¹³ “India asks China to cease activities in Pakistan occupied Kashmir” *The Indian Express*, September 3, 2012, available at <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/india-asks-china-to-cease-activities-in-pakistan-occupied-kashmir/997108/> (accessed March 15, 2014).

²¹⁴ Nirupama Rao “India-China relations” in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.) *India’s Foreign Relations - 2010*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2011, p. 1065.

²¹⁵ This is even mentioned in the Indian Army doctrine, 2004.

²¹⁶ John Garver, “Development of China’s overland transportation links with Central, South-west and South Asia,” *China Quarterly*, No. 185, 18–19.

²¹⁷ The economic growth on the Chinese side of the border has been over 12% annually for the period 2007–2014.

the region. The central government has proposed ad-hoc investment and infrastructure promises, but such planning efforts lack a framework for dynamic economic growth.²¹⁸ The absence of economic progress on the Indian side in particular, compared to visible signs of development on the Chinese side of the border, has exacerbated fears of losing the little legitimacy the central government has in the unstable northeastern area.

New threats: (a) China's blue-water navy in the Indian Ocean

Given its sheer size, economy, population, history, and geography, India has always been a natural leader in South Asia. This is a mainstream, but often buttressed, perception held by policymakers, strategists, and the general public.²¹⁹ It is also true for India's place in the Indian Ocean; after all, it is the only ocean that is named after a country. However, for a long time, India's security outlook was inward looking, continental, and hardly went beyond its immediate neighborhood. As a result of this, India's navy in the mid-1990s was still in a "deplorable state of affairs" according to Jaswant Singh, who would become External Affairs Minister in the BJP-led government. As evidence for this, he mentioned the "rapidly declining force levels, lack of sufficient funding, and limited warship construction programs."²²⁰ In 1992, India officially initiated its Look East policy: a deliberate attempt to bring India closer to economically dynamic Southeast Asia. Four years later, India became a full dialogue member of ASEAN and a member in the ARF.

These developments formalized and institutionalized India's Look East policy, and matured its engagement with Southeast Asia to go beyond economics and into the political realm. The Annual Report of 1997/1998 stated that—when it came to India's security interests beyond the IOR—India's new broader security horizon included "countries of ASEAN, Central Asia, and Gulf regions and the Indian Ocean community."²²¹ For India, it meant a "redefinition of our neighborhood as we draw closer to our dynamic South East Asian neighbors."²²² At the same time, China had been extending its strategic maritime horizons, looking beyond the first and second island chain, to Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean. As both rising powers expanded their maritime boundary lines, it was only a matter of time for India and China to encounter each other at sea.

²¹⁸ H. Shivanandra, "Economic Potential of Northeast India: An Asset or Threat," *IDSA Comment*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2011.

²¹⁹ Interviews with several people within New Delhi's strategic community.

²²⁰ Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, New Delhi: Macmillan India, 1999.

²²¹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1997-1998*, p. 2.

²²² "Statement by Shri Pranab Mukhertjee, Minister for External Affairs on the Implications of India becoming a full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN," in *Foreign Affairs Record 1996*, New Delhi: MEA, February 1, 1996, p. 29.

India's Look East policy and its rapprochement with Southeast Asia brought it closer to witness firsthand the effects of China's growing naval prowess. Under the BJP-led government, India expanded its strategic horizons further. The "extended neighborhood" concept was meant to look beyond South Asia toward the east, west, and south of its immediate neighborhood. Then, in 2004, Prime Minister Singh mentioned how India's

strategic footprint covers the region bounded by the Horn of Africa, West Asia, Central Asia, South-East Asia and beyond, to the far reaches of the Indian Ocean. Awareness of this reality should inform and animate our strategic thinking and defense planning.²²³

The Indian Navy presented its own perspective on what India's maritime reach was in the Maritime Doctrine of 2004. The document spoke of "the shift in global maritime focus from the Atlantic-Pacific combine to the Pacific-Indian Ocean Region."²²⁴ India's strategic footprint and its national interests thus went beyond the Indian Ocean horizon, even before Prime Minister Abe's speech in the Indian Parliament, in which he spoke on the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, anticipating the idea of the "Indo-Pacific." It is no coincidence that his message resonated so well with the Indian audience.

Nonetheless, such concerns have not often been articulated as a source of concern in the Indian official discourse. For a long time, India was hardly affected by China's naval modernization, as it was all happening in a distant theatre, far away from the Indian Ocean. China's naval modernization's primary goals and ambitions had been contained within the geographical scope of Southeast and East Asia. The 1996/97 Annual Report stated for the first time

The Asia-Pacific is beset with territorial and maritime disputes, such as the South China Sea dispute, the Korean peninsula problem and the Kuriles Island dispute. . . . may well serve as potential flashpoints and can have a de-stabilizing effect on the economic growth and security of the entire region.²²⁵

²²³ Press Information Bureau, "Combined Commander's Conference, Extracts from Prime Minister's Address," New Delhi: Government of India, October 26, 2004, available at <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=4535> (accessed March 1, 2014).

²²⁴ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defense, *Maritime Doctrine 2004*, p. 34.

²²⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, p. 3.

The report did not mention the Senkaku dispute, despite the growing Japanese–Chinese tensions in this particular year, nor did it make any reference to the Taiwan Straits Crisis. The main reasons for this were the positive developments in China–India relations during that time and the “One China” policy India adhered to.²²⁶ It was Defense Minister Fernandes who first publicly voiced concerns about China coming into the Indian Ocean. Commenting on the possible inroads of the Chinese Navy into the Indian Ocean, Fernandes went on, stating:

[China’s] senior officials have said that the Indian Ocean is not India’s ocean. There is no doubt in my mind that China’s fast expanding navy, which will be the biggest navy in this part of the world, will be getting into the Indian Ocean fairly soon.²²⁷

One reason for this observation was China’s close relationship with the military junta in Myanmar. Myanmar is important for India for several reasons: (a) It borders India’s northeast states and in that way plays an essential part in India’s Look East policy, (b) Myanmar has traditionally strong ties with China, and (c) Myanmar is a hub for energy routes. The Annual Report of 1997 stated that “China’s strengthening defense relations with Myanmar need to be carefully watched, in view of the geo-strategic location of Myanmar.”²²⁸ The report did not give further details on the specifics of this growing sense of concern from the Indian side, other than that India’s security concerns in the subcontinent were “intimately linked to peace, progress, stability and security of Afghanistan, Myanmar and other neighboring countries.”²²⁹ A clear indication for an increased Chinese presence in Myanmar came in 1994, when the Indian Coast Guard intercepted and detained three trawlers, apparently fishing close to the Indian naval base in the Andaman Islands while flying Myanmar flags. It appeared the crew was all Chinese, and no fishing gear was found on board the ship.²³⁰ It caused Defense Minister Fernandes to later accuse China of helping Myanmar install surveillance and communications equipment on some of the islands in the Bay of Bengal, including the Coco Islands, with the purpose of monitoring the EEZ, as well as activities along India’s east coast. Responding to these developments, Fernandes stated that “there is massive electronic surveillance establishment which the Chinese have installed and which is monitoring

²²⁶ Interview by author with senior MEA government official.

²²⁷ “China is threat No.1, says Fernandes,” *Hindustan Times*, May 3, 1998, available at <http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199805/msg00059.html> (accessed February 16, 2014).

²²⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, p. 6.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East*, New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012.

everything in India. And there are moves to convert that into a major naval base which would be a direct threat to us.”²³¹ These allegations later turned out to be inaccurate. Nonetheless, the statement was exemplary of the existing apprehension in New Delhi of Chinese investments and military cooperation with the military junta in Myanmar and sensitivities over China’s possible inroads into the Indian Ocean.

Raising the stakes in the Indian Ocean

In 2001, the Indian government announced the following: “The growing strength of China and uncertainty over the future role of the US in South East Asia had resulted in a regional arms race. . . .Worsening of the security environment in South East Asia could affect regional stability, and will directly impinge on our interests”.²³² In the same year, the Andaman and Nicobar Command was established, involving all three services of the Indian Armed Forces and aimed at securing India’s strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca. India’s desire for a greater maritime footprint also manifested itself in its outspoken desire for a blue-water naval capability first mentioned in the Annual Report of 2002. In 2004, the Indian Navy published a maritime doctrine, which stated that China’s modernization programs, including the construction of an aircraft carrier, SSBNs, Type 093 attack submarines, conventional submarines, amphibious ships, and logistics ships “would make the PLA Navy capable of projecting power well beyond China’s shores.”²³³ The doctrine also viewed “the security environment in the neighborhood surrounding the IOR far from satisfactory.”²³⁴ The increase of extra-regional powers into the Indian Ocean and the growing influence of China have “the potential of upsetting the strategic balance and adversely affecting the security of India.”²³⁵ One of the navy’s missions, therefore, was “raising the cost of intervention by extra regional powers, and [detering] them from acting against our security interests.”²³⁶ The doctrine boldly stated that “control of the choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game, where the currency of military power remains a stark reality.”²³⁷ By 2005, Admiral Arun Prakash was raising the issue of China’s

²³¹ “India says China installing equipment in Myanmar,” *Reuters*, June 4, 1998, available at http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg_burma/archives/199806/msg00071.html (accessed March 11, 2014).

²³² Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2000-2001*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2001, p. 13.

²³³ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, *Maritime Doctrine 2004*, p. 70.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²³⁶ As quoted in James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner, and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*, Abingdon: Routledge 2009, p. 64.

²³⁷ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2004

“determined drive to build a powerful blue water maritime force” and reiterated the “imperative for India, therefore, to retain a strong maritime capability in order to maintain a balance of maritime power in the Indian Ocean, as well as the larger Asia-Pacific region.”²³⁸ Similar words were expressed in India’s Maritime Military Strategy of 2007. In the document, the Chinese Navy was singled out as an extra-regional navy set on a path to become a blue-water force. Concerns over the development of China’s Navy were more frequently voiced by individual officers, in particular after the “chain of pearls” concept gained traction in the security discourse.

The MOD and the armed services remained silent on the issue for a longer time. Strong statements on China by the Indian Navy were not in line with the discourse coming from South Block on how to deal with a growing China. The issue of Chinese–Indian rivalry in the IOR did not fit nicely into the wider official discourse that still emphasized cooperation, coordination, and engagement. Nonetheless, articles by retired officers in strategic journals hinted that there was a growing nervousness over China’s maritime power-projection capabilities.²³⁹ It was the 2009 Annual Report that explicitly stated for the first time that China is “rapidly enhancing its blue-water navy to conduct operations in distant waters . . . [which] will have an effect on the overall military environment in the neighborhood of India.”²⁴⁰ This statement must be seen against the background of the PLAN’s first expeditionary deployment in the Gulf of Aden and China’s assertive behavior in the South China Sea. Keeping the sea lanes of commerce open, securing its maritime interests in the region, and having the ability to project power in what India perceived to be its strategic footprint dictated that India should possess a strong blue-water navy. The 2009 Annual Report acknowledged that “the sea is increasingly becoming relevant in the context of India’s security interests and we must re-adjust our military preparedness to this changing environment. We have in place an ambitious plan for force modernization of the Navy.”²⁴¹ Admiral Sureesh Mehta added that once China consolidates its comprehensive national power and has the military capabilities, it “is likely to be more assertive on its claims, especially in its immediate neighborhood.”²⁴² When it came to

²³⁸ As quoted in David Scott “India’s Drive for a Blue Water Navy” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter 2007-08,) p. 9.

²³⁹ Retired officials tend to be more hawkish regarding China; it gives a peak into “China threat” arguments that are prevalent in the ranks of the armed services that do not appear in official documents.

²⁴⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2009-2010*, p. 6.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Sureesh Mehta “India’s National Security Challenges – An Armed Forces Overview” in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.), *India’s Foreign Relations - 2012*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2013, p. 219.

the Indian response, he continued, saying, “Our strategy to deal with China must include reducing the military gap and countering the Chinese footprint in the Indian Ocean Region.”²⁴³ The frank argument of Admiral Mehta must be seen against the backdrop of an overall hardened official Indian stance on China from 2008 onward.

Before 2008, India’s official discourse had been relatively silent on China’s naval modernization. After 2008, the strategic importance of the Indian Navy to secure India’s economic development and political influence in the region has become an increasingly important theme. The U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts energy demands in India and China to account for 34% of the world’s energy consumption by 2040. The sea lanes of communication from the Middle East to ports in India and China are vital lifelines that have to be secured in order to provide for the growing energy appetite of the economic giants and sustain economic growth. The Annual Report of 2009 stated that India “is crucially dependent on the sea because of the criticality of sea borne trade in an increasingly inter-linked world, as well as because of the potential of vast economic resources from the oceans.”²⁴⁴ Thus, both India and China crucially link their economic development to maintaining a secure supply of resources through the Indian Ocean. It is therefore no surprise that Chinese investments in maritime power-projection capabilities have become a matter not only for Indian defense planners but also has become widely shared in India’s policy circles. In the words of Prime Minister Singh:

We should also recognize that there will be other competing interests whose maritime presence in the sphere of our interest and our influence will have to be carefully monitored. The importance of the Indian Navy in safeguarding our vital security interests has thus become paramount. There can thus be no doubt that the Indian Navy must be the most important maritime power in this region.²⁴⁵

The increasing volume of Chinese trade and energy resources that travel through the Indian Ocean combined with India’s desire to continue to be the strongest maritime power in the region could result in a security dilemma in which both states would want to defend what might be perceived as conflicting national interests. The strategic importance and potentials for

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2008-2009*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2009, p. 8.

²⁴⁵ Manmohan Singh, “Inaugural Address at the Naval Academy” in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.), *India’s Foreign Relations – 2009*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2010, p. 3.

rivalry are also acknowledged in the Indian press, which is increasingly paying attention to the developments in India’s maritime backyard.²⁴⁶

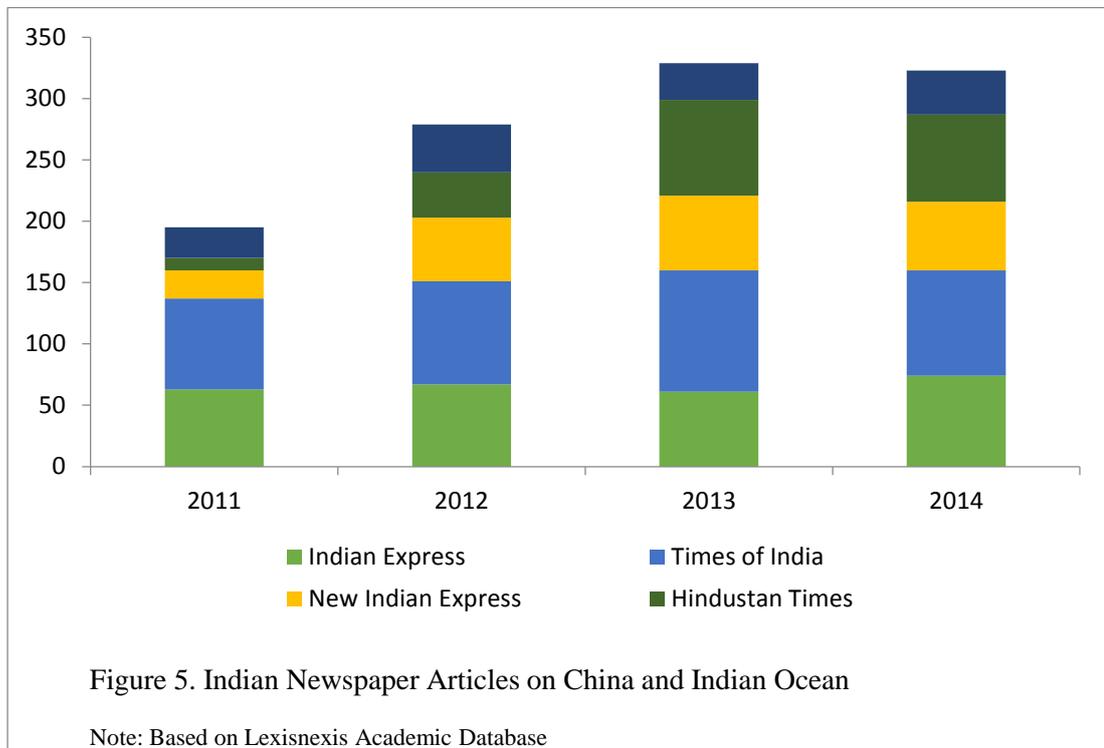


Figure 5. Indian Newspaper Articles on China and Indian Ocean

Note: Based on Lexisnexis Academic Database

These articles take note of the increased competition for resources, influence, and potential security dilemmas as China steps up its maritime presence to secure its SLOCs.²⁴⁷ The newspapers have pushed for a more comprehensive IOR strategy instead of threatening regional countries not to invite Chinese warships and protesting at the side of the Chinese if such things do occur.²⁴⁸ Indian security experts blame the government for its passive and reactive posture in the IOR. It is perceived that newly elected Prime Minister Modi has put renewed emphasis on “neighborhood diplomacy,” visiting the Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius and signing agreements on defense cooperation, infrastructure development, and capacity building. Modi’s implicit message to these countries was that India was willing to step up its engagement in the IOR in a more proactive manner.

²⁴⁶ In recent years, Chinese publications have started to express their reservations about the Indian perception that the IOR is India’s maritime “backyard.” They have emphasized that the Indian Ocean does not belong to any state and that a Chinese presence there is justified given its significant economic and strategic interests.

²⁴⁷ These were used in a LexisNexis Academic Database using the keywords “China” and “Indian Ocean.” Available articles do not go back to years before 2011.

²⁴⁸ There is a host of articles that is critical of the government’s weak-kneed response and its inability to come up with a strategic response; see for instance *Indian Express*, “Quest for Influence,” September 18, “Lanka pit-stop,” *Indian Express*, November 5, 2014, *Hindustan Times*, “Pursue the Kautilya Line,” June 20, 2014, Rajar Pandit, “Two-front war remote, but threat from China real,” *The Times of India*, October 12, 2012.

As noted above, the Indian official discourse has shifted as well, and elements of competition are mentioned in particular when it comes to China–India interaction in the IOR:

We will have to accept the new reality of China’s presence in many areas that we consider an exclusive playground for India and its friends. The games, the rules of the games will change. China will come in and add to the richness of the participation, but will also then provide greater competition.²⁴⁹

Even without the establishment of military bases in the region, the combination of a rapidly expanding and modernizing PLAN, the physical presence of Chinese warships in the IOR as part of the anti-piracy operations, the port calls of Chinese nuclear attack submarines in Sri Lanka, the establishments of ports and infrastructure in China-friendly countries, and China’s expanding diplomatic influence in the IOR have spurred anxieties in New Delhi, although such concerns are mostly muted in the halls of government.²⁵⁰

China-India interaction in the sea and on land; miles apart

Sino–Indian interaction in the Indian Ocean is very different from the regularized, routine-based, action–reaction dynamics on the land border. First, there are issues of significant strategic interests at stake (access to oil, trade, and connections with the Middle East and Africa). Second, India and China have no history of maritime cooperation. There has been very little interaction between the Chinese and Indian Navies, in stark contrast with their army counterparts. Third, both for India and China, the navies are increasingly seen as protectors of national interests in more distant areas. This is of strategic significance because it is likely that interactions between the two navies will only increase in the future. Movements of the PLAN in the Indian Ocean are carefully followed. Fourth, unlike on the land border, there are few institutions and confidence-building measures in the Indian Ocean that can regulate behavior. So far, New Delhi has been reluctant to give China full membership in institutions such as the IORA. Instead, India has tried to promote the Indian Ocean as an area of inclusiveness, cooperation, and development. Indian policymakers have shunned away from discussing hard

²⁴⁹ Salman Kurshid “The Dawning of the Asian Century: Emerging Challenges before Theory and Practices of International Relations in India” *India’s Foreign Relations - 2012*, p. 219.

²⁵⁰ See for instance the influential former Indian Navy Chief Arun Prakash, “PLA(N) Submarines in the Indian Ocean: Cat Among the Pigeon?,” *SP’s Mai*, available at <http://www.spsmai.com/experts-speak/?id=64&q=PLA-N-Submarines-in-the-Indian-Ocean-Cat-Among-the-Pigeons?> (accessed March 22, 2015).

security matters in such bodies; however, as Jagannath Panda argued, Indian policymakers need to strategically approach the Indian Ocean as a sea for open regionalism, trade, and economic cooperation on the one hand and security on the other. An Indian strategy on the Indian Ocean should then focus on “trade security” in order to combine economic and security interests.²⁵¹

For many of India’s strategic thinkers, the Indian Ocean presents an opportunity for India to pursue its “strategic autonomy” to the fullest by not aligning itself too much to either the United States and Japan on the one hand or China on the other. That way, India can get the maximum options in its relations with the outside world, contributing to the development of India’s own comprehensive national power.²⁵² In any case, Sino–Indian interaction in the Indian Ocean has the potential to add new complexities to the bilateral relationship. There is some sense of confidence in India’s ability to counter China’s rise in the future, despite the current gap in capabilities. China’s long sea lanes of communication make it vulnerable to interception and blockades.²⁵³ China has no military bases overseas, and its naval assets are for now mostly contained within the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ESC). This allows India to build up its balancing options through the increased allocation of funds for naval modernization and increase cooperation with regional countries as well as the United States, Japan, and Australia.

3.4. Hypothesis Testing

In Chapter 1, I hypothesized that growing military capabilities automatically increase a level of threat. To a certain extent, the findings above support this. China’s increased power-projection capabilities and the increased gap in military capabilities is something those in the defense and security communities think are of growing concern and should be addressed, mostly by India beefing up its own capabilities. However, such medium- or high-level “China threat” arguments were mostly muted in the official and mainstream discourse. It was only from the late 2000s on that China’s investments in military hardware became to be seen as an enabling factor for it to take a more assertive stance on issues that it considers to be of “core national interest.” After 2008, China’s capabilities on the border and in the Indian Ocean

²⁵¹ Jagannath Panda, “China’s Tryst with the IORA: Factoring India and the Indian Ocean,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 38, No.5, p. 680.

²⁵² Center for Policy Research, *Non-Alignment 2.0.*, available at <http://www.cprindia.org/research/reports/> (accessed November 11, 2012).

²⁵³ This point was explicitly made by Bharad Karnad, who mentioned that China’s vulnerability in the IOR should be used as a bargaining chip to get concessions on the border issue; interview with Bharad Karnad, Centre for Policy Research.

became increasingly scrutinized. In a discursive turn, the official discourse on “China threat” arguments went from a low level to a medium level. There was a growing acknowledgement in India’s officialdom that China–India relations would have elements of rivalry and competition.

The observation above suggests that “China threat” perceptions are not triggered by a gradual increase in Chinese military power. If that were the case, then “China threat” arguments would have been made before that in increasingly alarming terms. After all, Chinese military spending did not suddenly peak in the late 2000s but rather has been growing consistently at an average rate of 10% annually since the early 1990s. Instead, China’s perceived policy change in 2008 is explained and rationalized, retrospectively, by its newly gained power.²⁵⁴ In that sense, material capabilities by themselves cannot explain significant changes in “China threat” arguments in India.

Moreover, the Indian discourse shows constraints in securitizing China’s military power. First, officials and politicians in power are still reluctant to openly talk about it, despite pressure from domestic actors (the media, the security communities, retired servicemen, and opposition parties) to do so. Openly talking about such issues runs the risk of antagonizing Beijing unnecessarily. Second, China’s military modernization drive per se is not questioned. When first addressed in an official document, it was noted that this development caused “awe and attention.”²⁵⁵ Indians have shown little inclination to scrutinize China’s defense expenditure as it is. As a matter of fact, India spends a larger amount of its GDP on defense, and some have argued that if its economic growth allowed it, India would modernize its armed forces in a similar fashion.²⁵⁶ Third, there are no Indian calls on China to make its military spending more transparent. Such arguments could, similarly, be considered hypocritical, since India’s own military spending is rather opaque. Finally, India believes it has demographic and political advantages over China that eventually will allow India to catch up with China’s rise.²⁵⁷ These apparent advantages suggest that India can cope with a “China threat” in the long term through external and internal balancing, which creates some level of confidence. Such

²⁵⁴ Hawkish views on China that already perceive it has malicious intentions are less affected by such behavioral changes. The mainstream, pragmatic view, however, still holds that China’s behavior toward India is open ended and not necessarily hostile.

²⁵⁵ Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2004/2005*, New Delhi: Government of India, p. 6.

²⁵⁶ Several interviews with armed-forces personnel and strategic thinkers confirmed this.

²⁵⁷ See for instance Indian MP Shashti Tharoor, “We Are Growing Younger, China, Others Are Aging. Advantage India,” *NDTV*, September 24, 2014. When it comes to political advantages, it is believed that India’s democratic nature will make it more sustainable to internal and external developments. Also, India is mostly perceived by other countries as a benevolent power, whereas many countries in the region are wary of China.

confidence results in some strategic thinkers arguing that it is now India's turn to make best use of Deng's maxim of biding time and hiding capabilities until the time that India can pursue its own favorable terms on outstanding issues like the disputed border and the Indian Ocean.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Arvind Gupta, Director-General IDSA, interview by author, April 23, 2014, New Delhi.

Chapter 4: India and China's Escalatory Actions

Main findings

- The official Indian position on China shows a great deal of continuity; it stresses the importance of mutual engagement, improving ties, and solving differences through dialogue. So far, Chinese and Indians have shown a willingness to regulate their behavior on the border and de-escalate crisis situations. This has caused for some level of reassurance and predictability.
- Nonetheless, in recent years, the official position has started to acknowledge competitive, confrontational elements within the China–India relationship.
- In the wider strategic discourse, there are three ideal types of perceptual positions on China: “the appeasing” position, the “pragmatic” position, and the “hyperrealist” position.
- Increased economic interdependence, exchanges, and connectivity form the crux of the appeasing perceptual position. Central to this argument is the proof that CBMs have brought “peace and tranquility” at the border.
- The pragmatists see a change in China’s behavior from the mid-2000s. Evidence for China’s new “confidence” came from its hardline rhetoric on the border issue, its dealing with the Tibetan unrest and the situation in the South China Sea, the inroads into the IOR, and the issue over the stapled visas from Arunachal Pradesh.
- Hyperrealists interpret China’s behavior as a deliberate, systematic attempt to bog down India in South Asia and prevent its rise as a (regional) great power.
- Because of the increased number of incursions and the ongoing reporting on this in the Indian media, perceptual positions on China have hardened.

4.1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union not only resulted in U.S. unipolarity but also affected strategic alignments of countries that were not directly involved in the conflict. In the case of China–India relations, it opened the way for rapprochement. New Delhi’s close relationship with Moscow made it difficult for Indian policymakers to build close ties with

China at the height of the Cold War.²⁵⁹ In the latter years of the Cold War, ideological foreign policy made way for a more practical and economic-oriented foreign policy in both China and India. This has resulted in the warming of bilateral ties. India's default policy toward China became one of engagement, although China's behavior toward India was sometimes put into question, in particular on the contested border, China's diplomatic relations with and military aid to other countries in the region, and its maritime ambitions in the Indian Ocean. Policymakers in New Delhi have slowly started to articulate their concerns about China's behavior from the late 2000s. These arguments mostly fit within the wider "China is assertive" narrative, although (a) some elements are unique to the China–India bilateral relationship and (b) "China threat" arguments are still mostly subdued in the official discourse. The reason why New Delhi refrains from making overt "China threat" arguments is because it believes China cannot be contained, and it is in India's best interest to not openly antagonize China too much. Nonetheless, we can discern new realities in India's China debate, as the realization hits home that both countries are rising within the same geopolitical space and that this shapes a more competitive China–India relation. Within the strategic and academic communities, there is an extensive debate over how China should be engaged and/or balanced. There are many works on China, but roughly, the debate can be divided into three ideal types, whose views are summarized in table 3 on the next page.

²⁵⁹ Li Li, *Security Perception and China-India Relations*, New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2009, p. 33–68.

Table 3. Perceptual Positions²⁶⁰

	<i>Appeasers</i>	<i>Pragmatists</i>	<i>Hyperrealists</i>
Dominant interpretation	Mirror imaging of China; both are developing, non-Western countries with similar goals and challenges. China is not hostile toward India.	China is a potential, long-term military threat/challenge and competitor for regional space. Although they have similar worldviews (multipolarization), Chinese strategic intentions remain unclear.	China is an immediate threat to India's territorial integrity as well as its economic development. China aims for regional hegemony and keeping India bogged down in South Asia.
Principles	Idealist, Nehruvian oriented	Balanced, diplomacy oriented	Realist, power oriented
Proponents	Sinologists, Marxists/Maoists (losing influence)	Mainstream position; Congress, business community, MEA	MOD, military and intelligence services, BJP (gaining influence), news media
Preferred China policy	Engagement, regional and global cooperation	Economic cooperation with a (soft) hedge	Containment, internal and external balancing

For the three main perceptual positions on China (the appeasing, pragmatist, and hyperrealist view), developments within the bilateral relationship have traditionally been interpreted in different ways. More than in Japan, the China debate in India outside the halls of government has been polarized and is in a state of flux.²⁶¹ In particular, the pragmatist position is moving more closely toward the hyperrealist position, mainly as a result of a “new China”

²⁶⁰ This table is based on the works of Steven Hoffman, “Perception and China Policy in India,” p. 39–49, and Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, p. 145–151, Amitabh Mattoo, “Imagining China,” Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo (eds.), *The Peacock and the Dragon: India-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, p. 20–21, and Mohan Malik, “Eyeing the Dragon: India’s China Debate,” Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, December 2003.

²⁶¹ Jonathan Holslag, *China and India: Prospects for Peace*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 103–120.

that is perceived to try to reshape the regional order to its own interests. This chapter will look at how China's foreign policy is perceived in general through the three perceptual positions (Section 7.2) and will closely look at how India interprets China's behavior on the most contentious bilateral issue: the contested border (Section 7.3). The chapter will end with conclusions (Section 7.4).

4.2. China's and India's Simultaneous Rise: Recipe for Rivalry?

India and China are rising simultaneously. In the past, the two aspirational powers were able to rise within their own strategic space; the Himalayas formed a natural boundary between the two civilization states. In the modern, interconnected world, the concurrent rise of India and China poses questions about how this will affect their bilateral relationship. Does India perceive that there is enough strategic space for both countries to rise without competition or rivalry? Do increased interconnections and interdependence alleviate perceptions of threat? This section will address such questions.

Connections and growing interdependence

In 1988, Gandhi visited China, despite domestic opposition. His historic visit set a new stage for mutual trust at both sides, not only because the visit was highly symbolic but also because both sides showed a shared commitment to resolve the most sensitive issue in their bilateral relations: the unresolved, disputed border. Although these proposals wielded only small results, they were important to foster mutual trust.²⁶² Moreover, during the visit a ministerial-level dialogue mechanism, the China–India Joint Economic Group on Economic Relations and Trade, was set up to further trade relations. Finally, Gandhi's visit to China (the first visit by an Indian head of government to China in 34 years) set the stage for a steady number of reciprocal visits as listed in table 4 on the next page.

²⁶² Ibid, p.46.

Table 4. High-level Visits 1988–2014	Date
PM Rajiv Gandhi visits China	December 1988
PM Li Peng visits India	December 1991
President R. Venkataraman visits China	May 1992
PM Narasimha Rao visits China	September 1993
President Jiang Zemin visits India	November 1996
President K.R. Narayanan visits China	May/June 2000
PM Zhu Rongji visits India	January 2002
PM A.B. Vajpayee visits China	June 2003
PM Wen Jiabao visits India	April 2005
President Hu Jintao visits India	November 2006
PM Manmohan Singh visits China	January 2008
President Pratibha Patil visits China	May 2010
PM Wen Jiabao visits India	December 2010
PM Li Keqiang visits India	May, 2013
PM Manmohan Singh visits China	October 2013
President Xi Jinping visits India	September 2014

Under Prime Minister Narashima Rao (1991–1996), New Delhi’s foreign policy “crossed the Rubicon,” as argued by Indian scholar Raja C. Mohan.²⁶³ He observed that in the early 1990s, New Delhi’s foreign policy underwent critical change through (a) a loss of idealism, (b) a focus on economics instead of politics, (c) a denunciation of anti-Western thinking, and (d) a transformation from a domestic socialist to global free-market economy.²⁶⁴ For China–India relations, this was reflected in a change to a more future-oriented policy, in which it was stressed that the economic development of each one would be beneficial for the other as well. Trade volume multiplied tenfold between 1990 and 1999; Indian consulates were opened in China; and on the disputed new border, trading posts were established. In the next decade (2000–2010), trade between the two countries would grow even more dramatically, with total trade expanding from a little over 2.1 billion U.S. dollars in 2000 to over 58 billion U.S. dollars in 2010. China became India’s second biggest trading partner (after the United Arab Emirates)

²⁶³ Raja C. Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India’s New Foreign Policy*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

in 2005. The focus on developing trade meant that “China threat” arguments were mostly subdued. The appeasing school in particular saw Beijing’s diplomacy toward India primarily as driven by economics. Adherents denied that there was any strategic threat coming and held that China was a satisfied power that was not interested in any hostilities toward India.²⁶⁵

Abanathi Bhacharrya summarized as follows:

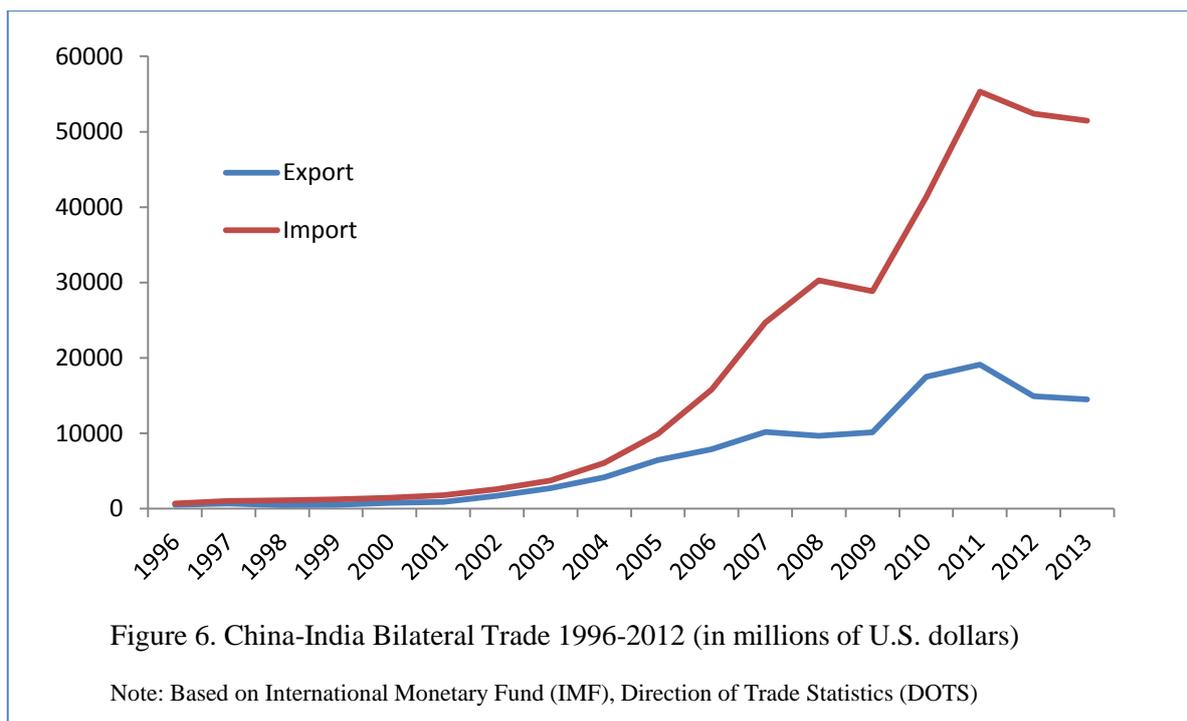
The growing interdependence in world politics, particularly with regard to trade and energy issues . . . significantly limits China’s scope for pursuing aggressive policies towards India. Also, the fact that both India and China are nuclear powers deters them from outright war. Again, since both India and China are in the midst of massive internal transition, their economic development is contingent on a peaceful external environment and a stable domestic order. The competitive elements in their relationship can be tempered to an extent through their security dialogues and multilateral cooperative mechanisms.²⁶⁶

Moreover, India and China’s economies are considered to be complementary; whereas China’s strengths lay in manufacturing, infrastructure, and hardware, India’s economic strengths are in IT, service industries, and banking. Their simultaneous economic development presupposes opportunities for cooperation and mutual benefits. This led Indian politician and trade minister at the time, Jairam Ramesh, to coin the term “Chinindia,” hinting that tapping in on those economic opportunities could better the overall relations between the two countries.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals*, p. 62.

²⁶⁶ Abanathi Bhacharrya, “China’s Foreign Policy Challenges and Evolving Strategy,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 30, No.1, p. 200.

²⁶⁷ Jairam Ramesh, *Making Sense of Chindia: Reflections on China and India*, New Delhi: India Research Press, 2005.



Many Indian scholars have acknowledged that the economic complementarities between India and China could lead to a strong and deep interdependence.²⁶⁸ The economic interdependence and increased connectivity thus formed the crux of the appealing perceptual position, which holds that India and China are both developing countries and are both experiencing the same challenges and opportunities domestically (lifting people out of poverty) as well as internationally (expanding their influence and standing in the U.S.-led unipolar world order). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the influence of the appeasers has been declining, as Indian views on China are hardening, in particular from the late 2000s onward.

A “new China”

The pragmatist school shares the view that economic development has been an important factor not only for their mutual development but also in terms of conflict prevention by raising the stakes for potential conflict. At the same time, adherents add that the increase in trade is partially offset by uneven growth. India’s trade deficit grew to over 37 billion U.S. dollars in 2012; it exports to China less than a third of what it imports. Moreover, China restricts

²⁶⁸ Biswa Bhattacharyay and Prabib De, “Promotion of Trade and Investment between People’s Republic of China and India: Towards a Regional Perspective,” *Asian Development Review* 22, no. 1 (2005): p. 45–70; Jahangir Aziz, Steven Dunaway and Eswar Prasad (ed.), *China and India: Learning from Each Other, Reforms and Policies for Sustained Growth*, Washington: International Monetary Fund, 2006 (in particular part V on economic cooperation); Nagesh Kumar, “Moving towards a Strategic Partnership,” *Financial Express*, April 12, 2004.

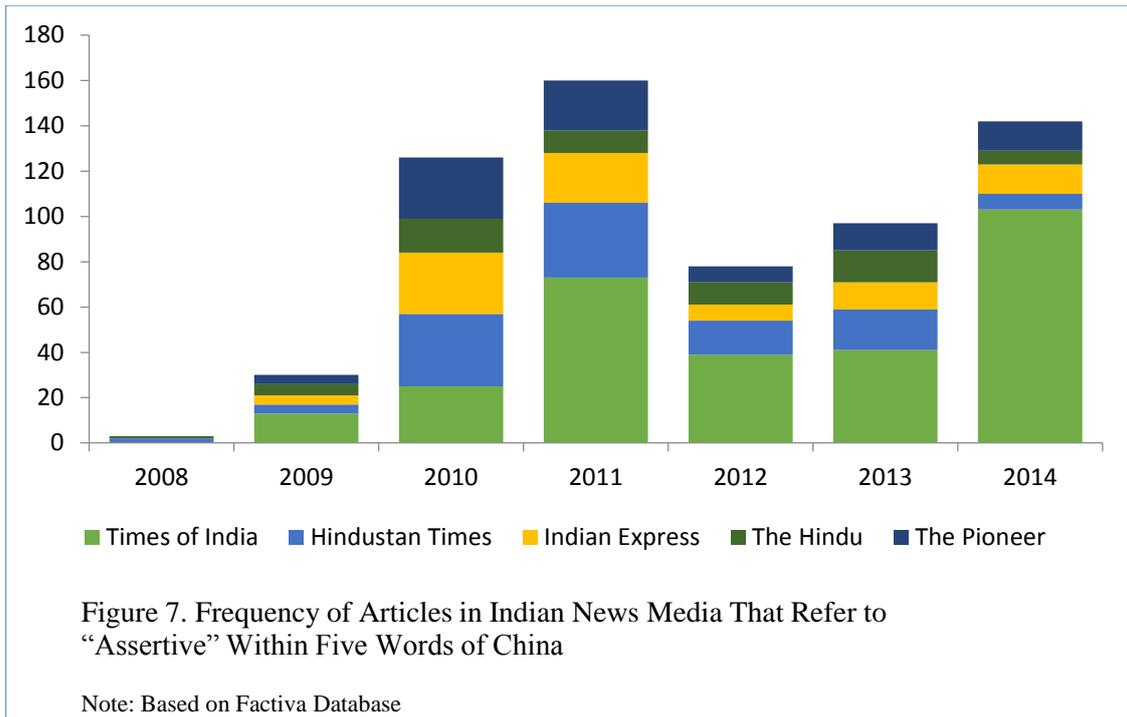
imports of Indian labor-intensive products; China has been repeatedly alleged of illegal dumping practices, and many Indian industries are fearful of not being able to compete with Chinese levels of production. Jonathan Holslag argued that “keeping the economic partnership on a positive track will increasingly necessitate political maneuverability and mutual understanding about the domestic economic challenges.”²⁶⁹ In 2010, the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED) was setup to discuss such macro-economic issues, including the trade deficit, opening up the Chinese market for Indian pharmaceutical and IT companies, and facilitating Chinese investments in India.²⁷⁰ It remains too early to tell to what extent the economic friction between the two countries is a process of growing pains. For now, there is political will from both sides to address India’s concerns, alleviate them, and keep the economic relations on a positive track. Besides the bilateral consultation mechanisms, India and China have worked together on many trade issues in the WTO and are looking to establish a regional free-trade agreement—the RCEP—in cooperation with the ASEAN countries and their FTA partners. The burgeoning economic bilateral relationship has justified an Indian policy of engagement toward China over the years. However, the pragmatic school also acknowledges that increased economic interdependence could not dissipate issues of strategic concern, historical grievances, and political sensitivities, which have become more pronounced in the pragmatic position and official narrative. Such concerns have been rising.

The pragmatists see a change in China’s behavior from the mid-2000s. Ironically, the image of a more antagonistic China came about shortly after both countries upgraded their relationship to a “strategic partnership” in 2005. Some have argued that the harder line from Beijing came as a response to the U.S.–India deal and New Delhi’s closeness to Washington. In that sense, there is an acknowledgement that China’s assertive stance is reactive and—at least in part—a result of India’s own diplomatic choices. This has not prevented the Indian government from taking a more outspoken stance on the issue. In 2008, in a clear departure from earlier statements, Manmohan Singh mentioned that China was becoming more “assertive” in its neighborhood. Defense Minister Mukherjee spoke of a “new China” that India had to deal with.²⁷¹ Part of this “new China” narrative was similar to the “China assertiveness” meme that also transpired in Japanese and U.S. media and commentaries. The Indian media also followed suit.

²⁶⁹ Holslag, *China and India: Prospects for Peace*, p. 81.

²⁷⁰ Teshu Singh, “Sino-Indian Strategic Economic Dialogue: an Analysis,” IPCS Issue Brief, No. 184 (March 2012), available at http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/IB184-Teshu-IndiaChina.pdf (accessed June 11, 2014).

²⁷¹ See also Chapter 3.



Similar to the Japanese logic, the idea was that China had become more confident because of its growing economic and strategic clout. However, again, in a striking resemblance to Japan’s case, such ideas came about by events that fundamentally affected India’s perception of China and not so much by the fact that China’s relative power increased over a certain threshold. In the case of India, evidence of China’s “confidence” came from its hardline rhetoric on the border issue, its dealing with the Tibetan unrest, the situation in the South China Sea, the inroads into the IOR, and the issue over the stapled visas from Arunachal Pradesh.²⁷² In the official statements and documents, reservations about China’s behavior became more outspoken. Indian officials started to point out that China’s rise presented India not only with opportunities for cooperation but also with new challenges and that both countries not only have shared objectives but also competing interests, which might lead to competition. MEA Minister Salman Kurshid stated:

We have to understand that many of our neighbors have a relationship with China. You can’t wish China away. China is also in the neighborhood. They will have their relationship with China, just as we have our relationship with China, but I don’t think

²⁷² See for instance Krishnaswamy Subramanyan, “Countering China’s New Assertiveness,” *Business Standard*, September 5, 2010, available at http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/k-subrahmanyam-countering-china-s-new-assertiveness-110090500009_1.html (accessed May 11, 2014).

that should be a cause of any concern. . . . We must be there to ensure that we retain our place under the sun with our neighbors and we will be there sometimes collaborating with China, sometimes cooperating, sometimes in competition.”²⁷³

The competition or rivalry with China is often discussed in the context of China’s forays into India’s extended neighborhood and with references to China’s quest for resources and energy.²⁷⁴ Indian officials have pointed out that such competition does not directly translate into a threat. As a matter of fact, the MEA has stressed that competition with China might actually be a good thing: “If you are in the same market place and you are competing for space, then of course there will be an actual competition. India encourages competition.”²⁷⁵ The MOD, however, has cast such competition in more adversarial terms, in particular the complicated interplay of sovereignty issues and resource management. The 2014, the MOD Annual Report noted that “the intensifying competition for natural resources adds an overlay of volatility to existing fault lines of territorial disputes between nations and poses a challenge to the norms of international law and accepted standards of international behaviour.”²⁷⁶ It is clear that the official Indian discourse on how to manage relations with China has changed from one that initially emphasized engagement and cooperation toward a more balanced view in which China–India relations are seen as a mixed bag of cooperation, coordination, and competition.²⁷⁷

The media and the strategic communities generally do not share the benign outlook on competition and see China’s rising influence in the region more in terms of a zero-sum game.²⁷⁸ They have advocated a stronger China policy and generally have criticized the Singh government for kowtowing to China. The 2014 Modi government was expected to act tougher on China. To some extent, the Indian media has been positive regarding Modi’s call on China to stop its 19th century expansionism, and Modi’s renewed diplomatic stance on resolving the

²⁷³ “Interview of External Affairs Minister with the *MINT*,” *India’s Foreign Relations - 2012*, p. 230.

²⁷⁴ Chietigj Bajpajee, “China-India Relations: Regional Rivalry Takes the World Stage,” *China Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 3–20; see also David Brewster, *India as an Asia Pacific Power*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, p. 34–48.

²⁷⁵ “Interview of External Affairs Minister Salman Kurshid to Bloomberg TV India” *India’s Foreign Relations - 2012*, p. 201.

²⁷⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2014*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2014.

²⁷⁷ During the BRICS Meeting in Durban 2013, Prime Minister Singh candidly told Indian reporters that the India–China relationship has “elements of cooperation, coordination and competition.”

²⁷⁸ Jagannath Panda, “Competing Realities in China-India Multilateral Discourse: Asia’s enduring power rivalry,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 22, No. 82, p. 669–690.

dispute as a prerequisite for the further development of bilateral ties.²⁷⁹ At the same time, critics have argued that Modi's rhetoric has not had any effect on India's policy position toward China. They see that the rhetoric is not followed up by policy initiatives.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in dealing with the "new China," the Indian governments from the late 2000s have increasingly voiced their concerns on China's behavior not only on the disputed border but also in new areas, such as the South China Sea and even on the China–Japan relationship.

Regionalism or encirclement

India shares Japan's anxieties over Beijing-led strategic initiatives that intend to reshape the regional order and increase China's influence in the region such as the MSR, the Silk Road, and the AIIB. At the same time, these initiatives could be beneficial for India, as New Delhi considers itself not to be in a position to isolate itself in the region by not joining.²⁸¹ Moreover, New Delhi has few realistic, strategic alternatives on its own for regional development (except perhaps for Project Mausam, which tries to increase the links between the countries in the IOR).²⁸² The connectivity argument being put forward by Beijing also resonates in the corridors of Delhi's halls of government. As one former ambassador mentioned, "An economics driven concept which would resonate well with the IOR littorals would burnish the image of a peaceful rise of China."²⁸³ The economic imperatives of the proposals are widely acknowledged and accepted. Also, many Indian analysts believe the MSR is a westward alternative that comes as Beijing faces strategic difficulties in rolling out such initiatives on its eastern flank. The Indian government nonetheless remains reserved over many of these proposals, since there are lingering concerns about the long-term implications of a growing Chinese presence in South Asia.

In the meantime, many of the IOR littoral states have increased their economic and diplomatic ties with Beijing. Countries such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Nepal, and Cambodia have all enjoyed increased trade and development aid coming from China, while relations with Myanmar and Pakistan have remained strong. Even the advocates of the

²⁷⁹ Modi made that remark during his election campaign and also on an overseas trip to Japan, where he found a captive audience for his message.

²⁸⁰ Among the critics who have spoken out on Modi's supposedly soft stance on the Chinese border incursions were Rahul Gandhi, Shashi Tharoor, Nitish Kumar, and Manish Tewari. See for instance, *Hindustan Times*, "Rahul rains guns at Modi over Pak firing, China incursions," October 10, 2014.

²⁸¹ Interview with Arvind Gupta.

²⁸² Interview with Bharat Karnad.

²⁸³ As quoted in Zorawar Daulet Singh, "Indian Perceptions of China's Maritime Silk Road Idea," *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 8, No.4, p. 7.

economic interdependence logic have acknowledged that China's economic footprint in the area means increased competition with an India that still considers itself as the most important player in the region.²⁸⁴ At the same time, the proponents of the pragmatic perceptual position stress that none of the nations in the IOR are willing to risk to wage war, simply because it allows Chinese investments in port developments. Countries in the region are understood to play a game of limited alignment toward Beijing and New Delhi in order to maximize their own benefits. This flexibility in orientations was the main reason why the 2014 Modi government decided to focus its foreign policy on its neighborhood diplomacy.

Hyperrealists have a less ambiguous idea about China's intentions toward the Indian subcontinent. They have traditionally argued that China has, since the occupation of Tibet, pursued a policy of containment toward India and that, through establishing friendly relations with Pakistan (in 1970s and 1980s), Myanmar (1990s), Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and the Maldives (2000s), it has aimed to keep India bogged down in South Asia.²⁸⁵ It started with military cooperation with Pakistan and the close links with the military junta in Myanmar. The close links with the regime in Myanmar fed early fears of a growing Chinese presence in India's strategic backyard.²⁸⁶ However, the Chinese presence in South Asia became ever more salient in the 2000s. Strategic thinkers closely scrutinized the burgeoning Chinese diplomatic and military presence in the IOR, be it under the guise of economic development, fighting pirates, or as part of a military strategy to secure SLOCs.²⁸⁷ For the hyperrealists, the string of pearls, a concept that originated in Washington, was reaffirmation of an idea that has fundamentally shaped their understanding of China's intentions toward India: the idea that China befriends India's neighbors (or according to Brahma Chellaney, "purchases friends") to encircle India.²⁸⁸

Similar to the other positions, hyperrealists acknowledged that the presence of Chinese ships in the IOR was related to access to and safe delivery of energy. However, in contrast with other perceptually held positions, they see China's quest for resources in zero-sum terms. Despite the fact that China and India have shared interests in the safety and security of maritime commons, hyperrealists see the relationship only in terms of a strategic rivalry, in particular in the IOR. Navy Admiral Sureesh Mehta said that "each pearl is a link in a chain of maritime

²⁸⁴ Interview with Sujit Dhutta.

²⁸⁵ Malik, *Great Power Rivals*, p. 55.

²⁸⁶ Jasit Singh, "Our Eastern Neighbor," New Delhi: IDSA, 2014, available at <http://www.india-seminar.com/2000/487/487%20jasjit%20singh.htm> (accessed May 18, 2014).

²⁸⁷ Brahma Chellaney, "What are Chinese submarines doing in the Indian Ocean, far from China's maritime backyard?," *Huffington Post*, May 19, 2015.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

presence and could take over the energy jugular.”²⁸⁹ Hyperrealists are concerned about China opening new military bases in the Indian Ocean, either in the Seychelles, Sri Lanka, or Djibouti, in particular since PLA Navy ships that have been participating in anti-piracy activities in the region might give Beijing a justification to do so. Reports of a PLA submarine docking twice in Colombo have exacerbated such concerns.²⁹⁰ After all, it was Defense Minister Fernandes who already warned in 1998 already that “there is no doubt in my mind that China’s fast expanding navy, which will be the biggest navy in this part of the world, will be getting into the Indian Ocean fairly soon.”²⁹¹ The fact that the Indian government takes the maritime challenge seriously can be seen by the increased budget that is being allocated to the Navy and the fact that the second-strike corps (a brigade that will significantly bolster India’s capabilities along the LAC) has been scaled down to half the originally intended size while the MOD aggressively goes ahead with its plans for the development of aircraft carriers.

The competition and rivalry not only manifests itself in the IOR but also, due to their simultaneous rise and great power aspirations, “The two emerging giants are engaged in a rivalry for global influence that spreads much further afield.”²⁹² Further to the east for instance, India and China are competing for influence in Southeast Asia, and in the northwest, both India and China are simultaneously courting the Central Asian countries. This is mostly done by increasing the transportation linkages: roads, ports, pipelines, rails, and other infrastructure. The connectivity between those regions on the one hand and China and India on the other is a matter of strategic struggling. In short, China and India’s concurrent rise automatically results in a strategic rivalry that, for now, manifests itself mostly in India’s backyard. The hyperrealist argument has not changed much in recent years, but the hyperrealists’ influence has increased, as China’s behavior is increasingly seen as inimical to India’s regional interests. As a result, the mainstream, pragmatic perception also draws closer to theirs. This discursive shift has occurred mostly as a result of Chinese activity along the contested border.

4.3. China on India’s Doorstep: The Contested Border

China and India dispute an area of approximately 130,000 square kilometers along a more than 4,000 kilometer long border. In the eastern sector, India administrates Arunachal

²⁸⁹ As quoted in Harsh Pant, *China’s Rising Global Profile: The Great Power Tradition*, Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2012, p. 59.

²⁹⁰ See for instance, Times of India, “India suspicious as Chinese submarine docks in Sri Lanka,” September 28, 2014.

²⁹¹ Hindustan Times, “China is threat No. 1, says Fernandes,” May 3, 1998.

²⁹² Deccan Chronicle, “China’s and India’s rivalry extends to the Arctic,” May 9, 2013.

Pradesh, which is claimed as Southern Tibet by China. Chinese claims focus on Tawang, because of its close links and historical associations with the Dalai Lama. The middle sector is the smallest area of the contested border and the area where India and China have made the most progress by exchanging maps in their bilateral consultations. The western sector (Aksai Chin) is held by China and claimed by India.

Setting up consultations and negotiations mechanisms

The problem over the border was the first and foremost reason why—for the only time in history—the two great civilization states went to war with each other in 1962. The “humiliation” and sense of “betrayal” left many scars in the minds of the Indian psyche.²⁹³ It was not until 1976 that the two countries once again started exchanging ambassadors. Bilateral exchanges resumed, and in 1981, border talks were reopened. The increased closeness between New Delhi and Beijing was a result of the changing geopolitical realities of the late 1980s.²⁹⁴ The dawn of the end of the Cold War meant a realignment of allegiances. Rajiv Gandhi pushed for closer cooperation with China on global matters, such as international economic cooperation, disarmament, and pollution. It was believed that collaboration on these non-sensitive issues would have a trickle-down effect and be conducive for the overall improvement of bilateral relations.²⁹⁵ However, both countries not only pushed for cooperation on non-sensitive issues but also set up regular meetings to discuss resolution of the disputed border. The JWG was proposed during the visit of Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988. One year later, the JWG had its first of what would become annual high-level meetings.

In the spirit of the improving relations, both countries signed their first CBM in 1993: the agreement on the Maintenance of Tranquility and Peace along the Line of Actual Control in the China–India Border Areas. It was important step forward, since the agreement showed political willingness from both sides to find a permanent resolution on the border issue. In 1996, the Agreement of Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control was signed. More than the 1993 CBM, this agreement stipulated concrete and operationalized measures (in terms of reduction of armed forces and increasing transparency and exchange) that both countries would take on each side of the border. Commentators labeled

²⁹³ Lora Saalman, “Divergence, Similarity and Symmetry in Sino-Indian Threat Perceptions,” p. 174.

²⁹⁴ John Garver, “Sino-Indian Rapprochement and the Sino-Pakistan Entente,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.111, No.2, 1996, p. 323–325.

²⁹⁵ *Idem*.

the 1996 agreement as the first “No War” pact between India and China.²⁹⁶ In the two decades that followed, India and China would regularly draft new CBMs related to the border, in order to (a) minimize misunderstandings on each side, (b) understand each other’s perceptual interpretations on the border, (c) increase cooperation, and (d) look for long-term resolution to the border dispute.

The frequent border consultations and dialogue, including the CBMs and other protocols, have created expectations about appropriate behavior. It is important to note that the largest disputed territory in the world has been relatively peaceful and tranquil, as both sides like to put it. Despite the numerous incursions, both sides have so far been able to successfully manage those situations, and to some extent, this has had a paradoxical, reassuring effect.²⁹⁷ The aim of this agreement was to preserve peace and tranquility and not to engage in military confrontations along the border. The agreement stipulated that both sides would reduce the troops stationed along the border, refrain from large-scale exercises in the border area, organize service to service contacts and exchange information on troop displacements and exercises. It was a further acknowledgement of the fact that both sides were dealing with the border issue through dialogue and consultation, as instated earlier in the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the China–India Border Areas. The signing of the Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control during Jiang Zemin’s visit cemented the prospect for enduring peace and tranquility along the disputed border.

²⁹⁶ The term “No War” pact was used by China expert K. Natwar Singh, who would go on to become Minister of External Affairs (2004–2005); see also Thanga Rajesj, “Revisiting Sino-Indian Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) On the Eve of 60th Anniversary of Panscheel,” *C3S Paper No. 2119* (July, 2014); Rup Narayan Das, “India-China Relations: A New Paradigm,” *IDSIA Monograph Series No. 19* (May, 2013) p. 42–64.

²⁹⁷ Interview of author with senior official from Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

Table 5. Contents of the China–India CBMs

*Declarative principles:*²⁹⁸

- Seek solution of the border problem by peaceful means
- Reduction of military forces in the areas along the LAC
- Non-use of force against each other
- China will not use the Pakistan card and India will not use its Tibet card
- Exercise self-restraint in face-to-face situations²⁹⁹

Information exchange:

- Regular, periodic meetings among diplomats, politicians, military experts, and regional officers³⁰⁰
- Exchange of information on natural disasters/arms and contraband smuggling in the border area
- Exchange of maps in the middle sector
- Personnel exchange between the two armed forces

De-escalation measures:

- Organize flag meetings within 48 hours after intrusions
- Establishment of a hotline between regional commanders
- Establishment of a hotline between prime ministers of both countries

Constraining Measures:

- Limitations on armaments and equipment 10 km from LAC³⁰¹
 - Limitation and prior notification of military exercises³⁰²
 - No tailing of “transgressing” patrols³⁰³
-

²⁹⁸ Some of these have been taken from Singh Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India: Cooperation or Conflict*, p. 124–126, and updated with newer principles and measures.

²⁹⁹ This can happen in situations in which there is no common understanding of the LAC.

³⁰⁰ This includes meetings at the national-political level up to the regional-army-commander level.

³⁰¹ This includes heavy tanks, artillery, and surface-to-surface, surface-to-air missiles, and combat aircrafts.

³⁰² No exercises bigger than one division allowed, any exercise with more than 5,000 soldiers has to notify the other side in advance.

³⁰³ Since there is no agreement on the border, there are areas that each claims as its own. When patrols stay within their “own” area, such patrols are called transgressions.

Table 6. Defense/Border Negotiations	Date
1st round of the JWG	June 30–July 4, 1989
2nd round of the JWG	August 30–31, 1990
3rd round of the JWG	May 13, 1991
4th round of the JWG	February 20–21, 1992
5th round of the JWG	October 28–29, 1992
6th round of the JWG	June 25–26, 1993
7th round of the JWG	July 6–7, 1994
8th round of the JWG	August 18–19, 1995
9th round of the JWG	October 16–18, 1996
10th round of the JWG	August 4–5, 1997
11th round of the JWG	April 27–28, 1999
12th round of the JWG	April 28, 2000
13th round of the JWG	July 31, 2001
14th round of the JWG	November 21, 2002
1st Special Representatives Meeting	October 26, 2003
2nd Special Representatives Meeting	January 12–13, 2004
3rd Special Representatives Meeting	July 26, 2004
4th Special Representatives Meeting	November 18–19, 2004
5th Special Representatives Meeting	March 10–12, 2005
15th round of the JWG	March 30–31, 2005
6th Special Representatives Meeting	September 26–28, 2005
7th Special Representatives Meeting	March 11–13, 2006
8th Special Representatives Meeting	June 25–27, 2006
9th Special Representatives Meeting	January 17–19, 2007
10th Special Representatives Meeting	April 24–27, 2007
11th Special Representatives Meeting	September 24–26, 2007
1st Defense and Security Dialogue	November 2007
12th Special Representatives Meeting	September 18–19, 2008
2nd Defense and Security Dialogue	December 15, 2008
13th Special Representatives Meeting	August 7–8, 2009
3rd Defense and Security Dialogue	January 9, 2010

14th Special Representatives Meeting	November 29–30, 2010
4th Defense and Security Dialogue	December 9, 2011
15th Special Representatives Meeting	January 1–17, 2012
1st meeting on the Working Mechanism	March 5–6, 2012
2nd meeting on the Working Mechanism	November 29–30, 2012
5th Defense and Security Dialogue	January 14, 2013
16th Special Representatives Meeting	June 28–29, 2013
3rd meeting on the Working Mechanism	July 23–24, 2013
17th Special Representatives Meeting	February 10–11, 2014
6th Defense and Security Dialogue	February 24, 2014
4th meeting on the Working Mechanism	October 16–17, 2014

Securitizing the border

In May 1998, China–India relations hit a temporary low when Prime Minister Vajpayee’s letter to American President Bill Clinton, in which China was named as India’s justification of its nuclear test (Pokhran-II), leaked out. In the letter, Vajpayee stated that “although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem.”³⁰⁴ The leaked letter gave a peek inside Indian official thinking on China. However, it could also be seen as a justification for India to go nuclear. New Delhi had to convincingly argue why it would need a nuclear stockpile despite the burgeoning international non-proliferation regimes. Pakistan was not a declared nuclear power state yet, and so China was the only reference Indian policymakers could use in justifying why nuclear weapons would be necessary for India’s need for a nuclear-deterrence capability. In that sense, it is difficult to determine to what extent a real change in perception took place in May 1998.

What is notable, however, is that the harsh talk on China quickly softened. In a testimony to the Indian Upper House, the Rajya Sabha, Vajpayee said that India

Would like the Chinese side to appreciate that our concerns need to be addressed in a meaningful manner with a view to finding early resolution . . . On the boundary

³⁰⁴ “PM’s reply to the Discussion in Rajya Sabha on Nuclear Tests” *Strategic Digest*, New Delhi: IDSA, 1998, p. 1585.

question, we recognize that a resolution takes time and patience. But progress can, and should, be made.³⁰⁵

Further in the speech, he added that “we do not seek a confrontation with China. . . . We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences and to the development of friendly, cooperative, good neighborly and mutually beneficial relationship with China.”³⁰⁶ On August 4 of the same year, Vajpayee reaffirmed in a statement at the Indian Lower House, the Lok Sabha, that India did not see China as an enemy or a threat.³⁰⁷ In the same year, NSA Brajesh Mishra and President Narayanan, in line with Vajpayee’s remarks, publicly stated that India does not see China as a security threat. Similar statements followed after Indian External Minister Singh’s visit to China in 1999.

The JWG meetings were postponed by the Chinese in 1998; however, the China–India Expert Group, which was a sub-group of the JWG consisting of military and diplomatic officials, met on June 8 and 9, 1998, within a month of Pokhran-II.³⁰⁸ From the Indian side, there was a political will to minimize the effect of the nuclear testing on the process of the border talks. As early as 1996/97, it was acknowledged by the Indian side that in the JWG deliberations, it was “necessary to accelerate the process of clarification of the alignment of the entire LAC, including through an exchange of maps.”³⁰⁹ There was a sense from the Indian side that the Chinese were not willing to move forward on the border issue and that talks would not be able to produce significant outcomes for a long period of time, despite the growing number of consultative and dialogue bodies.³¹⁰ Such arguments were also made by the Chinese side, and despite the growing number of consultative bodies that addressed the border, there had been very little actual progress. In 2000, India declared in its official documents that there continued to exist a difference in perception between the Chinese and the Indian sides over the actual line of the LAC, causing what each side considered to be intrusions by the other. This resulted in situations “on the ground that could have been avoided had the LAC clarification

³⁰⁵ As quoted in Suyata K. Dass, *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: Prime Minister of India*, New Delhi, Kalpaz Publications, 2004, p. 57.

³⁰⁶ Atal Behari Vajpayee “Reply made by Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister, on 29 May 1998 in the Rajya Sabha on Nuclear Tests in Pokhran,” in K. R. Gupta (Ed.), *Selected documents on Nuclear Disarmament*, New Delhi: Atlantic publishers and distributors, 2001, p. 238.

³⁰⁷ Li, *Security Perception and China India Relations*, New Delhi: Knowledge World International, 2008.

³⁰⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 1998-1999*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1999, p. 31.

³⁰⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, New Delhi: Government of India, 1997, p. 11.

³¹⁰ Shruti Pandalai, “Enduring Legacy of 1962: Cementing the Conflict of Perceptions in Sino-Indian Ties,” *Journal of Defence Studies* Vol. 6, No. 4, 2012, p. 207–228.

been completed.”³¹¹ It also stated that while China was preoccupied with other issues, internally and on its maritime borders, China’s policy toward the border issue with India would not be to resolve the issue, but rather to “keep differences within manageable limits.”³¹² In official publications, India repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and consultations but also showed its desire to speed up the process of clarification and eventual resolution. Despite these shared perceptions of a lack of political will from the other side to really make progress on the border issue, India and China were quick to restart high-level visits and negotiations after Pokhran-II. In contrast to the Congress Party, the BJP government stressed that meaningful progress on the border was necessary in order to move the bilateral relation forward.

A renewed commitment to finding a settlement

In 2000, the JWG discussions resumed, and in 2001, a small breakthrough was achieved when both sides agreed to exchange maps on the central part of the middle sector of the LAC. During a visit to China in 2002, MEA Minister Jaswant Singh stated that there was further progress in the talks, as both sides agreed to exchange sample maps of the western and eastern sectors of the LAC by the end of 2003. He summarized that the “establishment of comprehensive security dialogue shows that the efforts for the last four years or so put China-India relations on a certain fixed and predictable rail on a monthly pace.”³¹³ In a press conference at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Jaswant Singh was asked whether the boundary question should be resolved through talks and whether a resolution of the issue were possible. His reaction was quite clear: “Yes, it is not just possible, it must be resolved. We must not permit the shadows of the past to affect the relations of the future.”³¹⁴ In the end, the Pokhran-II missile test had done little more than temporarily stall the political process of finding a resolution on the border.

Vajpayee’s 2003 visit to China allowed India to address the border issue in a more comprehensive manner. In a speech at Peking University, he asserted that India and China had suffered from a time when both went through an introspective phase but that in the last few decades, both countries had taken steps to increase trust and understanding. Vajpayee added

³¹¹ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2000-2001*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2001, p. 3

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ “Transcript of Press Briefing by External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh at Diaoyutai Guest House” *Strategic Digest*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2002, p. 595.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

there are elements of competition between the two countries but that such competition is natural and no reason for divisive rivalry. First and foremost, he emphasized the importance of resolving the border issue for the further development of China–India relations. He stated, “One cannot wish away the fact that before good neighbors can truly fraternize with each other, they must first mend their fences.”³¹⁵ Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal expressed a similar line of reasoning when he stated at the Geneva Forum in early 2003 that the challenge with China was “to sustain the steady expansion and strengthening of the relationship in diverse fields even as we attempt to together resolve the border issue.”³¹⁶ In order to resolve the outstanding issue, Vajpayee stressed that India would have to adopt a pragmatic stance on it.

The Indian prime minister’s visit has been seen a breakthrough in China–India relations beyond the rhetoric. India and China signed a Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation, assigned special representatives to deal with the border issue from a political perspective (and the importance both countries attached to finding a political solution to the border issue, as explicitly mentioned in the joined statement), and signed a trade agreement with India allowing border trade at a market in Sikkim (Changgu). At that time, China was the only country that did not recognize Sikkim as an Indian state. Two years later, China recognized that Sikkim was a state within the Republic of India in a joint statement, effectively ending a dispute that had existed since the 1970s. Vajpayee’s visit was important because it reaffirmed the growing economic and political links and convergence between the two countries while also creating a momentum for substantial progress on the border issue. He argued that from a military perspective, finding a resolution on the border would allow the Indian Army to focus itself on more meaningful activities.³¹⁷

From resolving to managing the border dispute

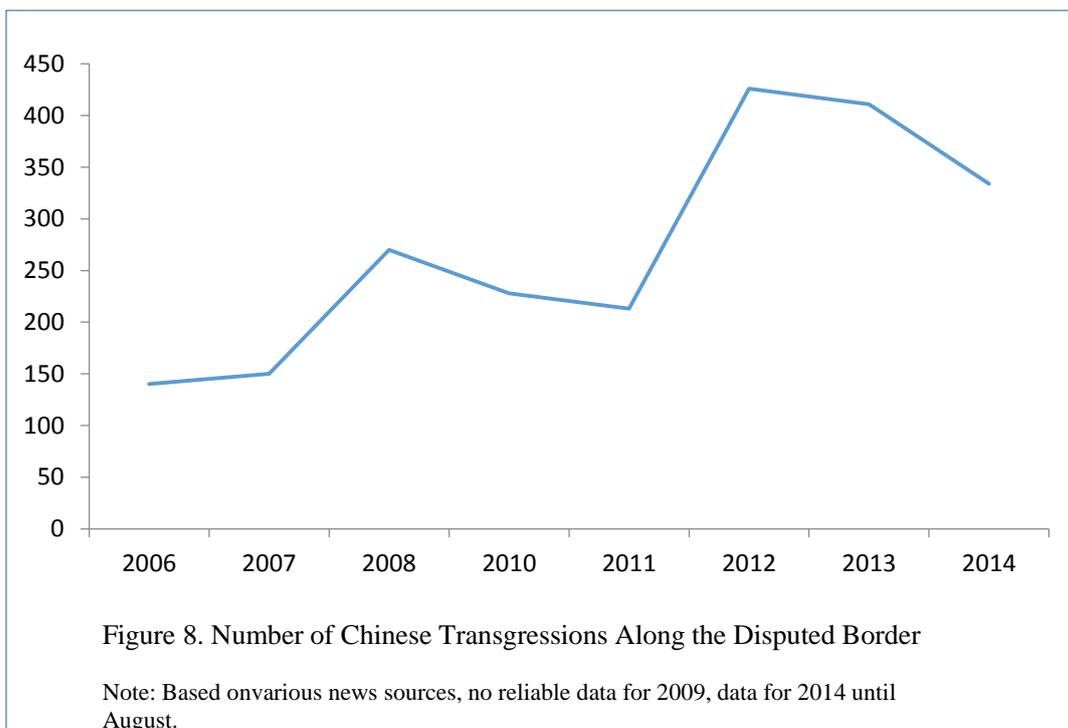
In 2005, both sides set the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles to seek a settlement on the border, another step in attempts to come to concrete results. A little bit later in that same year, India and the United States signed an agreement on nuclear cooperation. The increased closeness of India and the United States had a negative spill-over effect on the border issue. After the India–U.S. nuclear agreement was signed, the Chinese stance on the border

³¹⁵ Atal Bihari Vajpayee “Speech by Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Peking University” in Mahendra Gaur (Ed.), *Foreign Policy Annual 2004*, Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2005, p. 179.

³¹⁶ Kanwal Sibal “Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Prospects” in Arvind Gupta, Makul Chaturvedi and Ashavy Joshi (Eds.), *Security and Diplomacy: Essential Documents*, New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2004, p. 272.

³¹⁷ As mentioned in Raja C. Mohan, “India and Sino-Pak Ties,” *The Hindu*, November 6, 2006.

issue hardened. Evidence for this is seen in the hardening of the Chinese position on Arunachal Pradesh, the increased number of Chinese incursions along the border, strong Chinese reactions to Prime Minister Singh’s visit to Arunachal Pradesh and President Prathiba Patil’s visit to Tawang, objections from the Chinese for a loan from the ADB for projects in the disputed border, and the refusal by Chinese authorities to grant visas to Indian government officials from Arunachal Pradesh. Despite the consultation mechanisms and an apparent political commitment to resolve the border issue from both sides, there remained regular Chinese patrols into what India believed to be its territory. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of annual incursions, or what are called “transgressions,” by the Indian Home Ministry went up from 90 to 150 and up to over 400 in 2012.³¹⁸ They added to the perception that China was increasingly assertive, in particular from 2009 onward.



Defense Minister Mukherjee recognized that the “situation has not improved. Massive preparations and deployments by China in the Tibetan and Sikkim border areas near Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin . . . has created an alarming situation.”³¹⁹ One explanation for this hardening stance on the border issue raised by Indian scholars is that India’s increased

³¹⁸ Holslag, *India and China: Prospects for Peace*, p. 123.

³¹⁹ Pranab Mukherjee, as quoted in Donald L. Berlin “India in the Indian Ocean” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2006, p. 63.

closeness with the United States was perceived in Beijing as a matter of external balancing against China.³²⁰ Another explanation is that China's infrastructure projects close to the border had the effect of a growing number of patrols along the border. In official circles, it is said that these transgressions are the result of decisions made by individual, local commanders and are not a direct instruction from Beijing.³²¹ These rationalizations suggest that there are more dynamics at work than simply China becoming more assertive. They imply that such moves can be (a) reactive to India's increased alignment with the United States, (b) a logical effect of the ability of the Chinese to come close to the border, or (c) the decisions of regional commanders who have a stake in keeping the conflict simmering.

Even though the reasons for the increased number of incursions remain mostly unclear, public statements from Indian policymakers have undergone significant change as a result of the new situation. Whereas Vajpayee stressed the need to look for pragmatic solutions to resolve the border issue, Manmohan Singh remained vaguer and more open ended when talking about the border issue. Like his predecessor, he emphasized the importance of a cooperative relation with China in general and the significance of the border talks. In contrast to Vajpayee, Singh said he was "satisfied with the results of our efforts so far and [we] are convinced that the potential for China-India relations is great and will be realized."³²² Defense Minister Mukherjee voiced similar words upon returning from China in 2006. He stated that "the possibility of an armed conflict with China had receded thanks to several CBMs being implemented by both the countries to improve defense relations and eliminate tension on the border." Later, he summarized the bilateral relations as follows: "Neither do we consider them a threat to us nor do they consider us a threat to them. There is enough space for both to grow in their own areas."³²³ From the Indian side, there were fewer mentions in official documents about the need for a quick resolution of the issue, let alone taking a pragmatic stand on it. Although both sides still aim for a resolution of the matter in the long term, the consensus has changed in that both sides acknowledge the process will take considerable time and both should

³²⁰ Prashant Kumar Singh and Rumel Dahiya "Managing India-China Relations" in Rumel Dahiya and Ashok K Behuria (Eds.) *India's Neighborhood, Challenges in the Next Two Decades*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2012; or Namrata Goswani, "[China's Territorial Claim on India's Arunachal Pradesh: A Response to Changing Power Dynamics in Asia](#)," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (September 2011), p. 781–792.

³²¹ Interview with senior government official, involved in border negotiations.

³²² Press Information Bureau, "PM addresses the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences," New Delhi: Government of India, January 15, 2008, available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=34609> (accessed April 6, 2014).

³²³ "Press Conference of Defence Minister Pranab Mehkerjee after his return from the tour of China and Japan" in Avtar Singh Bhasin (Ed.) *India's Foreign Relations - 2006*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2007, p. 933.

focus first and foremost on maintaining peace and stability on the border at a time of geopolitical shifts and de-escalation should crises occur.³²⁴ Das argued that recently, the border talks have transformed from a consultation mechanism to resolve the outstanding issue to a consultations body to manage it; effectively accepting the current status quo for the time being.³²⁵

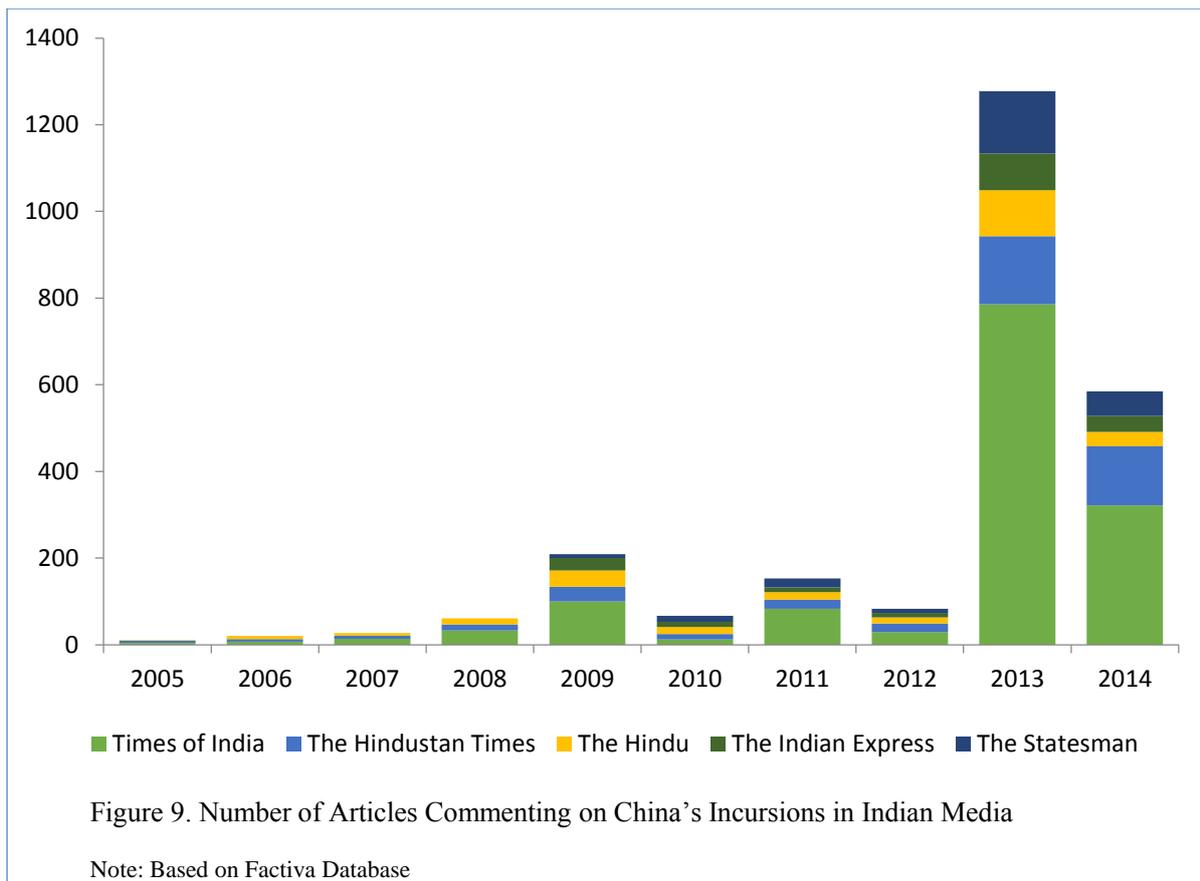
2013 onward: The border back on the top of the agenda

The problem of the growing number of Chinese incursions intensified when the Indian media started reporting on the issue from 2009 onward. A major incursion on April 15, 2013 significantly raised concerns in India. Chinese troops entered 19 kilometers into what the Indian side claimed to be the LAC. Moreover, in a new escalatory move, Chinese troops set up camp in the area. Quickly after, Indian forces were rallied and set up camp 300 meters from the Chinese. For a period of 3 weeks, the Indian and Chinese troops faced a stand-off. Most Indian commentaries saw the incursion as a test of strength and resolve. A diplomatic solution was reached on May 5, after which both sides withdrew. Figure 9 shows that in 2013, media attention and “China threat” arguments spiked. There was pressure on the government to act, much more than before. The incursions by the Chinese were increasingly seen as a way to keep strategic pressure on India.³²⁶ They also fueled and reaffirmed the persistent mistrust in China–India relations. Critics hold that the lack of progress on the border is attributed to China’s wait-and-see approach; endurance would be in China’s favor, as long as power asymmetries steadily grew in Beijing’s favor up to the point where India might be forced to accept the Chinese position. The incident was the direct cause of the proposed establishment of a new 90,000-soldier-strong Mountain Corps.

³²⁴ Interview Rup Narayan Das.

³²⁵ Rup Narayan Das, “India-China Border Talks Shift From Resolving Disputes to Managing Them” *China Brief*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2014, available at <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/> (accessed March 12, 2014).

³²⁶ Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals*, Boulder: First Forum Press, 2011, p. 125–165.



On the other hand, some analysts support India's de-escalatory response and New Delhi's insistence on silent diplomacy as long as the Chinese incursions do not lead to a "new normal" on the border.³²⁷ In 2009, when it was reported that Chinese incursions on the border had gone up drastically, the Singh government stated that the problem was "hyped" in the media and that there were no reasons for concern. In 2013, the Singh government called the incursion an "isolated incident" and downplayed its importance. In all fairness, the Chinese capabilities involved were seven men, five tents, and a dog.³²⁸ Former NSA Shivshankar Menon dismissed the incident as such and argued that the incident did not change the fact that the border has been peaceful and tranquil. Moreover, even if the move can be interpreted as a form of military escalation, Chinese political leaders showed a conciliatory approach and were willing to work with the Indians in resolving it.³²⁹ Later in 2013, in a move to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, both sides signed the BDCA to improve communications on border patrols. This willingness at high political levels to de-escalate caused many in India

³²⁷ See for instance, Manoj Joshi, "Depsang Incursion: Decoding the Chinese signal," *Observer Research Foundation Analysis*, May 14, 2013.

³²⁸ Manoj Joshi, "Making Sense of the Depsang Incursion," *The Hindu*, May 7, 2013.

³²⁹ Rumel Dahiya, "Border Standoff: Understanding Chinese Motives," IDSA comment, available at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/BorerStandoff_rdahiya_290914.html (accessed June 19, 2015).

to see the incursions as attention-seeking activities by the PLA's local commanders. Some argued that they have operational flexibility and can make such moves independent from the central political leadership. Others have speculated that certain factions within the PLA (closely associated with Jiang Zemin) do not agree with the overall policy of engagement vis-à-vis India and are deliberately escalating the situation as a result of that. Finally, many commentators acknowledge that the Chinese actions came as a result of India building up its capabilities and infrastructure on its own side on the border and that this was a reaction to these developments.

The discourse on the border has gone through three distinctive phases. The years until 1998 were marked by progress in the forms of important CBMs and mutual recognition on both parties' perceptions on the border; the Vajpayee government (1998–2004), after a short low, stressed a pragmatic approach to the border and the need to resolve the issue in order to move China–India relations forward; the Singh government emphasized the difficulty of resolving the border issue, while stressing the many new dimensions of and positive developments in the relationship. In the words of Foreign Secretary Rao:

I believe there is maturity on both sides to understand the complexity of the issue and to insulate it from affecting our boarder relationship. I believe this policy has paid dividends and has contributed towards reducing the possibility of conflict.³³⁰

The border does not dictate the state of China–India relations as much as it has in the past, but the overall condition of bilateral relations does affect the positions of each side on the border issue. In a way, the border has become a thermometer to measure the state of the overall bilateral relationship; the issue of the border does not stand on its own anymore, but it is invoked and affected by shifts in the overall China–India relationship.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

India's overall "China-threat" is not as high in Japan,³³¹ which can mostly be explained by the fact that China's behavior—although closely scrutinized—is not seen as overly aggressive, escalatory, and revisionist, as has been the case in Japan. This is mostly because for now—at least from the official point of view—the situation on the border remains "tranquil and peaceful," as Indian policymakers like to put it. In this narrative, there is no room for "China threat" arguments. There is less fear that the rise of China directly impinges on the "survival" of the Indian state. By this I mean there are no publicly expressed concerns that

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 989.

³³¹ Measured in terms of declaratory "China threat" arguments.

China's behavior is aimed at salami-slicing parts of Indian territory in order to effectively change the status quo. There are also fewer fears about an uncontrollable situation in which if India gives in on the disputed border, China will continue its claims further inland. Unlike Japan, China's behavior vis-à-vis India on the border is mostly seen as a manageable situation; at least that is what the Indian officialdom tells us.

At the same time, the border remains the biggest factor for the ongoing strategic deficit and a hurdle in moving China–India relations forward. According to Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, “The cartographies that define national identity are internalized in the minds of people of both countries.”³³² This may explain why, despite the numerous deliberations and plethora of CBMs, there has been very little progress in resolving the issue, particularly in the last decade. Moreover, from the strategic communities and the media, there is increased pressure to “act tough” on the border, and perceptions are hardening, as it is believed that China is taking a firmer stance on the border, in particular from 2009 onward, with the 2013 Depsang incident as a point in case. It is these perceived changes in policy behavior that trigger widespread “China threat” arguments. The incidents along the border have pushed the overall discourse into a more antagonistic frame, mostly because the result of the intrusions along the border “China threat” arguments went from a low level to a medium level in the early 2010s. Additionally, other bilateral and regional strategic dilemmas have added to the growing concerns over the state of China–India relations.

Besides the border, there are long-term, strategic concerns, although most of these concerns are not new. Indian hyperrealists traditionally fear encirclement by China through its friendly relations with Pakistan and Myanmar on both of India's east and west flanks. Thanks to its rise, China has been able to court many countries in the South Asian subcontinent, and its presence is ever growing, mostly in the form of infrastructure projects in the IOR, in Southeast Asia, and in Central Asia, three areas that are considered to be core areas within India's own strategic horizon. With China's presence becoming more salient, the mainstream perception moves closer toward seeing the bilateral relationship—at least in regional terms—as a becoming locked in a state of enduring competition. Beijing's active promotion of China-led institutions and initiatives is met with hesitation in India; on the one hand, it cannot afford to isolate itself in the region by not joining, but on the other hand, it wants to check China's influence. It is no coincidence that Modi, during his first year in tenure, went on state visits to

³³² Nirupama Rao, “Prospects and Challenges of India-China Interactions in the 21st Century,” *India's Foreign Relations - 2011*, edited by Avtar Singh Bhasin (New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2012) p. 988.

Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, the Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius, among others. There is a desire in New Delhi to roll back China's influence and give a (complementary) alternative to a China-led order. In short, China's active involvement in regional dynamics are long-term, strategic concerns for New Delhi, something that does not immediately heighten perceptions of threat but plays into long-term, strategic calculations and adds a new competitive element to the China–India relation.

Chapter 5: India and China's Identity Convergence/Divergence

Main Findings

- The 1962 War still shapes public perceptions and is exacerbated by the continuing incursions on the border and the simmering issue over Tibet. These elements are largely responsible for a pervasive level of wariness on China.
- There is little attention for China's domestic problems or its distinct "otherness" in India's official narrative. There are however some perceptually held common denominators in the wider strategic discourse related to the three perceptual positions mentioned in Chapter 4, which affect China-India identity convergence and divergence.
- The identity discourse can largely be divided into three meta-narratives.
- In the "post-colonial, developmental" frame, there are points of China-India convergence: both countries are civilization states, face similar developmental and nation-building challenges, and reject "western, imperialist" values and power politics.
- In the "emerging power" frame, there are points of identity convergence and divergence. There is convergence on global issues such as climate change, multipolarity, fighting terrorism, and reshaping institutional arrangements. This has lessened their mutual fear to a certain extent. A level of suspicion nonetheless remains because, despite cooperation on global matters, both sides have been unable to tackle the main drivers of India's threat perceptions. At the same time, competition is an inescapable, systemic feature within the "emerging power" narrative.
- In the "natural leader" frame, most elements of China-India relations are cast in terms of rivalry and hostility. This frame makes overt references to the 1962 War and sees China's great power ambitions as directly impinging on India's.

5.1. Introduction

In India's official narrative, there is little attention to China's domestic problems or its distinct "otherness." There are a couple reasons for this. First of all, India's national identity is a construct that covers many dimensions. As a product of Hindu, Muslim, and British rule, India has many points of reference for how it perceives itself and how it sees others. For instance, Hindu nationalists see the Muslim rule during the 16th century as a period of alien

rule and subjugation, whereas the secularist Hindus and Indian Muslims emphasize the positive aspects of the Muslim rule.³³³ Therefore, for the Hindu nationalists, othering manifests itself mainly along religious lines, and in the case of foreign policy, it is most likely to distort Indian views of Pakistan and not so much the perceptions of a secular China.³³⁴ Second, Indian policymakers do not openly discuss issues such as China's domestic problems or communist regime, since this is considered to be an inappropriate interference in China's domestic politics.³³⁵ Moreover, officials also regard that identity challenges, such as nationalism, ethnic minorities, and inequality, are not unique to China and are in fact shared by countries like India itself and Japan themselves.³³⁶ Third, India worked closely with the Soviet communists in the past, which makes securitizing China's current non-democratic regime less credible. Finally, any kind of "democracy" or "value" promotion could be harmful for India's own neighborhood policies; after all, many of India's neighboring countries (other than China) are not entirely democratic.³³⁷ For these reasons, there is no ideational tone to India's official rhetoric vis-à-vis China.

At the same time, there are some perceptually held common denominators in the wider strategic discourse that affect how India sees itself in relation to China. In contrast to the China-Japan identity contestation that seems to be in constant flux, the three Indian ideal images have been relatively constant over time. First, there is the frame of India as a "post-colonial, developing country," which is an idea that closely corresponds to the left-wing, appeasing perceptual position. Second, there is a widely held belief that India should play an important global role in the world stage. The frame of India as an "(emerging) global major power"

³³³ David Ludden, "Ayodhya: A Window on the World," David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996, p. 1–26.

³³⁴ For an analysis of the origins and drivers of communal violence in contemporary India, see Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003. For a more comprehensive account on the politics of identity building within the Hindu nationalist movement, see Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s*, New Delhi: Print Line, 1996; Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva," David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996, p. 270–294.

³³⁵ Interview with senior government official.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Although the Indian government has taken a more proactive stance in its voluntary support to "democracy promotion" in the region, it has consistently stated that such initiatives will by no means contribute to an imposition of "democratic" norms and values. India's democracy promotion mainly consists of economic aid to neighborhood countries, which ideally creates favorable conditions for democratic institution building; see Arijit Mazumdar, "Democracy promotion in India's foreign policy: Emerging Trends and developments," *2014 WPSA Annual Meeting Discussion Paper*, available at <http://wpsa.research.pdx.edu/papers/docs/Democracy%20promotion%20and%20India%20~%20Arijit%20Mazumdar.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

corresponds closely to the pragmatist view. The third frame that informs China-India identity contestation is India, which sees itself as the “natural leader” in the South Asian subcontinent. This frame mostly discusses China-India relations in terms of security threat and economic rivalry and is closely related to the (hyper) realist perceptual positions.

The basic assumptions that inform the ideal types mentioned above have stood the test of time even though they have different perspectives on the China-India binary identity construction: from one of similar interests and cooperation to one of opposing goals and strategic rivalry. At the same time, there is a growing tendency (particularly from 2009 onward) toward the antagonist frame. The second part of this chapter will have a closer look at to what extent there is identity convergence or divergence within the three perceptual positions described above. Before that, the next section what themes determine the overall China-India identity discourse. The chapter will end, similar to the previous chapters, with hypothesis testing: testing whether othering has influenced perceptions of threat within the larger China-India narrative.

5.2. Securitizing China’s Identity Traits

As noted above, official Indian publications do not comment on internal developments in China nor have an ideational tone to it. This does not mean that internal developments or the identity variable is of no concern to India. China-India relations have elements of deep mistrust, which not only come from recent behavior but from deeply ingrained recollections of Chinese aggression in the 1960s. The situation on the border and in Tibet touches upon elements of shared religious and historical identity, and Indian and Chinese nationalist mythmaking have divergent interpretations on these issues.

Historic mistrust

Mistrust between India and China runs deep. As mentioned in Chapter 5, China’s behavior on the border has been “managed” through dialogue and consultation since the late 1980s. However, there remains a lingering mistrust that came as a result of how the disputed border came into existence in the first place.³³⁸ In the post-Second World War, the two newly independent states were in search of their place in the world and were re-establishing their

³³⁸ The border dispute is the main bone of contention in bilateral relations. This is not only because of the incursions or the perceived strategic pressure coming from China. The border issue touches on deeper concepts such as national identity, territorial integrity, nation building, unity, and nationalism. Interview with author, Namrata Goswani, New Delhi.

relationship toward one another. In the first few years of official relations, between 1949 and 1957, relations between China and India were mostly friendly. In the newly emerging Cold War order, both countries were initially non-aligned and maintained good relations, not only because of their shared strategic interests but also because of the (Nehru's) sense of a shared post-colonial legacy. China's involvement in the Korean War and India's ongoing conflict with Pakistan made neither one of them want to open a second front. For instance, New Delhi showed its support for breaking the Chinese isolation through active lobbying for Chinese representation in the United Nations. Their friendly bilateral relations were further cemented during the 1955 Bandung Conference, which gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India-China relations were branded as "Hindi-China bhai bhai" or "Indians and Chinese are brothers."

In the late 1950s, relations deteriorated when both sides published maps, which showed some of the disputed territories as their own. The problem was that the border was not clearly delineated during the British occupation of India. The McMahon Line, for instance, which was supposed to demarcate the eastern border, was not acknowledged as such by the Chinese Qing- leadership at the time of the Shimla Conference (1914) and thus never recognized by the Chinese. When China annexed Tibet, which it argued had been Chinese territory since the 13th century Yuan Dynasty, an important buffer state between the two countries disappeared overnight. All of a sudden, India was bordering a massive country with its own aspiring regional ambitions and foreign policy orientations. During the ongoing border negotiations, both sides hardened their stance, and New Delhi thought it necessary to take up forward positions and set up many outposts in the disputed areas. The Chinese responded in a, what they called, limited war by routing Indian forces before retreating to what the Chinese considered to be the legitimate border. Eventually, the war did not change the positions of India and China on the border much. India remained in control of the eastern sector, while China was in control of the western sector. Despite this unchanged reality, the war significantly influenced Indian perceptions.

The 1962 China-India War was the result of "Chinese aggression," as Nehru called it. He also mentioned that he saw the war as a "betrayal by the Chinese," since it was his initial belief that both sides were developing a closer relationship in the 1940s and 1950s.³³⁹ The

³³⁹ Steven Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, in particular, p. 213–224.

slogan “Hindi-Chini bhai bhai” was quickly replaced by “bye bye Hindi-China bhai bhai.”³⁴⁰ It took fifteen years before India and China would again exchange ambassadors. In the Indian media, such mantras uttered by the Indian leadership have been repeated endlessly even though many of the exact details of the war remain classified.³⁴¹ In the public mind, this has painted a one-dimensional picture of a naïve and passive India vis-à-vis an aggressive and provocative China, which endures until today.³⁴² Added to such stereotypes is a general feeling of puzzlement over China’s actions, intentions, and character. In Nehru’s words, the Chinese “smile while saying the most callous and ruthless things....with the Chinese, you never know and have to be prepared for unexpected reactions. This may be partly due to their isolation, but it is mainly the Chinese character, I think.”³⁴³ Such negative and insecure belief systems were further cemented in the 1960s when China granted assistance to Pakistan (particularly during the India-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971) and when it was reported that China was supporting the Naxal insurgencies in India.³⁴⁴ The support to the Indian communist rebels reinforced the ideological dimension of the mistrust.³⁴⁵ During the 1970s and early 1980s, there was little interaction between the two civilization states, also because China and the United States were aligned since 1971, whereas India had close links with the Soviet Union. China’s closeness with Pakistan and the United States was at that time already seen as a way to encircle India.

The rapprochement from the late 1980s and the “engagement” narrative have been unable to dissipate the feelings of mistrust that run deep in the public mind.³⁴⁶ The boundary talks and “trust and tranquility” statements from the Indian government are seen as pragmatic ways in dealing with China, which is a policy that is meant to be aimed at keeping the status quo without effectively resolving the border dispute and, with it, the deeper feelings of mistrust.³⁴⁷ For many Indians, the border represents a relic of the 1962 War, and it is no coincidence that feelings of mistrust linger on due to the numerous border patrols into what the Indians believe to be their territory. Foreign Secretary Rao mentioned that “the cartographies

³⁴⁰ Some 2015 media articles cast the state of current relations from “bye bye” to “buy buy”; see, for instance, *Hindustan Times*, Modi-Xi Agenda: ‘Hindi-Chini buy buy’, September 16, 2014.

³⁴¹ The Henderson Brooks report, which reflects on the war from the Indian Army’s perspective, remains classified even after five decades.

³⁴² Stephen Cohen, *India Emerging Power*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2001, p. 256–258.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³⁴⁴ B.P. Sinha, “Insurgency in North East India – The External Dimension,” *the USI Journal*, 1998.

³⁴⁵ Krishna Roa, “Insurgency in the North East,” *the USI Journal*, 1998.

³⁴⁶ Lora Saalman, “Divergence, similarity and symmetry in Sino-Indian threat perceptions,” 2011.

³⁴⁷ Rup Narayan Das, “India-China Border Talks Shift From Resolving Disputes to Managing Them,” *China Brief*, Vol.14, No.4, 2011.

that define national identity are internalized in the minds of people of both countries.”³⁴⁸ This may explain why, despite the numerous deliberations and plethora of CBMs, there has been very little progress in resolving the issue. As long as the border remains unresolved, such feelings are not likely to dissipate. The border issue is further complicated by the fact that the disputed area is not simply a stretch of territory in the mountainous Himalayas. For instance, Arunachal Pradesh’s Tawang district is a religious place for Hindus and a place where the Dalai Lama rested after his escape from Tibet. China’s vulnerability in Tibet further complicates the border dilemma.

The Tibet dilemma

An area where India has a perceived strategic leverage over China is in the Tibet issue. In 1959, the Tibetan Revolution broke out. In India, there was – and still is – public sympathy for the Tibetan case. At that time of the revolution, Nehru was under domestic pressure to stand up to the perceived Chinese aggression. The Dalai Lama was welcomed in the Indian city Dharamsala, and India has hosted the Tibetan Government-In-Exile (TGIE) ever since. The Tibetan diaspora residing in India numbers over 100,000 and periodically exerts pressure on the Indian government to push for an Indian acknowledgement of an independent Tibet. The official Indian position is that Tibet (or the “Tibetan Autonomous Region,” as Indian policymakers like to call it) is part of the Chinese territory.³⁴⁹ There is, however, a widespread sympathy for the Tibetan case. Moreover, the Indian government cannot open-endedly prevent pro-Tibetan demonstrations or suppress sentiments, even more so given the successful internationalization of the Tibetan case. For the Indians, the spiritual and cultural links with Tibet are self-evident. The Dalai Lama often criticizes the official Indian position of being appeasing toward China. On the other hand, China constantly warns the Indian government that it will not accept any anti-Chinese activities in India by the Tibetans. Thus, the Indian government is in a position where it faces internal and external pressure on the Tibetan issue. So far the Indian official position is not to escalate the situation, although many security experts are well aware that the Tibet issue is one of the few trump cards New Delhi has in its dealings

³⁴⁸ Nirupama Rao, “Prospects and Challenges of India-China Interactions in the 21st Century,” Avtar Singh Bhasin (ed.), *India’s Foreign Relations - 2011*, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2012, p. 988.

³⁴⁹ The Tibetan Autonomous Region is a much smaller area than Tibet; for instance, the TAR does not include Arunachal Pradesh. In 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee “recognized” that the TAR was part of the People’s Republic of China territory. At home, Vajpayee was criticized for giving in to China, but others have argued that his stance did not challenge the Tibetan claims, since the PRC only came into existence in 1949.

with China. In the words of John Garver, “China’s vulnerability in Tibet is to India what India’s vulnerability vis-à-vis Pakistan is to China.”³⁵⁰

In 2008, the Tibetan situation deteriorated when riots and demonstrations broke out in Tibet. Consequently, anti-China demonstrations took place in India, including a disturbance at the Chinese embassy. In a response, the Indian president asked the Dalai Lama to “not conduct any political activities [in India] that lead to a negative impact on Sino-Indian relations.”³⁵¹ Ignoring the “overcautious” Indian advice, the Dalai Lama visited Tawang in 2009, 50 years after the escape from Lhasa, and stated that the city was Indian territory. In the deteriorating China-India relations, the Dalai Lama’s visit was well-timed. More than before, arguments started to appear about how the Indian government should take a harder stance on the Tibet issue. China’s bad track record, when it comes to dealing with its ethnic minorities, further complicates the situation. Moreover, nationalist discourse and a process of Hanization by the Chinese government have been used to exert its control over Tibet.³⁵² This attempt of the Chinese central government to tighten its grip on Tibet did not come without conflict, with the 2008 uprisings as a case in point. Rajiv Sikri concluded that “the more repression there is, the less credible China’s claim to ‘peaceful rise’.”³⁵³ After all, it was China that escalated the security situation through (a) the violent crackdown of the Tibetan protest; (b) referring to Arunachal Pradesh as “South Tibet”; (c) and the mounting pressure on India through the increased number of border patrols in that area. In the strategic document “Non-Alignment 2.0,” it was argued that India’s Tibet policy should be “reassessed and readjusted.” It stated that the Indian government should persuade China to seek reconciliation with the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetan community.³⁵⁴ A study by the IDSA in 2012 stressed that India’s strategic bargaining chip in Tibet should not be tied to the fate of the Dalai Lama. Instead, India should focus on the reinforcement of “institutionalization of the faith.”³⁵⁵ Soft power, or “spiritual diplomacy,” would tie Tibet and India together in the long term.

From 2013, the Indian official narrative on Tibet has also become more assertive and ambiguous, which can be explained as a reaction to the perceived increased Chinese threat on

³⁵⁰ John Garver, *Protracted Contest*, p. 75.

³⁵¹ Economic Times, “Centre’s message to China: Dalai Lama must not do politics,” April 2, 2008.

³⁵² Abanti Bhattacharya, “Chinese nationalism and the fate of Tibet,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 31, No.2.

³⁵³ As quoted in IDSA, p. 162.

³⁵⁴ Center for Policy Analysis, *Non-Alignment 2.0*, available at <http://www.cprindia.org/> (accessed June 11, 2013).

³⁵⁵ IDSA Task Force Report, “Tibet and India’s Security: Himalayan Region, Refugees and Sino-Indian Relations,” May 2012, p.14.

the border.³⁵⁶ Former intelligence chief, Bahukutumbi Raman, stated that it was in the Indian interest “to keep the Tibetan heart beating in the region.” He continued that “the self-immolations since 2009 are an indication of the total failure of the Chinese suppressive policy in the Tibetan areas.”³⁵⁷ Indian political leaders have not been as vocal on the Tibet issue but instead showed their position by not affirming the “One China” policy during high-level bilateral meetings. It shows that the Tibet issue is very much at the core of China-India relations. The passing and succession of the Dalai Lama might change some of these dynamics, although it is likely that deeper issues of identity politics will continue to paint the Tibet-India-China predicament.

Communism

Another factor that contributes to the trust deficit is the fact that China is a communist regime, although this is not mentioned in any official argument. The role of the PLA in foreign policy making is nevertheless under close scrutiny in New Delhi, particularly since it is assumed that incursions on the border are the results of instructions coming directly from the PLA and not necessarily from the political leadership in Beijing.³⁵⁸ As Sujit Duttta noted, “the dominant role of the military in shaping China’s national security and important sectors of the foreign policy agenda is highly destabilizing, since the absence of democratic or other constraints mean the use of force and application of coercive strategies would not be politically impeded.”³⁵⁹ Moreover, it is feared that the influence of the PLA on China’s strategic direction is increasing. For instance, Bhaskar Roy called 2010 the “year for the PLA.” What he meant by this was that the PLA was dictating the terms on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, war games in the South China Sea, and financial assistance to Pakistan in the wake of the 2010 floods.³⁶⁰ In 2014, the Brahma Chellaney noted that “the PLA is taking advantage of its rising political clout at home to escalate border incursions...Enjoying increasing autonomy and soaring budgets, the PLA of late appears ready to upstage even the Communist Party in China.”³⁶¹ Visits by high-

³⁵⁶ Jeff Smith, *Cold Peace*, p. 93

³⁵⁷ As quoted in *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ Interview with senior government official.

³⁵⁹ Sujit Duttta, “China’s Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications for South Asia,” Jonathan Pollack and Richard Yang (eds.), *In China’s shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1998, p. 95.

³⁶⁰ Bhaskar Roy, “China’s Strategic Vision and the PLA’s Rise,” *Journal of Defense Studies*, Vol. 5, No.3. Chinese statements on civil-military relations are also under close scrutiny in India; see, for instance, Mandip Singh, “Assertiveness in the People’s Liberation Army; Pressure on the Party,” *IDS Comment*, October 1, 2012, available at <http://idsa.in/idsacomment/> (accessed October 12, 2014).

³⁶¹ Brahma Chellaney, “Hawkish China, defensive India,” *The Hindustan Times*, September 19, 2014.

level Chinese politicians have often been disturbed by incursions along the border; this is seen as evidence for the growing dissonance between the political and military leadership in China. Following this line of reasoning would suggest that the political leadership strives for a friendly, cooperative bilateral relationship, whereas the military has a stake in keeping the conflict simmering.

The official narrative nonetheless refrains from arguments that either link the communist regime with negative identity traits (such as aggressiveness, intolerance, or revisionism) or link communism with a certain defiance to “international norms and values.”³⁶² Indian policymakers abstain from invoking the “democratic peace theory” or the need to promote democracy in the neighborhood as a prerequisite for regional peace and stability. Non-Alignment 2.0, an important strategic document drawn by senior scholars, policymakers, and journalists argued that

we are committed to democratic practices and are convinced that robust democracies are a surer guarantee of security in our neighborhood and beyond. Yet we do not ‘promote’ democracy or see it as an ideological concept that serves as a polarizing axis in world politics.³⁶³

And although Indians often compare China and India (economically and politically) and are quick to point out the obvious difference in regime types, this is seldom securitized as a threat multiplier. China’s communist regime is mentioned first and foremost with reference to how India could be a more viable foreign investment destination thanks to its sound democratic institutions. In that sense, the Indian perceptions of Chinese aggressiveness are marked more by history than by this particular “identity trait.” However, it is not unlikely that, in case New Delhi decides to emphasize its “democracy promotion” more, such securitizing will become increasingly prominent.

Domestic instability and nationalism

Indian officials do not deem it appropriate to publicly address domestic issues in China and refrain from commenting on them.³⁶⁴ There are no references in Indian official documents,

³⁶² This is based on a thorough review of official statements and speeches for the given time period.

³⁶³ Center for Policy Research, “Non-Alignment 2.0,” 2012, available at http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/working_papers/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf (accessed April 11, 2014).

³⁶⁴ Interview with senior government official.

statements, or speeches that pinpoint internal developments in China or how such trends could impinge on India's security calculus. On the other hand, there are non-official Indian commentators who have been pointing out the domestic problems China is facing and how this can affect its foreign policy. The dominant position is that China's problems, such as the gap between the rich and the poor, ethnic minorities, peasant protests, and strikes, will result in a more moderate strategy. This stems from the idea that China will be too preoccupied with its own problems and will want to keep external pressure at a minimum and focus its attention on its internal problems.³⁶⁵ Such an assessment is quite similar to Japanese ones made in the early 1990s. Nowadays, however, Japan finds that domestic instability in China can exacerbate the security situation. In Tokyo, the situation is complicated because it is believed that the Chinese solution for many of these problems is to increase nationalist or patriotic sentiments among its population.

On the one hand, Indian policymakers see nationalism as a constraining factor in developing cooperative bilateral relations, particularly considering the Chinese hardened stance on territorial integrity. In the Chinese media and commentary, India has started to appear more frequently as a source of contention, not only because of Tibet or Indian sea power (the traditional components of the "India" threat in China), but also because of India leaning more toward the United States and Japan by acting as a "western ally."³⁶⁶ Shen concludes that "any economic, military or territorial defeat by the Indians would be seen as an unacceptable face-loss for the online Chinese nationalists and could have fatal consequences for the party-state."³⁶⁷ These new domestic dynamics that influence China's India policy have been acknowledged in India as well.³⁶⁸ Indian analysts are wary of references to "core national interests" or Xi's "China dream." Raja Mohan noted that, "as Xi relies on the Chinese nationalist spirit to boost the legitimacy and authority of the party, the betting is that Beijing will have even less political space for any significant concessions in its territorial disputes with its Asian neighbors, especially Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and India."³⁶⁹ China's perceived hardened stance on territorial issues was also addressed by Narendra Modi during

³⁶⁵ Mohan Malik, "India-China Relations in the 21st Century: The Continuing Rivalry," Brahma Chellaney (ed.), *Securing India's Future in the New Millennium*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 1999, p. 398.

³⁶⁶ Interview with Srikanth Kondapalli; also see Simon Shen, "Exploring the Neglected Constraints of Chindia. Analyzing the Online Chinese Perception of India and its Interaction with China's India Policy," *The China Quarterly*, Vol.207, p. 541–560.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 560.

³⁶⁸ See, for instance, Hindustan Times, "Beat them at their own game," July 29, 2008, and Abanthy Bhattacharya, "China's cyber warriors a challenge for India," *Asia Times*, November 27, 2008.

³⁶⁹ Raja C. Mohan, "China Dream," *Indian Express*, December 5, 2012.

his trips to Japan. Modi was outspoken like never before on China when he hinted at China's 19th century expansionism.³⁷⁰ Chinese nationalism is mostly discussed in how both countries should deal with their border and Tibet.

The problem for India and China is that their quest for modernity and their transformation from a fragmented, decentralized civilization into a modern and united nation-state requires both to act tough on the disputed border. Both countries make references to different points in time, and both have their separate "belle epoches," in which a recorded presence in the past forms the basis of legitimate claims in the present. Additionally, both India and China have embraced norms of sovereignty and non-interference. Such ideas are now promoted further with public, nationalist sentiments on both sides of the riling border, making it ever more complicated for policymakers to find an acceptable solution. In short, Indians acknowledge the domestic problems in China and believe that they can have a pacifying effect as long as China concentrates on solving such issues. If the Chinese leadership decides not to solve the domestic issues but instead decides to redirect attention away from it by shoring up nationalist sentiments, this will likely affect India and China in their ability to resolve their territorial problems.

On the other hand, India does not consider itself a target of Chinese nationalism as much as Japan. There are no incidents of large-scale anti-Indian protests in China. India does not feature as a reference in China's patriotic education, and although there are some nationalist Chinese who look at India as a threat to China's rise (mostly in terms of India's claims in the Indian Ocean), Chinese leaders have not exacerbated such sentiments for political purposes. Instead, the Chinese leadership has shown a conciliatory approach in times of crises and not to give in to domestic, nationalist sentiments. In contrast to China-Japan relations, Chinese and Indian leaders have to some degree prevented identity discourse to influence bilateral relations.

5.3. China–India Identity Convergence/Divergence

China and India have a complex set of evoked images that contain elements of identity divergence but also convergence. Together, these dynamics shape the contours of the debate on the "China threat." Ideas of convergence and othering are not only based on perceptions of China but also by ideas about the self (India). This section will look at how such narratives have developed and how they are drawn from the perceptual dispositions mentioned in the

³⁷⁰ Modi mentioned China's "expansionist" policies during his election campaign while visiting Arunashal Pradesh and in his visits to Japan and the United States.

introduction of this chapter. Three major meta-narratives have identified that all have a different view on China-India relations. The “developing country” narrative identifies many similarities in China and India’s post-colonial struggle for development and global status. The “natural leaders” narrative focuses on zero-sum geostrategic rivalry between China and India. The “rising powers” frame sees similarities as well as differences. They are discussed in more detail below.

India and China as post-colonial, developing countries

In India, there are still elements that heavily draw on anti-imperialist ideas and notions of colonialism. The original non-aligned movement (NAM) under Nehru promoted the idea of a freedom movement: a freedom of Asia from its European colonizers.³⁷¹ John Garver mentioned how in both newly independent China and India there was a sense of “lost time” as well as a “grievance against a world order that had denied them their rightful place for too long.”³⁷² It rejected the ideas of “western” realist or power politics but instead envisioned a normative, alternative international order centered on concepts such as mutual respect and equality. These were not hollow, rhetorical concepts but were actively used in India’s early foreign policy. The 1954 agreement between India and China on the trade and intercourse between Tibet, China, and India (popularly known in India as the “Panchsheel Agreement”) was based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: (a) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, (b) mutual non-aggression, (c) mutual non-interference, (d) equality and mutual benefit, and (e) peaceful coexistence.³⁷³ The treaty meant to set the course for China–India relations for a period of 8 years. By the end of this period, however, relations had deteriorated and the agreement was not renewed. In the 1970s, relations improved once again and China and India recommitted themselves to the five principles, thereby reinvigorating their bilateral relationship with the impression of ideational synergy. The “peace and tranquility” mantra on the border is a direct product of this.

Although Panchsheel’s validity is under heavy scrutiny, Indian and Chinese policymakers regularly celebrate their commitment to the principles. Raja Mohan is one of many who see the Panchsheel as an Asian value system, recently invoked by Xi Jinping to

³⁷¹ Ian Hall, “Normative Power India,” Jamie Gaskarth (ed.), *China, India and the Future of International Society*, Boulder: Lynn Rieder, 2015.

³⁷² John Garver, *Protracted Contest*, p. 14.

³⁷³ See Ministry of External Affairs, “Panchsheel,” available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/> (accessed January 11, 2014).

return to a time when Western powers were absent in the Asian theater.³⁷⁴ He warns that such a path would have serious consequences for India's security. Mohan sees China's Panchsheel campaign as a way for China to mainly "frame one's interests in universal terms, push other major powers out of one's immediate vicinity and replace the old regional order with a new one."³⁷⁵ Mohan's assessment illustrates the growing acknowledgement in India that ideational rhetoric can be abused for power politics. Such assessments are not shared by proponents of the left-leaning "developing country" frame perceptual position who still believe that India's foreign policy orientations should primarily be a product of ideational principles. For them, power politics is affiliated with notions of Western imperialism. As Deepa Ollipally noted, "anti-colonial nationalism has dictated India's international outlook beyond other factors and continues to have a strong hold, despite the decades that have passed, the huge structural changes in the international system, and the political transformation domestically."³⁷⁶ Related to the "developing country" frame are notions of Western imperialism and a sense of victimization, which – in a similar way to China – shapes India's national identity.³⁷⁷ Some see the China-India divide as a plot by the West to keep both from developing their full potential. For instance, Panchuk Stobdan argued that "we can be sure that the West would play on Indian sentiment to sustain China-India competition." He goes on to say that "the 'expansionist' narrative helps others sustain Asia rifts and smoothly implement their own projects."³⁷⁸ Instead he finds that "a shared philosophy, geography and economic interests could actually take China-India partnership to a new height in the 21st century."³⁷⁹ In this respect, there is more China-convergence than othering in the "developing country" frame.

Besides a shared rejection of colonialism and Western power politics, the post-colonial frame also has a civilizational and developmental side to it, which highlights India's and China's parallel history and future challenges. First, it holds that India and China are both the product of ancient civilizations and have maintained friendly relations throughout most of that time. Even though both were physically separated by the Himalayas, there are spiritual and religious links between the two countries. Second, both face similar domestic challenges, particularly the social and economic development of their own people. Despite economic

³⁷⁴ Raja Mohan, "Panchsheel 2014: China's campaign for a new security order," *Indian Express*, July 4, 2014.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Deepa Ollipally, "India's Evolving National Identity Contestation: What Reactions to the "Pivot" Tell Us," *The Asan Forum*, available at <http://www.theasanforum.org/indias-evolving-national-identity-contestation-what-reactions-to-the-pivot-tell-us/> (accessed April 29, 2014).

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Panchuk Stobdan, "Modi in China: Shift the Discourse," *IDSA Comment*, available at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ModiinChina_pstobdan_140515.html (accessed 22 June, 2015).

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

growth, India has been unable to lift many of its people out of poverty, unemployment remains high, and regional differences in economic development have become larger. In this mostly inward-looking frame, India faces a similar challenge as China, transforming its complex, agrarian civilization state into a modern, industrial, and market-based nation-state. In a sense, China is seen as a model country of which some elements of development could be emulated (although there is a hefty debate over what ways it should do so) in order to achieve similar economic development and growth.³⁸⁰ The “developing country” frame refrains from talking about the China-India relationship in competitive or adversarial terms. On the contrary, the fact that India and China were poor was mostly the result of both countries suffering from Western colonial humiliation, thus linking these concepts together in a single frame.

India as a “natural, regional leader”

Other than the “developing country” narrative, the “regional leader” meta-narrative sees China-India relations in a zero-sum struggle for space, development, and security. As an example, the 2013 India Poll showed that 94% of Indians think India should have the strongest navy in the Indian Ocean.³⁸¹ After all, the Indian Ocean is the only ocean in the world that is named after a country. Although most are reluctant to openly state it, most Indians regard their country as *the* predominant power in the South Asian subcontinent. For many years, India’s relations with its neighbors in the South Asian subcontinent have been hegemonic. The United States and the Soviet Union were mostly locked in the European and Pacific theaters. Communist China had its fair share of domestic problems and little interest in the Indian Ocean region. The European post-colonial states were on the retreat. This created favorable strategic circumstances for India to claim what it believes to be its rightful place as a regional leader. The “Indira doctrine” was based on hard power and the premise that countries in the region should bilaterally deal with India in case of problems.³⁸² This led to Indian interventions in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Extra-regional powers such as the United States were not welcomed. As a result, India began to be regarded as a regional bully by its immediate

³⁸⁰ Kishore Mahbubani calls it the “March to Modernity,” which is an Asian process of economic development led by China and India; see Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York: Public Affairs, 2008, p. 14–26. See also, for instance, Robyn Meredith, *The Elephant and the Dragon: The Rise of India and China and what it Means for All of Us*, London: W.W. Norton, 2007, in particular, p. 51–57. On differences see Niranjana Rajadhyaksha, *The Rise of India: Its Transformation from Poverty to Prosperity*, Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 2007.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Padmaja Murthy, “The Gujral Doctrine and Beyond,” available at <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jul9-8.htm>, accessed November 12, 2013.

neighbors. In the 1990s, India's regional approach shifted; the Gujral-doctrine was based on the ideas that (a) India's relations with its neighbors should be based on reciprocity and (b) India should focus on restoring frayed relations with countries it had little problems with and deal with Pakistan later.³⁸³ For most of its neighbors, India turned from a malign to a benign hegemon. Nonetheless, although Indian perspectives regarding how it should behave toward its neighbors have changed drastically, the idea that India should take a leading role in regional affairs remains.³⁸⁴

The frame of India as a regional leader is closely correlated to the hyperrealist argument. After all, it presupposes Indian dominance in South Asia and rejects extra-regional countries coming into the region, whether it is the United States or China. From this perspective, China's dealings on the border are seen as ways to keep strategic pressure on India; China's assistance to Pakistan is seen as a way to counterbalance India's strategic clout in the region; and – more recently – inroads into the IOR are interpreted as a way to keep India on the strategic defensive. This frame posits China as the most significant other in its identity construction, since it is believed that China is the only country that could and would prevent India's rise as a natural leader in the region. In this frame, there is a similar divide between the nationalist and internationalist. There are those who propose that India should get closer to the United States and that Japan and those who think India should cope with the "China threat" first and foremost by active internal balancing.³⁸⁵ The "regional leader" frame supporters are with the DPIJ, the intelligence and security communities, and some newspapers. Although not the dominant narrative, the idea of a zero-sum competition between the two countries is becoming more mainstream.

China and India as rising powers

The third frame that informs bilateral identity contestation is one that places India and China as rising powers in a rapidly changing world order. Instead of an inward-looking perspective, this frame looks at whether the simultaneous rise of India and China is feasible, which elements could cause competition, and which one could cause cooperation. It holds that as a prerequisite for becoming a global power, India has to first concentrate on expanding its economy, not just

³⁸³ Interview with Raja C. Mohan; this is also confirmed in public opinion polls, such as India Poll 2013 by the Lowy Institute.

³⁸⁴ The Indira doctrine was mostly considered a failure; see Stephen Burgess, "India and South Asia," Harsh Pant (ed.), *India's foreign policy in a unipolar world*, London: Routledge, 2009.

³⁸⁵ Ollapally, "India's Evolving National Identity Contestation: What Reactions to the "Pivot" Tell Us," The Asian Forum, available at <http://www.theasanforum.org/indias-evolving-national-identity-contestation-what-reactions-to-the-pivot-tell-us/> (accessed June 12, 2014).

to lift its own people out of poverty, but also to gain status and increase its global influence. In this sense, it bears similarity to Deng Xiaoping's dictum of biding time and focusing on economic development first. Although Nehru already envisioned India to take up a global role, such beliefs gained more traction as India's economy started to open up. Ideas were reinforced by the increased number of academic and research publications that started to comment on the unbridled potentials for economic growth in India and the consequences for a global redistribution of power. Stephen Cohen noted that

most Indians, especially those in the Delhi-centered strategic and political community, strongly believe that their country is once again destined to become a great state, one that matches the historical and civilizational accomplishments of the Indian people. This view is encountered at nearly all points along the Indian political spectrum.³⁸⁶

According to a 2010 Pew survey, 49% of Indian respondents said India would eventually become a great power, while another 38% thought India already was a great power.³⁸⁷ In the "(emerging) global major power" frame, India and China share some interests such as the multipolarization of the world order, rejection of U.S. unipolarity, and rejection—in some aspects—of the existing, institutional, and power-sharing arrangements.³⁸⁸ India and China are not alone in their desire for making a new international order. Russia, with which the Indian policy elites still have warm ties, has similar interests and has joined institutional arrangements with both countries, such as RIC, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Ultimately, both countries would like to become new poles in a multipolar order, thereby constraining what they both consider unilateral actions by the United States. It is no coincidence that China and India both opposed U.S. actions in Iraq (1998 and 2003), Kosovo (1999), and Libya (2011). Such actions are seen as undermining the norm of sovereignty and the authority of the UN system.³⁸⁹ India further shares China's interests on transnational issues

³⁸⁶ Stephen Cohen, "Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in South Asia," *Harvard/MIT Transnational Security Project Seminar*, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/1998/11/23india-cohen> (accessed April 11, 2014).

³⁸⁷ Pew Research Center, "Indians See Threat From Pakistan, Extremist Groups," October 20, 2010, available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2010/10/20/indians-see-threat-from-pakistan-extremist-groups/> (accessed January 4, 2013).

³⁸⁸ Keshav Mishra, *Rapprochement across the Himalayas: Emerging China India Relations in the Post-Cold War Period (1947-2003)*, Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004, in particular, p. 201–239.

³⁸⁹ Pant, *Strategic Asia*, p. 106.

such as climate change, trade, and restructuring the global financial institutions and terrorism. Such convergence in the spirit of globalization has “contributed to the lessening of their mutual fear,” according to Jagannath Panda, even though he goes on to say that “it has not evaporated the threat perception.”³⁹⁰ That is so because none of the areas of convergence deal with the areas that form the basis of India’s threat perception. The fact that both countries have shared global interests could incentivize them to work together and shelf bilateral sensitivities. It might also raise the potential cost for conflict. Nevertheless, it does not dissipate deep-rooted issues of concerns, particularly the border issue that is deeply ingrained in the evolving security/identity discourse. Despite the fact that both emphasize their shared interest in securing the sea lanes and keeping the border “tranquil and peaceful,” they both consider each other as potential spoilers. Thus, the “emerging power” frame has elements of cooperation, but such cooperation is delineated by what each considers its own strategic backyard. A Chinese presence, whether economic, political, or economic in India’s strategic neighborhood is seen as inimical toward its national interests.

Not only does India consider itself to be a (nascent) great power, but it also sees itself as a “civilizational power,” which not only informs some convergence with China but also relates to India’s status as a “great power.” It holds that India’s regional clout is not merely based on its (potential) economic power or its huge population but is also grounded in its cultural values and rich history.³⁹¹ In the “great power” frame, there are those who look at international politics from a realist perspective, and as discussed in Chapter 5, such voices are becoming more common and widespread. However, within the “great power” frame, there also remain powerful, nationalist voices who uphold the traditional tendencies of strategic autonomy, sovereignty, and civilizational entitlement.³⁹² This dichotomy is also reflected in a 2013 poll by the Lowy Institute; it showed that 65% of the respondents agreed (30% strongly) that India should work together with other countries to curtail China’s growing power (the balancing argument). An almost similar amount (64%, of which 29% strongly) agreed that India should cooperate with China to play a leading role in the world stage.³⁹³ It shows that a large part of the Indian public is hedging its bets when it comes to a rising China.

³⁹⁰ Jagannath Panda, BRICS and the China-India construct: A new world order in the making?, *IDSIA Monograph Series*, New Delhi: IDSA, 2013, p 100.

³⁹¹ Teresita Schaffer, “Modi’s India: A View From Washington”, *South Asia Hand*, September 24, 2014, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/09/24-washingtons-view-of-modi-led-india-schaffer> (accessed March 29, 2014).

³⁹² Lowy Institute, *India Poll 2013*, available at <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013>, (accessed March 19, 2014).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

5.4. Hypothesis Testing

Indian officials are reluctant to securitize China's identity traits, let alone to juxtapose them with India's. They do not publicly discuss China's minority problems, the growing gap between the rich, and the poor or issues of nationalism, partly because India is dealing with similar problems. Instead, they emphasize there is some level of convergence and an understanding that both countries are dealing with similar challenges in their nation-building and economic development. There is a growing discord between the official narrative and the wider strategic discourse on bilateral relations.

Nehruvians like to point out that both India and China are developing countries with shared interest in transnational issues such as climate change, environment, terrorism, and multipolarization. This convergence argument has become less convincing for many Indians, mostly as a result of the growing realization that the China-India bilateral competition has simply become too great. Both powers can pragmatically work together on issues of shared global interests but have been unable to book significant progress on the issues that inherently divide them. The major reason why Indians perceive China as a security threat is because of the historical legacy on the disputed border.³⁹⁴ For a long time, India and China were civilizational states isolated from each other and separated by the Himalayas. In the post-colonial world, India and China started their relations on a high. The 1962 War came as a total shock for India, even more so as New Delhi tried to steer its own idealistic course as a newly independent country. This "betrayal" by the Chinese still lingers on in the public mind. Such basic schemas and beliefs about China have recently been reinforced by the extended media coverage on the PLA's incursions in 2009 and 2013.³⁹⁵ For a hyperrealist, these episodes were a testament of the inherent aggressive intentions that China has vis-à-vis India. It is no surprise that the hyperrealists have gained influence as a result. Threat perceptions are thus triggered first by what are perceived to be escalatory acts and then reinforced by putting such incidents in a simplified, historical context. As one distinguished Indian scholar/diplomat notes, "in today's India, the narrow nationalism, if not paranoia, built on the burden of 1962, seems only artificial."³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ It should be noted that the Indian media is often blamed for giving false information on the border. There are several reasons for this: (a) India's media has become very competitive and, as a result, has become more sensationalist; (b) the influence of the government on the media is declining; (c) the media is used for parochial interests and agencies to leak or use the media to advance their own interests; and (d) the Indian media lacks foreign reporters; see Yang Lu, *Dynamics of National Interest and National Identity: A Constructivist Approach to the India-China Relations (2003-2012)*, PhD-thesis, Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg, 2013, p. 170–172.

³⁹⁶ Stobdan, Modi in China: Shift the Discourse, *IDSA Comment*, May 14, 2015.

So far, Indian officials have shown a commitment to not go along in the hyperrealist, divisive narrative. Indian officials do not push for a more value-laden foreign policy or any kind of democracy promotion as part of its foreign policy. Democracy promotion is instead seen as a hard power tool to justify American interventions in the Middle East and not as a soft-power tool to foster cooperation between like-minded countries. For the whole time period under review, there is no observable change in India's official identity-discourse vis-à-vis China. At the same time, we have observed a change in the "China threat" arguments, particularly from the early 2010s onward. This suggests that identity convergence only plays a secondary role in perceptions of threat.

Chapter 6: Japan and China's Military Capabilities

Main findings

- Japan's military budget shrank between 1996 and 2012, whereas China's expenditure grew annually with double digits percentage-wise, causing drastic changes in the balance of military power.
- The concerns about China's military modernization became more pronounced for the whole time period under review, although most discursive changes did not come gradually but often materialized after trigger events.
- China's growing military power is an enabling factor, but it does not independently cause the threat perceptions to change.
- Instead, the growing military power raises attention and creates anticipations about future behavior.
- From 2009, linking China's increasing power with its assertive behavior became axiomatic in framing China's rise as a security concern in Japan's policy discourse.
- Japan's concerns about China's military modernization focus on threats to its offshore islands and coping with China's presumed anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy.

6.1. Introduction

According to realist theory, military spending is a key variable that can explain the emergence of threat perceptions in an anarchical state structure. In the period from 1990 until 2014, the Chinese defense budget rose annually with double digits. This trend would suggest that China would be considered a growing threat as it grows more powerful. This chapter will look at how China's military modernization is interpreted in Japan. First, I will process trace perceptions and debates on China's growing military expenditure and military modernization in general. Then I will look at what (new) capabilities are considered the most threatening to Japan. The chapter will end with hypothesis testing and a conclusion. Some of the key findings are already presented in the box above.

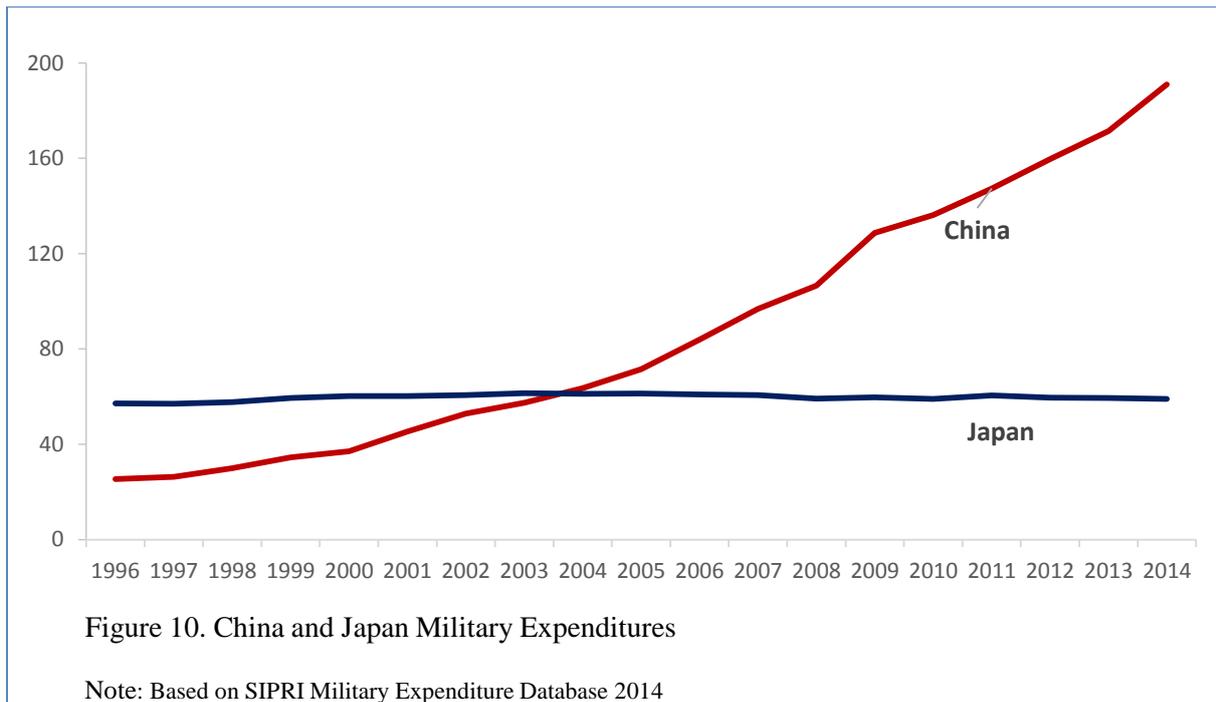
Walt mentioned geographic proximity as one of the factors that raise perceptions of threat.³⁹⁷ Ueki added that Japan's proximity to China acts as a de facto threat multiplier.³⁹⁸ In both cases, Japan's geographic destiny makes it highly susceptible to the changes in relative power. China's continued investments in naval, air, and missile capabilities and information technologies have become reasons for concern for Japan, since most of these new capabilities have the potential to hit Japan. This chapter will first look at how China's military modernization was perceived in Japan and subsequently look at what elements of this modernization were considered to pose the greatest security threat.

6.2. Expanding Budgets and Military Modernization

At the same time of China's rise, Japan's economy went into decline. This also had consequences for Japan's military spending. Between 1996 and 2014, Japan's military budget shrank whereas China's expenditure grew annually with double digits percentage-wise (see the figure). These trends made it possible for China to rapidly catch up with Japan's military spending. In 1996, China's defense budget was estimated to be around half the size of Japan's budget. Sixteen years later, China's military expenditure was about three times the size of Japan's. In Japan's official narrative, China's military expenditure comes out prominently; it has become a growing source of concern and has become articulated accordingly. This section will track the development of this discourse and perception and highlight the most significant changes.

³⁹⁷ Stephen Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, p. 23–24.

³⁹⁸ Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" arguments*, p. 32.



Military modernization as part of a wider development

In Japan's official discourse in the early 1990s, China's modernization of military equipment was duly acknowledged, but this was not so much articulated as a threat but more as a move toward creating a more modern army. According to the 1990 Japan Defense Agency (JDA) defense white paper, China was in a process of "shifting its conventional posture of the 'people's war', based on guerilla war tactics....to a posture of war by regulars which attaches importance to the operational ability and combat readiness based on the joint operations of its armed forces."³⁹⁹ In many ways, China had a lot of catching up to do, and this modernization was argued to be a long-overdue process.⁴⁰⁰ A recurring trend in the Japanese defense white papers of the first years of the 1990s was the supposed priority China puts on economic construction over military modernization.⁴⁰¹ Basically, the JDA did not openly question Beijing's line of reasoning that military modernization was only second to economic

³⁹⁹ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 1990*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1991.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ This argument underwent subtle changes in the Defense of Japan over the years. For instance, while the top priority was economic development, the 1997 white paper added that, according to Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, China would also enhance its defense capabilities and national defense forces, partly as a prerequisite for this economic development. In the white papers that followed, economic developments were linked with Chinese statements on military modernization. The 1999 Defense of Japan added its own interpretation and stated that despite the argument made by China's Defense Minister Chi Haotian that China's defense build-up was subject to economic construction, China's military modernization required continued scrutiny.

development. In 1993, after consecutive years of a double-digit increase in defense spending, the defense white paper still argued that since China

puts its top priority on economic construction, it is unlikely that the ratio of defense spending to total fiscal spending will drastically increase in the future. Also it seems difficult for China to immediately implement the modernization of its entire defense forces while maintaining the current level of strength, because the country faces a difficult situation with its economy showing inflationary trends and continually suffering from budget deficits.⁴⁰²

This view remained persistent in the JDA publications, even while China continued to modernize its indigenously built armed forces and invest heavily in newly imported military equipment from Russia (such as the *Kilo*-class submarines and the *Sovremenny*-class destroyers) and indigenously built surface vessels, submarines, and missiles.

Early voices of concern

This does not mean the Japanese were unaware of the security implications of such trends.⁴⁰³ In the early 1990s, some Japanese strategic thinkers outside the government had already started to question whether a peaceful rise of China would be possible. Some of them argued that the trends pointed in the other direction; they said that in the context of the post-Cold War, China's military spending should be considered a potential threat to Japan.⁴⁰⁴ Shigeo Hiramatsu, a researcher at the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) and later the professor at Kyorin University, and Tomohide Murai of the Japan Defense Academy (JDA), were the first ones who warned against China's growing power and laid the foundation for what would later become a host of analysis and strategic commentaries on China's military modernization. Hiramatsu had been warning of the threat coming from China's growing military power long before the 1990s.⁴⁰⁵ He studied Chinese official statements and speeches in a historical determinist approach and deduced how China's growing power would gravely

⁴⁰² Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 1993*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1994.

⁴⁰³ At the same time, it should be noted that besides China, Japanese defense planners also had to deal with a belligerent Democratic Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and the remnants of a decade-long Soviet threat.

⁴⁰⁴ With the disappearance of a shared Soviet threat, the necessity of maintaining friendly relations for strategic purposes was no longer there.

⁴⁰⁵ Yashuhiro Matsuda, "Japanese assessments of China's military development," *Asian Perspective*, Vol.31, No. 3, p. 191.

impact Japan's security.⁴⁰⁶ Moreover, he predicted that, as China became stronger, its behavior would become more aggressive, particularly in the maritime domain.⁴⁰⁷ The critique to Hiramatsu's argument was that he often used anecdotal evidence to make broad generalizations about China's strategic goals.⁴⁰⁸ Nevertheless, many of his predictions seem to have materialized, at least in the eyes of the Japanese.⁴⁰⁹ Murai published an article in 1990 in which he warned against China's military modernization in the new post-Cold War regional order.⁴¹⁰ According to Murai, now that China and Japan no longer need each other to balance against the Soviet threat, Japan should take heed of China's sustained military development and the potential threat coming from it.

However, Ueki observed that the arguments put forward by Hiramatsu and Murai still constituted a minority view in the early and mid-1990s.⁴¹¹ In a counterargument, Ikuo Kayahara, for instance, argued that China's military capabilities still lagged far behind the U.S.'s and that attempts to hype the "China threat" were the result of "psychological amplification in the context of a lack of transparency."⁴¹² Similarly, Abe Junichi argued that the military threat from China should not be taken seriously based on the existing power asymmetries between China on the one hand and the U.S. and Japan on the other.⁴¹³ Blowing the "China threat" out of proportion was believed to be "unconstructive at best" and would "only succeed in intensifying mutual distrust."⁴¹⁴ The differences in their statements can be explained by the fact that Hiramatsu and Murai based their assessments on the future trajectory of China's military spending based on historical trends, in contrast to others who focused on the existing balance of power and the military dominance of the United States in the Asia-Pacific at that time.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Euam Graham, *Japan's Sea Lane Security: A Matter of Life and Death*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 216.

⁴⁰⁸ Matsuda, "Japanese Assessments of China's Military Development," p. 191.

⁴⁰⁹ While his warnings against China's growing power were a minority view in the early 1990s, his views would become more mainstream in the wake of the generational change of Japanese politicians, China's ongoing military expenditure, and China's perceived assertiveness with regard to the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits between 1992 and 1996.

⁴¹⁰ On this article and the wider changes in domestic discourse, see Wilhelm Vosse, "Increasing threat perceptions and anti-militarist norms, Wilhelm Vosse, Reinhard Drifte and Verena Blechinger-Talcott (eds.), *Governing Insecurity in Japan: The Domestic Discourse and Policy Response*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

⁴¹¹ Ueki, The Rise of "China threat" arguments, p. 334.

⁴¹² As quoted in Seiichiro Takagi, "Studies of China's Foreign and Security Policies in Japan," Robert Ash, David Shambaugh and Seiichiro Takagi (eds.), *China Watching: Perspectives from Europe, Japan and the United States*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, p. 199.

⁴¹³ Ibid, p. 200.

⁴¹⁴ Ikuo Kayahara, "China as a Military Power in the Twenty-first Century," *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 67.

Nonetheless, in academic and strategic commentaries, the arguments that followed Hiramatsu and Murai's logic started to appear more often. In 1995, the Japan Forum for International Relations (JFIR) published an influential report on the future of China and the policy Japan should adapt. It was co-signed by 67 prominent scholars and business leaders and reflected on fears that China's new wealth was used to boost its military and that this new military power would someday be used to assert China's historic claims.⁴¹⁵ Satoshi Morimoto summarized on what was an emerging consensus on China's military modernization as follows: (a) China does not pose a threat at the moment; (b) however, "if [it] maintains its current rapid pace of economic development, devotes significant portions of its GNP to military modernization, and builds up its power projection capabilities in neighboring waters, it will ultimately become a serious threat in the Asia-Pacific region"; and (c) the lack of transparency blurs the direction of China's military policies and adds to the growing concerns.⁴¹⁶

The emerging debate did not only take place in the epistemic communities. Even though the Defense of Japan, the official publication from the Japan Defense Agency (JDA), remained largely silent on China's modernization drive in the early 1990s, some individual politicians started to question the need and intentions behind it. As early as March 1991, Chief Cabinet Secretary Sakamoto Misoji declared that the Japanese Official Development Aid (ODA) to China should be reviewed given China's increased military spending.⁴¹⁷ Similar concerns were expressed by vice-Foreign Minister Kakizawa Koji in 1992 after the purchase by China of the Ukrainian-built aircraft carrier *Varyag* (refurbished and eventually commissioned as the *Liaoning* in 2012). In 1993, Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata added that China needed to increase its military transparency.⁴¹⁸ And in 1995, Foreign Minister Kohno expressed his concerns over China's military spending while casting doubt over the Chinese explanation that the budget increase was only meant to replace outdated equipment. He warned that "if you ask the Chinese, they will explain that it is not an increase but a renewal and modernization of weapons. But I think we must observe (the change) with even greater caution."⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Japan Forum on International Relations, "The Policy Recommendations on the Future of China in the Context of Asian Security," Tokyo: JFIR, 1995.

⁴¹⁶ Satoshi Morimoto, "Chinese Military Power in Asia: A Japanese Perspective," Jonathan Pollack and Richard Yang (eds.), *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development*, Washington D.C.: Rand, 1998, p 37-52.

⁴¹⁷ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Security Relations with China: From Balancing to Bandwagoning?*, Routledge: London, 2003, p. 43.

⁴¹⁸ Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, p. 354.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

Gradually, such arguments became more commonplace, and the reservations about military trends were incorporated in official documents. It began with the ODA Charter, which was amended under the Kaifu government in 1992 to include extra principles regarding the distribution of aid. One of four new principles stated that “full attention should be paid to trends in recipient countries’ military expenditures, their development and production of mass destruction weapons and missiles, their export and import of arms, etc., so as to maintain and strengthen international peace and stability.”⁴²⁰ Although China was not explicitly mentioned in the document, it was clear that if trends in military expenditure continued at the same pace, China’s ODA would become under increased scrutiny.⁴²¹ The new ODA Charter was not the only official document to make an implicit reference to China. The November 1995 adopted National Defense Policy Outline (NDPO) mentioned – in a much more direct way – that “there still remain large-scale military capabilities including nuclear arsenals and many countries in the region are expanding or modernizing their military capabilities mainly against the background of their economic development.”⁴²² This was in line with the influential Higuchi-report, which was the result of the work of an advisory panel created by Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in 1994.⁴²³ This report had already argued that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, “there is no evidence that the level of military tension in this part of the world has declined.” It went on to say that countries in the region had instead become more concerned about their security and were “devoting a considerable portion of their resources to the improvement of military power.”⁴²⁴ Mostly without specifically mentioning China, it became increasingly clear that Japan was becoming concerned about the developments in Chinese

⁴²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Japan’s Official Development Assistance Charter*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1999, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1999/ref1.html> (accessed September 12, 2013).

⁴²¹ Domestically, the distribution of Japanese aid money to China became increasingly difficult to maintain as concerns over China’s military spending increased. Eventually, aid to China was phased out, partly as a result of China’s ongoing investments in military equipment; see Tsukusa Takamine, *Japan’s Development Aid to China: The Long-Running Foreign Policy of Engagement*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 136–157.

⁴²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *National Defense Program Outline in and after FY 1996*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1995, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/security/defense96/situation.html> (accessed August 11, 2013).

⁴²³ The official title of the report was “The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century.” The panel consisted of nine members with Hirotarō Higuchi as Chairman; defense experts Seiko Nishihiro and Makoto Sakuma; academics Akio Watanabe and Kuniko Inoguchi; former MOFA-official Yoshio Okawara; and from the private sector, Ken Moroi, Shinji Fukukawa, and Toyoo Goten.

⁴²⁴ Advisory Group on Defense Issues, “The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century,” August 12, 1994, available at <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPSC/19940812.O1E.html> (accessed June, 12, 2013).

military spending. Michael Green and Benjamin Self observed that the tenets of Japan's China policy slowly changed from a "commercial liberalism" to a "reluctant realism."⁴²⁵

The China taboo

In the public documents, however, it was a political taboo to label China as a direct threat.⁴²⁶ Public statements on feelings of anxiety or concern were largely suppressed. Securitizing China went against the Japanese policy of engagement, which was aimed at promoting economic and political reforms in China and slowly socializing it into a liberal-based order.⁴²⁷ During that time, Tokyo saw for itself an important responsibility in supporting and facilitating China's domestic reforms and actively working together with Beijing to integrate China into the existing institutions and regional supply chains.⁴²⁸ China's rise also presented huge possibilities for Japan, in particular, as long as its rise would take place within the existing paradigm of the flying geese model with Japan at the head of the flock.⁴²⁹ It offered Japan the possibilities to turn its stagnating economy around. Therefore, it was argued that the "China-Japan relationship is important not only for the two nations, but also for peace and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the entire world; and in light of this importance, both countries share a serious responsibility to work to develop bilateral relations."⁴³⁰ So there were political and economic incentives not to label China as a threat. This was also reflected in the many powerful domestic political actors in Japan that opposed attempts to label China as a security threat: the business lobby, the powerful China-school in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and many senior politicians were all committed to maintaining pro-Chinese policies.⁴³¹

⁴²⁵ Michael J. Green and Benjamin Self, "Japan's Changing China Policy: From Commercial Liberalism to Reluctant Realism," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No.2, p. 35–58.

⁴²⁶ See Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, p. 334.

⁴²⁷ Yasuhiro Matsuda, "Engagement and Hedging: Japan's Strategy towards China," *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 109–119.

⁴²⁸ Interview with Hiroshi Tanaka.

⁴²⁹ The flying geese paradigm was put forward by Kaname Akamatsu in 1962 and provided a model for the division of labor in East Asia based on labor cost and comparative advantages. In this top-down regional model for economic cooperation, advanced economies outsource low-productivity production to second tier economies and shift to more capital-intensive economic activities. Similar dynamics would also occur further down the flock between second and third tier economies. For the original work, see Kaname Akamatsu, "A Historical Pattern of Economic Growth in Developing Countries," *Journal of Developing Economics*, Vol. 1, No.1 (March-August 1962), p. 3–25.

⁴³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook 1997*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1998, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1997/I-b.html#2> (accessed August 19, 2013).

⁴³¹ Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, p. 458.

1996-2004: Strategic uncertainties

The change in discussing China's military modernization, in response to the changing security situation, was also reflected in the 1996 defense white paper. There was a clear shift with earlier statements, as forced modernization in China was something that required continued scrutiny from then onward. It was also the first time that the paper called for Beijing to be more transparent in its military spending, particularly with the breakdown of the military budget and the overview of China's goals and objectives.⁴³² In the wake of the Taiwan Missile Crisis, it was unclear what China's regional intentions and ambitions were. Added to this lack of transparency were growing concerns over arms exports and research and development expenditures, which were supposedly not included in Chinese defense spending. Similar apprehensions were expressed in the following annual white papers. In 2001, the Chinese argument that economic construction took precedence over military modernization was finally questioned directly. The white paper clearly stated,

The problem associated with this modernization is that China does not disclose specific information on the weapons it possesses, procurement programs, unit-level organization, major operational plans, exercises and the total and details of its defense budget. In addition, whether or not the objective of the modernization exceeds the scope necessary for Chinese defense should be judged deliberately. It is necessary to keep paying close attention on these trends.⁴³³

Moreover, it added that "the annual growth rate of the national defense budget is higher than that of the GDP for the recent years. The total amount of the defense budget is also increasing significantly as the result of annual increases of more than 10% for 14 consecutive years."⁴³⁴ The ongoing double-digit increase in China's defense budget became an important source of concern in the white paper, as China's defense budget began to approach Japan's defense spending in the mid-2000s. In the official narrative, China's military modernization, its growing defense budget, and its lack of transparency were linked in an effort to signal that

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2002*, Government of Japan: Tokyo, 2003, p. 34.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

Japan was concerned over the future direction of China's defense policies and the obscurity of its long-term bilateral and regional intentions.⁴³⁵

2005-2009: Scrutinizing the rationale of military modernization

In 2005, we can see new ways in how China's military modernization is framed as a security concern in official publications and through outspoken comments of influential policy leaders. For the first time, The 2005 National Defense Program Guidelines labeled China as a concern in a strategic official document. This was explained by Defense Agency Director General Yoshinori Ono against the backdrop of an intrusion by a Chinese submarine into Japanese waters.⁴³⁶ The main question for Japanese policymakers was why China deemed it necessary to invest heavily in military equipment when the external environment was considered generally stable and peaceful. It raised questions about China's long-term intentions, not only in the case of a Taiwan scenario but also beyond that.

Foreign Minister Taro Aso was more outspoken on the issue and concluded, "When one of our neighbors has more than one billion population and atomic bombs, and its military expenditure has increased for 17 years, and its contents are extraordinarily opaque, what will happen? It is becoming a considerable threat."⁴³⁷ Although the Cabinet Office quickly watered-down Aso's statement, saying China is not a threat to Japan, Aso's evaluation was shared by opposition leader Seiji Maehara. In a speech in Washington in December 2005, he said,

China's rapid economic growth and strength has allowed it to maintain a growth rate of more than 10% in military spending for nearly 20 years. Some say that amount is perhaps two or even three times the Chinese government's official figures. Nonetheless, it continues to strengthen and modernize its military power. This is a very real concern.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ In particular, the defense white papers of the early 2000s repeatedly called for China to be more transparent in its military spending.

⁴³⁶ Kyodo News, "Analysis: Japan naming China as a concern may lead to a vicious cycle," 10 December 2004.

⁴³⁷ Quoted in Kanako Takahara, "China posing a threat," *Japan Times*, December 23, 2005, available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/12/23/national/china-posing-a-threat-aso/#.VH7 fdKUeSo> (accessed May 13, 2013).

⁴³⁸ Seiji Maehara, "The National Image and foreign Policy Envisioned by the DPJ," Speech at CSIS, Washington DC, December 8, 2005, available at <http://www.dpj.or.jp/english/news/051215/01.html> (accessed June 14, 2013).

Adding to these outspoken statements by individual politicians, MOFA, for the first time, became critical in its Diplomatic Bluebook regarding its assessment of China's military modernization: "Japan remains watchful of the fact that there are still segments which are unclear in terms of such amount increases in national defense expenditures and the modernization of China's military power, and intends to continue to keep calling for greater transparency in the future."⁴³⁹

It was in Japan's changing domestic landscape of the mid-2000s, in which openly questioning Chinese foreign policies became less of a political taboo, that Tokyo openly started to (a) question China's need for the heavy investments in military equipment, (b) doubt the accuracy of the Chinese figures, and (c) worry about how China's defense budget would develop in the future if such trends would continue. In 2007, the defense white paper stated that "this pace of increase means that the defense budget will increase two-fold every five years, and that the size of the official national defense budget of China has nominally grown 16 times in the last 19 years."⁴⁴⁰ Koizumi hinted in a response to questions from the Diet that, without explicitly mentioning China, the military modernization of countries in the region would make them a "latent threat."⁴⁴¹ It hints that no matter the actual behavior of China, a certain level of concern would always be there, thus reflecting the primacy of power asymmetries in Japan's China calculus.

After the lifting of the "China taboo," it became easier for politicians to utter their concerns on China's rise.⁴⁴² This was also possible because China's favorability rating in public opinion polls plummeted, particularly in the mid-2000s. Even though most Japanese acknowledged the importance of bilateral ties, they showed growing apprehensions over China. The Cabinet Office and Genron, a non-governmental organization, show that a growing percentage of the Japanese public has an unfavorable view of China. Since the start of the Genron poll in 2005, unfavorable views have gone up from 37.9% (in 2005) to 93% (in 2014). The Cabinet Office polls show that since the mid-2000s, unfavorable views have gone up steadily, although less spectacularly, from 58.2% (in 2005) to 83.1% (in 2014). Nonetheless, the data shows similar trends. Against the backdrop of these rapidly changing public perceptions, it became easier for Japanese politicians to publicly voice their concerns about the

⁴³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2006*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2007.

⁴⁴⁰ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2007*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2008.

⁴⁴¹ As quoted in Matsuda, "Japanese Assessments of China's Military Development," p. 187.

⁴⁴² Chikako Ueki found that the political taboo to publicly name China as a threat (or concern) gradually disappeared in the 1990s and increased in the 2000s due to (a) China's growing power, (b) the consolidation of Japan's relationship with the United States, and (c) a generational and factional change in Japan's domestic politics; see Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, p. 384–389.

security consequences of a rising China for Japan. The trends in expenditures were often the starting point of speculation, and since there was a lack of transparency and no consensus about China's overall vision and strategy, the estimates about China's intentions lacked a solid empirical basis and were open to imagination. The concerns over transparency and military spending remained, even in times of domestic political change in Japan. Under the DPJ government, which—particularly the Hatoyama government—was more China-friendly, the defense white paper and politicians continued to be critical about China's military expenditure and its lack of transparency.⁴⁴³ It showed a bipartisan consensus on the issue.

2010-2014: Changing power, changing behavior

As described above, the Japanese concerns over China's military spending and the lack of explanation or accountability about this have become more common, particularly from the mid-2000s onward, and remained so, even in times of policy shifts. Moreover, from 2009, the changing balance of power in the region was also used to rationalize what was perceived as major policy shifts in China's own foreign policy. Against the backdrop of events in the late 2000s and early 2010s, the decades of annual double-digit increase in military spending became historical proof for a China that was "biding its time" before it chose to pursue its maritime claims more aggressively.⁴⁴⁴ China's increased power was a *sine qua non* for it to pursue a more aggressive policy. It was believed that China's increased military power made it more "confident," or, as the popular meme goes, more "assertive" in its foreign policy.⁴⁴⁵ The Asian Strategic Review of 2011, which is published by the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), began its chapter on China as follows:

The year 2010 may be remembered as a turning point for China's external behavior.

Buoyed by expanding national power and growing confidence, China in 2010 began to

⁴⁴³ Ichiro Ozawa, Secretary General of the DPJ, said during his December 2009 visit to China that the Japanese view China's military development as a threat. Defense Minister Kitazawa stressed the deterrent role of the U.S. Marines in Okinawa vis-à-vis China; see Richard Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, p. 215.

⁴⁴⁴ The phrase "biding out time" comes from Deng Xiaoping's dictum of "biding time and hiding talents," which in a military sense is understood as hiding capabilities up to the point where China can effectively challenge the status quo.

⁴⁴⁵ There is a host of scholarly articles on China's assertive behavior from 2009 onward; see, for instance, Michael Swaine, "Perceptions of an Assertive China," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35.; Michael Swaine and Taylor Fravel, "China's Assertive Behavior: Part Two, the Maritime Periphery," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 35; Andrew Scobell and Scott Harold, "An "Assertive" China? Insight from Interviews," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 4. No. 1, p. 5-29. This "new assertiveness," in relation to Japan and India, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

take an assertive approach in pursuit of its own national interests, disregarding friction with the United States and neighboring countries.⁴⁴⁶

Shin Kawashima observed an increase from 2010 in English and Japanese statements on China's assertive external behavior, thereby linking these policy shifts of China (whether it was related to the East China Sea, South China Sea, or other issues) with a departure from Deng Xiaoping's strategy of biding time and hiding talents.⁴⁴⁷ The (offensive realist or power transition) theoretical assumption that increased power makes states more confrontational was not only used by realist accounts in explanations on China's assertiveness but instead became "a bedrock belief in a great deal of ostensibly non-realist writings on China's rise."⁴⁴⁸ For instance, Yasuhiro Matsuda predicted that "China's hawkish assertiveness will escalate as its national power expands" up to the point where the strategic situation would allow it.⁴⁴⁹

Japan's political leaders, particularly Shinzo Abe, although less outspoken on the topic, repeatedly warned that the open seas should be governed by international rules and law and not by might, implicitly accusing China of pursuing such a path.⁴⁵⁰ Linking Chinese increased power with its assertive behavior became axiomatic in framing China's rise as a security concern in Japan's policy discourse.⁴⁵¹ The first National Security Strategy launched in December 2013 linked those concepts together as follows:

China has been rapidly advancing its military capabilities in a wide range of areas through its continued increase in its military budget without sufficient transparency. In

⁴⁴⁶ The NIDS is the core policy research arm of the Ministry of Defense, National Institute for Defense Studies, "China: Towards a Less Cooperative, More Assertive Posture," *East Asian Strategic Review 2011*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2012.

⁴⁴⁷ Shin Kawashima, "The Development of the Debate Over "Hiding One's Talents and Biding One's Time," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 14–36.

⁴⁴⁸ Bjorn Jerden, "The Assertive China Narrative: Why it is Wrong and How So Many Still Bought into It," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, No.1, p. 81.

⁴⁴⁹ Yasuhiro Matsuda, "How to Understand China's Assertiveness since 2009: Hypotheses and Policy Implications," *Strategic Japan*, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2014.

⁴⁵⁰ See, for instance, Shinzo Abe's speeches in ASEAN countries early 2013.

⁴⁵¹ The official white papers of the Ministry of Defense and NIDS' East Asian Strategic Reviews of those years suggest this logic; for instance, the 2011 defense white paper stated, "China has not clarified the current status of or future vision for the modernization of its military capabilities, and since transparency is not sufficiently ensured regarding its decision-making processes for security and military matters, it has been pointed out that there is a possibility that this could lead to a sense of distrust and misunderstandings in other countries. Furthermore, China is expanding and increasing its activities in waters close to Japan." The China 2013 Security Report of the NIDS also discusses "China's new assertiveness" against the backdrop of relative changes in the distribution of power; see National Institute for Defense Studies, "NIDS China Security Report 2013," Tokyo: NIDS, 2013, available at http://www.nids.go.jp/publication/chinareport/pdf/china_report_EN_web_2013_A01.pdf (accessed December 12, 2013).

addition, China has taken actions that can be regarded as attempts to change the status quo by coercion based on their own assertions, which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, in the maritime and aerial domains, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea.⁴⁵²

From a Japanese perspective, Hiramatsu and Murai's warnings in the early 1990s seem to have materialized; China's strategy of coercion and intimidation has been made possible against the backdrop of a changing balance of power, not only thanks to China's rise itself but also as a result of the U.S. and Japanese decline.⁴⁵³ According to this logic, it is no coincidence that China chose to change its policy toward the region at a time when (a) the U.S. was facing a severe financial crisis and (b) China overtook Japan as the second economic power in the world. China's increased power has been interpreted as a prerequisite for its behavior, particularly from 2009 onward. The minority view of the early 1990s had become the mainstream perception in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

As expected for the time period under review, China's increased defense expenditure as a security concern has become articulated in increasingly open and candor ways in Japan's policy discourse. Nonetheless, we can distinguish several sudden shifts in the discourse: in 1996, 2005, and 2010. The next section will highlight how particular elements of China's military modernization have affected Japan's perception of threat.

6.3. Susceptibility

Even though China's increased military spending figures prominently in the official narrative, some analysts argue that this is not the true source of concern for the Japanese defense planners. The real anxieties are rather about China's investment in certain military capabilities that will allow it to erode U.S./Japanese dominance in the regional waters and skies.⁴⁵⁴ The 2010 Sato-report, named after its chairman Shigetake Sato and set up by the Japanese prime minister, which served as input for the new National Defense Program

⁴⁵² Cabinet Office, "National Security Strategy," Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2014, available at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf (accessed January 12, 2014).

⁴⁵³ The years 2008 and 2009 are often mentioned as a watershed in China's foreign policy, where it chose to pursue a more aggressive policy. One of the main reasons for this timing is the Lehman Shock and banking crisis in the United States and its relative decline as a result; interview with Masashi Nishihara, RIPS president.

⁴⁵⁴ James Schoff, *Realigning Priorities: The US-Japan Alliance and the Future of Extended Deterrence*, Cambridge: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2009, report available at <http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/RealignPriorities.pdf> (accessed, March 9, 2014).

Guidelines (NDPG), warned that “a number of nations are gaining and strengthening their ability to enclose parts of the global commons, such as obstructing the deployment of military force in the sea and airspace around their nations, destroying artificial satellites, and mounting attacks in cyberspace”; as a result, it continued, “the superiority of US power in the region is not unconditional.”⁴⁵⁵ This section will look at what new capabilities have heightened the perceptions of threat in Japan. Not all trends in China have been monitored with the same levels of anticipation; there are elements in China’s military modernization that feature more than others in Japan’s threat assessments. This section will look at the three dimensions of China’s military modernization that effect Japan’s security calculus: the first part will discuss the nuclear asymmetry between the two countries; the second part naval and air modernization (which is particularly relevant in relation to the ongoing disputes); and the third part the developments in the new military domains of space and cyberspace.⁴⁵⁶

Nuclear asymmetry and missile development

Japan is the only country in history to have been hit by a nuclear attack, which has resulted in a domestic taboo and allergy toward the topic.⁴⁵⁷ It also has affected Japan’s foreign policy orientations, since, as a result of the atomic bombings, Japan sees for itself an important role in the global effort of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.⁴⁵⁸ At the same time, the question rises whether a reliance on extended deterrence through the U.S. nuclear umbrella will suffice in the changing security environment.⁴⁵⁹ Some consider Japan to already be a quasi-nuclear power. The question for those skeptics is not if but when Japan will “go nuclear.” They argue that Japan has the necessary capabilities to go nuclear within a short amount of time,

⁴⁵⁵ The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, “Japan’s Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation,” August 2010, available at http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo_e.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014).

⁴⁵⁶ These three areas of China’s military modernization have been identified as key in affecting Japan’s security calculus; see Tokyo Foundation, “Japan’s Security Policy toward China: Integration, Balancing and Deterrence in the Area of Power Shift,” Tokyo: Tokyo Foundation, 2011, p. 14, available at http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/additional_info/security_strategy_toward_china.pdf (accessed November 18, 2012).

⁴⁵⁷ See, for instance, Thomas Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

⁴⁵⁸ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Japan’s Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Policy,” Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2011, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/pdfs/pamph1103.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2013).

⁴⁵⁹ Nobumasa Akiyama argued that Japan’s non-nuclear policies are not based on the emotional reactions to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, but actually developed in a complicated political process, and were not simple reflections of idealism; Nobumasa Akiyama, “The Socio-Political Roots of Japan’s Non-Nuclear Posture,” Benjamin Self and Jeffrey Thompson (eds.) *Japan’s Nuclear Option: Security, Politics and Policy in the 21st Century*, Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003, p. 64–94.

should Japan's politicians decide to pursue such a course of action.⁴⁶⁰ Such a decision would depend on the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella and on how the other nuclear powers in the region (North Korea and China) develop their nuclear capabilities and nuclear doctrines. China went nuclear in 1964 after successfully testing a highly enriched uranium atomic bomb. This was followed by the explosion of a thermo-nuclear device in 1967. In the 1960s and 1970s, China developed and tested indigenously produced liquid-fueled missiles (Dongfeng-series, DF-1 to DF-3) with a range of 2,650 kilometers. Additional short- and medium-range liquid-fueled missiles were produced during the Cold War. At that time, however, Japan and China were in the same strategic camp, and concerns over nuclear weapons were largely muted.

They resurfaced after the end of the Cold War. In the early 1990s, China's conventional arms were no match for Japan's advanced modern weapons. However, unlike China, Japan had never developed nuclear capabilities, and so it was perceived that Japan was – at least to some extent – susceptible to China's nuclear capabilities.⁴⁶¹ The reality of a nuclear attack on Japan from China was nonetheless considered so remote that China's possession of a nuclear weapon did not seriously heighten perceptions of threat outside the security communities. The nuclear weapons were only believed to be used in cases of the Taiwan scenario.⁴⁶² China also stressed in its official documents that it upheld its No-First Use (NFU) principle. Moreover, the China taboo and Japan's default policy of engagement did not allow political space to become vocal on something as sensitive as nuclear weapons. For these reasons, the concerns about China's nuclear capability were mostly muted in the official discourse in the first years after the Cold War.

In 1993, the Defense of Japan stated that China, “as a nuclear power...is capable of having grave effects on the security of this region.”⁴⁶³ For its defense, Japan had to rely on the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States. Any nuclear attack against Japan (either by the DPRK [most likely] or China [less likely]) would be followed by a retaliation attack from the United States (deterrence by punishment). A popular question being raised at that time was whether Washington was willing to sacrifice Los Angeles to save Tokyo.⁴⁶⁴ The susceptibility to a potential nuclear attack from either North Korea or China was the reason for Tokyo

⁴⁶⁰ Kenneth Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security*, No. 18, p. 44–79.

⁴⁶¹ Ueki, *The Rise of “China Threat”* arguments, p. 356.

⁴⁶² This does not mean Japanese policymakers do not care about the missiles aimed at Taiwan. As a matter of fact, Taiwan figures prominently in Japan's strategic thinking, and the possibility of losing a Japan-friendly Taiwan to mainland China would have serious strategic consequences for Japan.

⁴⁶³ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2003*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2004.

⁴⁶⁴ Taro Kono, for instance, said in 2002 that he doubted the United States would sacrifice Los Angeles for Tokyo; see Howard French, “Taboo Against Nuclear Arms is Being Challenged in Japan,” *New York Times*, June 9, 2002.

developing a Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) system in cooperation with the United States. Deterrence by punishment (retaliation in the event of an attack) would be complemented with deterrence by denial (preventing a successful attack in the first place). The development of a TMD system, in cooperation with the United States, was met with fierce opposition from Beijing, claiming that such a system would undermine China's nuclear deterrent. Since Japan does not possess nuclear weapons, this logic would be invalid unless China's policy of NFU or NFU against non-nuclear powers did not apply to Japan. Ironically, Chinese statements that went against Japan's decision to cooperate in TMD further added to the anxieties over China's ballistic missile threat.

This was augmented in the mid-1990s when China continued to test its nuclear weapons despite the Japanese pressure not to do so.⁴⁶⁵ Even though it was believed that the tests did not improve the likelihood of an attack, it brought the reality of the existence and further development of China's nuclear weapons into the public spotlight.⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, the nuclear testing was believed to be aimed at developing newer, smaller warheads, possibly with Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) capability to fit on a next-generation of solid-fueled missiles.⁴⁶⁷ The IRBM Dongfeng-21 (DF-21) that was deployed in the late 1980s had already increased China's ability to hit Japan. In the 1980s and early 1990s, China's nuclear capabilities increased significantly by bringing modern solid-fuel ballistic missiles into service (such as the DF-21 and DF-31). China also heavily invested in modernizing its conventional ballistic missiles and in the development of a sea-based deterrent (JL-1 and later JL-2) and nuclear bombers. In the 2000s, China proceeded with its missile development with the upgrading of stationary, liquid-propelled missiles to mobile solid-propelled missiles and the development of new submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM, the JL-2) and cruise missiles (such as the Dong Hai-10). These new capabilities are making a crude nuclear triad and a reliable second-strike capability possible.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Ueki illustrates this with Japan's reaction to China's 1993 underground test. The Japanese public reacted strongly against the testing and the Japanese government for the first time unilaterally sanctioned China, which was seen as a symbolic departure from Japan's policy of maintaining friendly relations with China, see Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" arguments*, p. 352.

⁴⁶⁶ There was public pressure on the Japanese government to respond to China's nuclear testing; Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Security Relations with China since 1989*, p. 122.

⁴⁶⁷ The Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Country Profile China," available at [http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/china/nuclear/](http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/china/nuclear/http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/china/nuclear/) (accessed March 12, 2013).

⁴⁶⁸ China still relies on an older bomber fleet (H-6 planes, based on the Tupolev-16 model) to deliver its nuclear payloads. The sea-based deterrent is based on capabilities that have seen limited operation (the JL-2 missile has been successfully tested, and the Jin-094 Class nuclear submarine was reported to be operational in 2013), although the 2014 U.S. Annual Report to Congress on the Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China speaks about arming the Jin-094 with JL-2 missiles in a future tense, suggesting they

The development of an anti-ship ballistic missile, the DF-21D, or popularly known as “the aircraft killer,” further increased concerns over China’s missile development. Quickly after its discovery, the missile had already been labeled a “game changer” in some strategic publications.⁴⁶⁹ In the 2011 NIDS China Security Report, a special section was devoted to the development of this weapon, and although the report acknowledged the technical difficulties China still faces in terms of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, it was concluded that the further development of the missile was “attracting much international attention,” which is a euphemism for Japan’s deep concerns over the increased number of asymmetric capabilities China is developing, of which the DF-21D was considered the standard-bearer.⁴⁷⁰ It was anticipated that a fully operational and accurate missile with a capacity to hit mobile targets at sea would significantly affect U.S. power projection capabilities in the area.

Beyond a Taiwan scenario?

The upgrading and introduction of new missiles put into question the goals and objectives of China’s nuclear policies. In 2001, China moved some of its short-range missiles to the Army Missile First Brigade of the Nanjing Military District. The Japanese evaluated that the Nanjing brigade would gain access to these capabilities since this district was thought to be in the lead in the eventuality of a Taiwan scenario. At the same time, a lot of intermediate range ballistic missiles and long-range ballistic missiles remained under the custody of China’s Second Artillery Force. Although it remained unclear what this meant for China’s intentions, it was a change that the Japanese watched carefully.⁴⁷¹ The possibility of China using nuclear weapons against Japan, in the form of nuclear blackmail or targeting U.S. bases and installations in Japan, is something that has preoccupied the defense community in Japan since the end of the Cold War but has only recently found its way in strategic commentaries and publications. Similar to discussions over other military capabilities, the Japanese express their

were not equipped at the time of publication; see Department of Defense, “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2014,” Washington D.C.: U.S. government, 2014, available at http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_DoD_China_Report.pdf (accessed February 12, 2015).

⁴⁶⁹ Andrew Erickson and David Yang, On the Verge of a Game-Changer: A Chinese Antiship Ballistic Missile Could Alter the Rules in the Pacific and Place US Navy Carrier Groups in Jeopardy,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 135, No. 5, p. 26–32.

⁴⁷⁰ National Institute for Defense Studies, *NIDS China Security Report 2011*, Tokyo, NIDS, 2011, p. 14–15. The missile is believed to be at the heart of China’s supposed anti-access, area denial (A2/AD)-strategy. For more on this strategy, see further on in this chapter.

⁴⁷¹ After noting these changes, the defense white paper stated that it was necessary to “closely watch whether or not China’s moves toward modernization and missile capabilities has any changes.” See Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2002*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2003.

concern about the lack of transparency of China's nuclear forces and doctrine.⁴⁷² It was and still is perceived that the primary goal of China's nuclear modernization is contained within a Taiwan scenario; nonetheless, the upgrading of China's missiles with longer range put those working assumptions under increased scrutiny.⁴⁷³ The news in 2014 that China launched and tested a new missile, the DF-41, which could reportedly carry up to ten MIRVs up to a maximum range of 1,4000 kilometers, meant that China was in the process of developing capabilities that could directly hit the U.S. mainland.⁴⁷⁴

Even though the Japanese agree that the possibility of using nuclear- or conventionally armed ballistic missiles against Japanese or U.S. troops in Japan remains remote, the stakes have risen with the tensions over the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands in the 2010s.⁴⁷⁵ Sumihiko Kawamura, a retired vice admiral of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Forces (JMSDF), warned that "you cannot understand China's maritime policy without looking at the nuclear dimension." He goes on to say that the reason for China controlling the South China Sea is to acquire a second-strike capability.⁴⁷⁶ An editorial in the liberal *Asahi Shimbun* noted that, "given the country's [China's] recent history of undertaking actions that many consider provocative and hostile, China's new nukes will not be welcomed by many countries in the region."⁴⁷⁷ On its part, the Defense of Japan mentioned the solid-propellant Short Range Ballistic Missiles DF-15 and DF-11 in relation to the East China Sea. It specifically stated that "their range covers also a part of the Southwestern Islands including the Senkaku Islands, which are inherent territories of Japan."⁴⁷⁸

It seemed that China's behavior in and around the disputed waters has given credence in Japan to the possibility of China using, in one way or another, its nuclear card vis-à-vis Japan on the matter of the Senkaku Islands. Because the mainstream view in Japan is that the current Chinese strategy of intimidation and coercion is centrally led and escalatory in nature, it is perhaps not surprising that the nuclear dimension has started to figure more prominently in

⁴⁷² See, for instance, Shinichi Ogawa, "Strategic Significance of Missile Defense and its Impact on International Security," NIDS Security Report, No. 5, March 2004, available at <http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/kiyo/e2003.html> (accessed March 12, 2014).

⁴⁷³ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2000*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2001.

⁴⁷⁴ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2013*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2014, p 202.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview senior officials of the Maritime Staff Office.

⁴⁷⁶ The South China Sea offers quick access to deep waters, which is essential for SLBMs. For Kawamura's quotes, see Kirk Spitzer, "Japan Worries About China Nukes," *Time*, September 21, 2011, available at <http://nation.time.com/2011/09/21/japan-worries-about-china-nukes/> (accessed March 21, 2014).

⁴⁷⁷ Jon Harper, "Analysis: China's nuke buildup is a concern, but a nuclear-armed Japan is not the answer," *The Asahi Shimbun*, October 3, 2013, available at <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/opinion/AJ201310030013> (accessed March 17, 2014).

⁴⁷⁸ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2013*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2014.

thinking about future situations. The problem with this position is that there are very few cues that indicate China is actually willing to use its nuclear weapons in such a scenario. Most strategic thinkers agree that China's nuclear posture is defensive in nature; the Chinese nuclear arsenal itself is still considered to be surprisingly small, particularly in comparison with the United States and Russia;⁴⁷⁹ this means that the delivery is still mostly focused on land-based ballistic missiles, and as well as being vulnerable, it maintains a low level of alert; also, Chinese leaders and official documents repeatedly stress China's No-First Use (NFU) principle.⁴⁸⁰

At the same time, nuclear weapons are believed to have become an integral part of China's A2/AD Strategy, which is meant to defend China's "core national interests" in its nearby seas.⁴⁸¹ The problem for Japan is that it remains unclear what China's "core national interests" exactly are. For instance, it is uncertain whether the Senkaku Islands fall under China's "core national interests."⁴⁸² Thus, the nuclear dimension adds an extra layer to the complex dynamics of deterrence and reassurance between the U.S., Japan, and China. Nonetheless, strategic thinkers in Japan point out the importance of conventional superiority over missile defense in order to avoid giving Washington the difficult choice of exposing Los Angeles by defending Tokyo.⁴⁸³

Naval and air modernization

China's naval and air modernization are closely watched by the Japanese defense communities since these developments affect two central features that have traditionally shaped Japan's perception of susceptibility: (a) its vulnerable southwestern offshore islands and (b) its long sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).⁴⁸⁴ The development of capabilities that enables China to project power further away from its shores has significantly alarmed defense planners

⁴⁷⁹ Jeffrey Lewis, "China's Nuclear Ideosyncracies/Idiosyncrasies and their Challenges," Institut Fraincais des Relations Internationales: *Proliferation Paper*, No. 47, available at <http://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pp47lewis.pdf> (accessed March 21, 2014). 47.

⁴⁸⁰ In the Chinese Defense White Paper of 2013, the NFU was not mentioned, thus raising questions about possible changes in China's nuclear posture. Later, it was stressed that there were no changes in China's nuclear policy.

⁴⁸¹ Harry Kazianis, "No Game Changer, but a Great Complicator: China's DF-21D ASBM," China Policy Institute Blog, September, 29, 2013, available at <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2013/09/29/no-game-changer-but-a-great-complicator-chinas-df-21d-asbm/> (accessed 14 March, 2014).

⁴⁸² Some scholars and officials have hinted that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands fall under China's core national interests, but there are no official documents on this. A remark by an official of China's foreign ministry, Hua Chunying, was later amended by stating that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands "touches upon matters of core national interest."

⁴⁸³ Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, "Thinking about the Unthinkable: Tokyo's Nuclear Option," Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes (eds.), *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2012.

⁴⁸⁴ Ueki, *The Rise of "China Threat" Arguments*, p. 371.

in Japan. Along with China's modernization of naval and air assets came reinterpretations about how such capabilities would be used in future scenarios.

Expanding missions for new capabilities

The Chinese fleet in the 1990s was mostly considered to be "outdated" and did not directly form a threat to U.S. regional dominance.⁴⁸⁵ The 1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis illustrated the supremacy of U.S. power when two aircraft carrier battle groups, in a show of force, entered the international waters around Taiwan. For the Chinese, the projection of U.S. power close to its home resulted in the ongoing, determined effort to boost its own capabilities in order to prevent a similar scenario in the future. Investments in air (such as Russian-built *Sukhoi* (SU)-27 and SU-30 fighter planes) and naval (such as imported *Kilo*-Class submarines and *Sovremenny*-class destroyers and indigenously built *Luhu*-class destroyers and *Jiangwei*-class frigates) capabilities equipped with modern missiles significantly boosted China's naval and air prowess.

For Japanese defense planners, these new capabilities signaled that China was not only preparing to challenge U.S. power in a future Taiwan scenario but also showed a determination to project power beyond its nearby seas.⁴⁸⁶ In the early 2000s, the Defense of Japan interpreted the modernization of China's naval capabilities as an indication that China was "transform[ing] the Navy to defend coastal areas into one able to defend more distant offshore waters."⁴⁸⁷ For the first time, the NIDS' East Asian Strategic Review of 2003 reported on China's desire to develop aircraft carriers as part of the PLAN's transition into a blue-water navy and saw it as a move that "merit[ed] attention."⁴⁸⁸ The purchase and refurbishing of the *Varyag*, a Soviet-build aircraft carrier, was an issue of much debate in Japan. Although it was agreed that the aircraft carrier would not directly form a challenge to its modern U.S. counterparts, it sparked debates about the long-term goals and aspirations of the China's navy. For instance, retired vice-admiral Hideaki Kaneda warned that "China's efforts to build power projection capability following the completion of aircraft battle groups may reach the level that can endanger regional military balance, increasing the risk of Chinese political leaders driven towards the

⁴⁸⁵ The Defense of Japan of the 1990s consistently mentioned that China's fleet consisted mostly of outdated vessels, even as it was in the process of actively modernizing itself.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with four maritime officers at Japan's Maritime Staff College.

⁴⁸⁷ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2001*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2002.

⁴⁸⁸ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2003*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2004, p. 194.

exercises of military actions.”⁴⁸⁹ Again, the hawkish realist view (which was not yet the mainstream view) on China’s military modernization presupposed that China’s military modernization predicated aggressive behavior.

In an official publication, the new power projection capabilities resulted in a re-evaluation of China’s strategy. In the mid-2000s the objectives of China’s naval and air modernization were reported to be (a) intercepting enemy naval operations as far from China’s mainland as possible; (b) avoiding the independence of Taiwan; (c) acquiring, maintaining, and protecting maritime rights in the East China Sea and South China Sea; and (d) protecting China’s sea lanes.⁴⁹⁰ Those changes came as a result of PLA’s shift from a focus on national defense to a diversified set of missions, as put forward by Hu Jintao in its “historic missions.”⁴⁹¹ Related to these new capabilities and objectives, the “String of Pearls” concept gained some traction in Japan’s security discourse.⁴⁹² This concept analyzed China’s inroads into the Indian Ocean Region and its infrastructure developments from the Hainan Island to Gwadar in Pakistan. In the report, these actions were interpreted as a calculated strategic move to upgrade commercial ports into overseas military bases in order to secure its own sea lanes of communication, build up a military presence along the SLOCs, and expand influence in the SCS and the Indian Ocean. The report gave credence to the alarmist view of an increasingly capable Chinese navy with expanding overseas objectives. Although the predictions made in the report did not substantiate, and the thesis was mostly rejected, it would continue to figure in Japanese media and strategic commentaries, even up to 2014.⁴⁹³ Along with the PLAN’s possible inroads into the IOR, the more traditional fear in Japan is of China expanding its maritime missions beyond the first island chain and its ambition to dominate the Western Pacific.

Despite these new capabilities and (proposed) missions, China’s navy has been labeled a “fleet-in-being,” one that is far from exerting sea control in a similar way as the U.S. navy.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁹ Hideaki Kaneda, “Responding to Chinese Militarism seeking Maritime Hegemony... Combined Defense for Strategic Delta Area,” *JANAFSA*, no. 36, available at <http://janafa.com/book-36/page-4.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014).

⁴⁹⁰ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2006*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2007.

⁴⁹¹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *NIDS China Security Report 2012*, Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2012, p. 13.

⁴⁹² The term “string of pearls” was coined in a study of the U.S. defense contractor, Booz Allen Hamilton, in 2004.

⁴⁹³ See, for instance, the editorials of 2013 and 2014, *Yomiuri Shimbun/The Japan News*, “China’s Maritime Strategy Causing Regional Arms Race,” March 3, 2013; or *The Asahi Shimbun*, “Japan India joining hands to counter China’s ‘String of Pearls,’” September 1, 2014.

⁴⁹⁴ Tetsuo Kotani, “US-Japan Allied Maritime Strategy: Balancing the Rise of Maritime China,” *Strategic Japan*, Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2014, available at http://csis.org/files/publication/140422_Kotani_USJapanAlliance.pdf (accessed January 12, 2015).

Instead, the strategy of a “fleet-in-being” is focused on denying the enemy control of nearby maritime areas. In this case, China’s strategy would be to deny or deter U.S. access to its first island chain, as was the case in the 1996 Taiwan Straits. The problem for Japan is that the disputed Senkaku Islands also lay within China’s first island chain. Whereas the concerns over China’s blue water aspirations were mostly strategic and long term, China’s naval posturing in its first island chain made the maritime threats closer to home and more acute.

Close to home; anti-access, area denial

Strategic, long-term concerns over the future roles and missions of China’s navy were largely subjugated to more immediate concerns over China’s military capabilities in its nearby seas, as a result of its perceived assertive behavior in the South China Sea and East China Sea. From 2009, the focus was on China’s presumed A2/AD capabilities. Anti-access is defined as enemy actions inhibiting movement into a theater of operations, whereas area denial operations are activities that want to deny freedom of action in enemy-controlled areas.⁴⁹⁵ The 2014 Defense of Japan specifically mentioned it as follows: “it is believed that China is enhancing its asymmetric military capabilities to deter military forces of other countries from approaching and advancing to China’s surrounding region, and to inhibit their military activities in the region (so-called Anti-Access/Area Denial [A2/AD] capabilities2).”⁴⁹⁶ In particular, China’s development of submarines, fast attack crafts (ballistic and cruise), missiles, and modern fighters would make a U.S. intervention in the South China Sea or East China Sea much more costly.

China’s modern submarine fleet is expected to play an important role in this counter-intervention mission.⁴⁹⁷ Between 1995 and 2012, China commissioned over 50 submarines. These include 4 type-094 (Jin class) SSBNs, 2 Type-093 (Shang class) SSNs, and 46 conventional attack submarines (including 12 imported Kilo-class submarines).⁴⁹⁸ The submarines are armed with Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles (ASCM) and possibly Land Attack Cruise Missiles

⁴⁹⁵ Christopher McCarthy, *Anti-Access / Area Denial: The Evolution of Modern Warfare*, Newport: US Naval War College, 2014, available at <https://www.usnwc.edu/Lucent/OpenPdf.aspx?id=95> (accessed January 14, 2015).

⁴⁹⁶ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2015.

⁴⁹⁷ Testimony of Senior Intelligence Officer for China, Jesse L. Karotkin (US Office of Naval Intelligence), “Trends in China’s Naval Modernization,” *China Economic and Security Review Commission*, January 30, 2014, p.7.

⁴⁹⁸ Ten out of the 12 Kilo-Class submarines are the improved Type 636; they are considered by the Office of Naval Intelligence to be the quietest of China’s submarines.

(LACM).⁴⁹⁹ The SSBNs carry the Julang-2 (JL-2), a ballistic missile with an expected range of about 8,000 km. And even though some of the submarines are still relatively noisy and outdated, particularly compared to the U.S. and Russian subs, they can play important roles in an A2/AD strategy by acting as bait for US SSNs.⁵⁰⁰ Related to these developments, China is also expected to further develop new unmanned underwater systems and modernize its inventory of modern mines.⁵⁰¹ Special attention is also given to China's new fast attack craft, the Houbei class. Despite its relatively small size, the fourth generation ASCMs it carries makes it able to "pack a lethal punch."⁵⁰² It is expected that these vessels will play an important role in China's near seas, thereby making it possible for the PLAN's larger combatants to operate in more distant waters.⁵⁰³ The U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) expects China's maritime strategy to evolve further into a sea control force, at least within the near seas region. A more alarming view was expressed in a 2014 NIDS report. It stated that China is looking to expand its operations in the far seas, and that, as a "hegemonic power," it would try to "rule over them [Asian countries] or make them satellite states to secure influence over the Pacific and Indian Oceans."⁵⁰⁴ Both scenarios would involve a shift toward a more offensive maritime posture.

Besides the potent naval capabilities, China is also expanding its air A2/AD capabilities; in particular, the purchase of the Su-35 from Russia (whose technology will also be used for the further development of the indigenously built, fifth-generation J-20 fighter), the smaller and anticipated-to-be stealthy J-31, and the development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), including the Predator-like Yi Long and the domestically-built stealth UAV, the Lijian.⁵⁰⁵ Given their shorter range of operations and the absence of China's military bases outside its own borders, these air capabilities will mostly focus on operations within China's near seas, such as, for instance, in the in 2013 established Air Defense Identification Zone

⁴⁹⁹ Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization – Implications for US Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress," Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014, p. 14, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33153.pdf> (accessed January 12, 2015).

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Andrew S. Erickson, "'A Thoroughbred Ship-Killer' – Proceedings Article on Type 022 Houbei Guided-Missile Fast Attack Catamaran," *China Analysis from Original Sources*, March 30, 2010, available at <http://www.andrewerickson.com/> (accessed January 15, 2015).

⁵⁰³ John Patch, "Chinese Houbei Fast attack Craft: Beyond Sea Denial," Peter Dutton, Andrew Erickson and Ryan Martinson (eds.), *China's Near Sea Combat Capabilities*, Newport: Naval War College Press, 2014, p. 1–17 available at <https://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications.aspx> (accessed January 7, 2015).

⁵⁰⁴ Masahiro Akiyama, "Maritime Security and Japan," Akio Watanabe (ed.), *Japan under the Power Shift: Its Security in the 2010s*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2014, p. 136.

⁵⁰⁵ All those air capabilities are specifically mentioned in the 2013 and 2014 East Asia strategic reviews.

(ADIZ). Different from the navy, the conventional modernization of the air force only recently took shape, and its predominant focus is on denial. However, it is expected that the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) will expand its scope and missions, presumably into "an independent service capable of conducting strategic strike missions at extended ranges in support of national objectives."⁵⁰⁶ The PLAAF is not only modernizing its conventional forces but is also in the lead of modernizing its arsenal of cruise and ballistic missiles. This will be discussed in the next section.

New dimensions; outer space and cyberspace

Japan's feelings of susceptibility have increased with the advent of new domains for military conflict: outer space and cyberspace. The 1991 Gulf War is said to have left an important lesson with the Chinese: the impact of science and technology on information warfare.⁵⁰⁷ For the Chinese, "informationalization" is an integral part of the overall modernization of China's military forces and includes all elements of Command, Control, Computer, Communication, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR). The 2004 Chinese defense white paper underlines how the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has resulted in the development of an "informationalized force" and how the strategic concept of "limited war under high-tech conditions" evolved into "local wars under informationalized conditions."⁵⁰⁸ As with other elements of China's military modernization, it is unclear what this new doctrine actually entails. The Japanese see the "RMA with Chinese characteristics" mainly in terms of missions that look beyond a Taiwan scenario.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, since cyberspace is a new domain for possible military confrontation, it is unclear how countries can and will make use of it. This leads to wild speculations on the "can and cannot" scenarios in these new domains for military power. For the first time, the Japanese defense white paper of 2001 mentioned China's "information warfare capability" in a reference to the U.S. Congressional

⁵⁰⁶ Mark Stokes and Ian Easton, "Evolving Chinese Aerospace Trends: Regional Maritime Implications," Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein (eds.), *Chinese Aerospace Power: Evolving Maritime Roles*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011.

⁵⁰⁷ The 2004 NIDS East Asian Strategic Review specifically discussed the impact of the 1991 Gulf War on the modernization of the PLA; see National Institute for Defense Studies, East Asia Strategic Review 2004, NIDS: Tokyo, 2004, pp. 109-113. See also, Vinod Anand, "Chinese Concepts and Capabilities of Information Warfare," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 30, No.4, available at http://idsa.in/strategicanalysis/ChineseConceptsandCapabilitiesofInformationWarfare_vanand_1006.html (accessed June 14, 2014).

⁵⁰⁸ State Council Information Office, *White Paper on National Defense 2004*, available at <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/china/doctrine/natdef2004.html> (accessed March 23, 2013).

⁵⁰⁹ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2013.

Office reports. Without openly labeling it a concern, the central question in the early 2000s was whether the PLA would see trends in information technology as a potential for asymmetric exploitation.⁵¹⁰ As with other elements of China's force modernization, this question was positively answered, mainly by its ongoing investments and lack of openness on these issues.

The militarization of space

In January 2007, China surprised the world by conducting an anti-satellite test (ASAT). Japan's reaction was one of concern. First, it illustrated China's capability to hit targets in space by using ballistic missiles (and maybe not just their own in the future). Second, it showed China was willing to push forward with the militarization of space, and, third, the debris created concerns over the space environment.⁵¹¹ Despite the fact that the test opened "great potential for the emergence of an asymmetric situation to the United States' disadvantage," it was concluded that thanks to the U.S. dominance in space, it "seems unlikely that China will use its newly acquired anti-satellite capabilities to intensify its military pressure on other nations."⁵¹² In the Japanese evaluations, the test was seen as a challenge first and foremost to U.S. dominance in space. It is important to note that the Japanese considered U.S. power, and not international rules or regimes, as the constraint to the future military use of China's space assets. The first reason for this is the absence of binding rules and provisions in existing institutions. The 2014 Defense of Japan notes that partly because of the absence of such regimes: "the stable use of outer space has become one of the critical security challenges countries face."⁵¹³ Although efforts to regulate behavior through the guidelines and code of conducts are underway, the mainstream Japanese perception generally considers China's foreign policy neglectful of international rules and norms and interprets its expansion as incremental and opportunistic. Outer space is not delimited by an international binding agreement, and so the threshold for the potential use of force is considered to be lower. This has resulted in an aggressive scramble by major powers for space in space.⁵¹⁴ The militarization of space is an issue of growing concern, particularly in combination with Japan's increased dependence on the modern (C4ISR) systems of satellites.

⁵¹⁰ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asia Strategic Review 2004*, p. 113.

⁵¹¹ The anti-ballistic missile test in 2007 was interpreted as a clear violation of international rules (as stated by PM Abe at the time) as well as a defiance of China's proposed principle of the peaceful use of outer space; see National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2012*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2013, p. 204.

⁵¹² National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2008*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2009, p. 32–33.

⁵¹³ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2015, p. 105.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Cyber warriors

With the introduction of the A2/AD concept, information warfare gained a more prominent role in (temporarily) denying the use of space- or information-dependent systems. The development of new capabilities and new dedicated PLA units, and the introduction of new terms such as “Integrated Network Electronic Warfare” (in lieu of an official doctrine), seemed to suggest that China is looking at ways to take advantage of adversaries’ weaknesses.⁵¹⁵ The first Japanese National Security Strategy emphasized three risks related to cyberspace: (a) stealing classified information, (b) disrupting critical infrastructure, and (c) obstructing military systems.⁵¹⁶

Cyber warfare mostly takes the form of orchestrated denial of service (DDOS) attacks on (Japanese) websites and servers. The National Institute of Information and Communication reported that the number of cyber-attacks on Japanese government offices and similar entities was over 25 billion in 2014, with approximately 40% of the attacks coming from China.⁵¹⁷ In comparison, in 2005 the number of cyber-attacks was a “mere” 310 million. Although it is difficult to trace in what ways the Chinese government is involved in these cyber-attacks, it has been widely assumed (although officially denied by the Chinese) that the PLA has a specific unit that deals with offensive cyber warfare.⁵¹⁸ The 2013 Cyber Security Strategy hinted that Japan could suffer from cyber-attacks launched by foreign governments.⁵¹⁹ The 2014 Defense of Japan singled out China and the active involvement of the PLA in its coverage of threats in cyberspace.⁵²⁰ However, it is not only the PLA’s capabilities and the possible links with hacker groups that are of concern to Japan. China’s huge population could pose considerable risks to Japan’s IT-network resilience, particularly in combination with feelings of nationalism and patriotism. It has been speculated that China’s 500 million internet users could be mobilized for a massive cyber-attack.⁵²¹ After the 2012 decision by the Japanese Cabinet to nationalize

⁵¹⁵ China’s interest in cyber warfare and the establishment of a cyber-warfare specialized unit were first mentioned in the Defense of Japan of 2008.

⁵¹⁶ Cabinet Office, *National Security Strategy*, December 17, 2013, available at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf (accessed January 19, 2014).

⁵¹⁷ The National Institute of Information and Communication (NICT) carries out an annual survey since 2005.

⁵¹⁸ PLA Unit 61398 is thought to be source of China’s hacking activities; see, for instance, a report by security consulting service Mandiant, “APT1: Exposing One of China’s Cyber Espionage Units,” Alexandria: Mandiant, 2013, p. 7–20, available at http://intelreport.mandiant.com/Mandiant_APT1_Report.pdf (accessed June 13, 2014).

⁵¹⁹ National Center of Incident Readiness and Strategy for Cybersecurity, “Cybersecurity Strategy – Towards, a world-leading, resilient and vigorous cyberspace,” Tokyo: NISC, 2013, available at <http://www.nisc.go.jp/active/kihon/pdf/cybersecuritystrategy-en.pdf> (accessed June 17, 2014).

⁵²⁰ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2015, p. 109–110.

⁵²¹ The Asahi Shimbun, “China bolstering cyber defenses for modern-day warfare,” February 13, 2013.

the Senkaku Islands, for instance, at least 19 Japanese websites of hospitals, administration offices, and courts were targeted.⁵²² The 2014 China Security report by the NIDS warned in a similar way that “China is now a major IT power, and there are a vast number of people related to the IT field working at businesses and studying at universities throughout the country. It must be recognized that all these people could potentially be involved in future Chinese cyber-attacks.”⁵²³ These new capabilities and threats have exacerbated the already growing sense of concern.

6.4. Hypothesis Testing

The realist theory suggests that “*the more China becomes capable of harming others, the more threatening it will become.*” To a certain extent, the elite policy discourse supports this proposition, since the “China threat” arguments over military modernization have become more pronounced and common in line with China’s increasing power. Japan’s security discourse shows a growing concern over a rising China, in which its military modernization is an important factor. In Japan’s changing perceptions on China, the empirical proof of annual double-digit military expenditure is a constant arbiter for its ongoing threat assessments.

Nonetheless, the military balance between China on the one hand and Japan and the United States on the other remains in favor of the latter. It is anticipated that most of China’s scenarios will not be able to challenge U.S. hegemony in the Pacific.⁵²⁴ For now, the military balance in the Pacific thus remains in favor of the U.S.-Japan Alliance in contrast to the military balance on the China-India border. Despite this more favorable situation, the “China threat” arguments in Japan have been more frequent and forthright than in India. This suggests that military capabilities alone cannot sufficiently explain changing perceptions of threat. Moreover, we can distinguish particular time periods in which arguments over China’s military modernization were impacted more than in others. In some areas, we can see a sudden spike of “China threat” arguments, for instance, when in new domains, such as space and cyberspace, new levels of vulnerability are perceived. In short, the discursive pattern shows irregularities that go against a gradual increase (in line with China’s increased power) of “China threat” arguments. Arguments over military modernization changed particularly in 1996, 2005, and

⁵²² Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, p. 110.

⁵²³ National Institute for Defense Studies, *China Security Report 2014*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2015, p. 53.

⁵²⁴ Eric Heginbotham e.a., *The US-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996-2017*,” Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2015, available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR392/RAND_RR392.pdf (accessed December 19, 2015).

2012. China's military spending became a matter of "attention" in 1996, when the Defense of Japan observed that

we need to continue to watch Chinese actions, such as modernization of its nuclear forces, naval and air forces; expanding its scope of activities in the high seas; and growing tension in the Taiwan Strait caused by its military exercises.⁵²⁵

Almost a decade later, we can see a new linguistic turn in the official China narrative, besides the unequivocal messages coming from both the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, Taro Aso) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ, Seiji Maehara), where for the first time, the 2005 annual white paper separately addressed maritime activities. It was observed that

China has increased its maritime activities and it is necessary for us to monitor these movements as it is pointed out that the Chinese Navy aims to extend the space for offshore defensive operations while integrated combat capabilities are enhanced in conducting offshore campaigns and to build a so-called blue-water navy in the future.⁵²⁶

China's aims for creating a blue-water navy (it was mentioned for the first time in 2005 and was thus linked to its increased maritime activities in the East China Sea). In 2012, at the height of the Senkaku dispute, the Defense of Japan wrote,

China has been increasing its defense spending, broadly and rapidly modernizing its military forces, mainly its nuclear and missile force as well as its Navy and Air Force, and strengthening its capability for extended-range power projection. In addition, China is working to improve joint operational capabilities among services and branches, to conduct practical exercises, to cultivate and acquire highly-capable human resources for administering operations of informationized forces, and to improve the foundation of its domestic defense industry. Furthermore, China has been expanding and intensifying its activities in its surrounding waters. These moves, together with the lack of transparency in its military affairs and security issues, are a matter of concern for the

⁵²⁵ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 1996*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1997.

⁵²⁶ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2005*, Tokyo: Government of Japan 2006.

region and the international community, including Japan, which should require prudent analysis.⁵²⁷

In short, discursive change was not the direct result of the sudden increases in military spending or newly perceived vulnerabilities. They were much more the result of trigger incidents, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Such events not only questioned China's behavior and future intentions but also created windows of opportunity to shift the discourse and rationalize China's actions based on its newly acquired capabilities and securitize China's military modernization. It thus seems that China's expanding military power in itself is not an independent factor for the change in Japan's "China threat" perception. Instead, it is an enabling factor that contributed more to perpetuity than to change; it created a certain level of strategic uncertainty and the need for Japan to hedge against possible aggression in the future. Such lingering concerns, however, did not significantly affect discursive changes, and for this we must look at how certain events shaped assessments of China's actual behavior.

⁵²⁷ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2013.

Chapter 7: Japan and China's Escalatory Actions

Main findings

- China's foreign policy behavior, as seen through Japanese eyes, can be characterized as exclusive, opportunistic, and revisionist.
- It is exclusive because of Japan's special place in China's foreign policy orientations.
- It is opportunistic because of the Japanese idea that Chinese escalatory behavior only occurs when the balance of power permits it (as already noticed in Chapter I). Related to this, the lack of regional or bilateral security regimes or institutions makes it hard to set standards for appropriate behavior.
- It is revisionist because of its increasingly assertive and coercive posture.
- Three phases of anxiety can be ascertained (a. 1996–2001, b. 2001–2010, c. 2010–2014), which came as a result of trigger events or new developments.
- Along with a growing sense of a lack of perceived leverage through economic carrots, the failure to regulate behavior through institutions has resulted in the idea that engagement with China has been ineffective.
- Regarding China's maritime activities, they were not seen as a series of unrelated incidents or as a process of reciprocal interactions with Japan but instead as an escalatory trend in China's assertive behavior, increasing in volatility, along with its military spending.
- Daft diplomacy from both sides had been unable to mollify what has become a broad consensus in Japan's media, public opinion, and the official narrative: that, for the time period under review, China has gradually become the most important security threat to Japan.

7.1. Introduction

After the Cold War, Japan actively pursued a policy of engagement toward China. Japan's decision as the first country to normalize relations with China after the Tiananmen incident; the significant amounts of official development aid (ODA) granted to China; the visit of the Japanese emperor to China in 1992, saying he "deeply deplored" the great suffering that the Chinese people experienced during Japan's wartime occupation; and the Nakayama

initiative leading (along with ASEAN) to the establishment of the ARF were all—at least in part—motivated by the desire to integrate China further into the region, manage its peaceful rise, and support its domestic reforms.⁵²⁸ The motives for pursuing this engagement strategy were not only economic; China was considered too important politically to be overlooked.⁵²⁹ Even under the Koizumi administration, Japan’s default policy toward China remained one of engagement, at least in the official rhetoric. Domestic forces in Japan’s political marketplace—“pragmatic” forces within the LDP, New Komei, and DPJ; the Ministry of External Trade and Industries (METI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Ministry of Finance (MOF); and business interest groups like Keidanren—were all opposed to policies that might antagonize Beijing and stressed the need for (economic) cooperation with China.⁵³⁰

In due course, however, and despite the enduring centrality of engagement in the official narrative, the idea took root that the aims of Japan’s engagement policy had failed.⁵³¹ China had become a peer competitor of Japan in East Asia and Southeast Asia; it was establishing its own institutions (with Chinese characteristics) and was perceived as increasingly aggressive, in particular in the maritime domain. This has left Japan in a precarious position because, due to the changing balance of power, it feels it has less leverage over what China does, while China’s behavior has been interpreted as increasingly assertive, coercive, and escalatory. I have identified three distinct phases in which trigger events led to an increased sense of anxiety—phase (a) attention, 1996–2001 (the Taiwan Straits Crisis); phase (b) concern, 2001–2009 (oceanographic research in Japan’s near seas); and phase (c) escalation, 2010–2014 (incidents and maritime intrusions around the Senkaku Islands)—which will be discussed in further detail below. In between these periods there had been attempts to better the bilateral relations; however, I will argue that these efforts from either side did not have a soothing effect on the perception of threat. Daft diplomacy had been unable to mollify what has become a broad consensus in Japan’s media, public opinion, and the official narrative: that, for the time

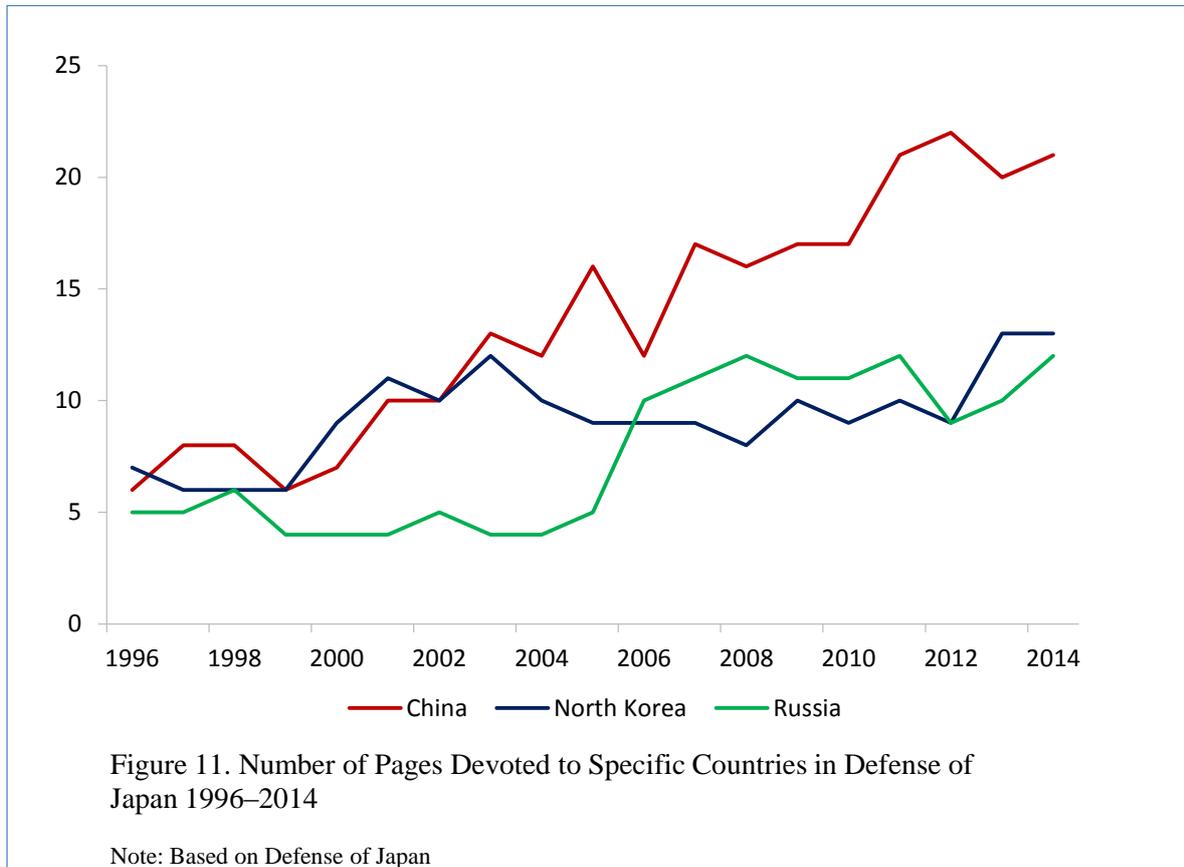
⁵²⁸ In the early 1990s, there was a period that has been labeled an “artificial honeymoon.” See Christopher Green, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 77; Kakizawa Koji spoke of a “new stage” in China–Japan relations, comparable to Germany–France relations in post-Cold War Western Europe; see also Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Security Relations with China since 1989: From Balancing to Bandwagoning?*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 140–173. For Japan’s desire for a greater international role in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s, see Yoshihide Soeya, “Japan’s Policy towards Southeast Asia: Anatomy of ‘Autonomous Diplomacy’ and the American Factor,” Chandran Jeshurun (ed.), *China, India, Japan and the Security of Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995, p. 93–116.

⁵²⁹ Christopher W. Hughes “Japan Responds to China’s Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision” *International Affairs* Vol. 85 (no.4) (2009), p. 837–841.

⁵³⁰ *Idem*, p. 843.

⁵³¹ This is the general consensus in Japan at the time of writing this dissertation. Engagement is considered to be important still but only as part of a broader strategy that also encompasses a strong hedging component.

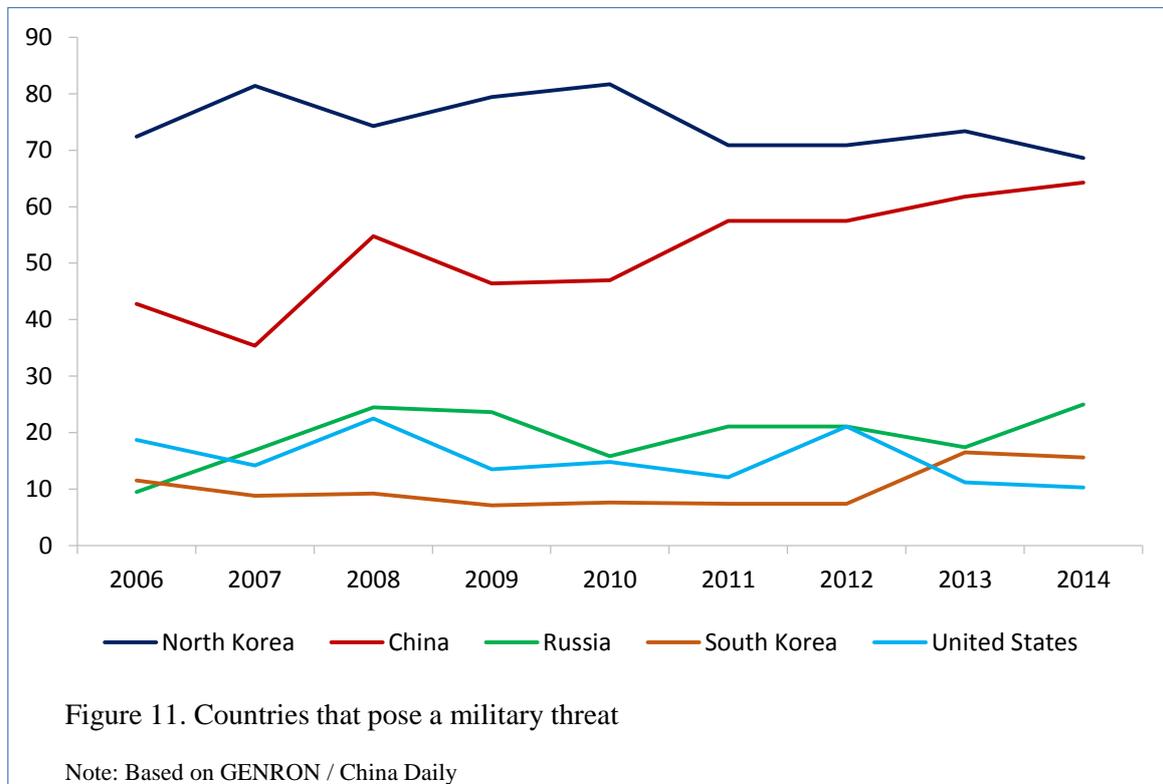
period under review, China had gradually become the most significant security concern to Japan.⁵³²



The Japanese general public shows similar trends in growing perceptions of threat coming from China’s rise. In an annual opinion poll organized by GENRON NPO and *China Daily*, China took second place in 2014 after North Korea as the country that poses the biggest military threat. Traditionally, North Korea ranks as the primary concern, not only because of its capabilities, the obscurity of the regime, and the eccentric behavior of its leaders but also because labeling North Korea as a threat comes with little political or economic cost. Talking about China as a security threat is more contentious and traditionally a political “hot potato,” although such discourses are changing, as I will illustrate below. Despite these reservations, the polls show that China (2014: 64.3%) is catching up quickly with North Korea (2014:

⁵³² This can be ascertained from explicit mentioning of China in policy documents, Japan’s rebalancing toward its vulnerable southern islands, and the increasing number of critical articles that negatively assess China’s behavior toward the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands; see Eric Johnson, “Japan Under Siege: Japanese media perceptions of China and the two Koreas six decades after World War II,” M. Heazle and N. Knight (eds.), *China–Japan Relations in the Twenty-first Century: Creating a Future Past*, Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2007.

68.6%). If current trends continue in the near future, it can be expected that China bypasses North Korea within the next few years.



This chapter will look at how China’s foreign policy is perceived in general (Section 7.2.) and will closely look at how Japan interprets China’s behavior regarding the most contentious and significant bilateral concern: the situation around the Senkaku Islands (Section 7.3). The chapter will end with hypothesis testing and a conclusion (Section 7.4).

7.2. China’s Rise, Japan’s Decline, and Failures of Engagement

Some authors claim that Japan’s engagement policy was initially successful because of the relatively peaceful integration of China into a liberal-based international order and its domestic economic reforms.⁵³³ At the same time, Tokyo’s engagement policies toward China did not always yield the direct, political results it was aiming for. Japan’s main tool for bilateral, political engagement was its extensive ODA program. Distribution of development aid was made more provisional after the Japanese government added extra conditions to its ODA Charter in 1992. Development aid would only be given to countries after taking into

⁵³³ Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Security Relations with China since 1989*, p. 173–176.

consideration the “trends of military expenditures of recipient countries” and “the trends of the developments and production of mass destruction weapons and missiles.”⁵³⁴ These new provisions did not sway leadership in Beijing. China relentlessly continued its military modernization and nuclear testing in the early 1990s, despite Japanese anxieties and protests. The May 1995 nuclear test by China was heavily criticized in Japan because (a) it happened right after the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in which countries agreed to refrain from nuclear testing; (b) it happened soon after Japan’s Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama’s visit to China, where he had pressed China to stop its nuclear testing; and (c) the Chinese test coincided with the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, adding fuel to an already heated public opinion.⁵³⁵ Mike Mochizuki argued that the nuclear tests in 1995 by China brought together a “tacit coalition” of right-wing nationalists and left-wing, anti-nuclear pacifists “in favor of a tougher policy towards China.”⁵³⁶ The Japanese government decided to reduce its grant aid to China, but—again—this did not induce the Chinese to stop testing. A second Chinese nuclear test occurred in August of the same year. After this test, MOFA (under domestic pressure) decided to temporarily freeze grant aid to China, although yen loans would continue. The move was mostly symbolic since the amount of total grant aid that was suspended was about \$86 million, compared to the much larger yen loans worth \$1.6 billion.⁵³⁷ Similar to other instances (e.g., the Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1996 and naval activities in 2000) when MOFA suspended or temporarily froze yen loans, the sanctions proved to have only a limited effect on China’s behavior and military spending.⁵³⁸

These episodes show that Japan did not have the political leverage, as it had expected or hoped, to effectively influence China’s policies or behavior, something MOFA acknowledged when it stated that “there is very little possibility that Japanese ODA sanctions

⁵³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Japan’s Official Development Assistance Charter*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2003, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/reform/revision0308.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2013).

⁵³⁵ Tsukasa Takamine, *Japan’s Development Aid to China: The Long-Running Foreign Policy of Engagement*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 123.

⁵³⁶ Mike Mochizuki, “The US–Japan Alliance and the Rise of China,” in Ellis S. Krauss and T.J. Pempel (Eds.), *Beyond Bilateralism: US–Japan Relations in the New Asia-Pacific*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 103.

⁵³⁷ Ming Wan, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Interaction, Logic and Transformation*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006, p. 36.

⁵³⁸ Tsukasa Takamine, *Japan’s Development Aid to China*, p. 133; see also Murata Koji, “Domestic Sources of Japanese policy toward China,” Lam Peng Er (ed.), *Japan’s Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 40.

can actually stop China's nuclear tests."⁵³⁹ Such a harsh reality was diametrically opposed to the original purpose of ODA, as Japan's principal strategic tool in its engagement policy toward China. After all, Japan's engagement policy intended to encourage China's integration within the international community and induce cooperative behavior in the region and in international institutions by means of supporting its sustainable economic development.⁵⁴⁰ As China became less receptive to such incentives, the foundations of this engagement policy would come under increased scrutiny in Japan. An editorial in the *Daily Yomiuri* noted that "China and Southeast Asian countries are becoming increasingly assertive, largely due to their economic growth."⁵⁴¹ The article went on to say that in order to realize regional peace and development, Japan should do more "than just show sympathy" but instead similarly pursue an assertive policy.⁵⁴² Multiyear ODA packages were cancelled in favor of annual deals, and the annual amount fell from around 200 billion yen to 86 billion yen in 2004. In 2005, the decision was made to stop ODA to China altogether by 2008. What the 1995 Chinese nuclear testing showed more than anything was that leadership in Beijing was not sensitive to Japanese concerns and not responsive to its "sticks" and that Japan's default policy of engagement came under domestic pressure, something that became even more apparent one year later.

The Taiwan Crisis

According to many scholars, the 1995/1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis, more than anything else before, raised concerns with Japanese policymakers over the direction of China's post-Cold War military intentions.⁵⁴³ Kori Urayama even argued that the crisis changed Japan's security psyche.⁵⁴⁴ This increased anxiety was shown in the strong public condemnation of Chinese actions by Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto, who expressed his concerns for the deteriorating security situation over Taiwan and his hopes for a peaceful resolution when he met with Chinese Premier Li Peng on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). The publicly expressed concerns did not deter China from escalating. Within a week after the ASEM meeting, the PLA launched rockets close to Taiwan's ports (one rocket landed 60 km from Japanese soil on Yonaguni Island) in order to influence the upcoming elections in Taiwan.

⁵³⁹ Tsukasa Takamine, *Japan's Development Aid to China*, p. 123.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview Hitoshi Tanaka.

⁵⁴¹ *Daily Yomiuri*, "Political Pulse: Japan should drop ambiguity to get its point across in Asia," December 13, 1994.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ Christopher Hughes, *Japan's Re-emergence as a "Normal" Military Power?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 45.

⁵⁴⁴ Kori J. Urayama, "Chinese Perspectives on Theater Missile Defense: Policy Implications for Japan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (July-August 2000), p. 616.

War games with an estimated 40 ships, 260 aircraft, and 150,000 troops were carried out in the north and the south of the Taiwan Straits. In a response, the United States sent two aircraft carrier groups to the area, one of which (led by the the USS *Independence*) was based in Yokosuka, Japan. Japan publicly expressed its support for the U.S. actions and vaguely declared that tensions over Taiwan had an impact on the security of Japan itself.

Hashimoto explicitly warned that “heightened tensions are obviously not desirable for the peace and stability of East Asia. The exercise this time is very close to Japan. From these points of view, the Japanese government has been very concerned that China began the military exercise.”⁵⁴⁵ MOFA’s official reaction to the crisis was milder; it expressed its concerns, in particular for the people living on nearby Yonaguni Island, but also cautioned against overreactions, stating that tensions were “not so high” and that the situation was under control.⁵⁴⁶ This relaxed public attitude of MOFA did not correspond to what scholars found to be a seminal moment in Japan’s changing perception of China. Ikuo Kayahara concluded that, above all, “the exercises near Taiwan, conducted on the eve of the presidential election, demonstrated that Beijing has no qualms about using military intimidation to achieve its political goals and fostered suspicion that it may resort to military force with very little provocation.”⁵⁴⁷ Below the radar of public scrutiny, the perceived low threshold for military action, combined with the fact that Japanese pleas for stability went unheeded, surely had an effect on Japan’s security calculus. This heightened sense of threat was also reflected in new official documents, guidelines, and capabilities.

Against the backdrop of the Taiwan Crisis, changes were made in many important Japanese documents related to national defense. Many of those documents made implicit or ambiguous references to China’s role in a new security situation emerging in the Asia-Pacific. The new NDPO was adopted in November 1995. The document called for “smooth and effective implementation of US–Japan security arrangements” in response to “situations that arise in areas surrounding Japan.”⁵⁴⁸ Furthermore, in April 1996, one month after the crisis, the United States and Japan signed a Joint US–Japan Security Declaration followed up by a revision of the guidelines for bilateral cooperation in the fall of 1997. Although these

⁵⁴⁵ As quoted in Ueki, *The Rise of “China Threat” arguments*, p. 359.

⁵⁴⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Conference by the Press Secretary,” March 12, 1996, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/3/312.html#3> (accessed June 24, 2013).

⁵⁴⁷ Ikuo Kayahara, “China as a Military Power in the Twenty-first Century,” *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 12. No. 1, p. 67.

⁵⁴⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “National Defense Program Outline in and after FY 1996,” available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/6a.html> (accessed October 15, 2013).

documents initially came as a reaction to the 1994 missile crisis in North Korea, Japanese policymakers often use the North Korean threat as a surrogate for China.⁵⁴⁹ And despite the carefully chosen phrases, the ambiguity in the renewed guidelines would probably not be there if Tokyo was only concerned about the threat coming from North Korea.

Stressing that the regional contingencies addressed in the guidelines were situational and not geographical added to the confusion. This strategic ambiguity offered the apparent advantage of keeping vague Japan's position on China in the guidelines. LDP Secretary General Kato Koichi mentioned in his visit to China that Taiwan would not be included, prompting a response from Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama that Taiwan could not be excluded. The policy of the United States and Japan in revising the guidelines appeared to be "to hedge against a possible military contingency involving China by strengthening the bilateral alliance, but also to avoid the designation of China as a threat for fear of antagonizing it and endangering the general policy of engagement."⁵⁵⁰ However, there were already voices in Japan that pleaded for increased balancing against a belligerent China and called Tokyo's engagement policy toward China "illusional."⁵⁵¹ The Japanese press (including the left-leaning *Asahi Shimbun*) became increasingly critical of China's apparent defiance of international norms and Japanese calls for restraint.⁵⁵² Public sentiments also showed an increase in unfavorable views; in 1998, for the first time, Japanese unfavorable attitudes toward China outnumbered favorable views.⁵⁵³ Concerns over a rising China grew, not only in Japan but also in other neighboring countries. Consequently, the CCP leadership thought it was necessary to change course.

Debunking the "China threat" or not

After the Taiwan Straits Crisis, in an effort to reduce the idea of an emerging "China threat" in the region, the Chinese leadership introduced its New Security Concept (NSC).⁵⁵⁴ It emphasized a multilateral approach to "common" security. Evidence for this new approach to

⁵⁴⁹ Yoichi Funabashi mentioned that the China factor had a "subliminal effect" on the reaffirmation process.

⁵⁵⁰ Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Economic Power and Security: Japan and Korea*, Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, p. 199.

⁵⁵¹ *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* correspondent Ina Hisayoshi was skeptical about Japan's China policy, quoted in Michael Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power*, New York, Palgrave, 2003, p. 103.

⁵⁵² Jing Sun, "Covering a Non-Democracy: A Japanese Coverage of China and Implications for Media Balancing," *International Journal of Communication*, Vol.1, p. 717-737.

⁵⁵³ These come from the annual polls by the Kantei; see Chapter 1 for the complete graph.

⁵⁵⁴ Michael Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations After the Cold War*, p. 32.

security was seen in China's establishment of the SCO and China's multilateral policy in the South China Sea. In Japan's official documents, this presumed policy shift was duly acknowledged. It was repeatedly stated that China's foreign policy goals in the early 2000s were to (a) establish friendly relations with its neighbors, (b) maintain a stable environment in and outside of China, (c) advance its open-door policy, and (d) achieve economic growth.⁵⁵⁵ However, not all trends in China's new foreign policy direction were positive. It was observed at the same time that China was looking to change the global order by resisting U.S. unipolarity and promoting (along with India and Russia) multipolarization.⁵⁵⁶

Beijing's approach to multilateralism toward that region made it a regional competitor for Japan, at least in financial and economic terms.⁵⁵⁷ The idea of Japan at the driver's seat of regional economic development lost traction in the 1990s, especially after the 1997 Asian financial crisis (AFC). China's role in the AFC was positively evaluated, whereas Japan's role did not receive similar positive feedback in the region.⁵⁵⁸ As a result, China's reputation soared, at the expense of Japan. Moreover, China's economic growth challenged the Japanese paradigm of regional division of labor, theorized as a flying geese model with Japan at the head of the flock.⁵⁵⁹ In METI's white paper on international trade of 2001, it was argued that due to the rise of China, "there has been some disruption in the conventional orderly catch-up process of the flying-geese pattern led by Japan, followed by the NIEs, ASEAN members, and China."⁵⁶⁰ Because of this changing paradigm, a more competitive and zero-sum discourse

⁵⁵⁵ Although *Defense of Japan* and the *Diplomatic Bluebook* both argued that China's overall foreign policy had these characteristics, they also acknowledged there were bilateral issues/problems that made Japan–China relations unique. In that sense, it was open to debate to what extent Japan would actually benefit from China's more cooperative and multilateral approach to foreign policy.

⁵⁵⁶ India's shared goal for a multipolar world is only mentioned in the 2001 *Defense of Japan*, which was published before the groundbreaking visit of PM Yoshiro Mori to India.

⁵⁵⁷ See, for example, the discussions over "who contributes more" in the Chiang Mai negotiations after the Asian financial crisis, Takeshi Terada, "Constructing an 'East Asian' Concept and Growing Regional Identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 251–277.

⁵⁵⁸ U.S. President Clinton, for instance, praised China's "statesmanship and strength" in its decision not to devalue the yuan, while criticizing Tokyo for the slow pace of its financial reforms (in *Straights Times*, 28 June 1998, p. 1).

⁵⁵⁹ The flying geese paradigm was put forward by Kaname Akamatsu in 1962 and provided a model for the division of labor in East Asia, based on labor cost and comparative advantages. In this top-down regional model for economic cooperation, advanced economies outsource low-productivity production to second-tier economies and shift to more capital-intensive economic activities. Similar dynamics would also occur further down the flock, between second- and third-tier economies. For the original work, see Kaname Akamatsu, "A Historical Pattern of Economic Growth in Developing Countries," *Journal of Developing Economics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March–August 1962), p. 3–25.

⁵⁶⁰ Chi Hung Kwan, "The Rise of China and Asia's Flying Geese Pattern of Economic Development: An Empirical Analysis Based on US Import Statistics," *RIETI Discussion Paper Series*, The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, July 2002, available at <http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/02e009.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2013), p. 3.

evolved in the late 1990s and early 2000s over regional economic leadership, and for Japan itself, a fear of a hollowing out of the economy.⁵⁶¹ This fear turned out to be unsubstantiated, partly as the result of continuous growth in bilateral trade. Nonetheless, rivalry over regional leadership endured and became more intense, as evidenced by both countries' regional institution-making efforts. As part of China's new multilateralism and under the guise of being "a responsible stakeholder," Beijing actively engaged in existing multilateral institutions (ASEAN Regional Forum, World Trade Organization, Conference on Disarmament, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban) and proactively started building up its own new institutions (Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO], China–ASEAN FTA).⁵⁶² David Shambaugh summarized that the result of Beijing's engagement toward Southeast Asia was that "most nations in the region now see China as a good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a non-threatening regional power."⁵⁶³ David Kang similarly found that despite China's rise and its military modernization, most countries in Southeast Asia were not actively balancing against it but were accommodating it.⁵⁶⁴ At least not until the late 2000s/early 2010s.

From a Japanese perspective, China's active engagement in the region posed a strategic dilemma. On the one side, China's active involvement in regional institutions might have a socializing effect, which ultimately was also one of the goals of Japan's own engagement policies. Alistair Iain Johnston, for instance, argued that China's policymakers' and diplomats' active participation in institutions led to more cooperative and self-constraining policies.⁵⁶⁵ On the other hand, China's evolving role came at the expense of Japan's own ambitions for regional leadership. Although there is no evidence that this competition for influence directly heightened perceptions of threat, China's turn to regionalism, its efforts in institution building, its economic leverage, and its strategic ties with countries in the region in some cases drew comparisons in Japan to a return to the "Middle Kingdom," in which surrounding states were

⁵⁶¹ Besides the numerous publications in newspapers and think-tanks like RIETI, see, for instance, Cabinet Office, *Annual Report of Japanese Economy and Public Finance 2001–2002*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2002, available at <http://www5.cao.go.jp/zenbun/wp-e/wp-je02/wp-je02-000i1.html> (accessed 1 August, 2014) for an official view.

⁵⁶² See, for instance, Amitav Acharya, "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia," David Shambaugh (ed.) *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

⁵⁶³ David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 64.

⁵⁶⁴ David Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

⁵⁶⁵ Alistair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions 1980–2000*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

vassal states and subjugated under a Beijing-led empire.⁵⁶⁶ Such comparisons saw China's new regionalism as an early cue for a grand strategy of regional hegemony and domination.⁵⁶⁷ Such outlooks became popular in nonofficial narratives but never appeared in the official discourse.⁵⁶⁸ The 1998 East Asian Strategic Review, for instance, summarized that "the all-directions cooperative diplomacy China has been pursuing has accomplished positive results in various areas and helped China strengthen its presence in the international community."⁵⁶⁹ In general, the Japanese welcomed a growing Chinese involvement in multilateral and regional institutions. Beijing's active involvement in the six-party talks in particular and its understanding of Japan's sensitivities have been positively evaluated.⁵⁷⁰

Bilaterally, however, problems continued to linger. The unresolved question over wartime guilt made the Chinese bilateral relationship with Japan different from any other. Relations deteriorated when President Jiang Zemin lectured the Japanese on this topic during his visit to Japan. Most Japanese media criticized what were considered to be inappropriate, patronizing comments by the Chinese president. Issues over history and territory became growing irritants between the two countries. This further escalated during the tenure of Junichiro Koizumi (2001–2006). Domestic politics and identity politics in both countries made a conciliatory approach toward each other difficult. Chapter 8 will go deeper into this specific theme. For now, it is important to note that Japan perceived that it did not benefit from China's new foreign policy direction. With the changes in the external environment and in the domestic political landscape, Japan's strategic culture of passivity and pacifism and its initial policy of engagement toward China would change "toward more pronounced balance of power behavior in response to rising external threats and the failure of traditional economic tools to enhance

⁵⁶⁶ See, for instance, Hirotsugu Koike, "China sends out reassuring message of 'peaceful rise,'" *Nikkei Weekly*, May 10, 2004, or Mohan Malik, "Restrain Japan, Contain India," *The Japan Times*, June 12, 1999, or James Auer, "Come Clean on Defense Policy," *The Japan Times*, June 11, 1999.

⁵⁶⁷ In a 2015 study commissioned by MOFA, similar anxieties were expressed. It stated that in case of a U.S. withdrawal from the region, the "law of the jungle" would prevail in the Asia-Pacific with a dominant China at the center; see Nozomi Matsui, "Ministry panel predicts China will dominate Asia-Pacific in 20 years if U.S. withdraws," *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 26, 2015.

⁵⁶⁸ Noriko Kamachi, "Japanese writings on post-1945 Japan–China Relations," Peng Er Lam (ed.), *Japan's Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 50–68.

⁵⁶⁹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 1998*, Tokyo; NIDS, 1999.

⁵⁷⁰ See official documents such as *Defense of Japan*, *East Asian Strategic Review*, and the *Diplomatic Bluebook*. In contrast to China's proactive role, Japan has been described as a spoiler in the six-party talks; see Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, "Japan as a spoiler in the Six-Party Talks: Single-Issue Politics and Economic Diplomacy Towards North Korea," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, available at <http://japanfocus.org/-Maaïke-Okano-Heijmans/2929/article.html> (accessed April 10, 2013).

security.”⁵⁷¹ Nonetheless, despite the ongoing and growing irritants, engagement was still the name of the game.

Engagement 2.0: Style over substance

With the end of ODA loans, Japan’s engagement policy (beyond economics) in the post-Koizumi era lacked substance.⁵⁷² And although the first post-Koizumi year (2006) showed signs of a restart of China–Japan relations with (a) a successful visit of the new Japanese PM Shinzo Abe to China; (b) the signing of a new strategic partnership agreement; (c) the establishment of a China–Japan joint research project on Japan’s colonial past, putting the history issue on the backburner; and (d), most significantly, proposals for joint development of hydrocarbon resources in the disputed Longjing/Asunaro and Chunxiao/Shirakaba fields around the Senkaku Islands, Michishita and Samuels argued that post-Koizumi Japanese PMs (in particular, Prime Minister Hatoyama) adopted a “Goldilocks consensus,” finding a “more effective balance between [Japan’s] neighbors and its security partner.” For Tokyo, this meant closing the distance with China by refraining from public displays of Japan’s nationalism and looking for regional cooperation bilaterally (e.g., port calls of JMSDF ships to China, establishment of a high-level economic dialogue, and cooperation on environment protection) as well as in institutional frameworks (such as the East Asian Economic Community, ASEAN Plus Three, and a free trade agreement between South Korea, Japan, and China).⁵⁷³

As ODA was slowly phased out, the engagement policy meant an insistence on bilateral exchange, dialogue, and reciprocal visits. In key speeches and official documents, Tokyo continually stressed the need to keep open these lines of communication, even in times when bilateral tensions were tense. In particular, such dialogues and exchanges on the grassroots level were deemed necessary to overcome the growing differences in popular perceptions. The problem was that these dialogues often had very little policy relevance, did not address particular bilateral issues, and were not robust or institutionalized. For the Japanese, they were meant to (a) explain Japanese policies, (b) protest against China’s policies, (c) build

⁵⁷¹ Michael Green, “Japan in Asia,” in David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Eds.) *International Relations of Asia*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008, p. 172.

⁵⁷² Glenn D. Hook et al., *Japan’s International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, p. 179–184.

⁵⁷³ Narushige Michishita and Richard J. Samuels, “Hugging and Hedging: Japanese Grand Strategy in the Twenty-First Century,” in Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (Eds.), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan, and Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 153–164.

confidence, (d) improve communication, and (e) gain support for other regional issues.⁵⁷⁴ These dialogues primarily were venues where both parties could express their perspectives on their own and each other's defense policies. They could not provide any direct mechanism for crisis prevention. Moreover, in many cases, such dialogues were cancelled whenever relations turned bad and when such institutions would be needed most (for instance, after visits to Yasukuni Shrine or after incidents in the East China Sea). The China–Japan security dialogue, which is the most regular form of bilateral consultation, has been subject to a stop/start pattern, as a result of cancellations or postponements from the Chinese side. The problems over the Senkaku Islands were the latest cause for a temporary freeze in exchange and dialogue.

	Date	Place
1a	December 1993	Beijing
1b	March 1994	Beijing
2	January 1995	Tokyo
3	January 1996	Beijing
4	March 1997	Tokyo
5	December 1997	Beijing
6	October 1999	Tokyo
7	June 2000	Beijing
8	April 2002	Tokyo
9	February 2004	Tokyo
10	July 2006	Beijing
11	March 2009	Beijing
12	January 2011	Tokyo

High-level visits were also postponed or cancelled in cases when relations turned sour. Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine resulted in the absence of a bilateral summit for five years. The incidents around the Senkaku Islands resulted in the cancellation of high-level visits,

⁵⁷⁴ Masayuki Masuda, "Tokyo and Beijing in Search of 'Strategic Relations': A Roadmap for Japan–China Military Diplomacy," Gerrit Gong and Victor Teao (eds.), *Reconceptualising the Divide: Identity, Memory and Nationalism in Sino–Japanese Relations*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, p. 194.

working-level dialogues, and attempts to find a bilateral, maritime consultation mechanism.⁵⁷⁵ Track II and III dialogues, although abundant, were easy to start but often lacked further momentum because of the lack of policy input.⁵⁷⁶ They were mostly aimed at increasing understanding and goodwill by inviting counterparts to study or present in the other country. Nonetheless, these dialogues and exchanges were considered very important by the Japanese as a first (and so far the only) step toward confidence building.⁵⁷⁷

The lack of regional security regimes or institutions had made it hard to set standards for appropriate behavior. This also made it hard to manage the relationship; crisis management mechanisms not only work in times of escalation, but they also create assurances in tranquil times, in particular when they have successfully been put to the test.⁵⁷⁸ Without any such mechanisms, states tend to base their assessments more on worst-case scenarios.⁵⁷⁹ In the case of Japan, the lack of security mechanisms with China meant that it had to insist on something more abstract in its efforts to signal what Tokyo would consider appropriate behavior from the Chinese side: international norms and rules.

International law, norms, and rules

Japan has benefited from and has a huge stake in the effective functioning of the postwar international liberal order, as founded and developed by the United States, its European allies, and Japan. For the Japanese, events that unfolded in the 1990s (China's nuclear testing and the Taiwan Straits Crisis) had already proven that the Chinese leadership was willing to challenge such existing international law and norms. Integration within the existing order is linked with concepts such as the "status quo" or China becoming a "responsible partner." The alternative is a China-led or Sino-centric order.⁵⁸⁰ Concerns over what such an alternative regional order would look like were heightened by events in the 2000s and 2010s, such as (a) the repeated maritime intrusions into what Japan considered to be its United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS)-defined EEZ, (b) sudden actions that defied international norms

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with MOD official.

⁵⁷⁶ Akiko Fukushima, "Multilateral Confidence Building Measures in Northeast Asia: Receding or Emerging?," Benjamin Self and Yuki Tatsumi (eds.), *Confidence-Building Measures and Security Issues in Northeast Asia*, Washington DC: Henry Stimson Center, Report No. 33, February 1999, p. 37–69, available at <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/fukushima.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2014).

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with MOD official.

⁵⁷⁸ Alexander Guisinger and Alastair Smith, "Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crisis," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 2, p. 17–200.

⁵⁷⁹ Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis*, p. 13.

⁵⁸⁰ In the mid-2000s, this question figured largely into the Japanese discourse; see, for instance, the National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asia Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2007, p. 3.

and rules and were perceived as outright acts of intimidation, (c) China's attempts to modify the rules of institutions it joined, (d) Beijing's active involvement in setting up new institutions and thought projects with "Chinese characteristics," and (v) China's attempts to redefine its bilateral relationship with the United States.

Regarding the first concern, maritime intrusions into and posturing close to Japanese waters have been interpreted as acts of coercion and escalation and in defiance of UNCLOS rules. The first time Chinese maritime actions were openly voiced as being a source of concern was in the early 2000s, when Chinese government ships failed to inform the Japanese about their movements, as was agreed in a 2001 bilateral mechanism for prior consultation. With the passing of time, the waters around the Senkaku Islands became increasingly contested. The 2014 Defense of Japan summarized that "China has adopted so-called assertive measures, including attempts to change the status quo by coercive measures based on China's own assertion which is incompatible with the existing international law and order."⁵⁸¹ China's maritime posturing around the East China Sea plays a vital role in the shaping of Japan's threat perceptions. They will be discussed in detail in Section 8.3.

Regarding the second concern, there have been occasional, sudden incidents that—for the Japanese—reaffirm China's defiance of international law and rules. For instance, in 2007, the PLA tested an ASAT, resulting in space debris after the destruction of one of China's own satellites. For Japan, the sudden launch of the missile came as a "shock."⁵⁸² In 2013, China set up an ADIZ covering large portions of the East China Sea and including the Senkaku Islands. Beijing demanded flights over the designated area to report or face "defensive emergency measures." Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida called the new ADIZ "unilateral conduct which Japan cannot recognize," Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera labeled it "extremely dangerous," and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe demanded a revocation. MOFA Director General for Asian and Oceanic Affairs Junichi Ihara was most outspoken on the issue; he labeled the incident "completely unacceptable . . . and extremely dangerous, inviting unforeseen incidents in

⁵⁸¹ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2015.

⁵⁸² The National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2008, p. 8, available at http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2008/east-asian_e2008_overview.pdf (accessed January 16, 2013).

Japan's airspace that could escalate".⁵⁸³ For Japanese policymakers, such unilateral actions reinforced Beijing's perceived opposition to international rules and norms.⁵⁸⁴

Regarding the third concern, in principle, Japan welcomes a China integrated in regional and global institutions. At the same time, this enmeshment may complicate things when (a) Beijing challenges established procedures or demands increased power in such regimes, for instance, in the form of voting rights, or (b) Beijing uses its political or economic leverage over other countries to influence the outcome of multilateral meetings. As an example of the first circumstance, China's behavior at the 2009 Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has been interpreted as part of its assertive agenda. Regarding the second circumstance, the failure of the 2012 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting to come up with a joint declaration was perceived to be a direct result of Cambodia's aversion to upsetting relations with Beijing by including remarks about developments in the South China Sea.⁵⁸⁵ In an editorial, the *Japan Times* said that "ASEAN succumbed to China's tactic of putting off an agreement to start talks on the binding code of conduct."⁵⁸⁶ Japan and China are both politically and economically actively engaged in the region, which sometimes leads to competition and rivalry. A Thai scholar, reflecting on Sino-Japanese rivalry in ASEAN summarized that "China and Japan seem to be more interested in preventing the other from establishing dominance over the region instead of coming up with a defining program to promote regional cooperation."⁵⁸⁷ ASEAN countries are well aware of the simmering rivalry between Japan and China but are looking for ways to prevent this from obstructing the broader regional processes of development and security building.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸³ James Przystup, "Japan-China Relations, Can We Talk?," *Comparative Connections*, CSIS, January 2014, available at http://csis.org/files/publication/1303qjapan_china.pdf (accessed January 17, 2014).

⁵⁸⁴ These are not the only two incidents that shaped such a perception; other incidents are, for instance, the EP-3 incident (2001); adoption of the Survey and Mapping Law, which restricts foreign militaries in China's EEZ (2002); the submergence of a Han-class submarine in Japanese waters (2004); ratification of the Taiwan Anti-succession Law (2005); and the surface of a Song-class submarine close to the U.S. carrier *Kitty Hawk* (2006). From 2009 onward, such ideas were further reinforced by China's "assertiveness" in the South China Sea and East China Sea. See Section 4.2.

⁵⁸⁵ See Kazuo Sato, "The Japan-China Summit and Joint Declaration of 1998: A Watershed for Japan-China relations in the 21st Century?," *Brookings Institute Working Papers*, January 2001, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2001/01/01china-sato> (accessed May 11, 2013).

⁵⁸⁶ The *Japan Times*, "Divisions serve to weaken ASEAN," July 21, 2012.

⁵⁸⁷ Chulacheeb Chinwanno, "Impact of the Sino-Japanese Competition on the ASEAN Political-Security Architecture," Sarah Teo and Bhubhindar Singh (eds.), *Impact of the Sino-Japanese Competitive Relationship on ASEAN as a Region and Institution*, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2014, available at http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/PR141224_Impact_of_Sino-Japanese.pdf (accessed January 14, 2014).

⁵⁸⁸ Moe Thuzar, "Sino-Japanese Competition and ASEAN Regional Institutions," Sarah Teo and Bhubhindar Singh (eds.), *Impact of the Sino-Japanese Competitive Relationship on ASEAN as a Region and Institution*,

Regarding the fourth concern, there is a growing fear that China is actively pushing ahead new forms of a regional or international order, bearing in mind first and foremost Chinese preferences and interests.⁵⁸⁹ Evidence for this is seen in the increased number of initiatives that were dubbed to have “Chinese characteristics,” such as the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures (CICA). Seiichiro Takagi argued that although China’s new multilateralism (the New Asian Security Concept, presented by Xi Jinping) of 2014 had similarities with the New Security Concept of the late 1990s, the differences between them “in both intention and context point[ed] to the characteristics and problematic nature of China’s external behavior in a new regional power configuration.”⁵⁹⁰ Chinese behavior within regional institutions and Chinese attempts at regional order building are often seen as balancing efforts aimed at minimalizing the U.S. and Japanese influence in the region.⁵⁹¹ Akio Takahara acknowledged there is a clear divide in Japan on the issue of institution building by Beijing, with fundamental differences in perceptions.⁵⁹² One group is very worried and concerned about China’s attempts to create a Sino-centric order, and others argue that balancing and isolation is not the right way to make best use of China’s rise. Within the Abe government, Takahara continued, the majority of the lawmakers support option 1: competition and balancing.⁵⁹³

For Tokyo, the presence of the United States and robustness of the United States–Japan alliance are of vital importance for deterring further Chinese assertiveness. Within Japan, discussions over “Japan passing,” the existence of a G-2, or, more recently, China branding its relations with Washington as “a new type of major-power relations” garner great interest. In particular, the idea that the United States and China should be considerate toward each other’s “core interests” warrants Japan’s attention.⁵⁹⁴ Although Washington has not embraced this idea, Japanese leaders have repeatedly sought assurances from Washington, including statements

Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2014, available at http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/PR141224_Impact_of_Sino-Japanese.pdf (accessed January 14, 2014).

⁵⁸⁹ Yoshihide Soeya, “China and International Law/Norms: A Japanese Perspective,” *The ASAN Forum*, November 22, 2013, available at <http://www.theasanforum.org/japanese-perspective-3/> (accessed November 11, 2014).

⁵⁹⁰ Seiichiro Takagi, “Xi Jinping’s New Asian Security Concept,” *The Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies- Commentary*, August 27, 2014, available at https://www2.jiia.or.jp/en_commentary/201408/27-1.html (accessed December 16, 2014).

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Masashi Nishihara.

⁵⁹² Interview with Akio Takahara.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Shinji Yamaguchi, “The Foreign Policy of Xi Jinping’s Administration and the Establishment of China’s Air Defense Identification Zone,” *NIDS Briefing Memo*, Tokyo, NIDS, September 2014, available at http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/briefing/pdf/2014/briefing_e190.pdf (accessed January 27, 2015).

over the Senkaku Islands. A 2011 survey of Japanese policymakers and experts showed that the preferred response to a rising China was to focus on military hedging and maintaining a robust alliance with the United States.⁵⁹⁵ An enduring political, economic, and military U.S. engagement in the region is deemed essential to prevent a new regional order “with Chinese characteristics” from emerging.

7.3. China on Japan’s Doorsteps: The Senkaku Islands

One of the central tenets of Japan’s discursive meaning making is that China’s “unilateral,” “assertive,” and “coercive” behavior trumps international rules and norms. This manifests itself first and foremost in the evolving conflict over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. The thorny bilateral issue of sovereignty over the islands is not in any way discussed bilaterally or in multilateral settings. The Japanese basic stance was and is that “the Senkaku Islands have always been Japan’s territory; Japan already effectively governs the islands; so the territorial issue does not exist.”⁵⁹⁶ And although there have been attempts to institutionalize some parts other than the question over territory (such as regulations over fisheries, a notification protocol, or agreements over joint development of the oil and gas fields), these attempts were often short lived.

The Senkaku Islands dispute contains several dimensions, in which Japan’s and China’s interests and interpretations clash. Richard Bush identified seven issues: (a) differences in interpretations of the continental shelf; (b) different interpretations about how the EEZ of each country should be delineated, and along with this, how each of the countries define their ADIZ; (c) the question of whether the islands are actually islands within the definitions of UNCLOS; (d) the location of the gas and oil fields; (e) the question of whether delimitation and sovereignty should be settled before recourse development is considered; (f) the presence of Chinese ships in the area and the kind of research those ships are pursuing; and (g) what kind of military activities are appropriate in the EEZ.⁵⁹⁷

Based on the seven points Bush presented above, it is important to note that land and sea disputes are different. Even though UNCLOS was created to establish maritime boundaries, the convention leaves much room for interpretation. In the case of the Senkaku Islands, both

⁵⁹⁵ Michishita and Samuels, “Hugging and Hedging,” p. 173.

⁵⁹⁶ As quoted in Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Security Relations with China since 1989: From Balancing to Bandwagoning?*, New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 50. See also Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Basic View on the Sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands,” May 8, 2013, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/basic_view.html (accessed November 12, 2013).

⁵⁹⁷ Richard Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, p. 66–70.

China and Japan refer to different tools to delineate their EEZs, which are both provided in UNCLOS. At the same time, China demands the Senkaku Islands as part of its historic claims going back to China's Ming Dynasty.⁵⁹⁸ The presumed existence of strategic oil and gas reserves makes the issue even more difficult to solve. The combination of alternate legalistic and historic interpretations and shared strategic interests between China and Japan has thus significantly complicated any kind of negotiations on the status of the Senkaku Islands. This section will look at how Japan has interpreted the developments over the Senkaku Islands for the time period under review; I will argue that China's behavior is interpreted as escalatory and increasingly aggressive and that the mainstream explanation for this behavior can be found in China's growing power and "confidence."⁵⁹⁹

Attention: Laws and illegal landings

China officially claimed the Senkaku Islands when it announced the law of Territorial Waters and Contiguous Zones in 1992. At that time, MOFA publicly downplayed the impact of the law by saying that the law was "merely a matter of China's tidying up its domestic legislation institutions" and that "the dispute would remain shelved as previously agreed."⁶⁰⁰ The Chinese government issued a similar statement saying that the new law did not represent a change in China's foreign policies and was not meant to affect the joint developments of the contested territories.⁶⁰¹ Nonetheless, the lasting impact of this new legislation was that the territorial issue would become a bone of contention in the bilateral relationship. Not only could the new law be interpreted as a clear signal of China's long-term intentions in its near surroundings, but China's behavior quickly followed suit, as in the years onward, it stepped up its maritime activity in the South China Sea as it occupied and built a presence on some of the disputed islands. From the mid-1990s, China pursued what Taylor Fravel called a "delaying strategy" in the South China Sea with the goal to "consolidate China's claims, especially to

⁵⁹⁸ For an overview of China's historical claims, see Reinhard Drifte, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands territorial dispute between Japan and China: between materialization of the 'China threat' and Japan 'Reversing the outcome of World War II,'" *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 32, May 2013, available at revistas.ucm.es/index.php/UNIS/article/download/44789/42208 (accessed February 16, 2016).

⁵⁹⁹ This is in line with the overall interpretation of China's behavior. Although there are many bilateral issues, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands have had the biggest effect on the overall deterioration of bilateral relations. The issue features prominently in daily newspapers and television shows. Domestic public opinion makes it hard for both sides to appear weak and to compromise on the issue.

⁶⁰⁰ As quoted in Drifte, *Japan's Security Relations with China since 1989*, p. 50.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

maritime rights or jurisdiction over these waters, and to deter other states from strengthening their own claims at China's expense."⁶⁰²

Tokyo started to articulate its apprehensions when China stepped up this maritime activity in the South China Sea. This apprehension was not only due to the possibility of China increasing its maritime presence in the East China Sea but also because of Japan's dependence on open sea lanes. Sea lanes have traditionally been central to Japan's functioning as a trading state. A 1970s JDA pamphlet stated that "the removal of threats against our sea lanes of communication is vital in securing the survival of the nation."⁶⁰³ With China stepping up its presence in these busy shipping routes, Japan observed that "such movements towards the expansion of the scope of activities at sea need continuous attention."⁶⁰⁴

The situation around the Senkaku Islands deteriorated in the mid-1990s as well. The presence of Chinese oil rigs near the median line in the East China Sea was widely reported in Japanese media. In a reaction, the right-wing Japan Youth Federation landed on the islands and constructed a lighthouse and a war memorial. MOFA officials, who were opposed to these acts, refrained from taking action since this might have weakened Japan's negotiating position on the issue vis-à-vis China.⁶⁰⁵ On a regular basis, right-wing nationalists from mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan landed on the disputed islands. However, both the Japanese and Chinese governments did their best to de-escalate such situations. This routine created some level of trust, as both countries showed their commitment to not let the relation spiral out of control by not giving in to nationalist sentiments. The problem over fisheries was (temporarily) settled in September 1997, when both sides agreed to set aside the issue of ownership and discuss the establishment of a "joint management zone" for fishing and resources management.

This resolution was quickly overshadowed by reports of Chinese warships and research vessels increasing their activities around the islands. This increased presence went against the idea of de-escalating the issue. Fears that China might use force in a scenario to defend the islands, based on comments made by a commander of the PLA Academy of Science, further resulted in a stiffened Japanese stance on the Senkaku Islands. The *Higuchi Report* warned that territorial disputes could trigger a conflict with China.⁶⁰⁶ And even though China claimed to work multilaterally and in cooperation with its neighbors in resolving the maritime disputes

⁶⁰² M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 293.

⁶⁰³ Euan Graham, *Japan's Sea Lane Security: A Matter of Life and Death?*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 108.

⁶⁰⁴ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 1996*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1997.

⁶⁰⁵ Michael Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, p. 86.

⁶⁰⁶ Advisory Group on Defense Issues, *The Modality of the Security and Defense Capability of Japan: The Outlook for the 21st Century*, Tokyo: Ministry of Finance, 1994.

and it signaled its intent by working together with the other claimant countries in the South China Sea on a declaration of conduct, Japan became apprehensive about the growing number of Chinese oceanographic vessels operating in its nearby waters. Among the Japanese, there were no feelings that China was changing course, and latent feelings of threat lingered on. Moreover, as Ueki observed, by the late 1990s, restraints on making “China threat” arguments were also removed as a result of (a) both China’s and Japan’s self-interested behavior, (b) a decline in attempts to maintain good bilateral relations, and (c) the lifting of the “China taboo.”⁶⁰⁷

Concern: Research and drilling

During Koizumi’s tenure, concerns about a rising China became more common, in particular in the defense white papers. The main focus of anxieties was Chinese activities in the East China Sea. Concerns about this were first publicly uttered in the early 2000s when Chinese research vessels were mapping the ocean floors. Whereas in the late 1990s the presence of these research vessels was reported in a more or less neutral manner, after 2000, such movements close by and sometimes inside what Japan considered its EEZ started to raise alarm bells in official publications (medium-level China threat arguments were becoming more mainstream). Foreign Minister Yohei Kono openly expressed his concern at the Central Party School in China about the voyage of a naval ship circling around Japan and involved in oceanographic research.⁶⁰⁸ The 2001 Defense of Japan stated that Chinese maritime activities close to Japan “undermine the friendly relations between Japan and China.” It went on to say that “with respect to the recent increase in activities of Chinese ships near Japan, it is important to pay attention to Chinese movements in relation to a so-called ‘blue water’ Navy in the future.”⁶⁰⁹ In 2001, Japan and China reached a framework for consultation on the East China Sea; both countries would let each other know in advance about maritime movements around the median line.⁶¹⁰ But, once again, the Chinese were accused of not following the rules and guidelines on consultation. Even after the establishment of a bilateral notification mechanism, Chinese vessels were reported to enter Japan’s EEZ without prior consultation, triggering “rigid

⁶⁰⁷ Ueki, *The Rise of China threat arguments*, p. 360.

⁶⁰⁸ Ming Wan, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Interaction, Logic and Transformation*, Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006, p. 134.

⁶⁰⁹ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2001*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2002.

⁶¹⁰ This median line was claimed by the Japanese as the maritime boundary between the two countries since the mid-1990s.

protests” from Tokyo. The 2002 East Asian Strategic Review of the NIDS commented on these developments:

Completely ignoring the agreement on the framework of prior consultation, these self-righteous activities by China are demonstrating that China has no intention of recognizing the EEZ demarcation line [median line between Japan and China] asserted by Japan in the East China Sea.⁶¹¹

The question was whether the objective of this research was (a) scientific, (b) to make a survey of natural resources such as oil and gas, or (c) to map the ocean floor for strategic reasons (e.g., anti-access, area denial purposes). Whatever the reasons might have been, mapping the ocean floor is a common maritime activity and not something that China exclusively does.⁶¹² Japan had also been conducting oceanographic research. The problem was that the Chinese actions—according to the Japanese interpretation of UNCLOS—were occurring in Japan’s EEZ and that Chinese ships were disregarding the framework of prior consultation. Behind those frustrations were anxieties over China’s long-term intentions toward the delineation of both countries’ EEZs and disputed islands. It was believed that China was not only sidestepping bilateral frameworks but also pushing for its own interpretation of its EEZ under UNCLOS.⁶¹³ Different from the China–India case, where both countries were able to accept “a difference in perceptions on the border,” in the China–Japan case, UNCLOS made it more difficult to accept differences in perception since both China and Japan used the same legal framework to claim their respective EEZs.

It was considered a new step in challenging Japan’s effective control over the islands. The NIDS’ East Asian Strategic Review covered the problems as follows:

As there were cases of the Haibing-723 conducting intelligence collection by circling Japan during May and June 2000, it is considered possible that China will increase its intelligence gathering and marine observation activities in various areas of the sea in the future. Also thought possible is that along with increasing intelligence collection

⁶¹¹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2002, available at http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2002/east-asian_e2002_5.pdf (accessed June 12, 2012).

⁶¹² Interview with senior officials at Maritime Staff College, Tokyo.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*; China’s claims under UNCLOS are based on the natural prolongation of the continental shelf, as far as the Okinawa Trough. Japan’s claims are based on the median line division.

activities, major fighting ships, including submarines, will be deployed in these areas.⁶¹⁴

And this is what happened exactly only a few years later.

The 2005 Defense of Japan, for the first time, included a separate section on China's maritime activities and listed three major points of concern regarding China's activities in nearby waters. First, the number of Chinese naval vessels conducting intelligence or oceanographic research that entered Japan's EEZ without prior notification increased dramatically compared to earlier years. After consultations with Chinese officials, MOFA stated that the presence of Chinese government vessels in Japan's territorial waters and contiguous zone had become "a concern" for Japan and was "inconsistent" with the idea of turning the East China Sea into a "sea of cooperation."⁶¹⁵

Besides this increased naval presence, China also began the construction of a facility to drill for natural resources on its side of the median line.⁶¹⁶ Conservative commentators and news media were critical of China's actions and demanded a strong response from Tokyo.⁶¹⁷ In a first reaction, Japan expressed "grave concern over the possibility that the contracted mining zone and the part of the subterranean structure beneath it extends to waters east of the median line."⁶¹⁸ METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa compared China's simultaneously exploring and drilling to a person "shaking hands with someone with the right hand and striking with the left."⁶¹⁹ To make sure that the Japanese would not be faced with a *fait accompli* in the East China Sea, Nakagawa decided to accept exploitation applications from Japanese companies to start drilling on the Japanese side of the median line. Bilateral negotiations on proposals for joint development did not bear fruit. Trade minister Nakagawa further promised that "Japan would do its duty" in protecting the drilling companies from potential harassment from the Chinese. Richard Bush noticed not only that diplomatic language hardened but also that along with the increased commercial presence in the forms of oil drilling companies, a military dimension to the Senkaku Islands started to manifest. PLAN vessels were spotted close

⁶¹⁴ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2002.

⁶¹⁵ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2005*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2006.

⁶¹⁶ Japan and China dispute the actual location of the median line and the location of the EEZ, based on different interpretations of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS).

⁶¹⁷ Traditionally, the *Sankei* is most vocal regarding the government's "weak-kneed" diplomacy toward China.

⁶¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2005*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2006.

⁶¹⁹ As quoted in James J. Przystup, "Japan-China Relations: No End to History," p. 125-127.

before parliamentary elections in Japan, and it was reported that one of the vessels “locked on” to a patrol aircraft of the MSDF.⁶²⁰

Third, on November 10, 2004, a Chinese nuclear-powered submarine was detected going through the Ishigaki Straits within Japan’s territorial waters. Only two days earlier, the JDA had issued an internal report that labeled China as a threat and described three scenarios in which Japan could get into conflict with China.⁶²¹ In a response to the intrusion, Foreign Minister Machimura labeled the incident “regrettable,” lodged an official protest with the Chinese embassy, and demanded an explanation and an apology.⁶²² After a while, Chinese Foreign Vice Minister Wu Dawei explained that the submarine accidentally entered Japan’s territorial waters and expressed his regret for the incident. The 2005 National Defense Program Guidelines, which were approved by the cabinet one month after the incident, spoke of an increase of Chinese operations at sea, which required prudent attention from Japan.⁶²³

These three developments seemed to suggest an escalatory trend in China’s behavior in the East China Sea. Until 2004, the dispute had remained within the realm of diplomatic bickering and the occasional landing of ultra-national groups from Japan, Taiwan, or mainland China. In the mid-2000s, the military dimension became salient, with an increased number of Chinese oceanographic vessels and warships navigating close to the oil and gas installations and Japanese SDF planes and ships scrambling to intercept possible violations of Japan’s maritime and air space. In an attempt to interpret this behavior, the Defense of Japan for the first time discussed China’s intentions beyond a Taiwan scenario. It stressed China’s importance in maritime interests and oil and gas exploitation in the East China Sea and South China Sea and the significance Beijing attaches to its vital lifelines, the sea lines of communication. Although it was unclear how far China’s capabilities would reach at that time, “given recent modernization of air and sea power of China, [the] reach of its capabilities appear[ed] to be expanding beyond Chinese home waters.”⁶²⁴ Discussions in the Diet took a discursive turn as well in this time period. Radical statements that blamed Chinese hardline

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Joseph Ferguson, “Submarine Incursion Sets Sino–Japanese Relations on Edge,” *China Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 23, available at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=3695#.VKpJA9KUeSp (accessed December 14, 2013).

⁶²² Reiji Yoshida and Kanako Takahara, “China’s sub intrusion sparks Tokyo protest,” *The Japan Times*, November 13, 2004, available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/11/13/national/chinas-sub-intrusion-sparks-tokyo-protest/#.VKpJh9KUeSp> (accessed December 14, 2013).

⁶²³ Cabinet Office, National Defense Program Guidelines, FY 2005-, available at http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/national_guidelines.pdf (accessed December 17, 2013).

⁶²⁴ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2006*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2007.

policy for the deterioration of bilateral ties became more common.⁶²⁵ In such discussions, China's maritime endeavors were linked with its quest for resources, which were believed not only to be for the benefit of its China's economy but also to increase its regional and global influence and help China in its quest for hegemony.⁶²⁶

The incidents in 2004 and 2005 showed that in times of tense bilateral relations and without any crisis communication channels, escalation in the East China Sea could occur rapidly. These events added fuel to an already tense relationship, as a result of Koizumi's visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Although some argued that escalation came as a result of deteriorating ties, this is not necessarily the case. Even when both sides were trying to better their overall relations (e.g., Hatoyama's idea of an "East Asian Community" and his subsequent calling for making the East China Sea a "sea of fraternity"), concerns lingered. During the negotiations about the joint developments of the gas and oil fields around the Senkaku Islands, unidentified MOFA officials were not optimistic about the early conclusion of negotiations. One official stated that "in no time, the East China Sea will become China's 'core interest' like the South China Sea. . . . China is now a 'military expansion' concern for more than the United States."⁶²⁷

Japan's maritime backyard remained militarized with an increasing number of Chinese warships appearing close to Japan's territorial waters (such as the passing of four vessels, including a Sovremenny-class destroyer, through the Tsugaru Straits in October 2008) and Japanese planes scrambling to monitor their activities. In 2008, some ships of the China Marine Surveillance (CMS) stayed for a prolonged period in Japan's territorial waters close to the Senkaku Islands, a move that was regarded as a new escalatory step by the Japanese.⁶²⁸ Japan's MOFA warned the Chinese that such incidents should never happen again but at the same time publicly stated that it would focus on diplomatic measures to convey its concerns to China. A stronger response might have had consequences for the upcoming trilateral summit with South Korea and China. MOFA was seemingly doing its best not to upset potential fence-mending efforts. At the same time, from a Japanese perspective, the Chinese action suggested that "the

⁶²⁵ Linas Hagstrom and Bjorn Jerden, "Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations: To Politicize or De-politicize the China Issue in the Japanese Diet," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, p. 736.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ As quoted in James Przystup, "Japan-China Relations: Troubled Waters," *Comparative Connections*, available at http://csis.org/files/publication/1003qjapan_china.pdf (accessed December 21, 2013).

⁶²⁸ Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – Between "shelving" and "dispute escalation," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 30, available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Reinhard-Drifte/4154/article.html> (accessed September 17, 2014).

significance of demonstrating the capacity of its Navy to access the Pacific [was] of greater importance to it than the prospect of developing new relations with the Japanese government.”⁶²⁹ On a later publicized MOFA information website, aimed to explain Japan’s position on the Senkaku issue to foreign readers, the 2008 move by the Chinese was explained as follows:

The incident made clear China’s new position concerning the Senkaku Islands, one that had never been observed before: Chinese government vessels intrude into Japan’s territorial sea with the clear intention of violating the sovereignty of Japan, attempting to change the status quo through force or coercion.⁶³⁰

Different from the 1990s, during which the Japanese pledged to work together with China for regional stability, the late 2000s saw a more precautionary Japanese narrative toward China. Diplomatic improvements did not seriously change perceptions. Concerns that started to appear in the early 2000s remained. In particular, in the maritime domain, it was up to China to prove its benign intentions. Masafumi Iida concluded in a NIDS *China Security Report* that whether or not China can take a flexible stance to Japan in the East China Sea issue, like the one taken with the Southeast Asian side regarding the South China Sea, will greatly affect how East Asian countries assess Chinese policy of “peaceful development.”⁶³¹

Ueki already observed in 2006 that “China’s maritime activities in and around the contested territorial waters and offshore islands were interpreted as signs of China’s aggressive intentions.”⁶³² Such interpretations were further reinforced by escalatory events in the 2010s.

Escalation: Intimidation and coercion

Diplomatic efforts to restart bilateral relations (under LDP PMs Shinzo Abe and Yasuo Fukuda and later DPJ PMs Yukio Hatayama and Naoto Kan) turned out to be fruitless when in September 2010 a drunken captain of a Chinese fishing boat rammed a Japanese Coast Guard

⁶²⁹ Michael Yahuda, *Sino–Japanese Relations After the Cold War*, p. 118.

⁶³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “About the Senkaku Islands,” available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html> (accessed February 12, 2015).

⁶³¹ Masafumi Iida, “New Developments in China’s Policy on the South China Sea,” *NIDS Security Report*, No. 9.

⁶³² Chikaku Ueki, “The Rise of China threat” arguments, p. 359.

ship, an incident big enough to let the bilateral relations spiral out of control. The Chinese crew of the fishing boat was released within a few days. Only the captain remained incarcerated for a period of 10 days. Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada mentioned that both parties needed to “act calmly” to resolve the issue. In response to the extended imprisonment of the Chinese captain, the Chinese lodged official protests, canceled ministerial meetings and postponed a Japanese youth exchange program to the Shanghai World Expo. In many cities in China, anti-Japan demonstrations broke out. The arrest of four Japanese and the suspension of export of rare earth materials were also seen as political and economic repercussions. For the Chinese, on the other hand, the detention of the captain was a change in the status quo; in similar cases, Chinese and Taiwanese crew were quietly detained and quickly released. Arresting the captain based on Japanese domestic law was also seen as a way to enforce Japan’s sovereignty claims on the islands.

Instead of acting calmly, newly appointed foreign Minister Seiji Maehara labeled the Chinese reaction as “very hysterical.”⁶³³ Japan’s own reaction was considered to be a reaffirmation of the status quo and in line with earlier positions based on (domestic) law. Between September 10 and November 16 Maehara reiterated on 25 occasions that the incident did not change Japan’s basic stance on the ownership of the islands.⁶³⁴ Therefore, it was only natural that the issue had been taken care of “based on domestic law.” Moreover, Maehara explicitly added that there had never been an understanding about shelving the issue for future generations.⁶³⁵ The Japanese official stance was that there was not and had never been a dispute over the islands. According to that logic, shelving the issue would have implied a tacit recognition of the existence of the dispute.⁶³⁶

Japanese policymakers thus insisted that the transaction was only a matter of domestic affairs and did not change anything in the government’s efforts to keep the status quo and maintain peace and stability on the islands. Instead, it was portrayed that it was China that was actively seeking to change the status quo. The 2010 Defense White Paper observed that China

⁶³³ The Japan Times, “China says it’s ‘shocked’ by being called ‘hysterical,’” October 20, 2010.

⁶³⁴ James Przystup, “Japan-China Relations: troubled waters: Part II,” *Comparative Connections*, January 2011, available at http://csis.org/files/publication/1004qjapan_china.pdf (accessed June 11, 2013).

⁶³⁵ According to the Chinese interpretation the issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands was agreed to be shelved for future generations after normalization in 1972.

⁶³⁶ Documents and testimonies (such as by PM Suzuki Zenko) showed that there was at least a tacit understanding about the existence of a dispute. On the problematic issue of the “shelving” the issue in Japan, see Reinhard Drifte, “The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – Between “shelving” and “dispute escalation,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 30, available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Reinhard-Drifte/4154/article.html> (accessed September 17, 2014).

had become “more self-confident and [was] displaying a more assertive posture in the international community” based on “[t]he fact that China’s economy promptly broke free of the impact from the financial crisis.”⁶³⁷ Beijing’s assertive posture was further reaffirmed after the fishing trawler incident by the increased number of Chinese patrols around the Senkaku Islands, the “hysterical” Chinese official reaction, and the anti-Japanese protests in China. Although an all-out Sino-Japanese war was not considered a realistic future scenario, the 2010 NDPG mentioned that a growing number of “gray-zone disputes” over territory, sovereignty, and economic interests had come to the forefront. It went on that in particular in the Asia-Pacific the effects of a power shift had become apparent, along with worrying trends such as China’s military expenditure and its expanding maritime activities. In stronger words than ever before in similar documents, it concluded that “these trends, together with insufficient transparency over China’s military forces and its security policy, are of concern for the regional and global community.”⁶³⁸

It is important to note that China’s maritime activities were thus not seen as a series of unrelated incidents, or as a process of reciprocal interactions with Japan, but instead were seen as an escalatory trend in China’s assertive behavior, increasing in volatility, along with its military spending.

Since mid-2009, China has stepped up its naval activities in the Western Pacific. Its fleet based in Qingdao sailed to the South China Sea in April 2010 and through the Miyako strait (the strait between the main island of Okinawa and the Miyako Islands) to the Okinotorishima area in the Pacific. This was a clear demonstration of China’s intention to expand its area of control beyond the “first island chain” (Okinawa, Taiwan, and the Philippines) to the “second island chain” (Tokyo, Iwoto, and Guam).⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2010*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2011.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2011*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2012.

Table 8. China's assertive actions around the Senkaku Islands (2008-2014)⁶⁴⁰

Date	Organization	Event
October, 2008	PLA Navy	For the first time Chinese military vessels (4) pass through the Tsugaru Strait
November, 2008	PLA Navy	For the first time Chinese military vessels (4) pass through the waters between Okinawa / Miyakojima
December, 2008	State Oceanic Administration	For the first time, Chinese ships (2) enter Japan's territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands
September, 2010	Fishing Boat	Chinese fishing trawler rams Japan Coast Guard ship
April, 2011	PLA Navy	For the first time Chinese military vessels pass through Osumi Strait
August, 2011	Bureau of Fisheries	Patrol boats enter Japan's territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands
September, 2012	Law Enforcement Agencies	Start repeatedly enter Japan's territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands
December, 2012	State Oceanic Administration	Violation of airspace over the Senkaku Islands by a fixed-wing aircraft
January, 2013	PLA Navy	1 confirmed and 1 suspected directed fire-control radar incident
July, 2013	PLA Navy	For the first time, Chinese military vessels (5) pass through Soya Strait
November, 2013	Ministry of National Defense	Establishment of Air Defense Identification Zone
May / June, 2014	PLA Air Force	Scrambles and near collisions between Chinese SU-27s and Japanese OP3-C and YS-11B

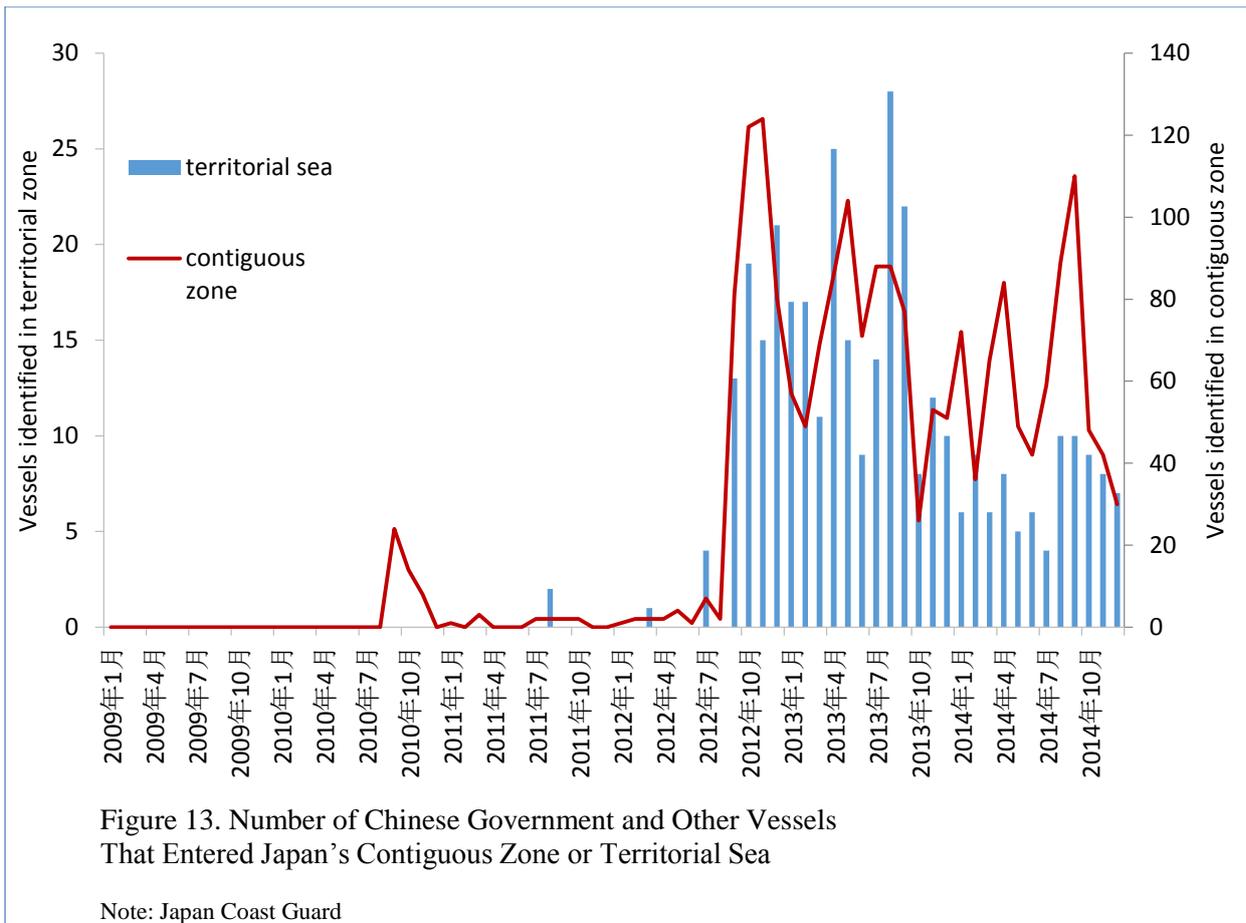
As the Senkaku issue went under increased public scrutiny, domestic pressure on both sides made it impossible to compromise. The decision to release the Chinese captain after the initial extension was highly criticized in Japan's media commentaries. According to such pundits, the Japanese government appeared "weak-kneed" by yielding to the Chinese pressure.

⁶⁴⁰ These events are specifically mentioned in official publications such as the 2014 Defense of Japan and the designated website on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands by MOFA, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html (accessed March 13, 2015).

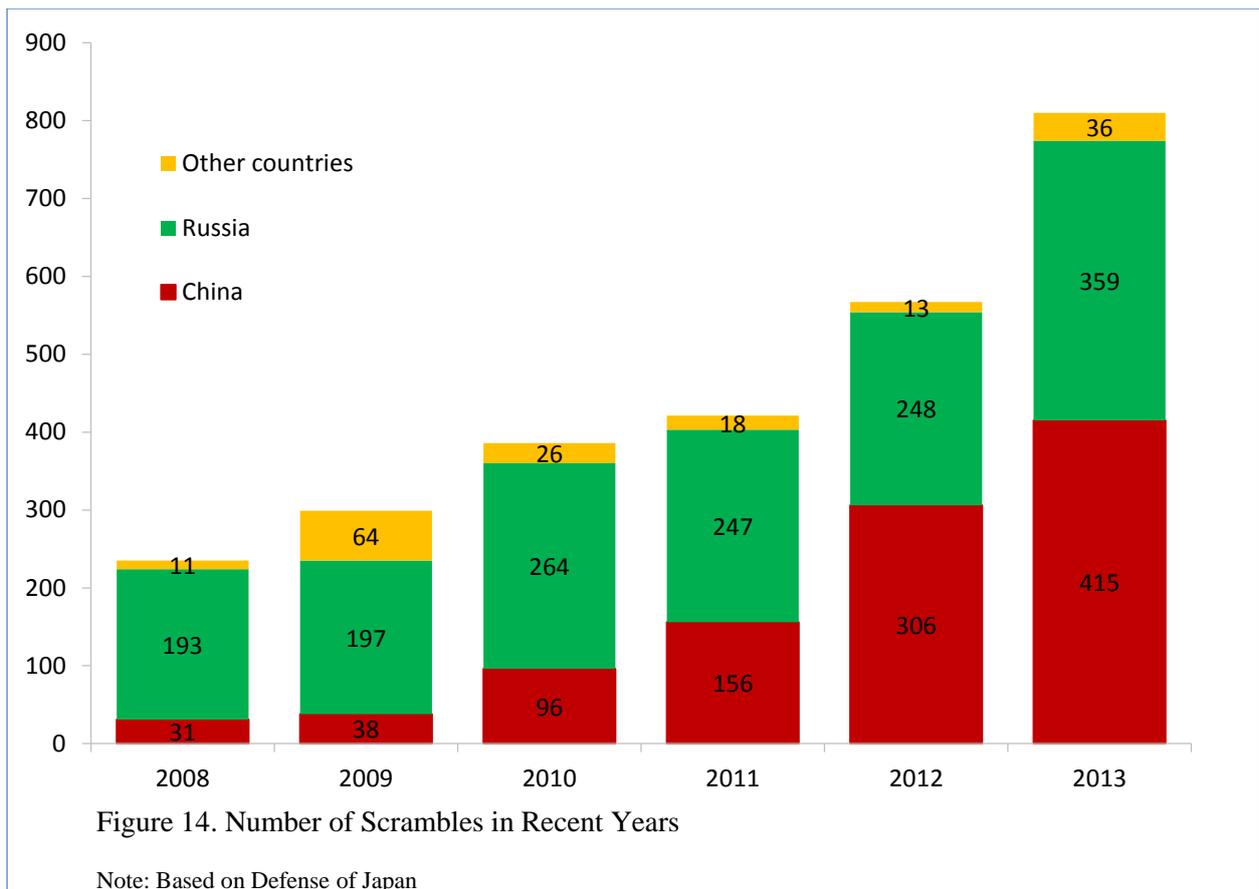
Public opinion and the media wanted the DPJ government to act in a more resolute manner toward China. In that difficult environment it was Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara who raised the stakes in April 2012 by publicly announcing that he was willing to purchase three of the four privately owned Senkaku Islands in order to strengthen Japanese control over the islands. Public polling indicated that 80% of the Japanese public approved.⁶⁴¹ In turn the Noda government, in a move to prevent the islands from falling into the hands of the notoriously anti-Chinese Ishihara, successfully made a counterbid and nationalized the islands in September of the same year. The new Japanese ambassador to China, Masato Kitera, stated that purchase of the islands by the government should not pose a problem for the bilateral relationship. Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba added that the nationalization was in fact just a “domestic commercial transaction,” and asserted in an op-ed in the *New York Times* that with the purchase of the islands “the ownership of the islands — held by the government until 2002 — was returned from a private citizen to the government.”⁶⁴² In that sense, the purchase of the islands by the central government and the nationalization were seen as ways to (a) prevent the islands from falling into Ishihara’s hands, (b) return to the status quo ante before the islands moved into private hands, and (c) de-escalate the situation and maintain the islands’ “peaceful and stable management.” Nonetheless, the nationalization came under severe criticism from China, causing rhetorical outbursts, new anti-Japanese protests, political and economic sanctions, and increased patrolling by China’s maritime agencies.

⁶⁴¹ Takeshi Suzuki and Shusuke Murai, “How the Japanese Media Covered the Senkaku Issue,” Thomas Hollihan (ed.), *The Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: How Media Narratives Shape Public Opinion and Challenge the Global Order*, New York: Palgrave, 2014, p. 153.

⁶⁴² New York Times, “Japan-China Relations at a Crossroads,” November 12, 2012, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/opinion/koichiro-genba-japan-china-relations-at-a-crossroads.html? r=0> (accessed July 22, 2013).



This increased Chinese maritime posturing around the contested islands and resulted in what the Japanese called “dangerous acts” that could possibly lead to “a contingency situation.” The official response to what many Japanese believed to be Chinese acts of intimidation, coercion, and salami-slicing tactics was a continuous appeal for China to “accept and stick to international norms,” while Japanese leaders stressed the necessity to enhance “maritime security” in reaching out to other countries that shared concerns over China’s maritime ambitions (such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and India). In the tensions that ensued from the 2010 Trawler Incident onward, it was thus argued in Japan’s official readings that Tokyo’s policies and behavior were aimed at keeping the situation “stable and secure,” maintaining the status quo, and “calmly” resolving bilateral tensions. China’s response was interpreted as “hysterical,” “assertive,” and not in accordance with international rules and norms. Moreover, Chinese maritime and air actions were interpreted as an escalatory trend, which, given the fact that China’s defense policies and strategic intentions were non-transparent, might escalate even further in the future.



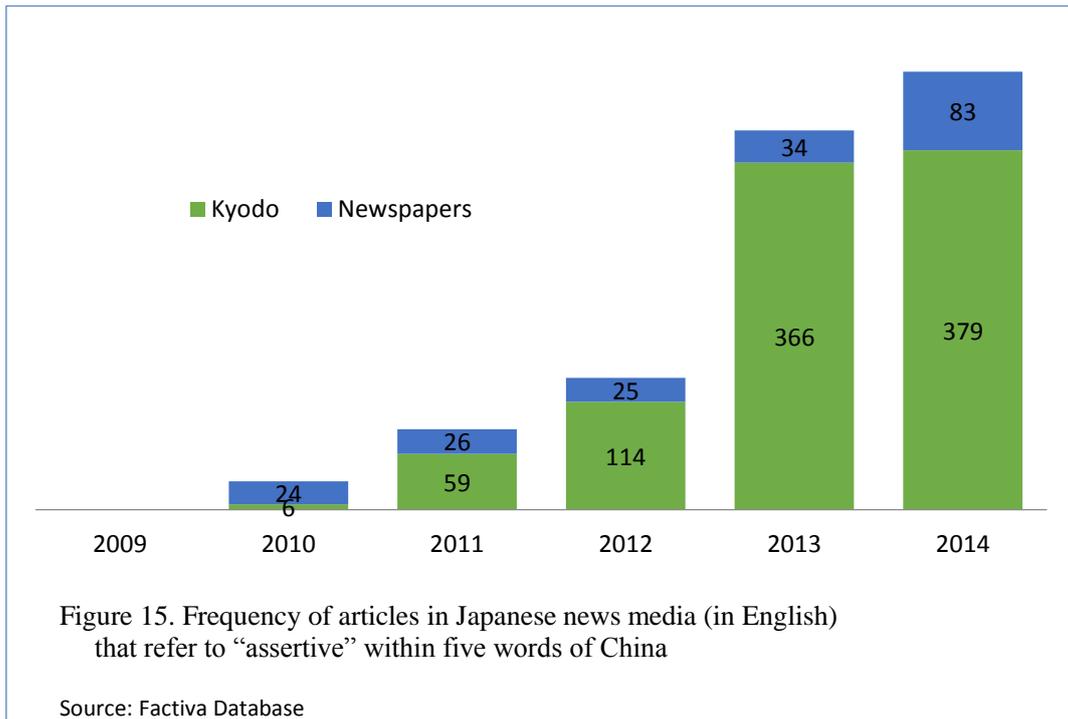
First fishing boats, then law enforcement vessels, and finally the PLA Navy and Air Force: China’s presence around the Senkaku Islands was seen as a slippery slope, not only in terms of capabilities, but also in terms of behavior. Japan’s first National Security Advisor Shotaro Yachi warned that if the situation around the Senkaku Islands changed in favor of China, “then China will claim rights over Okinawa next.”⁶⁴³ He also contended that China

is essentially a continental state that has historically tended to protect its national security through territorial expansion. It seems that China is aspiring to an increased naval presence as well by applying the same expansionist logic as it embraced for expanding its territory before.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ Shotaro Yachi, “More Proactive Contribution to Peace” Changes Japan’s diplomacy, Abe Administration’s Policy Toward Asia and the United States,” *Japan Foreign Policy Forum*, No. 20, available at http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/en/pdf/2014/no20/DJweb_20_dip_01.pdf (accessed January 13, 2015).

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

If unchecked, the future scenario would be for Beijing to exert control over the First and Second Island Chain and divide (with the United States) the Pacific Ocean into two spheres of influence.⁶⁴⁵ Although discussions over China’s ambitions in the Western Pacific remained open-ended, the salience of the China narrative-meme in the official and media narratives increasingly empowers the belief that China’s “peaceful development” is a fallacy. Instead, China’s behavior is characterized as revisionist, escalatory, and coercive.

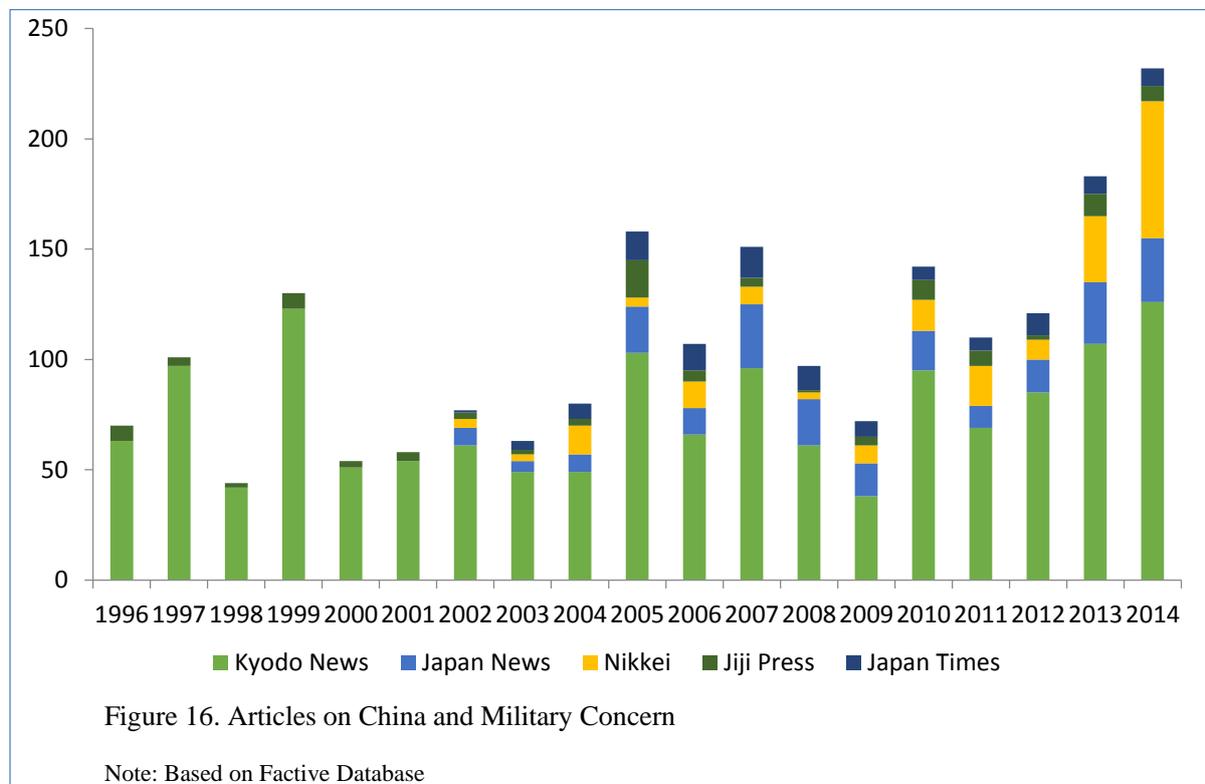


7.4. Hypothesis Testing

In Chapter 1, I hypothesized that “the more China acts in an escalatory, non-compromising way, the more threatening it will become.” Chapter 6 concluded that China’s growing power has enabled it to pursue a more “confrontational” or “assertive” foreign policy. China’s growing power has been an enabling factor for threat perceptions to rise; however, ultimately it is escalatory events that trigger sudden increases in the quantity and the volatility of “China threat” arguments. In that sense, China’s behavior best explains the divergence on China threat perceptions in Japan. The Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1996, oceanic research, submarine intrusion, and conflicts over gas and oil extraction in the East China Sea in the mid-2000s, and China’s assertive behavior between 2008 and 2014 have significantly shaped the

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

“China threat” discourse. The newspaper articles commenting on China as a military concern show a similar irregular discursive pattern, which suggests events-driven discursive change.



Concerns over a rising China as a result of its perceived behavior have manifested themselves in two ways. First, there have always been strategic concerns over how China sees the emerging regional order and what role China sees for itself. Although Chinese active involvement in regional institutions was welcomed in the 1990s, there are growing concerns that Chinese foreign policy is creating a new form of regionalism “with Chinese characteristics,” in which “universal” law, values, and norms are replaced by the rule of might, as well as dependence and—in the worst case scenario—subjugation to the new Middle Kingdom. Besides these strategic apprehensions, immediate anxieties have manifested in Japan over the “survival” and integrity of the Japanese state as a result of Chinese actions. The increased salience of China’s (military) presence in Japan’s backyard, particularly after the 2010 Fishing Trawler Incident, has spurred such sentiments, in particular because China’s tactics were interpreted as escalatory salami-slicing.⁶⁴⁶ The overall Japanese consensus is that China’s foreign policy has taken an

⁶⁴⁶ Interview Satoshi Morimoto, Masashi Nishihara. See also Christopher Hughes, “Japanese Military Modernization: In Search of a “Normal” Security Role, Ashley Tellis and Michael Wills (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2005-06: Military Modernization in an Age of Uncertainty*, Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005, p. 111.

assertive turn in the late 2000s and that China is unwilling to de-escalate or compromise. In line with these observations, “China threat” arguments in Japan have multiplied and hardened.

The absence of robust institutions has contributed to an increased sense of insecurity over how China behaves and what it ultimately wants. Dialogue and interaction have not resulted in mechanisms that can delineate behavior and de-escalate crisis situations; instead, they served as talk shops in which—during peacetimes—each side would convey and try to find understanding for their perspectives on their own and each other’s defense policies. In times of escalations, such institutions were disbanded or postponed. Rather than bilateral or multilateral mechanisms, Japan had to stress something more ambiguous, such as “international law, rules and norms,” to express its concerns about Chinese aggressive or unilateral behavior. Along with a growing sense of a lack of perceived leverage through economic carrots, the failure to regulate behavior through institutions has resulted in the idea that engagement with China was ineffective.⁶⁴⁷ Most of the “China threat” argument proponents therefore prescribe a more resolute China policy.

In the 2014 GENRON/*China Daily* poll, the top reason why China was a security concern for Japan was the issue over the Senkaku Islands (58.6%).⁶⁴⁸ Out of the 15 possible answers to choose from, China’s military modernization only ranked 9th (9.6%). This shows the Japanese public was more triggered by events that showcased China’s assertive behavior and less with long-term trends such as military modernization. The Japanese official position also changed in response to events, rather than to trends. The Taiwan Crisis made the Japanese concerned about China’s threshold for escalation; events around 2004/2005 showed that China was willing to defend its rights in the East China Sea with military means; and the Senkaku Islands incidents proved that China was behaving as a regional bully for some and an aspiring hegemon for others. Most of these “China threat” arguments were not new, yet they increased in quantity and intensity during and after these “trigger events.” Such events allowed a change in discursive patterns, for instance to securitize capabilities (defense expenditure, transparency or acquisition of military hardware) or identity traits (such as assertive tendencies, Chinese nationalism, regime obscurity). The next chapter will address how identity has contributed to Japanese perceptions of a “China threat.”

⁶⁴⁷ Ueki, *The Rise of ‘China Threat’ Arguments*, p. 341.

⁶⁴⁸ The GENRON NPO, “Japan-China Public Opinion Poll,” available at http://www.genron-npo.net/en/pp/docs/10th_Japan-China_poll.pdf (accessed March 19, 2015).

Chapter 8: Japan and China's Identity Convergence/Divergence

Main findings

- Normative disparities, dissimilar world views, and different political systems have fundamentally shaped Japan's view of China.
- In the 1990s it was assessed that, in order to cope with social instability and income disparities, Beijing had chosen to prioritize its opening-up policies and by doing so aimed to increase the size of the pie, instead of redistributing it.
- Consequently, in order to maintain its economic growth, China had no other choice than to pursue a cooperative foreign policy.
- In the early 2000s Chinese nationalism started to figure more prominently in Japan's policy discourse as a disruptive force for the development of bilateral relations.
- The mounting Chinese nationalism not only complicated diplomatic attempts to normalize bilateral relations, but it was believed that the Chinese leadership cultivated such anti-Japanese sentiments and in that sense was responsible for it.
- Instead of a peace-multiplier, China's domestic problems were increasingly seen as a catalyzer for a more assertive foreign policy.
- At the same time, Japan's reaffirmation and active promotion of its "peaceful" image was juxtaposed with the image of a "belligerent" China.
- China's assertive behavior was explained by a combination of its relative power position and its natural inclination as a normative other to disregard international rules and showcase aggressive behavior.

8.1. Introduction

Japan's identity is subject to a lot of ambiguity. Among other names, Japan has been called a "trading state," a "civilian power," a "reactive state," a "sort power superpower," and even an "aikido state."⁶⁴⁹ In particular, Japan's anti-militarist culture, its supposed quest for normalization, and its ambiguous Asian/Western character have been extensively debated in the existing literature.⁶⁵⁰ Constructivist arguments on identity change can help explain changes

⁶⁴⁹ For an overview of such 'abnormalities' in the literature, see Linus Hagstrom, "The 'abnormal' state: Identity, norm/exception and Japan," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 21, No.1, p. 122-145.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

in Japan's security policies. However, this change cannot be explained only by changes in the self, but also by how Japan's identity develops as the result of its interaction with others. I argue that, as part of a wider development of Japan redefining its identity and (regional) role, Japan in the early 2000s began to disassociate itself from its close significant other, China. Such a deliberate attempt to reconstitute itself vis-à-vis China was not visible in the 1990s.

China-Japan relations after the Cold War began on a positive note. Japan was quick to normalize relations after Tiananmen, and some Japanese hoped that the visit of the Japanese Emperor to China in 1992, where he declared that he "deeply deplored" the suffering of the Chinese during Japan's occupation, or else the Murayama statement of 1995 would bring an end to the history issue. Government publications and political leaders mostly pointed out the positive developments in bilateral relations as well as China's internal development and reforms, including its transformation into a market economy. A number of domestic problems in China were identified, such as unemployment and debts; however, such problems were also listed, for instance, in the case of the United States. It was argued that China's "precarious domestic situation" would make it mostly inward-looking and prevent it from actively engaging in overseas activities. At the same time, domestic reforms by China were actively supported by the Japanese government. It was believed that by opening up the market in China, a growing urban, educated, and rich middle class would come into existence, which in turn was expected to push for more political influence and democratic reforms. In that sense, supporting economic reforms in China would ultimately have the effect of China becoming a liberal market economy, and more democratic. In short, it would become more like Japan itself.

Michael Yahuda argued that China and Japan's deteriorating relations in the 1990s and early 2000s did not come from a "conscious adoption of hostile policies by either state against the other." Instead he holds that "they arose as unintended consequences of changes in their broader responses to the post-Cold War international environment and to their respective new socio-political changes at home."⁶⁵¹ Domestically the CCP, in a deliberate attempt to create a new sense of identity for the country and legitimacy for itself, embarked on a campaign in the 1990s to promote Chinese nationalism and patriotism.⁶⁵² Japan's occupation of China in the 1931-1945 period figures prominently in this narrative, spurring anti-Japanese sentiments

⁶⁵¹ Michael Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War*, p.31.

⁶⁵² Gilbert Rozman, "China's Quest for Great Power Identity," *Orbis*, No.1, p. 73-91, or Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

throughout society.⁶⁵³ In Japan, at the same time, a domestic change was taking place as well. The general public grew tired of China's insistence on apologies for the cruelties of the war. President Jiang Zemin was heavily criticized when on his 1998 visit he repeatedly lectured the Japanese about Japan's wartime aggression, in particular when he did so during a ceremonial meeting with the Japanese emperor.⁶⁵⁴ Within Japan's ruling party the revisionists—a political group within the LDP that, inter alia, propagated a more nationalist agenda and a less conciliatory stance toward China—gained ground, personified by PM Junichiro Koizumi's tenure in office between 2001 and 2006.⁶⁵⁵ In Japan's foreign ministry, many pro-China bureaucrats were purged.⁶⁵⁶ The domestic changes in both countries set the stage for a series of events that would seriously deteriorate public perceptions of each other.

Those events will be discussed in Chapter 8; this chapter aims to illustrate the context in which such events are placed and discussed and to paint a picture of the stage in which such events were given meaning. Culturalists argue that people see the world through a socio-cultural prism. Thomas Berger explains that “[t]he way one group sees an event depends crucially on the ways in which that event is defined by the group, which in turn depends on the way in which that group understands the word, both past and present.”⁶⁵⁷ Others argue that political leaders use history in their official narratives to pursue concrete policy objectives.⁶⁵⁸ In both cases there is a mechanism at work that, deliberately or not, gives a distorted meaning to outside events. Narratives that are thought to be correct, or at least acted upon to be correct, have consequences for the perceived political reality of people.⁶⁵⁹ Kiichi Fujiwara also described the influence of powerful, commonly held ideas such as the end of the war in the case of Japan. He found that

because history is preserved not just by a few politicians but by society as a whole a clash between divergent memories may not stop at friction between governments but

⁶⁵³ Zhu Jianrong, “Japan’s Role in the Rise of Chinese Nationalism: History and Prospects,” Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo (eds.), *East Asia’s Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 180-189.

⁶⁵⁴ Even the liberal Asahi Shimbun was critical of Jiang Zemin’s remarks.

⁶⁵⁵ Christopher W. Hughes, “Japan’s Policy towards China: domestic change, globalization, history and nationalism,” in Christopher Dent (Ed.), *Japan and regional leadership in East Asia*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008, p. 37-51.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 20.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁹ Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

escalate into an uglier collision, with the ideas and prejudices of whole societies and religions pitted against one another.⁶⁶⁰

Moreover, policymakers use schemas, theories, and analogies to understand the complex outside world. To make sense of China's foreign policy, it is imperative for Japanese policymakers to have an understanding of the players and drivers that give shape to China's foreign policy. How such understandings are shaped depends on more than a rational account of cognition and information processing.⁶⁶¹ It also depends on ideational dispositions. Ryosei Kokubun acknowledged that "the Japanese people have a deep-rooted pattern of emotional response to China that has consistently colored their views of that country."⁶⁶² This suggests that explaining Japan's perception of China goes beyond a rational explanation in which countries react to each other based on their relative position within the existing international order. To understand how Japanese interpret China's foreign policy, it is thus also necessary to understand the way views over China's domestic politics and the overall "China-image" are constituted. Section 5.2 will discuss China's domestic idiosyncrasies and how they are considered to be of potential concern to Japan. Section 5.3 will then look at how through a process of identity formation, binary images were created and how this has affected perceptions of threat. Section 5.4 will end with hypothesis testing and conclusions.

8.2. *Securitizing China's "Identity" Traits*

As mentioned above, China is in many ways a very different country from Japan. For a long time, however, this has not been articulated as a source of concern. In the last decade of the Cold War, both countries were pragmatic allies in their mutual struggle against the Soviet Union. After the Cold War, Japan's engagement policy was meant to make China more like Japan: supporting its domestic reforms, the growing middle class, and China's integration in regional fora. The idea was that a highly educated, wealthy, urbanized and influential middle-class would serve as a democratizing political force. As it turned out, economic reforms did not translate to political reforms, and the CCP proved efficient in absorbing the new middle

⁶⁶⁰ Keiichi Fujiwara, "History and Nationalism," *Japan Echo*, Vol. 31, No.6, p. 38.

⁶⁶¹ Vertzberger, *The World in their Minds*, p. 122.

⁶⁶² Ryosei Kokubun, "China and Japan in the Age of Globalization", *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 3-17.

class into its political rank and file.⁶⁶³ The legitimacy of the CCP was based on this economic success and a rising—cultivated—nationalism.⁶⁶⁴

From a Japanese perspective, the absence of political reforms and the endurance of the communist leadership based on its economic success and nationalism has changed Japan's reading of China. In Japan's official publications there is a growing amount of problems associated with China's (economic) development: China's (a) communist rule, (b) domestic problems with (ethnic) minorities and income inequalities, and (c) nationalism. In particular there is a growing sense of concern that in times of economic downturn, the CCP might accentuate the second peg of its legitimacy: nationalism. These are considered important because Japan plays an important role in China's nationalism as an aggressor and violator. This section will look at how certain elements of China's idiosyncrasies have been described in Japan's readings.

Communist rule, domestic problems, and the lack of political reforms

In the early- to mid-1990s, references to political developments in China were written down in a neutral, descriptive way, with little analysis or assessments. The “China taboo” and the hope for political reforms meant that Japan had no incentive to openly criticize China's autocratic rule or comment on its internal problems. Satoshi Amako linked China's ongoing reforms and opening policies with a foreign policy of peaceful cooperation with other countries.⁶⁶⁵ Overall, the consensus was that (a) China's reforms were an encouraging sign of its transformation into a liberal, market-based political state and (b) the overall direction of China-Japan relations was positive and outstanding problems and sensitivities could be managed through dialogues, exchange, and deft diplomacy.⁶⁶⁶

Events that unfolded in the mid-1990s, such as the Taiwan Straits Crisis and the nuclear testing, questioned the intentions and the nature of the communist regime in Beijing. In the Diplomatic Bluebook it was argued that “the difference in political systems and domestic circumstances of the two countries inevitably make it difficult to avoid various frictions as the

⁶⁶³ Ironically, the most rigorous form of democratization took place on the countryside, where village and townships introduced elections for their town leaders, see Robert A. Pastor and Qingshan Tan, “The Meaning of China's Village Elections,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 162, p. 490-512 or Lianjiang Li, “The Politics of Introducing Direct Township Elections in China,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 171, p. 704-723.

⁶⁶⁴ Richard McGregor, *The Party*, 2012.

⁶⁶⁵ Satoshi Amako, “China's Reform and Open-Door Policies: The Pace Picks Up,” *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 134-154.

⁶⁶⁶ Interview with former senior MOFA-official.

exchanges between the two countries deepen.”⁶⁶⁷ Slowly, the discursive meaning making took a subtle linguistic turn. Instead of stressing the progress of reforms, Japan’s annual publication started to articulate a number of problems that it identified in China: in particular, the crackdowns of the outlawed Falun Gong. This movement was followed with great interest, because it would signal how the CCP coped with potential social unrest in its society. The Falun Gong was a large, spiritual group of mostly middle-aged and elderly people who, in most cases, had been unable to enjoy the spoils of economic development. Its large numbers, independence from the government, and ability to organize made it a severe challenge to the CCP’s legitimacy. The Chinese government labeled the movement “heretical” and its crackdown was annually reported in Japan’s official documents.⁶⁶⁸ Other problems that were identified in Japan’s official papers were corruption, problems with minorities, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and, related to that the gap, between the urban and rural areas. It is important to note that these topics were discussed in the MOFA/JDA publications because they were issues of concern for Japan.⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, these issues were always featured first in the China section, showing the relative importance that Japan’s defense establishment attached to these issues. It signaled that despite China’s growing regional economic and political clout, it still had a lot of problems to solve at home. The reason why these domestic problems are important to Japan is because it is believed that the CCP, in some cases, tries to divert attention from these domestic problems by shoring up nationalist, anti-Japanese sentiments.⁶⁷⁰

A positive for Japan was that it assessed that, in order to cope with social instability and income disparities, Beijing had chosen to prioritize its opening-up policies and by doing so aimed to increase the size of the pie, instead of redistributing it. It was believed that “China has to rely more heavily on technology transfer and direct investments from industrialized countries. China’s dependence on foreign economies will become a stabilizing factor.”⁶⁷¹ Thus, in order to maintain its economic growth, China had no choice other than to pursue a cooperative foreign policy. The Japanese were well aware that the CCP’s legitimacy came—

⁶⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook 1998*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1999, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1998/> (accessed July 15, 2013).

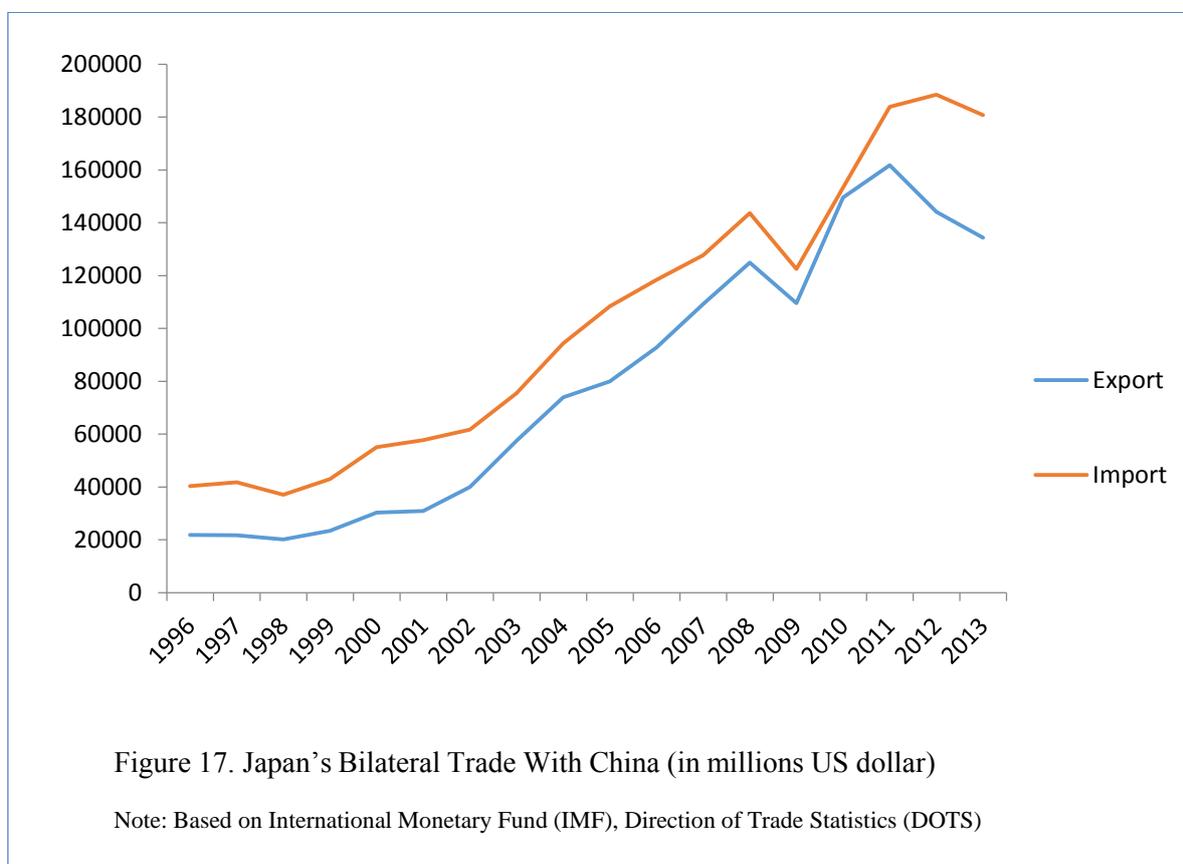
⁶⁶⁸ See for instance the Defense of Japan annual report of the late 1990s/early 2000s and the NIDS’ East Asian Strategic Review of those years.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview with MOD-official.

⁶⁷⁰ See for instance Peter Hays Gries, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2004; for the complications on Japan-China relations see Alexander A. Tan and Boyu Chen, “China’s Competing and Co-Opting Nationalisms: Implications to Sino-Japanese Relations,” *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 365-383.

⁶⁷¹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2003*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2004, p. 159.

in part—from its success in economic development. That is why economic interdependence not only meant that the cost and the threshold for military action would be increased; it also meant that China’s government for its own regime survival was dependent on a favorable external environment in which it could trade with its direct neighbors. As the graph below shows, trade between Japan and China grew considerably between 1996 and 2013. And although bilateral relations have often been characterized as “hot economics, cool politics,” there was believed to be a pacifying effect coming from China’s dependence on Japanese technology, trade, and investments.⁶⁷² In that sense, politics and economy were indirectly linked with each other.



On the other hand, it was believed that social instability could present a new problem for Japan. In order to deal with domestic problems China underwent an ideological turn, centered on the concept of “Three Representations,” which was believed to become a “new guiding principle of the Chinese Communist Party.”⁶⁷³ The East Asian Strategic Review

⁶⁷² Interview with former senior MOFA-official.

⁶⁷³ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2002*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2003.

mentioned that this new guiding principle was aimed at “restoring its credibility by strengthening ideological and political regimentation of its members.”⁶⁷⁴ Under this new ideology private entrepreneurs would be able to join the CCP, effectively changing the party from a proletarian political party to a national one. It showed the resolve, pragmatism, and ingenuity of the communist leadership by incorporating potential “class enemies” from the “wavering middle.” Shinji Yamaguchi of the NIDS called it “authoritarian resilience.”⁶⁷⁵ It also signaled that political reforms, in the form of a Western type of democratization, might not follow any time quickly. Instead, it was observed that Jiang Zemin opted for China becoming a “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics.”⁶⁷⁶ The NIDS interpreted this move as a way for the CCP to strike a delicate balance between initiating some kind of political reform while restraining attempts for a “Western” style of democratization. The concept as brought forward by Jiang Zemin was labeled “unique” and “different from the conventional idea of democracy.”⁶⁷⁷ Linked with this new ideological rigidity was the second peg of the party’s legitimacy that began to shine its light on the China-Japan relationship: the CCP’s active promotion of patriotism and nationalism.

Chinese nationalism

Incidents in the late 1990s gave rise to the idea that the general public was becoming more nationalistic: landings of Chinese on the disputed Senkaku Islands, official and public outrage over the 1999 US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the collision of the EP-3 US plane with a Chinese J-8 plane, and publications of popular books such as 1996’s *China Can Say No* by Zhang Zhangzhang. China began to actively promote patriotic education in 1994, in which Japan’s occupation of China features prominently. As a result, anti-Japanese sentiments had been growing. This has not only resulted in some high-profile protests and incidents in which Japanese property and imported goods from Japan were destroyed, but also in widespread and pervasive anti-Japanese feelings spread through all levels of Chinese society. Seiichiro Takagi noted that China’s ideology in the 1990s was centered on a nationalism “closely tied to the history of anti-Japanese struggles in the 1930s and the earlier half of the

⁶⁷⁴ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2004.

⁶⁷⁵ Shinji Yamaguchi, “Is China’s Social Unrest the Source of its Foreign Policy? A Preliminary Study on the Impact of Domestic Instability on External Relations,” *NIDS Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1.

⁶⁷⁶ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2003, p. 159.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

1940s.”⁶⁷⁸ For some time, China’s nationalism was a non-issue in Japan’s official readings. Hopes for political reforms and creating a democratic China lost traction in the early 2000s, and concerns over China’s idiosyncrasies in general, and its strident nationalism in particular, started to appear more frequently.

The 2002 Defense of Japan stated that China had a long history and a “peculiar culture and civilization”; it went on that the “pride derived from the long history and experience of semi-colonization after the 19th century brings about people’s desire for a strong nation and nationalism.”⁶⁷⁹ However, feelings of nationalism came not only from a bottom-up development. It was believed that the CCP was responsible for stirring up such patriotic feelings. The 2004 East Asian Strategic Review mentions that

nationalism serves as a source of legitimacy for the party. In the past, the CCP has often portrayed itself as patriotic heroes saving China from Japanese aggression. Socialism has been undermined as a unifying ideology in China, and nationalism has increased its importance as glue in Chinese society.⁶⁸⁰

A second wave of nationalist sentiments came up from the early 2000s and was much more Japan-centered.⁶⁸¹ The reasons for increased anti-Japanese sentiments were the visits of politicians (in particular Koizumi) to Yasukuni, the leftovers of chemical weapons in China and accidents with poison gas, remarks over comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre, and the approval of a “revisionist” textbook that whitewashes Japan’s wartime actions. An editorial of the English version of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* warned that “Japan must give proper consideration to the domestic situation in China and to the feelings of the Chinese. At the same time, however, China must understand the danger of excessive ethnic pride targeted against Japan.”⁶⁸² Similar articles appeared as the result the deaths of chemical weapons left behind by Japan after the war and the subsequent student protests targeting Japan.⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁸ Seiichiro Takagi, “Studies of China’s Foreign and Security Policies in Japan,” Robert Ash, David Shambaugh and Seiichiro Takagi (eds.), *China Watching: Perspectives from Europe, Japan and the United States*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, p. 199.

⁶⁷⁹ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2002*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2003.

⁶⁸⁰ National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review 2004*, Tokyo: NIDS, 2005, p. 108.

⁶⁸¹ Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower: How China’s Internal Politics could derail its Peaceful Rise*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁶⁸² Daily Yomiuri, “Excessive ethnic pride does nothing but harm,” November 2, 2003.

⁶⁸³ See for instance, Nikkei Report, “China Needs to Renounce Patriotic Education to Cool Nationalism,” February 16, 2004.

The real peak of anti-Japanese public sentiments came in April 2005, when in many Chinese cities people took to the streets in response to the approval of the controversial textbooks, Tokyo's decision to explore for oil and gas in the East China Sea, and Japan's quest for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Chinese protests were organized through Internet blogs but moved quickly from the web to the streets. Some protests turned violent, targeting Japanese shops, offices, and goods in China as well as Japanese websites of MOFA, the Self-Defense Forces, Sony, the National Police Agency, and Kumamoto University.⁶⁸⁴ MOFA condemned the Chinese official reaction, which stated that the protests were a response to Japan's own actions, and claimed that the Chinese government seemed to allow such violence to occur, thereby ignoring international rules and norms.⁶⁸⁵ Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura observed that "Chinese patriotic education apparently has culminated in anti-Japanese education."⁶⁸⁶ The annual Diplomatic Bluebook reflected that Chinese nationalism became a "destabilizing factor" in China-Japan relations.⁶⁸⁷ Prime Minister Koizumi went a step further and said in an interview that "I think to advance this perception of Japan as a rival and to create a sense of 'anti-Japanese' in China would be advantageous to the Chinese leadership."⁶⁸⁸ In short, mounting Chinese nationalism not only complicated diplomatic attempts to normalize the strained bilateral relations, but it was believed that the Chinese leadership cultivated these anti-Japanese sentiments and in that sense was responsible for them. Similar anti-Japanese protests and outbursts of violence, including the destruction of Japanese goods and property, occurred after the 2010 and 2012 incidents around the Senkaku Islands. As a result of the repeated violent protests, concerns over Chinese hyper-nationalism have become more common and expressed more explicitly. Japan's first National Security Advisor Yachi Shotaro commented that "[f]aced with many domestic problems that need to be addressed, the Chinese government seems to find no other effective

⁶⁸⁴ Richard C. Bush, *The Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 207-210.

⁶⁸⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statement by the Press Secretary/Director-General for Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Statement by the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China concerning the Anti-Japan Demonstrations in China," April 13, 2005, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2005/4/0413.html> (accessed August 12, 2014).

⁶⁸⁶ As quoted in James J. Przystup, "Japan-China Relations, No End to History," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 2005), p. 4, available at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0502qjapan_china.pdf (accessed August 16, 2014).

⁶⁸⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2005*, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2006, p. 18.

⁶⁸⁸ Robert Novak, "Koizumi sees the Bigger Picture," *Real Clear Politics*, October 24, 2005, available at http://www.realclearpolitics.com/Commentary/com-10_24_05_RN.html (accessed December 13, 2013).

choice but to rely on an unadulterated appeal to nationalist sentiment for achieving continued robust economic growth.”⁶⁸⁹

There are a couple of problems with the explanation that the CCP whips up nationalist, anti-Japanese sentiments whenever it likes to do so. First, China still needs Japan for its economic development, so stirring up sentiments might run the risk of negatively affecting bilateral trade, and—as a consequence—China’s own economic growth. Second, nationalistic actions could contribute to a Japan choosing to rearm itself in the wake of a growing “China threat,” something that the Chinese leadership does not want, either. Third, it assumes that Chinese people are—to some extent—puppets that can easily be manipulated to believe anything the government tells them. Communication theory holds that rhetorical statements can be used for political mobilization only if the message “resonates” or, in other words, has a “captive audience.”⁶⁹⁰ In this sense there has to be some level of receptivity to what has been uttered. In Japan, the focus is on the pervasive nature of China’s patriotic education, and its (government-controlled) mass media that widely shapes such anti-Japanese perceptions. It is often articulated that anti-Japanese sentiments in China run wide and deep as a result of the anti-Japanese education, the daily indoctrination through the media, and the heavily regulated Internet/blogosphere. Although this might be the case, this emphasis underplays the role or influence of Japan’s own actions, past or present. Fourth, it is argued that the Chinese government sometimes uses anti-Japanese sentiments to draw attention away from domestic problems.⁶⁹¹ Again, although this might be true to some extent, Chinese policymakers are also aware that such outbursts of nationalism have the potential to spin out of control and turn into anti-government rallies, something the CCP aims to avoid at all cost.⁶⁹² It thus seems that any assumption that the CCP can divert attention to Japan, whenever it is deemed beneficial, is too one-dimensional. For Japan, on the other hand, such assumptions have become more commonplace and also have begun to play an important role in the evolving identity-contestation between both countries.

⁶⁸⁹ Yachi Shotaro, ““More Proactive Contribution to Peace” Changes Japan’s Diplomacy: Abe Administration Policy Toward Asia and the United States,” *Japan Foreign Policy Forum / Diplomacy*, No. 20, available at <http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/en/archives/diplomacy/pt20140412012137.html> (accessed December 18, 2014).

⁶⁹⁰ Shogo Suzuki, “The Importance of ‘Othering’ in China’s National Identity: Sino-Japanese Relations as a stage of identity conflicts,” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1.

⁶⁹¹ Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 140-180.

⁶⁹² On the influence of the Chinese media on its foreign policy see, Susan Shirk, “Changing media, changing foreign policy,” in Susan Shirk (Ed.), *Changing media, changing China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 225-252.

8.3. *Reconstructing Identity*

Prime Minister Koizumi's annual pilgrimages to the Yasukuni Shrine between 2001 and 2006 drew annual strong protests from Beijing. Unlike his predecessors Nakasone and Nakasone, who visited the shrine in 1985 and 1996, Koizumi would not yield to the Chinese pressure.⁶⁹³ Koizumi justified his visits by stating his visits were not to glorify Japan's militaristic past, but to pay tribute to those who had given their lives for the country.⁶⁹⁴ Moreover, Koizumi stated that he visited Yasukuni in a private capacity, and, until 2006, he refrained from visiting the shrine on August 15, the day of Japan's surrender. In that sense, Koizumi showed some accommodation toward China. Other proof of Japan's historical revisionism were the approved publication of a history textbook that whitewashed Japan's wartime behavior, the increased popularity of certain manga and movies that glorified the accomplishments of the Imperial Army, and the increasing number of politicians openly doubting the authenticity of sensitive issues such as the comfort-women issue. Nonetheless, such feelings of nationalism were not dominant and not new. The general public was divided over the Yasukuni visits or wartime revisionist remarks; whereas public support was high in May 2001 (over 90% approval), it dwindled to 50% in January 2004 and stayed around this percentage until August 2006.⁶⁹⁵ However, that does not mean that public attitudes towards China have not shifted. In general the public has grown increasingly wary of China. It seemed unfair for the Chinese to keep blaming Japan for militarism while China's own military development and posturing posed question marks over its proposed "peaceful development."⁶⁹⁶ The percentage of people who think relations are unfavorable has grown from 37% in 2005 to over 84% in 2012.⁶⁹⁷ It created space for Japan to reinterpret its image in relation to China's accusations.

⁶⁹³ Akihiko Tanaka, "The Yasukuni Issue and Japan's International Relations," Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo (eds.), *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 119-141.

⁶⁹⁴ This is a clear departure from the Gotoda statement, which holds that "peaceful" countries should be considerate of the historical perceptions of other countries, and as a result should refrain from visiting controversial places like Yasukuni Shrine.

⁶⁹⁵ See Yew Meng Lai, *Nationalism and Power Politics in Japan's Relations with China: A Neoclassical Realist Interpretation*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 135.

⁶⁹⁶ Interview with Akio Takahara.

⁶⁹⁷ These statistics come from the annual opinion polls held by the Kantei.

Creating binary images

In the meantime, Japan's domestic politics had changed. An almost 40-year-long reign of the LDP ended in 1993. Ichiro Ozawa, a conservative leading figure in Japanese politics, left the LDP to form the Japan Renewal Party. Ozawa stimulated a new nationalism, emphasizing traditional Japanese virtues and proposing that Japan become a "normal country," which included, inter alia, a reconsideration of Japan's constraints on the use of force and a promotion of contributions in UN peacekeeping operations.⁶⁹⁸ The LDP quickly regained power, but the Social Democratic Party (SDP, then Japan Socialist Party (JSP)), the staunch defender of Japan's pacifism, lost considerable influence. Also, within the LDP a new generation of Japanese policymakers emerged, which shared Ozawa's nationalist views and had grown weary of Chinese questions over wartime guilt.⁶⁹⁹ The visit of Chinese President Jiang to Japan, in which he took a tough stance on Japan's postwar reconciliation efforts, did not go down well. Slowly, the pro-China school within the LDP lost influence, culminating in the election of Junichiro Koizumi as Prime Minister in 2001.

During Koizumi's tenure China was never labeled as a threat. Instead, Koizumi argued that China was an (economic) opportunity. In that sense, he discarded the fear of China hollowing out the Japanese economy. Moreover, he never openly described China as a military or ideological threat. Even so, during Koizumi's tenure, the official narrative on China underwent a more subtle, but nonetheless significant, change. First, Koizumi decoupled Japan's militarist past with its postwar development as a "peaceful" nation, and in that way justified his repeated visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.⁷⁰⁰ Koizumi argued that Japan

⁶⁹⁸ This came partly as a result of Japan's desire to be taken more serious in international affairs, in particular after being criticized of 'checkbox diplomacy' during the 1991 Gulf War. Ichiro Ozawa (translated by Louisa Rubinfien), *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994, p. 93-150. For the Chinese the book was regarded as a radical nationalist contention and considerably raised apprehensions over a possible remilitarization of Japan, see for instance Jianwei Wang, "Chinese Discourse on Japan as a 'Normal Country'," in Yoshihide Soeya, David A. Welch and Masayaki Tadokoro (eds.), *Japan as a Normal Country?: A Nation in Search of its Place in the World*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, p. Another influential contemporary book that stimulated nationalist sentiments in Japan was "The Japan that can say no," written by then Minister of Transport and later Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara. It mainly argued that Japan be more assertive in its dealings with the United States. Ishihara further blamed Chinese citizens for increased crime rates in Tokyo and used pejorative terms for China and Chinese people. Evidence that Japan was becoming more nationalistic in its national policymaking were the adoption of the Hinomaru and Kimigayo as national symbols, the approval of textbooks that downplayed Japanese aggression in the Second World War, amendments in the Fundamental Law on Education, and political movements aiming for a revising of the "Peace Constitution," see Jin Limbo, "Japan's Neo-Nationalism and China's Response" in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo (eds.), *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 165-178.

⁶⁹⁹ Drifte, *Japan's Security Relations with China since 1989*, p. 78.

⁷⁰⁰ Tetsuya Takahashi, "National politics of the Yasukuni Shrine," in Naoko Shimazu (ed.) *Nationalisms in Japan*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 156; and Akihiro Tanaka, "The Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's international

had proven its benign intentions through its 60 years of “peaceful” post-war development. Moreover, Koizumi argued that his visit was not to glorify Japan’s militarist past, but to honor those who had given their life for the country and to pledge not to go down the same road again. In such a narrative, the visit could be interpreted as a commitment of Japan to remain a “peaceful” country. This implied that for China (or South Korea) there would be no point in arguing that visiting the Yasukuni shrine was a consequence of Japan not being able to face its history. Koizumi did so, just not exactly as Beijing or Seoul would like to see it. And even though the Japanese public was divided over Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits, his more resolute stance toward Beijing was overall appreciated.

Second, Koizumi refrained from apologizing for Japan’s wartime aggression. Only once, partly in order to secure a meeting with Chinese president Hu Jintao in 2005, did Koizumi express his “deep remorse” and a “heart-felt apology” for the countries that suffered from Japanese occupation during the Second World War.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, Koizumi did not specify for what he was apologizing, nor did he make any reference to how Japan would overcome it and find closure on the history issue. Instead he went on to say that “Japan has resolutely maintained, consistently since the end of the Second World War, never turning into a military power but rather an economic power, its principle of resolving all matters by peaceful means, without recourse to the use of force.”⁷⁰² In that sense, even this apology fitted within the frame of a different Japan, delinking the past from present-day Japan.

Third, Koizumi’s narrative on Japan’s contribution to peace and prosperity in the world would help him, inter alia, to (a) make changes in Japan’s security policies, (b) make a plausible bid for Japan to become a permanent UNSC-member; (c) invalidate China’s argument on Japan’s lingering militarism; and (d) contrast Japan’s image as a “peaceful,” “democratic” nation with high regard for international law, rules, and norms with China’s “opaque,” “authoritarian” regime with little respect for human rights. Bahar Rumelili found that “discourses on the promotion of democracy and human rights are inevitably productive of two identity categories, a morally superior identity of democratic juxtaposed to the inferior identity

relations,” in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo (eds.) *East Asia’s Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008, p. 134-140.

⁷⁰¹ As quoted in Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 64.

⁷⁰² Koizumi did so at the highly anticipated 60-year anniversary of the end of the Second World War, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Speech by H.E. Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan,” April 22, 2005, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/meet0504/speech.html> (accessed October 15, 2014).

of non- (or less) democratic.”⁷⁰³ The Japanese conservative right-wing movement had characterized China as “immoral,” “different,” “child-like,” and “emotional” as opposed to a “rational,” “civilized,” and “moral” Japan.⁷⁰⁴ Although Koizumi never went as far as such right-wing conservatives, discussions in the Diet as well as in official publications such as the Defense of Japan started to highlight differences in the internal characteristics of China and Japan.⁷⁰⁵ These discussions and reorientations of the official discourse led to binary oppositions in Japan’s identity construction vis-à-vis China. Maiko Kuroki observed that “the articulation of China as a ‘militaristic’, ‘interfering’ and ‘authoritarian’ state might reinforce Japan’s alleged new identity of a ‘peaceful’, ‘respectful of rule of law’, and ‘democratic’ nation.”⁷⁰⁶ In an article in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* Taro Aso mentioned that China-Japan co-dependence might well increase in the future, but that he would only welcome “China’s return to center stage in East Asia—as long as China evolves into a liberal democracy.”⁷⁰⁷

Finally, Koizumi banked on Japanese apology fatigue. He continued visiting the Yasukuni shrine, despite strong criticism from China. LDP Secretary General Takebe said that Koizumi would continue visiting the shrine because otherwise “it would give the impression he is giving in to China.”⁷⁰⁸ Deputy Secretary General Shinzo Abe added that “a foreign country has no business telling other nations what to do” and that not going to the shrine would shake the foundations of Japan itself.⁷⁰⁹ Hashizume Daisaburo, in an article in *Japan Echo*, held that the Japanese could rewrite and find their own identity, without outside interference.⁷¹⁰ In that sense, the Yasukuni Shrine was not only politically contested because of the war criminals enshrined there, but also became a symbol that showed Japan’s determination to

⁷⁰³ Bahar Rumelili, ‘Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2004), p. 31.

⁷⁰⁴ Shogo Suzuki, “The strange masochism of the Japanese right: redrawing moral boundaries in Sino-Japanese relations” in Glenn Hook (ed.) *Decoding Boundaries in Contemporary Japan: the Koizumi Administration and Beyond*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, p. 45-48.

⁷⁰⁵ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the early 2000s the Defense of Japan started to comment on China’s domestic problems and idiosyncrasies; its problems with ethnic minorities, the rich-poor divide, its “peculiar culture and civilization” and its growing nationalism. See also Maiko Kuroki, *Nationalism in Japan’s Contemporary Foreign Policy: A Consideration of the Cases of China, North Korea and India*, PhD-thesis, London: London School of Economics and Political Science, p. 103-109.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷⁰⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Japan Welcomes China’s Democratic Future: Contribution by Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso to the Asian Wall Street Journal” March 12, 2006, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/contribute0603.html> (accessed August, 10, 2014).

⁷⁰⁸ James J. Przystup, “Japan-China Relations: A Volatile Mix: Natural Gas, a Submarine, a Shrine, and a Visa,” *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 6, No.4 (Winter, 2004).

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ Hashizume Daisaburo, “Koizumi and the New Nationalism” *Japan Echo*, Vol. 28, No. 6, similar arguments were also vented in the Diet, for instance by Masahiro Morioka and Masayuki Fujishima. Chinese criticism was outside interference and Japan should take a hardline in responding to it.

stand up against what an increasing percentage of the Japanese population believed to be hypocritical Chinese accusations of militarism. Taking into consideration this new discourse on the one hand, and China's ongoing investments in military equipment, outbursts of Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments, and the very nature of its authoritarian regime on the other hand, it became untenable in Japan's new narrative for China to accuse it of militarism and disregard what Japan considered to be legitimate security concerns.

The five points mentioned above have contributed to a significant change in Japan's discursive meaning making, whether in a deliberate attempt or not, of reinforcing Japan's new peaceful, democratic and sensible image. Although Japan's democracy was of course nothing new, nor was its decades of pacifism something out of the blue, the new element was that this became increasingly articulated. A major reason for that is a new-found confidence in finding itself as a peaceful, democratic country, bereft of a "subservient mentality" and becoming more "normal" and proactive in its foreign policy.⁷¹¹ In a speech at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo, Aso suggested that Japan play the role of "thought leader" in the region. The idea was that through its past experience, Japan had learned how to deal with nationalism, and that Japan's "democratic debate" and "vox populi" would prevent it from going down that path again.⁷¹² It was thus not only in bilateral relations that we can witness this change to a more pro-active, value-oriented diplomacy, but it also manifested itself in Japan's new regionalism.

Even before the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" (more about that in the next section) MOFA and academics promoted the idea of a more value-oriented approach to regionalism. The JFIA, in an influential report led by ex-diplomat Kenichi Ito and co-signed by about 100 prominent scholars, split up the world in three spheres: (a) the advanced sphere, whose members (including Japan) were part of a "No-War Community"; (b) the modern sphere, whose members (including China) "still use the "richer and stronger nation" value as their national goal, and have not abandoned the use of force as a means of international conflict resolution"; and (c) the chaos sphere, consisting of rogue states.⁷¹³ Through engagement and interdependence the modern countries would learn to embrace and choose democracy and

⁷¹¹ Ito Go, "Japan's Values and Foreign Policy: Intangible Power in International Relations," *Japan Forum for International Relations*, March 2014, p. 8, available at http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/regular_research/201403.pdf (accessed February 13, 2015).

⁷¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Asian Strategy as I see it: Japan as the "Thought Leader" of Asia," Speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Aso at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, December 7, 2005, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0512.html> (accessed February 27, 2013).

⁷¹³ Japan Forum for International Relations, "Policy Recommendations on New World Order of No-War Community and Future of US-Japan Alliance," April 28, 2004, available at <http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/pr/pdf/24.pdf> (accessed January 12, 2014).

peace over war and dictatorship.⁷¹⁴ At the time of publication, Japanese officials were still struggling with how to strike a balance between “universal values” and “Asian values.”⁷¹⁵ The former eventually won over the latter, in particular when Washington signaled its concerns about the establishment of the East Asian Summit (EAS), to which the Americans were not invited. In Koizumi’s last trip to the United States the value-dimension was inked out in the joint declaration, stating that “the United States and Japan stand together not only as mutual friends but also for the advancement of universal values such as freedom, human dignity and human rights, democracy, market economy and rule of law.”⁷¹⁶ It was promoted that through value-diplomacy, Japan’s foreign policy could shift from a focus on the idea of “charity” to “solidarity.” What this meant was that Japan would stop the unquestioned distribution of aid to developing countries. Instead, it was argued that the Japanese government should “seek to share common values in a globalized world,” no matter the economic size.⁷¹⁷ Important in this value-diplomacy was Japan increasingly opting for a China-out policy. The *Daily Yomiuri* states that

China is under the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party. It does not share values such as freedom and democracy with Japan. It is unrealistic to expect that peace and stability in the region could be built based on China-Japan relations.⁷¹⁸

Michael Green interpreted it as a soft balancing act against China’s attempts in regional institution-building.⁷¹⁹ I argue that value-diplomacy, in addition to being a bargaining tool in dealing with a rising China, contributed to the notion that China and Japan were two very different countries. In redefining its identity as a regional promoter or “thought leader” for peace, stability, and the rule of law, Japan’s deliberate reverse mirror imaging, or othering, was aimed at China, which (a) showed militarist tendencies, (b) had many internal problems, and (c) showed disregard for “universal” values and norms. In a critical piece Haruko Satoh

⁷¹⁴ Ibid. p. 8.

⁷¹⁵ See Kenichi Ito, “An Open Community Based on Universal Values,” *CEAC Commentary*, June 27, 2005, and also Sohl Yun, “Japan’s New Regionalism: China Shock, Universal Values and East Asian Community,” *WIAS Discussion Paper*, No. 2009-005, available at <http://www.waseda.jp/wias/eng/achievement/dp/data/dp2009005.pdf> (accessed March 11, 2014).

⁷¹⁶ Quoted in Ibid. p. 26-27.

⁷¹⁷ The Japan Forum on International Relations, “Japan’s Values and Foreign Policy: Intangible Power in International Relations,” March 2014, available at http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/regular_research/201403.pdf (accessed April 27, 2014).

⁷¹⁸ Daily Yomiuri, “Strong US-Japan ties vital for East Asia,” 17 November 2005.

⁷¹⁹ Michael Green, “US-Japan Relations after Koizumi: Convergence or Cooling,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 107.

(daughter of then JIIA President and former UN Ambassador Yukio Satoh) posited that a new sort of hawkishness had become prevalent in Japan political meaning making, exemplified by a discursive concoction over values, democracy, and military expenditure. She made a point that “[t]he way that Japanese leaders are responding to China’s Japan bashing today is really not to preserve Japan’s interest in the long run, but to express ideas about Japan.”⁷²⁰ The JIIA-commentary, together with one written by Masaru Tamamoto (also voicing concerns over Japan’s nationalism), was removed after complaints that it was emotional, sensational, insulting, and anti-Japanese.⁷²¹ While the critique and much of the discussions over Yasukuni focused on whether Japanese nationalism was on the rise or not, I argue that even if it wasn’t, the point that Satoh makes still holds: Japan redefined its identity not in isolation. Identity formation is by default a social process and, when understood as a process of interaction, needs other by definition.⁷²² In the case of Japan’s redefinition efforts, China took center stage.

Expanding the in-group

Under Koizumi’s successor, Shinzo Abe, Sino-Japanese relations improved, as evidenced by the first visit China-Japan summit in five years, in which both sides stressed in the joint declaration the need for increased exchange and cooperation in various fields. Abe’s decision not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine meant that—on the surface—he was willing to shelve the identity politics that had plagued China-Japan relations under Koizumi. By the same token, Chinese leader Hu Jintao for the first time acknowledged Japan’s peaceful post-war development, thereby (like Koizumi) implicitly delinking Japan’s postwar peaceful development from its early 20th century militarist legacy, much to the delight of the Japanese. The installation of a joint group of scholars from both countries to study the history issue showed that both countries were keen to reset their bilateral relations. In the “ice-breaking” and “ice-melting” reciprocal visits, Abe spoke of fostering “strategic, mutually beneficial relations.” It seemed that that the change in political leadership (Hu Jintao and Shinzo Abe in, Junichiro

⁷²⁰ Haroku Satoh, “The Odd Couple: Japan and China – The Politics of History and Identity,” *JIIA Commentary Archive*, August 4, 2006, available at <https://sites.google.com/site/wdsturgeon/commentary%234> (accessed July 15, 2014).

⁷²¹ These critiques came from right-wing *Senkei Shimbun* journalist Yoshihisa Komori, see David McNeill, “The Struggle for the Japanese Soul: Komori Yoshihisa, Sankei Shimbun, and the JIIA Controversy,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, September 5, 2006, available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-David-McNeill/2212/article.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2014).

⁷²² See Iver Neumann, “Self and Other in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 139-174. This point is also made by Wendt in his social theory on international relations. After all, one cannot be social alone.

Koizumi and Jiang Zemin out) in Japan and China could have a positive effect on their overall relations.⁷²³ During his first term in office Prime Minister Abe, who initially viewed the China-Japan relationship in terms of “hot economics and cold politics,” spoke of the China-Japan relationship as one in which the “two wheels of ‘politics’ and ‘economy’ boldly work together, so that it would promote the advancement of the bilateral relationship.”⁷²⁴ In the official narrative Abe refrained from using an anti-Chinese stance.

Despite these changes in Japan’s stance towards China, there was also continuity in Japan’s more implicit narrative vis-à-vis China. Under Abe’s tenure, Foreign Minister Taro Aso launched his value-based diplomacy based on the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.⁷²⁵ This concept aimed to improve Japan’s diplomatic relations with (emerging) democracies along the Eurasian continent. It stressed shared values such as democracy, freedom, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. The purpose of what was labeled a new pillar of Japan’s diplomacy would not only be to promote and spread such liberal ideas, but it was also a deliberate attempt to isolate China. In that sense, the Sino-Japanese binary images persevered in Japan’s policy discourse and even became a key feature of Japan’s diplomacy. India, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States were countries with which Abe actively sought to strengthen Japan’s relations. He did so by emphasizing the universal values that all these countries share, thereby hinting that China could never really join such a club, unless it embraced such values as well. Moreover, by expanding its diplomatic horizons, Japan would no longer be isolated in a region because of its problems over history. As a matter of fact, Abe often stressed the fact that bilateral relations with countries like Australia and India did not suffer from the emotional baggage that beset Japan’s relations with China and South Korea. The 2006 India-Japan joint statement, for instance, mentioned that bilateral relations between the two countries were

⁷²³ The reasons for this normalization of bilateral relations can also be found in domestic politics in Japan. Domestic pressure (especially from the business community) on policymakers not to hurt bilateral relations, factional politics, and parrying criticism from the main opposition party DPJ were all reasons to mend relations with China. See for instance Keizei Doyukai, “Recommendations Towards the Realization of an East Asian Community - Working to Build Confidence with East Asian Countries,” March 29, 2006, available at <http://www.doyukai.or.jp/en/policyproposals/2005/pdf/060329a.pdf>.

⁷²⁴ As quoted in Kuroki, *Nationalism in Japan’s Contemporary Foreign Policy*, p. 205.

⁷²⁵ In Taro Aso’s speech on November 30, 2006 called “The Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan’s Expanding Diplomatic Horizons” he explained the basic tenets of this new direction is Japan’s foreign policy. Most of these ideas had found their way into the official discourse well before the November 30 speech. In that sense, the only new element was that such ideas would form a new pillar of Japan’s foreign policy.

driven by converging long-term political, economic and strategic interests, aspirations and concerns and underpinned by a common commitment to democracy, open society, human rights, rule of law and free market economy. It is based on deep respect for each other's contributions in promoting peace, stability and development in Asia and beyond, unencumbered by any historical differences.⁷²⁶

After the process of (binary) identity construction under the Koizumi tenure, the in-group that shared similar values and ideas with Japan was expanded under Abe to include many (emerging) democracies from Australia to Southeast Asia, India, and Europe. Abe therefore could talk softly on China (for reasons mentioned earlier), while at the same time emphasizing the differences between this expanding in-group and China. The momentum of the initiative was short-lived, however. Because the concept was interpreted as a clear and deliberate attempt to isolate China, many countries—for reasons of their own—did not embrace the ideas, and Abe/Aso's stay in office was simply too short to put flesh on the bones of this concept.

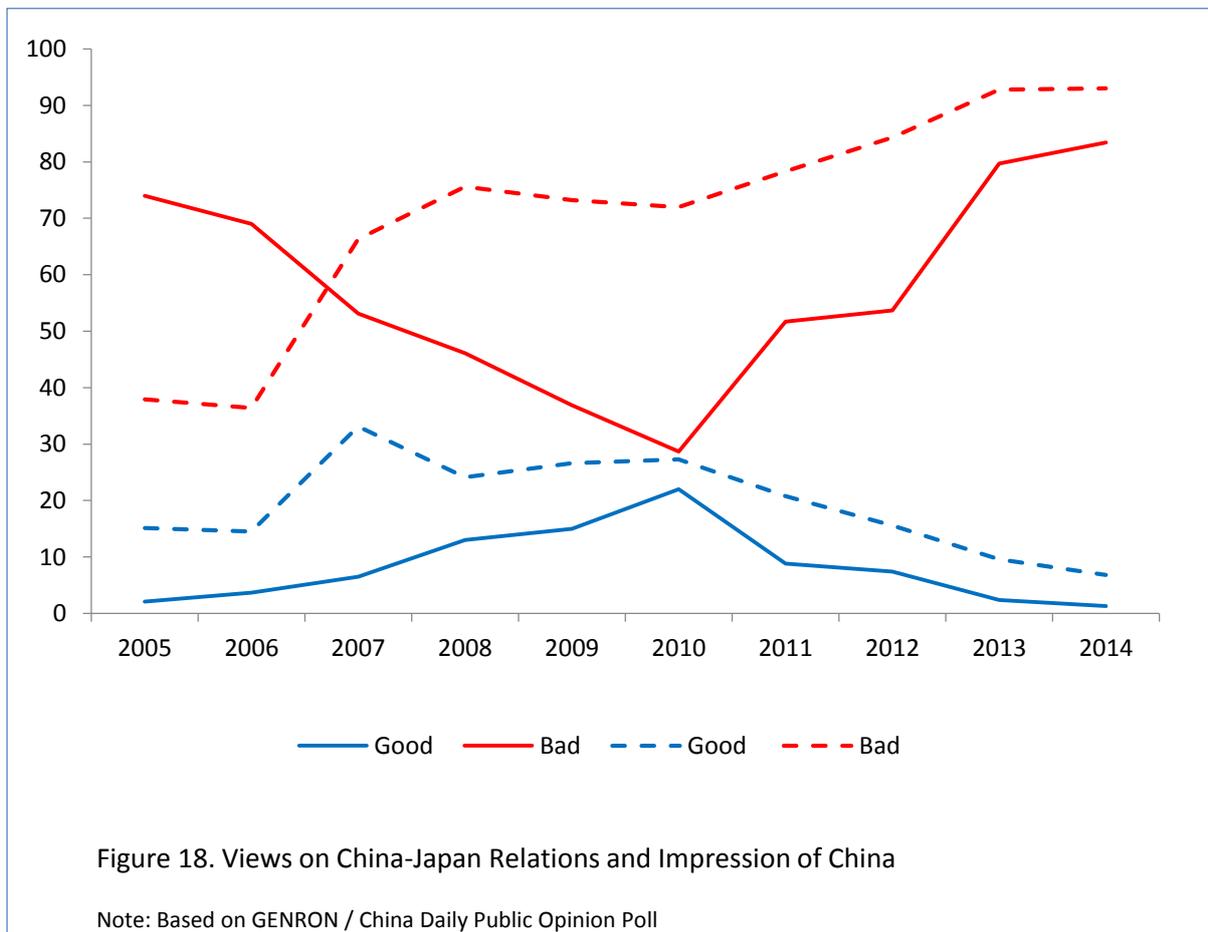
Change, continuity, and confirmation

In September 2007 Abe stepped down for health reasons. His successor, Yasuo Fukuda, was considered a dovish and pro-China figure within the LDP. He discontinued the value diplomacy and in its place reiterated the importance of Japan's diplomacy towards Asia within the framework of the US-Japan alliance. Instead of the proactive approach of his predecessor's value-based diplomacy, it was observed that Fukuda opted for a low-key, multilateral approach of engaging the region as a whole.⁷²⁷ Fukuda also emphasized the importance of community-building with China through (youth) exchanges, visits, and dialogues. During their 2008 summit, Hu spoke of starting a "new beginning" in China-Japan relations; reaffirmed that rise of China was an opportunity for countries in the region, instead of a threat; refrained from making comments about history; expressed appreciation for the Japanese ODA in helping the Chinese economy; and stepped up cooperation in environment, food, and energy efficiency. In short, Hu did everything right.

⁷²⁶ Cabinet Office, "Joint Statement Towards a Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership," December 15, 2006, available at <http://japan.kantei.go.jp/abespeech/2006/12/15joint.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2014).

⁷²⁷ Hitoshi Tanaka, "Japanese Foreign Policy under Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda," *East Asia Insights*, Vol. 2, No. 5, available at <http://www.jcie.or.jp/insights/2-5.html> (accessed January 16, 2014).

The Japanese public reaction to the Chinese overtures was nonetheless lukewarm. Several telephone interviews that were held right after the Fukuda-Hu Summit in May 2008 showed that, despite all the official camaraderie, the Japanese public still wanted Japan to act in a stricter manner. The results of the interviews also suggested that the majority of the Japanese people did not even appreciate the summit.⁷²⁸ It seemed that diplomatic efforts to change perceptions, something that was mentioned as a goal in a number of initiatives expanding exchange and dialogue initiatives, were not an easy fix. The GENRON polls also indicate that, in contrast to the public opinions on the state of the bilateral relations, public perceptions of China's image did not improve. In fact, negative impressions of China increased drastically between 2006 and 2008 and remained relatively stable until the 2010 incidents around the Senkaku Islands. The graph below clearly illustrates this discrepancy.



⁷²⁸ James Przystup, "Japan-China Relations: Progress in Building a Strategic Relationship," *Comparative Connections*, July 2008, available at http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/0802qjapan_china.pdf (accessed January 18, 2014).

Under the DPJ government a China-inclusive approach to community-building gained new impetus, in particular under the leadership of Yukio Hatoyama. His proposed East Asian Community (EAC) was turning away from the universal values to a more Asian approach, stressing fraternity, shared prosperity, and sustainability.⁷²⁹ The concept, however, never gained traction, because of domestic (division within the DPJ) and external (pressure from the United States) factors.

At the political level there were also continuities, despite different positions on how Japan's China policy should evolve in the post-Koizumi/Abe era. The policy discourse shows that Fukuda and the DPJ-governments shared concerns with their predecessors over China as an opaque, unstable, and potentially threatening country.⁷³⁰ Escalatory events in 2010 further added to the impression that turning the East China Sea into a "sea of fraternity" was not a feasible idea. Instead of a turn for the better, Chinese actions suggested that its course was in fact the other way around. In short, despite the efforts to reconfigure the China-Japan relationship between 2008 and 2010, incidents around the Senkaku Islands had a detrimental effect on these reconciliation attempts and reaffirmed the image of a China that was attempting to change the status quo through force and coercion. China's assertiveness was seen to have started in late 2008 as a result of becoming more confident in its foreign policy, which—in turn—was a result of quickly overcoming the global financial crisis.⁷³¹ Before that point, however, there had already been expectations uttered in Japanese academia, the government, and within public perceptions that China, if the situation would allow it, would act more robust in dealing with its neighbors.⁷³² Folk-realist assumptions on China's military build-up hinted that something like that could happen, but it was also attributed to the fact that China was not a democracy, suffered from hyper-nationalism, had little respect for rules, and was domestically increasingly unstable.⁷³³ In other words, China's behavior was explained by a combination of its relative power position and its natural inclination as a normative other to disregard international rules and showcase aggressive behavior. The rise of China within the

⁷²⁹ Cabinet Office, "Japan's New Commitment to Asia: Towards the Realization of an East Asian Community," Speech by PM Yukio Hatoyama in Singapore, November 15, 2009, available at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200911/15singapore_e.html (accessed January 22, 2014).

⁷³⁰ Hagstrom and Jerden, "Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations: To Politicize or De-politicize the China issue in the Japanese Diet," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, p. 719-739.

⁷³¹ Interview Akio Takahara, and confirmed by Masafumi Iida.

⁷³² After all, China's behavior was interpreted to be escalatory in nature, made possible thanks to its growing relative power position vis-à-vis the established Pacific powers. The Chinese intrusion in Japan's territorial waters in December 2008 is an important marker, as the start of Chinese assertiveness towards Japan.

⁷³³ Yoshihide Soeya, "Fishing for Lessons: The Latest China-Japan Rift," *Global Forum Asia*, September 28, 2010, available at <http://199.19.87.229/globalasia/forum/fishing-for-lessons-the-latest-china-japan-rift/> (accessed September 17, 2013).

East Asian liberal order became increasingly difficult to justify. In a policy proposal by the Tokyo Foundation (which consisted, inter alia, of Ken Jimbo and two members of the NIDS), it was stated that

The peaceful rise of China, however, is not an easy goal to be realized without bridging a deep crevasse between China and the liberal order. Under current conditions, it is almost impossible to predict that China will smoothly cooperate with or become a guardian of the liberal international order. This is partly because the Chinese political system is founded on a single-party structure—one which does not assume a plural alternation of power among parties—and on the curtailment of liberalism. Also, under the conditions of a socialist market economy, an industrial policy that entails a high degree of government intervention in the market is continuing. Further, there is a high degree of social instability because of a failure to ameliorate the disparity between the wealthy and the poor or to improve the social security system. For these reasons, the fundamental problems associated with the political system, lack of an assurance of free economic activity, and the questions of the stability of society are entirely capable of intensifying the conflict with the liberal order.⁷³⁴

The tense bilateral relations were fertile ground for the reelection of Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister in late 2012, although there were many other factors that contributed to his victory.⁷³⁵ As expected, Abe was firm on China quickly after his victory became clear. In December 2012, he announced his proposal for the reemergence of the “security diamond,” a strategic grouping of “like-minded, democratic” countries: Australia, Japan, India, and the United States.⁷³⁶ It bore a great resemblance to the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.” Although, again, the value-oriented foreign policy lost traction during his first year in office, the normative juxtaposition of China and Japan gained further traction, in light of Japan’s redefining new security policies.

⁷³⁴ Tokyo Foundation, “Japan’s Security Strategy Towards China: Integration, Balancing and Deterrence in the Era of Power Shift,” Tokyo Foundation, October 2011, available at http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/additional_info/security_strategy_toward_china.pdf (accessed September 22, 2013).

⁷³⁵ For a brief overview see, The Economist, Japan’s Election: Shinzo Abe’s sumo-sized win,” December 16, 2012, available at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/12/japans-election> (accessed September 29, 2013).

⁷³⁶ Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012, available at <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe> (accessed September 23, 2013).

Hagström argued that the securitization of China in Japan's policy discourse serves the purpose of further "normalization" of Japan's own foreign and security policy. In that sense the "China threat" advances the political agenda to initiate security reforms and invest more in defense capabilities.⁷³⁷ This suggests that the "China threat" might to some extent be invoked or exaggerated for political purposes. A somewhat related argument I put forward here is that Japan's identity reconstruction vis-à-vis China created "expectations" about China's behavior, and that signals that were in line with these ideas were taken as confirmation of such belief systems. Japan's own actions and behavior are largely explained as "status quo"-oriented, whereas China's actions, as the obvious challenger, are rationalized as "revisionist"-oriented. For instance, when Japan nationalized the Senkaku Islands, in a counterbid to Ishihara's successful fund-raising scheme, it was argued by Japanese policymakers that it was a move toward de-escalation and keeping the status quo, since the islands had been in the hands of the government before and would not fall into the hands of Tokyo's hothead governor. According to that logic, there was little reason for China to get upset about it.

As a result, China's policy toward Japan, in particular its assertiveness from 2009, is explained primarily in terms of its dispositional factors and less as a result of situational factors. Some authors argue that Japan's decision to imprison the Chinese fishing boat captain after the Fishing Trawler Incident, Ishihara's efforts to buy the Senkaku Islands and the subsequent nationalization of the islands by the Japanese government, the denials of shelving the dispute, and Shinzo Abe's visits to Yasukuni can, at least to some extent, explain the action-reaction dynamic in China-Japan relations.⁷³⁸ Others add that Japan had repeatedly not taken up signals that were meant to show Beijing's unyielding stance over the Senkaku Islands.⁷³⁹ In Japan's policy discourse, these explanations do not figure. The Japanese perceptual position instead maintains that widespread nationalist sentiments in China, legitimacy problems of the CCP, the influence of the PLA in policymaking, and China's economic slowdown can, to a large extent, explain China's foreign policy behavior.

⁷³⁷ Linas Hagström, "The "abnormal" state: Identity, norm/exception and Japan," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol.21, No.1, p.122-145.

⁷³⁸ See for instance Wenran Jiang, "New Twists over Old Disputes in China-Japan Relations," *China Brief*, Vol. 10, No. 20, The Jamestown Foundation, available at http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/cb_010_37b83a.pdf (accessed June 12, 2014).

⁷³⁹ Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation over the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands – Between "Shelving" and "Dispute-escalation," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 30, July 28, 2014, available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Reinhard-Drifte/4154/article.html> (accessed August 22, 2014).

Identity politics and the internal attribution error

Nationalistic feelings and unfavorable public perceptions on both sides have made it difficult for leaders to compromise and find solutions to the outstanding strategic and historical issues.⁷⁴⁰ Domestic audience costs limit the governments' options and room for maneuverability. In both China and Japan, public opinion has come to play a more prominent role in policymaking, in particular on sensitive issues that figure prominently in the China-Japan relationship.⁷⁴¹ This has resulted in a new type of Japanese rhetoric and politics toward China. Instead of "appeasing" or "kowtowing to" China, it became more important (and politically advantageous) to talk and act resolutely in dealing with Beijing. In Japan's domestic political market space there is less room for a sympathetic stance toward China. For instance, in 2010, the consensus in the media and the Diet was that the DPJ government yielded too quickly to Chinese pressure. Itsunori Onodera called it "the greatest diplomatic defeat of the post-war period."⁷⁴² It showed the increased domestic pressure on Japanese politicians to stand up to what is perceived to be a bullying China. When Shintaro Ishihara decided to buy the islands from their private owner, 70% of Japanese supported it.⁷⁴³ Japan's ambassador to China at the time, Uichiro Niwa, publicly expressed his reservations about Ishihara's proposal. He said that, if followed through, it would result in "an extremely grave crisis."⁷⁴⁴ The unprecedented move by the ambassador to utter his concerns publicly can be explained by the fact that he thought it was necessary to warn the Japanese how big an issue the nationalization of the islands would be for China. Instead of heeding the advice, Niwa was criticized for his candor and, following opposition from the LDP, discharged from his post.⁷⁴⁵

The identity variable and the domestic pressure not to compromise on China have thus contributed to fundamental attribution error and actor-observer bias. The hardened stance on China makes it more difficult for Japanese politicians to explain China's behavior as a result

⁷⁴⁰ Interview with MOD-official, Katsuyuki Yakushiji argued that "owing to the strained relations and widespread anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan, Abe has the entire LDP behind him," see "Structural Shift in Japan-China Relations," The Tokyo Foundation, December 2, 2013, available at <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2013/shift-in-japan-china-relations> (accessed February 2, 2014).

⁷⁴¹ For Japan see Paul Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, for China see James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

⁷⁴² As quoted in Linus Hagström, "Power Shift' in Asia? A Critical Reappraisal of Narratives on the Diaoyu / Senkaku Islands Incident in 2010," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 272.

⁷⁴³ Hitoshi Tanaka, "Politicizing the Senkaku Islands: A Danger to Regional Stability," *East Asia Insights*, Japan Center for International Exchange, August 2012, available at <http://www.jcie.org/researchpdfs/EAI/7-3.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2013).

⁷⁴⁴ Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – Between "shelving" and "dispute escalation."

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

of situational factors. Instead, it increases the propensity to look at how domestic factors can explain behavior, and less at how Chinese behavior can be explained as a result of, for instance, the US pivot to Asia, or as a reaction to what in the eyes of the Chinese is perceived to be Japanese provocative actions (such as Ishihara's bid to buy the islands). On the other hand, Japan explains its need for rearmament as a response to China's military development and assertive behavior. Similar logic on the Chinese side can explain the existing perceptual gap. A 2014 public opinion poll showed that the Japanese highly rate (a) Chinese patriotic education (42.9%), (b) nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments among the Chinese people (22%), (c) anti-Japanese coverage in the Chinese media (19.5%), and (d) Chinese politicians' anti-Japanese statements as barriers to developing relations. Japanese nationalism (2.3%), anti-Chinese statements made by Japanese politicians (3.7%), anti-Chinese coverage in the Japanese media (4.1%) and Japan's historical understanding (6.5%) scored significantly lower. On the Chinese side, Japan's historical understanding (31.9%), anti-Chinese coverage in the Japanese media (6.6%) and Japanese politicians' statements (14.6%) scored higher than the anti-Japanese sentiments in China's news, historical understanding, and official statements. One interesting aspect of the poll was that the Chinese ranked their own people's nationalism a greater (8.4%) barrier to developing good relations than Japanese nationalism (3.7%). On the other hand, the Japanese public shows a strong propensity toward a peaceful resolution of outstanding issues. There is a strong desire to have a bilateral summit (64.6%); resolve the Senkaku Islands dispute through peaceful means (48.4%) and wish for peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity (62.4%).⁷⁴⁶ Moreover, the Japanese public indicates that it principally disagrees with the government over the existence of a dispute. A large majority (Yes: 64.3%; No: 13.8%) holds that there is in fact a dispute over the islands.

8.4. Hypothesis Testing

In chapter 1, I hypothesized that “the more China is defined as a significant other, the more threatening it will become.” In this chapter I argued that China is in many ways a different country from Japan, as evidenced in Japan's discursive meaning-making through pointing out China's autocratic rule, its lack of respect for human rights, the gap between the rich and the poor, and its military modernization drive.⁷⁴⁷ Such normative disparities, dissimilar world views, and different political systems have fundamentally shaped Japan's view of China. I

⁷⁴⁶ The GENRON NPO, “Japan-China Public Opinion Poll 2014,” available at http://www.genron-npo.net/en/pp/docs/10th_Japan-China_poll.pdf (accessed March 19, 2015).

⁷⁴⁷ Such “identity traits” are mentioned in the China section of the Defense of Japan from the early 2000s onward.

argued that institutionalized othering about a “rising China” in Japan’s official narrative manifested itself first during the Koizumi period, and was reinforced during the Abe administration; it created expectations about China’s future assertive behavior. When such “expected behavior” became a reality, they were seen as justifications of such belief systems and reinforced them. Cues that might have been interpreted as conciliatory did not change institutionalized and socialized perceptions, while signals that affirmed the dominant belief system were more eagerly adopted. As a result, Japan’s explanations of China’s behavior stress dispositional factors over situational factors, while Japan explains its own actions more in terms of situational factors. These biases have contributed to Japan’s perceptions of threat, which have become what I would call “sticky,” or resistant to change.

At the same time we can observe that while Japanese leaders such as Fukuda, Hatoyama, and Noda refrained from using identity politics, “China threat” arguments did not dissipate. In that sense, the level of identity-othering and the level of a perceived “China threat” are not always similar. As a result, we can conclude that identity-othering does have an effect on creating a certain level of expectations (*status quo ante*) and a level of stickiness (*post hoc*), but it does not primarily shape perceptions of threat. Ultimately, as I argued in Chapter 7, the most important reason for changes in perceptions of threat is China’s behavior. Polls indicate that Japanese public concerns are triggered mostly by recent events.⁷⁴⁸ Without any confirmation of belief systems through these cues, the “China as a belligerent other” loses its meaning and its resonance with a captive audience. In that sense, China’s behavior is the main variable that can explain change on the dependent variable. However, China’s behavior is given meaning through a process of intersubjective meaning-making that touches upon the core of China’s identity (as an autocratic, belligerent, and revisionist power), and—related to it—Japan’s own identity (as a democratic, peaceful, and *status-quo* power). I argued that othering, based on regime type and nationalism, has reinforced certain belief systems, in particular when it was perceived that China’s behavior turned out to be consistent with preconceived ideas. This belief system has contributed to a broad consensus in Japan that views China’s behavior as coercive, revisionist, and zero-sum.

⁷⁴⁸ Such as crises over Yasukuni, food-related concerns, or anxieties over the Senkaku Islands. The Genron polls from 2005-2014 show a host of concerns that fluctuate depending on recent issues that shape bilateral relations.

Chapter 9: Conclusions, Comparative Analysis, and Policy Recommendations

As has been discussed in Chapters 3 to 7, China has become a bigger military concern in the time period under review for both India and Japan. This final chapter will start with a summary of the main findings from the previous chapters and testing of the hypothesis on three different points in time. For each point in time, an overview will be provided as to what extent each of the independent variables (capabilities [material], escalatory actions [behavioral], and othering [ideational]) became salient as a source of concern in China–India and China–Japan relations. This chapter will then test how the IR theories hold up with the findings of this research (Section 9.2). After that (Section 9.3), I will give a comparative overview of the three variables of this research based on the most recent findings. These comparative conclusions will serve as input for the policy recommendations (Section 9.4).

9.1 Conclusions and Hypothesis Testing

Table 9. Scores on variables and policy outcome: mid- to late 1990s

	Capabilities	Escalatory acts	Othering	Perceived threat	Policy outcome
India	medium	low	low / medium	low	engagement
Japan	low	low / medium	low	low	engagement

India: Rapprochement across the Himalayas

In India, the official discourse shows very few mentions of China actually being a security “threat.” The only time this happened was in the late 1990s in the weeks around Pokhran-II (the 1998 series of nuclear test explosions), when Defense Minister Fernandes labeled China “potential threat number one” and Prime Minister Vajpayee’s invoked the “China threat” in his letter to U.S. President Clinton (in which he explained India’s decision to go nuclear) by making references to China’s nuclear arsenal and the “atmosphere of distrust” that exists between the countries. Ashley Tellis called this the exception to the rule, not because the sentiments expressed were uncommon but because they were publicly articulated in such a direct fashion.⁷⁴⁹ Many have argued that the reason to call out China was made for political

⁷⁴⁹ Ashley Tellis, *India’s Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal*, Santa Monica: Rand, 2001, p. 71.

purposes, justifying the introduction of nuclear weapons to the South Asian subcontinent. However, this might not be the only reason. For decades, India had shown anxieties about Chinese nuclear weapons. It began in the 1970s when it was reported that Chinese ballistic missiles were stationed in the TAR. The fact that a Chinese no-first-use clause might not be applicable in the disputed border areas increased the chances of these weapons' being used against Indian armed forces.⁷⁵⁰ Moreover, Chinese military and technological cooperation with Pakistan increased the feeling of a growing China–India asymmetry that could not be bridged by conventional means. These arguments were nonetheless not commonplace and only constituted a minority view in the overall strategic and policy discourse. Official “China threat” arguments were muted quickly after India itself became a de facto nuclear state. This supports the premise that invoking the “China threat” before the Pokhran-II test was done out of political motivations.

At the same time, both sides showed a political will to move the relationship forward and make progress on the border (although progress was slower than the Indians had wished). Several CBMs were agreed upon, maps on the disputed middle sector were exchanged, and the JWG met on regular intervals. After the 1998 nuclear test, Indian leaders were quick to state that China posed no threat to India. Track II and high-level exchanges were resumed, a new bilateral security dialogue was established, and China showed restraint in its support for Islamabad during the 1999 Kargil conflict. In the words of Jaswant Singh, who visited China in 1999, “The Indian government does not think China is a threat to India. The Indian government’s basic policy is to develop good-neighborly relations with China.”⁷⁵¹ Chinese politicians reciprocated such statements, leading to further rapprochement after the brief 1998 hiatus. Overall, both sides showed willingness to further the bilateral relationship, de-escalate tensions, and mend relations after Pokhran-II.

There was little room for identity politics in the burgeoning China–India relationship. In his letter to President Clinton, Vajpayee openly stated that strategic distrust came as a result of the 1962 war, a sentiment that was (and is) widely shared in India. At the same time, politicians did their best to mend relations with China quickly thereafter. All in all, New Delhi’s China policy was a product of a new-found pragmatism. Under Prime Minister Vajpayee, China–India relations improved and bilateral trade increased. This not only had the effect of raising the potential cost of conflict, but it also justified New Delhi’s policy of engagement

⁷⁵⁰ Srikanth Kondapalli, interview by author, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, March 14, 2014.

⁷⁵¹ As quoted in Keshav Mishra, *Rapprochement Across the Himalayas*, p. 204.

from a strategic perspective. After all, it was believed that India's role as a major power required it first and foremost to develop its comprehensive national power in a similar way as China was doing. This created a policy space for both countries to pursue future-oriented cooperative relations instead of focusing on lingering historical sensitivities. Although some China hawks disapproved of what they called their leaders' "kowtowing" to China, the idea of China as a distant other started to disappear from the mainstream policy discourse, thanks to the increased interaction, dialogue, and expanding relations.

Japan: The logic of engagement

In the early post-Cold War years, concerns in Japan were mostly suppressed because of the ambivalence on how to develop China–Japan relations following the Cold War. Japan was the first country to normalize relations with China after the Tiananmen incident; China was the number one recipient of ODA from Japan, and both countries stepped up their cooperation on a host of issues, including cooperation in multilateral frameworks, such as ASEAN and the ARF. These diplomatic efforts were aimed to socialize China into a newly emerging regional order, to incentivize its peaceful rise, and to support its domestic reforms.

Regarding capabilities, there were those who had already warned against China's expanding budget, but the mainstream idea was that (a) China's investment in its military capabilities was a process long overdue, (b) military modernization was subordinate to economic development, and (c) China's power would be no match for the formidable might of the reinvigorated Japan–U.S. alliance in the foreseeable future. Most of the PLA's equipment was outdated, and its transformation into a modern force was something that naturally needed time and money. All in all, the gap in capabilities was considered to be in favor of the United States and Japan for decades to come.

Regarding escalatory acts, Japan and China had been working bilaterally on a diplomatic level to de-escalate tensions surrounding the Senkaku Islands. In most cases when right-wing nationalists from either Japan, China, or Taiwan landed on the islands, both countries did their best to quietly settle the issue and not let it spin out of control. Anti-Japanese actions in China were quelled by the CCP under the guise that the party was capable of safeguarding national interests and that such movements would hurt China's economic interests and have a destabilizing social effect.⁷⁵² On a more regional level, there were concerns

⁷⁵² Erica Strecker Dawns and Philip C. Saunders, "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diaoyu Islands," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No.3, p. 130.

over how China—despite Hashimoto’s urgent request to exercise restraint in a meeting one week before the Taiwan incident —had shown a propensity to use force on what was considered its core national interest, the Taiwan issue. Some of the Chinese missiles that were used in the exercises landed close to Japan’s southeastern islands. Also, in the late 1990s oceanographic ships started to move into what Japan considered its EEZ. A framework for prior notification was established to inform and keep track of movements in the East China Sea. In some cases, however, China failed to comply with these new rules. These were early signs that hinted at a more assertive China manifesting itself close to Japan’s borders.

Regarding identity othering, there was little mention of China as an ideological threat. China was transforming from a rigid, centrally planned economy into a modern nation-state with capitalist characteristics. The economic reforms created hope and expectations that a newly emerging middle class would push for political voice and reforms. In that sense there was some hope for identity convergence, which was also one of the drivers of Japan’s engagement policy. Although acknowledged as a significant weakness in China’s ongoing development, the existence of domestic problems (e.g., Falun Gong, ethnic problems, corruption, and the rich–poor divide) was thought to strengthen Beijing’s desire for a peaceful external environment. The history problem led to some bilateral irritants, but this did not directly affect perceptions of threat. This was because Chinese nationalism and ant-Japanese sentiment were not yet salient. There was also some positivism about China becoming “socialized” in existing regional institutions.⁷⁵³ This turn to multilateralism and cooperative security suppressed anxieties over China’s revisionist great power aspirations.

Table 10. Scores on Variables and Policy Outcome Mid-2000s

	Capabilities	Escalatory acts	Othering	Perceived threat	Policy outcome
India	medium/high	low	low	low	engagement
Japan	low/medium	medium	medium	medium	hedging

India: Slow and steady progress

In 2005 India and China signed their strategic partnership. It was the official affirmation that bilateral relations had been progressing steadily in many directions. At the same time, there

⁷⁵³ See for instance Alistair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

was a perception that the Chinese were not interested in making substantial progress on border negotiations. Anxieties over a Chinese (political and economic) presence in the South Asian region also became increasingly salient.

The gap in capabilities between China and India had increased significantly from the early 2000s onward. This development—first mentioned in the MOD’s Annual Report of 2004—did not result in acute “China threat” arguments. However, an increased number of (retired) servicemen started to speak of how this growing gap could undermine India’s position on the border as well as India’s role as South Asia’s natural regional leader. Nuclear anxieties remained, despite the fact that India had become internationally accepted as a de facto nuclear power state. India’s lack of a credible second-strike capability meant that it was still susceptible to China’s nuclear power. India’s missiles were not able to reach densely populated areas in China, whereas Chinese missiles could easily reach high-value targets in India. A new concern was the increased Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean region. The “string of pearls” concept, initially coined by a U.S. think tank in a report to the Pentagon, confirmed Indian anxieties over China’s ambitions in the Indian Ocean. Despite these concerns, which originated mostly from within the vocal strategic communities, the mainstream position remained that China–India relations were steadily moving forward and that China did not pose an immediate threat to India.

Despite the growing asymmetry in capabilities, there were no direct indications that China would become aggressive toward India. The CBMs mostly worked as intended: there were few reports of incursions along the LAC. Indian leaders liked to speak of the success of the CBMs in creating “peace and tranquility” along the disputed border. Additional CBMs were incorporated, special political representatives with increased mandates to negotiate were appointed, China accepted Sikkim as a part of India, and old mountain passes were reopened to facilitate trade and exchange. Beijing’s approach toward Islamabad was more mindful of Indian sensitivities, and it was perceived that China was starting to acknowledge India as a serious global player. All in all, China showed restraint in behavior toward Delhi.

The political capital that was gained from rapprochement and cooperation was not dissipated by identity politics. Instead, there was a growing identity convergence. The two countries’ increasing cooperation on many levels indicated the dawn of a new Asian era. The status of the Asian hemisphere was reflected in the words of Wen Jiabao, who stated, “combined, we can take the leadership position in the world.”⁷⁵⁴ Indian leaders expressed

⁷⁵⁴ As quoted in Jeff Smith, *Cold Peace*, p. 36.

themselves in similar fashion. The term “Chindia” was coined and popularized by Indian politician Jaimen Ramesh. Most Indian leaders also refrained from securitizing China’s domestic weaknesses. It was instead anticipated that it would result in a China that first and foremost valued a peaceful periphery (as Japan did in the 1990s). Nationalism was not considered much of a concern either, since—although it was recognized as a powerful force in 21st-century China—it was not considered to be targeted toward India. There was identity convergence on the international stage as well. China’s insistence on norms of sovereignty and non-interference was shared in a time of U.S. unilateralism under the guise of democracy promotion. These relations brought the two emerging global players closer together on shared goals (multipolarization, reform of international institutions, environment, trade) and shared “Asian” values (non-interference and sovereignty).

Japan: Increased tensions and identity divergence

By the mid-2000s, China-Japan relations had deteriorated for a couple of reasons. Compared to 1996, the most important change was that both countries were taking a less conciliatory approach toward one another as a result of increased rivalry (as a result of China catching up with Japan) and identity politics (as a result of Chinese nationalism and Japanese apology fatigue).

Regarding capabilities, the Chinese continued to invest heavily in their military, overtaking Japan’s defense expenditure around the mid-2000s. The idea that China’s military expenditure was second to overall development was discarded in most Japanese assessments, and questions were raised how China could reconcile its “peaceful rise” with annual double-digit growth in defense spending. The fact that China was investing in capabilities that directly impinge on the security of Japan (asymmetric capabilities such as ballistic and cruise missiles, nuclear submarines, and offensive network-centric warfare capabilities) raised feelings of susceptibility. At the same time, it was believed that the reinvigorated U.S.–Japan alliance would remain dominant in the Asia-Pacific for years to come.

Second, the situation in the East China Sea deteriorated as a result of increased Chinese presence in the form of (a) oceanographic research ships that entered the area without prior notification, disregarding the framework that was established earlier; (b) a nuclear submarine entering Japan’s territorial sea; and (c) the installation of Chinese oil and gas facilities, which were meant to extract the natural resources that were on the Chinese side of the median line. Japanese protests that resource extraction was also occurring on the Japanese side were met with opposition. Instead of finding a working solution to the problem, a military presence in

the East China Sea became increasingly salient, with Chinese warships patrolling close to the oil and gas installations and Japanese fighter planes scrambling to keep track of these movements. On the issue of the East and South China Sea, it was perceived that Chinese behavior was less in line with international rules and norms than before, and the Chinese showed a growing disregard for de-escalating bilateral stand-offs and tensions or quelling nationalist sentiments at home.

In the 2000s it became clear for the Japanese that political reform in China would not follow automatically after China’s economic opening-up. Instead of the “Three Represents” being seen as a move toward democratic inclusion, it was interpreted as a move to capture and turn potential enemies of state within a reinvigorated, rigid ideology. This policy, called “authoritarian resilience,” showed that political identity convergence was not feasible in the near future. The history issue came to the forefront, evidenced by the repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Koizumi. Chinese accusations were met with a Japanese apology fatigue. The “new” Japanese leaders, Koizumi, Abe, and Trade Minister Shoichi Nakagawa were appreciated by the general public for acting more resolute with regard to China. On the other side, Ma Licheng’s “New Thinking” (arguing that historical bilateral issues had been solved) lost to strident nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments. A host of incidents exacerbated the tensions and eventually resulted in large-scale, anti-Japanese riots in multiple Chinese cities in 2005. The Chinese government was blamed for fueling discontent among the Chinese and supporting the demonstrations. It created the perception that anti-Japanese sentiments were cultivated in China for reasons of creating an external enemy to distract the Chinese from their domestic problems. Whereas it was first believed that domestic problems would result in conciliatory foreign policy, nationalism now made it feasible that those same domestic problems could spin off into a more non-compromising policy toward Japan.

Table 11. Scores on Variables and Policy Outcome – 2010s

	Capabilities	Escalatory acts	Othering	Perceived threat	Policy outcome
India	high	medium	low	medium	hedging
Japan	medium	high	high / medium	high	balancing

India: From engagement to hedging

Compared to the early to mid-2000s, the China–India relationship has become more complex in the 2010s, with elements of cooperation, competition, and coordination (in the words of Manmohan Singh). The China–India security relationship has matured and come to encompass many more dimensions than the border issue and regional competition. Shared concerns and limited cooperation (e.g., on sea lane security, [nuclear] terrorism and post-Afghanistan stabilization) have given China–India security relations more substance than they had 20 years earlier. However, such cooperation has not been able to refute growing perceptions of threat.

Continuous economic growth has allowed China to significantly increase the gap in military capabilities between the two countries. The expanding budget is not questioned in itself, but the consequences are felt directly in several ways. Strategic roads, railway tracks, and airports have augmented the Chinese possibilities for power projection in the border areas. Modern solid-fuel ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines keep the strategic nuclear balance strongly in favor of China, and asymmetric capabilities in new domains such as space and cyber space are adding to traditional feelings of susceptibility.

What has affected perceptions of threat even more is the increased number of Chinese movements along the disputed border. Incursions into what India considers its territory are seen as strategic pressure to keep India on the defensive. Newly elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in line with media commentary, has become vocal in calling for China to change its behavior. A large majority of Indians see China as a security threat, and the media have significantly stepped up their coverage of China’s behavior on the border. At the same time, the official position maintains that the CBMs have resulted in enduring “peace and stability” on the border. Indian policymakers have been—to some extent—confident in their ability to “manage” the border and prevent escalation. Other areas in which India and China are likely to be at odds with each other (the Indian Ocean, space, and cyberspace) lack the institutional foundations to regulate and manage future behavior.

Although it is unlikely the two countries will become “bhai bhai” (brothers) again, because of the level of mistrust and the structural competitive element in their relations, diplomacy has been able to not let the relation spiral out of control. Indian policymakers are looking to find a fine balance in which they can address their concerns over a rising China without invoking the “China threat” theory or antagonizing Beijing. Neither do policymakers create ideological distance between India and China. One way Indian policymakers are addressing the growing Chinese footprint in the region is by adding the element of

“competition” to the official Chinese narrative, accepting that not all elements of their simultaneous rise and great power aspirations can be cast in terms of cooperation and coordination. The official position—for now—is that China’s behavior is not interpreted as overtly hostile, escalatory, or coercive. That is why China is still mostly seen as a long-term security challenge and not as an immediate or ideological threat. It is likely that a balanced, constructive engagement with a hedging component will continue to be the desired policy in New Delhi.

Japan: balancing the China threat

In the 2010s Tokyo has also started to articulate its foreign policy goals more in realist terms. Instead of looking for regional stability and prosperity through cooperation and engagement, it now aims first and foremost to maintain the regional balance of power, as it feels this is a prerequisite for peace and stability. This changing narrative is to a large extent the result of Japan’s growing concerns and its failed, initial policy of engagement with China. Japan’s policies toward China have turned from engagement to hedging to balancing. This balancing takes the form of limited internal balancing, allocating more resources and capabilities toward areas where the China threat is most felt. A small increase in the defense budget, reinterpretations of collective self-defense, and loosening restrictions on trade in arms constitute aspects of Japan’s balancing act vis-à-vis China. At the same time, Tokyo and Washington have updated their guidelines for defense cooperation, and Japan is looking for security cooperation with countries such as Australia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and India.

The enduring tug-of-war over the Senkaku Islands has significantly exacerbated bilateral tensions and hardened Japanese views of a “rising China.” There is a broad and shared understanding that interprets Chinese behavior as coercive and escalatory. In seeking to explain such behavior, Japanese assessments rationalize that such conduct is predicated on the changing balance of power in the region. This suggests that China’s behavior will continue to be more assertive, as long as power asymmetries continue to grow.

Bilateral tensions have become increasingly tainted by identity politics, in which “personality traits” (values, regime type, and historical memory) shape binary images of China and Japan. Even if such othering is primarily meant for domestic consumption or to isolate China, it has the effect of pitting historical interpretations and value systems against each other, reinforcing visceral antipathy and mistrust. This in turn, has created expectations about behavior. When such anticipated behavior becomes a reality, it reinforces negative belief systems. It is important to note that policymakers tend to adhere to schemas and images based

on their personal predispositions and tend to discard signals that oppose their images.⁷⁵⁵ In that sense, identity politics makes it more difficult for China to change Japan's perception. To do so would require lengthy and costly signaling, something that would be difficult for Chinese leaders given the pervasive anti-Japanese sentiments present in Chinese society.

9.2. IR Theories and Perceptions of Threat

This research has sought to empirically test what the drivers behind perceptions of threat were. This section will now look at how these findings hold up with IR theories, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The parsimonious premise of realism is that growing power asymmetries will lead to the increase of threat perceptions. This research validates the importance of power, but sees it as an enabling factor rather than a decisive one. Chinese power has been growing rapidly and has had similar effects on Japan and India. In the case of India, China's increased power is felt in areas of traditional concern; China has increased power projection capabilities on the border and has significantly expanded its ability to hit India with nuclear missiles. China's growing power is also increasingly felt in other new dimensions (Indian Ocean, space, and cyber). Similar developments have taken place in the case of Japan, which has become more and more exposed to new and more advanced naval and missile capabilities in areas where it had traditionally felt susceptible (the nuclear domain and Japan's southwest islands). Moreover, new assets in space and cyber technology have diversified China's ability to hit Japan. In section 9.1 I established that although both India and Japan experience a shared sense of susceptibility to China's newly gained power (the independent variable), the levels of threat they face (the dependent variable) are not similar. Also, their dominant policies toward China are different for two out of the three points in time selected. This suggests that in India and Japan there are other dynamics at work that influence threat perceptions. Clearly, power matters. Without the ability to inflict harm, there is no reason to be worried about it. However, states do also care about intentions and try to make sense of them by looking at the behavior of others.

This is what I argue is the main factor in explaining the difference in threat perception between India and Japan. India sees Chinese behavior as increasingly assertive, but it is not as alarmed as Japan is. The main reason for this is the fact that both sides have been able to keep their borders relatively secure for a long period of time. Some instances in the recent past

⁷⁵⁵ Vertzberger, *The World in their Minds*, p. 111–192.

suggested that China was challenging “peace and tranquility” on the border. At the same time, these escalatory incidents were relatively quick resolved. The Chinese political leadership has shown a tendency for regulation and de-escalation of China–India crises. This has created the impression that escalatory actions are not part of a deliberate, centrally planned, revisionist grand strategy vis-à-vis India, but rather the result of individual decisions made by regional PLA commanders on the border. Japan, on the contrary, sees China’s behavior as centrally planned, coercive and revisionist. This is the result of what has been interpreted as a sliding scale of escalatory actions around the Senkaku Islands. Although there were some attempts at institution building, the China–Japan relationship proved difficult to manage in times of crisis. The few coordination mechanisms that were established were not followed through, and high-level visits, working-level dialogues, and other forms of exchange were canceled by the Chinese. When there are no established or respected rules of the game and each side considers the other inimical to its own interests, then states will prepare for worst-case scenarios. Institutions can thus mitigate perceptions of threat by setting the rules of the game. When both sides repeatedly show a commitment to the rules they have established, then this creates expectations about future behavior. Realists will argue that states can never be truly sure about each other’s future behavior, and of course this is true. But it is also evident that states learn from interactions with each other and that choices for escalation or de-escalation have a strong impact on perceptions of threat.

Finally, constructivism holds that a level of identity convergence can mitigate perceptions of threat. I have argued that identity divergence and convergence play secondary roles in threat perception. They create a certain level of anticipation about behavior. When such behavior is observed, it justifies and reinforces such images. In the case of India, for example, the border is an important factor that affects how India sees China. The Depsang incident in 2013 confirmed for China hardliners that the Chinese really could not be trusted, the CBMs had failed, and the Chinese leadership was trying to keep India on the defensive. This hardline view is gaining more traction in India, although there remain a host of different views on the matter. In Japan, there is a broad consensus that sees China’s behavior as escalatory and aggressive. This idea is galvanized by the growing ideational divide that juxtaposes a peaceful Japan against a belligerent China. Such ideas gained traction when China’s behavior was not yet considered particularly aggressive. When reality caught up with expectations, it reaffirmed and institutionalized such beliefs.

9.3. Comparison: 2014 Differences and Similarities

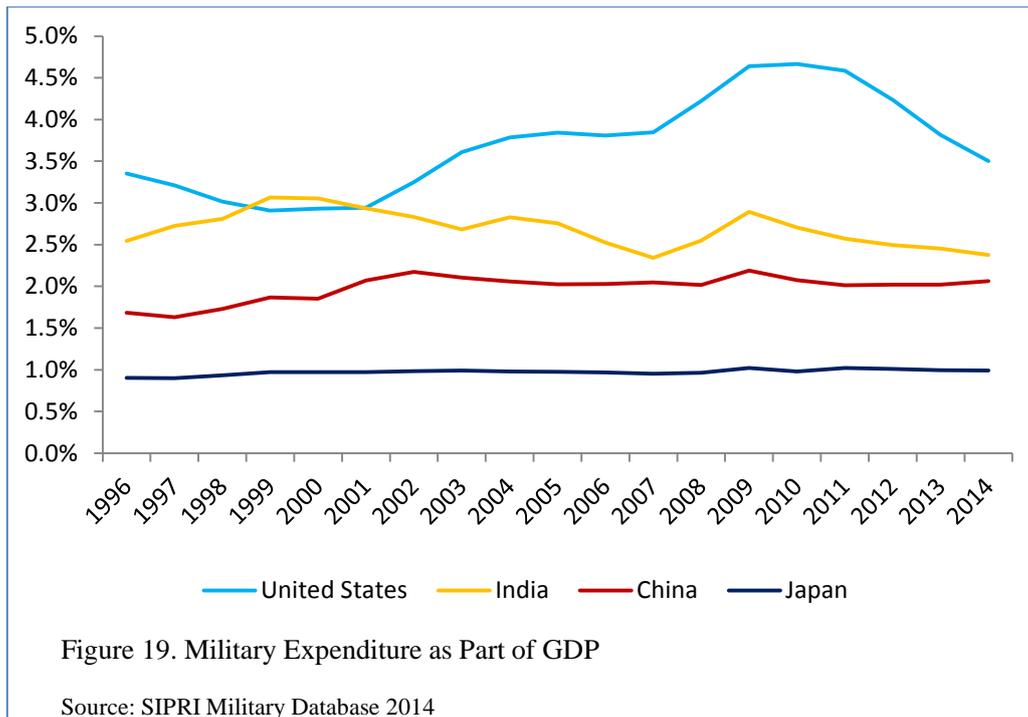
This section will give an overview of major similarities between India and Japan in their perceptions of China. It will do so according to the independent variables that were presented in the first chapter; military capabilities (material), escalatory policy acts (behavioral), and identity convergence/divergence (ideational). The policy recommendations are primarily based on the most recent findings. Each one of them will highlight similarities and differences in a table and give a summary of the major conclusions.

Material: Military capabilities

It can be argued that China's military investments are not extraordinary given its size, the dismal state of its military in the 1980s, and the economic growth that enabled the military modernization from the 1980s onward. When China's economy began to grow and its defense expenditure as a portion of GDP remained similar, it was only logical that it would expand and modernize its armed forces. The dramatic expansion of the military budget in real terms notwithstanding, some U.S. experts have argued that China's military expenditure remains a function of its economic development, something that does not figure in Japan's and India's security discourse.⁷⁵⁶ If one looks at China's military expenditure as part of its GDP, it supports the idea that—at least as far as data are available—its military expenditures remain a direct function of its economic growth. As the graph below shows, in the past two decades China's expenditure as a portion of GDP has hovered around 2%. This is lower than that of the United States (3.5%), India (2.4%), France, and the United Kingdom (2.2%).⁷⁵⁷ It is exactly the amount that NATO prescribes its member countries to spend on defense. Seen in this light, China's military expenditure and its long-term intentions—which are often related—appear less threatening.

⁷⁵⁶ Andrew Erickson, "Demystifying China's Defense Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate," *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 216, p. 805–830. See also Dennis Blasko, ea., *Defense-Related Spending in China: A Preliminary Analysis and Comparison with American Equivalents*, The United States-China Policy Foundation, available at <http://www.uscpf.org/v2/pdf/defensereport.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2014), or Sean Chen and John Feffer, "China's military spending: soft rise or hard threat," *Asian Perspective*, Vol.33, No.4, p. 47–67.

⁷⁵⁷ From SIPRI Military Expenditure Database; percentages are based on 2014 expenditures.



Andrew Erickson argued that China’s military expenditure is not as opaque or “mysterious” as is often portrayed. He found that China’s military modernization can be well understood within the (expanding) roles and missions as written down in Beijing’s official documents. The result of not looking at the context in which policy takes shape but narrowly scrutinizing the annual increase of defense spending is, according to Erickson, giving “an oversimplistic narrative about China’s rise and its long-term intentions.”⁷⁵⁸ Erickson might be right in this observation, as he writes for a U.S. audience. The fact of the matter for both India and Japan is that China’s “expanding roles and missions” often directly touch upon Japan’s and India’s areas of strategic interest. In that sense, New Delhi and Tokyo are much closer to the heat than Washington.

In contrast to the logic presented above, Japan’s and India’s discursive meaning-making shows growing concerns over a rising China, in which its military modernization and the expanding budget are used as quantitative evidence to substantiate a heightened sense of wariness. At the same time, the threat coming from a rising China has diversified in the time period under review. Naval modernization (Japan) and missile development have traditionally been sources of concern because of proximity to China and, as a consequence, their susceptibility to these capabilities. Added to that are diffuse threats in new domains of space and cyberspace. Both these domains lack the international rules and institutions to effectively

⁷⁵⁸ Erickson, “Demystifying China’s Defense Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate,” p. 805.

govern them. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida warned that “whether the rule of law extends to the global commons such as the high seas, cyberspace, and outer space, which are the new frontiers of the world, determines the future of global peace.”⁷⁵⁹ China’s active governmental involvement in developing new (cyber) space capabilities fits into its presumed strategy of acquiring asymmetric capabilities and circumventing international norms and rules.

In India, there are concerns over the asymmetric nature and the growing gap in capabilities. For New Delhi the crux of the problem is not fundamentally why China is investing in its capabilities but how India (with fewer resources) can balance it with a smaller defense budget; China is expanding its capabilities on the border, in the Indian Ocean, in the nuclear domain, and in new domains such as space and cyber. In the border areas India is investing in strategic roads, rails, and other infrastructure. A new mountain strike corps is supposed to reduce the current India–China combat ratio, which hovers around 1:3.⁷⁶⁰ Concerns over nuclear susceptibility will remain as long as India is not confident in having a credible deterrent against China. India’s investments in sea-, air-, and land-based systems have reduced the asymmetry in nuclear capabilities to some extent, and with it India’s vulnerability not only to China’s nuclear posturing but also to Chinese strategic pressure. NSA Menon stated that India’s possession of a nuclear arsenal has had a deterrent effect and successfully prevented nuclear blackmail ever since Pokhran-II.⁷⁶¹ Nonetheless, there remain concerns when it comes to the asymmetry in terms of capabilities, in particular as the Chinese continue to develop and upgrade their delivery systems and the China-Pakistan proliferation continues despite repeated protests from New Delhi.

Moreover, the scramble for resources results in a more competitive, zero-sum relationship. Both countries link their economic development to a safe and steady supply of energy resources. The interruption of sea lanes would have grave consequences for either one. And even though both acknowledge a shared concern for safe shipping and open sea lanes, the discourse tells us that China’s inroads into the IOR are mostly cast in competitive and adversarial terms. India wants to remain the most important naval power in the IOR and a “net provider” of security. This means that extra-regional navies, and in particular the Chinese, are

⁷⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Summarizing comment by Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Fumio KISHIDA Munich Security Conference,” February 1, 2014, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page18e_000046.html (accessed June 21, 2014).

⁷⁶⁰ There are problems with financing the new strike corps. The Modi government has slashed its size in half, and funding occurs on an ad-hoc basis, without the proper allocation of funds. See DNA India, “Parl. panel raps Defence Ministry for raising Mountain Strike corps,” August 13, 2015.

⁷⁶¹ DNA India, “No threats of nuclear blackmail post-Pokhran: National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon,” October 15, 2013.

under scrutiny. For now, India is believed to be in a strategically advantageous position. It is confident that it has the ability to balance a Chinese naval presence. After all, (a) India is centrally located in the Indian Ocean, (b) the Nicobar and Andaman Islands are situated close by the Malacca Straits and provide India with a forward base in a strategic location, (c) China has (for the time being) no military bases in the area, and (iv) China's maritime focus is mostly contained within its nearby seas, where it is increasingly balanced by other countries. Besides, India is investing heavily in naval capabilities. Some have even argued that India should use its advantageous position in the Indian Ocean as a bargaining chip with China to get concessions in other areas, such as the border.⁷⁶²

In Japan, China's ongoing double-digit growth in military expenditure is a key variable in Japan's public statements of concerns; the empirical proof of annual double-digit military expenditure in combination with a lack of transparency has become the constant arbiter for its ongoing threat assessments. The 2014 Defense of Japan warns that China's defense budget in absolute terms has "grown approximately 40 times over the past 26 years and almost quadrupled in size over the past ten years."⁷⁶³ In the 2000s, questions were raised why China was investing in military capabilities when the environment was considered to be benign. It raised anticipation about how such capabilities would be used. After China's behavior became more assertive, it became clear that "China is making efforts to strengthen its asymmetric capabilities to prevent military activity by other countries in the region by denying access and deployment of foreign militaries to its surrounding areas."⁷⁶⁴ As Erickson mentioned, the new capabilities are used in new missions and roles, first and foremost an expansion close to (or what Japan considers to be within) Japan's maritime borders.

⁷⁶² Interview Bharat Karnad.

⁷⁶³ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan*, 2014, Tokyo: Government of Japan, 2015.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 4.

Table 12. Material

Similarities	Differences
China's growing power is felt close to Japan's and India's disputed borders, in terms of an increased naval/army presence.	Asymmetric nature in capabilities is a recurring theme in Indian strategic discourse, Japanese concerns on China's military capabilities focus on "catching up" and challenging U.S.-Japan regional predominance.
Concerns over the freedom of navigation and openness of sea lanes in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.	India's concerns over nuclear weapons are the NFU's not being applicable to border areas and the lack of a credible deterrent. Japan's concerns over nuclear weapons are mostly in terms of regional scenarios, such as a Taiwan contingency, or as part of a wider presumed A2/AD strategy.
Shared understanding that increased power has enabled China to pursue a more "assertive" foreign policy from the late 2000s.	India has concerns about how to cope with the growing gap in capabilities, whereas in Japan, China's military expenditure in itself is fundamentally questioned.
Concerns over China's capabilities in new, unregulated domains such as space and cyberspace.	Concerns over nuclear proliferation are exacerbated by China's military cooperation with Pakistan (in the case of India).
	Unlike Japan, India feels confident in its ability to deal with Chinese naval power in its surroundings. Some Indian strategic thinkers comment that the ESC/SCS disputes are beneficial for New Delhi, as it locks China's naval power in its nearby seas.

Behavioral: escalatory policy acts

It is in the nature of defense and security establishments to assess the military balance and make contingency plans for worst-case scenarios. Behavioral change can happen quickly, and states are never truly sure about each other's intentions. In that sense, it is not strange that such communities keep a close watch on China's military developments. This research has argued, however, that even if capabilities provide an enabling environment and some

expectations about China's future behavior (a latent threat), "China threat" arguments have intensified mostly as a result of perceived escalatory behavior. This has become particularly salient in the post-2008 "assertive China" narrative in India and even more so in Japan.

In India, "China threat" arguments flared up in 2009 and 2013 as a result of incursions along the border. For many Indians it showed that the CBMs do not work properly and, ultimately, that the Chinese cannot be trusted (this is related to the historical mistrust that lingers on as a result of the 1962 war; this is discussed further in the identity section). Moreover, many of the concerns that were voiced in 1996 were echoed in 2012: the border remains unresolved, fears of Chinese regional encirclement remain, and China and Pakistan continue their cooperation on nuclear and missile technologies. Added to that are anxieties over Chinese inroads into the Indian Ocean. Although India is in a strategically advantageous position, the movements of the PLA Navy are closely scrutinized. External Affairs Minister Krishna explicitly stated that India would remain "conscious, always of the need to defend our security interests and to carefully monitor Chinese activities in our neighborhood."⁷⁶⁵ The 2014 visit of a Chinese nuclear submarine to Colombo drew wide attention from Indian security and defense establishment. As China's maritime focus shifts from offshore defense to "open seas protection," such visits are likely to occur more often, and this time not under the guise of fighting piracy. Similar to Japan, New Delhi is wary of China's active regionalism. In contrast to Japan, India is joining these initiatives, partly because a refusal would make India a clear outlier in South Asia. For now, New Delhi does not have the vision or the means to present an alternative to the Chinese initiative for regionalism. China's active regionalism is likely to add to the competitive element in China-India relations.

In Japan, we can see discursive changes after the 1996 Taiwan Missile Crisis, China's "demonstration of their naval capabilities of acquiring, maintaining and protecting maritime rights and interest"⁷⁶⁶ in the East China Sea in the mid-2000s and escalation during the 2010-2014 Senkaku Islands dispute. After these incidents, "China threat" arguments intensified in tone as well as in volume. As a result, China's foreign policy has been interpreted as a sliding scale, showing less restraint in its behavior in line with its growing power. The lack of institutions that can de-escalate a crisis makes it even more difficult to lower threat perceptions. In times of escalation, high-level exchanges are frozen, working-level dialogues are canceled, and various other sorts of goodwill exchanges are postponed. The few channels for negotiation

⁷⁶⁵ Somanahalli Mallaiah Krishna, "EAM Remarks at the release of India's National Security Annual Review 2010," April 19, 2011, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm> (accessed August 11, 2015).

⁷⁶⁶ This is how China's behavior is explained in the Defense of Japan from 2006 onward.

and de-escalation have been shut down on an initiative from the Chinese side. This has created the impression that China’s leaders have become more sensitive to domestic pressure than to Japanese concerns. Restarting such negotiations, dialogues, and meetings infers a domestic political cost, which makes compromising difficult. China’s behavior in 2014 vis-à-vis Japan is widely seen as escalatory and coercive. Consequently, Japan must show resolve and demonstrate that it will not back down on the Senkaku Islands. China’s active regionalism “with Chinese characteristics” is watched with anxiety. Japan is one of the few Asian countries that have not committed themselves to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Tokyo also closely watches moves that are aimed to push the U.S. presence out from the region, such as Xi Jinping’s comment during the 2014 Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures (CICA) in Asia, in which he called for Asians to solve Asian problems.

Table 13. Behavioral	
Similarities	Differences
India and Japan have a shared perspective on the more assertive China from 2008, mostly through increased Chinese intrusions/ incursions close to or within what both countries perceive to be their legitimate borders.	China–India CBMs have proven to be relatively robust; In times of escalation, China and India can generally rely on their CBMs for de-escalation. China tends to freeze bilateral dialogues and interactions with Japan, in times of escalation, when such measures are needed most.
Both countries have publicly expressed their reservations about China’s behavior in Southeast Asia and condemn Chinese assertive actions in the South China Sea.	Indian officials publicly stress their belief in the ability to manage the border with China; Japan sees China’s behavior at the maritime border as coercive, expansionist, and escalatory.
India and Japan share anxieties over Chinese attempts at institution building “with Chinese characteristics” in the region.	Japan largely explains China’s behavior as Beijing lead; Indians also point at other actors involved (local, regional, civil-military relations, and India itself).

	The ECS and SCS disputes revolve around Chinese behavior on issues of history, identity, and sovereignty. China's behavior in the IOR is shaped by securing sea lanes, trade, and access to resources and expanding its regional influence.
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Ideational: identity convergence/divergence

The pursuit of a great power nationalism has become the political foundation of the CCP's *raison d'être* in times of economic and social change. Official positions and popular manifestations of such nationalist sentiments simultaneously reinforce each other through repetitive feedback.⁷⁶⁷ For reasons of regime survival, the CCP could stir up nationalist sentiments and may target them toward a third country. This could in turn result in a backlash in the target country, enlarging the ideological divide and resulting in "institutionalized antagonism."

In India, there is little reference to China as a normative other, at least not in the official narrative on China. Instead, there is much more China convergence; both countries consider themselves developing countries and are emerging in a western-dominated international order. Their shared interests in the realization of a multipolar world have brought New Delhi and Beijing closer together. Indian officials do not consider India as a direct target for Chinese nationalism and refrain from securitizing it. Instead, it is argued that such sentiments are common in most countries and not particularly dangerous. At the same time, nationalism could become more salient in both countries in case their relation evolves into a more competitive one. Also, there remain suspicions about China as a result of history, in particular the 1962 war. The idea that China simply cannot be trusted has gained further traction as a result of the recent increase in the number of border incursions from 2008 onward.

A negative interdependence of identities has become prevalent in China–Japan relations. What I mean by this is that nationalism in China has become incompatible with Japan's self-image. Chinese nationalists would like to see an apologetic Japan and a great power status for China itself. Japan sees itself as a peaceful, status-quo-oriented country and is looking for ways to balance an assertive China and maintain stability in the Asia-Pacific. The bilateral identity divergence has complicated the bilateral relationship; it raises nationalist sentiments in both

⁷⁶⁷ Shaun Breslin and Simon Shen, "Online Chinese nationalism(s)," Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin (eds.), *Online Chinese Nationalism and China's Bilateral Relations*, Plymouth: Lexington, 2010, p. 268.

countries, making political attempts to find compromises on sensitive bilateral issues more difficult.⁷⁶⁸

Table 9.6. Ideational	
Similarities	Differences
Both India's and Japan's mistrust of China is driven by ideational factors.	Mistrust fueled by historical events in the case of India, and regime type and nationalism in the case of Japan.
Othering of China is part of a broader, nationalist narrative in both India and Japan.	Japan regards itself as an obvious target for Chinese nationalism; India, for now, does not.
	Domestic instability is considered a source for conflict in the case of Japan (in terms of a more aggressive foreign policy) because of Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments. India believes China's domestic instability will lead to a more conciliatory foreign policy.
	Identity divergence led to binary images in the case of China–Japan relations; China and India converge on issues such as economic development, post-colonialism, nation-building, and multipolarization.

9.4. Policy Recommendations

The final part of this chapter will offer some policy recommendations based on the conclusions of this research. These policy recommendations follow the logic of this chapter and the whole thesis. The first recommendation will discuss Japan's and India's policy options regarding dealing with China's new capabilities. The second recommendation will stress the importance of institutions. The third recommendation will deal with overcoming the ideological divide.

⁷⁶⁸ Ming Wan, "Perception gaps, identity clashes," Tatshushi Arai, Shihoko Goto and Zheng Wang (eds.), *Clash of national identities: China, Japan and the East China Sea territorial dispute*, Wilson Center, available at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/asia_china_seas_web.pdf (accessed November 12, 2014).

Policy recommendation I: Increase external balancing options

India and Japan are both internally balancing against an increasingly strong China. However, neither has the budget to keep up with China's military modernization. Although India and Japan are geographically far apart, there are areas in which both should expand or initiate security cooperation, in particular on areas of shared concern.

Policy recommendation I.a: Expand existing security cooperation, in particular in the maritime field.

The rationale for a Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean is very different from that in its nearby seas. China has no historical claims in the Indian Ocean and no claims on gas- or oilfields. Instead, China seeks to protect its energy security and its maritime interests, which includes securing its long sea lanes. Nevertheless, both India and Japan share anxieties over China's naval modernization and have—as one of the most concrete results in their bilateral commitments—stepped up their cooperation through bilateral exchanges of dialogue and exercises. New Delhi and Tokyo share a commitment to ensure the safety of the maritime commons and freedom of navigation, whether in the Indian Ocean or in the western Pacific.⁷⁶⁹ In order to underline their mutual commitment to the principles of free passage, India and Japan should further institutionalize and expand their maritime cooperation in a more comprehensive matter.

- a. New Delhi and Tokyo should regularize their cooperation in maritime exercises, such as the Malabar exercises, as well as intensify their joint, bilateral navy and coast guard exercises. Since New Delhi has some reservations about inviting Japan to such exercises and it does not want to provoke China, the two countries should stress that such cooperation is meant to secure the global commons and is not aimed at any other country in particular.
- b. India and Japan should increase their exchange of intelligence to create a greater shared situational awareness in both the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

⁷⁶⁹ As already explicitly expressed in the 2007 Joint Declaration, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement for New Dimensions to the Strategic and Global Partnership between Japan and India," August 22, 2007, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/joint-2.html> (accessed February 11, 2014).

Policy Recommendation I.b: Initiate security cooperation on issues of shared concern

Both India and Japan are concerned about China's investment in the new domains of space and cyberspace. In the interconnected world, cyberspace and space are vital sectors that need to be protected accordingly. However, compared to other domains, there are few rules that govern these areas; and thus there are no parameters for appropriate behavior. Cyberspace and space are seen as possible ways for China to leapfrog into creating an asymmetric advantage. Given their shared vulnerability to such capabilities, it is imperative for Japan and India to increase cooperation and bolster their shared deterrence capabilities. Both countries could:

- a. Increase dissemination of information on cyber-attacks. Tokyo and New Delhi should share information and intelligence on the origins of cyber-attacks. By combining, analyzing, and interpreting such information, more concrete indications can be made about the origins, methods, and modus operandi of such attacks.
- b. Explore possibilities for cooperation on missile defense. India and Japan (with the United States) each have their own unique missile defense systems. There are few opportunities for jointness. Nonetheless, possibilities for both sides to boost their deterrence-by-defense capabilities (as part of collective self-defense) through cooperative actions should be explored.
- c. To show their mutual commitment to this cause, Japan and India could sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on cyber/space security, establish protocols for mutual support, and explore opportunities for cooperation on preventive, defensive capabilities.

Policy recommendation II: Build institutions to induce appropriate behavior

Japan should push for a more norm-oriented, bilateral security policy with China in order to create "rules of the game." Creating norms for appropriate behavior has three apparent benefits: (a) it is a pragmatic method of security cooperation without ideological implications, (b) there is room for finding consensus among all parties on issues of shared interest that stop short of more sensitive questions of sovereignty, and (c) members that accept the rules can be held accountable if they decide to breach them. China and India have found their rules for border management useful and effective. After all, they have resulted in "peace and tranquility"

on the border for a long time. Japan and China could learn from those experiences to increase the confidence on both sides that tense situations can be managed.

Policy recommendation II.a: Set up mechanisms that involve regular meetings and dialogue

A criticism of the China–India CBMs is that they have not resulted in any substantive progress on the resolution of the disputed border. Though this may be true, I would argue that the regularized meetings have resulted in a sudden level of familiarity on each side of the other’s perceptions and positions on the border. In the case of Japan, bilateral meetings have often been canceled or postponed (by China) in times of crisis. One of the reasons why this has been easier for the Chinese in Japan’s case, in comparison to India, is the fact that meetings were mostly organized in a more ad hoc fashion. As a result, the political cost for the Chinese of canceling a meeting has been lower than in the case of India. An important part of a long-term agenda of managing the dispute is the creation of durable mechanisms that involve regular meetings and dialogue.

Policy recommendation II.b: Focus on crisis prevention and management

The CMBs that have been most successful in India–China relations were not those that were aimed at a resolution of the dispute. Instead they were the articles and rules that focused on quick de-escalation and crisis management. China and Japan should focus on creating institutions that deal with crisis management situations. As this research has shown, it is China’s perceived escalatory behavior during times of crisis that has invoked the “China threat” more than anything else. Japan and China should find ways that (a) preclude any misunderstandings that could instigate crises and (b) prevent further escalation of crises. The Japan–China Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism (MCM) could bring together the actors and provide a podium to share viewpoints. The problem is that not all the relevant actors are present, in particular the Coast Guards from both countries. Moreover, Japan could push for stronger declarative principles in the MCM in comparison to the language in the India–China CBMs. This includes a commitment from both sides to refrain from using force in the disputed area.

Policy recommendation II.c: Cooperate in setting up regional rules and norms

India, with the support of Japan, should take a lead in creating maritime rules of the game in the Indian Ocean region. Japan, on the other hand, could push for similar rules of the game and/or regional mechanisms to build confidence in the Western Pacific with the support

of India. This research advises the Indian and Japanese governments to look closer at the following issues:

- (i) India and Japan should use existing institutional frameworks to push for maritime norm setting and confidence building in the Indo-Pacific region. This can be done in a similar fashion as China and India have done on the border; there could be (a) declarative principles, (b) information exchange, (c) de-escalation measures, and (d) restraining measures.
- (ii) India and Japan should push for increased regulation and inspection on space and cyberspace. New Delhi and Tokyo could take a lead in establishing (effective) international regimes, conventions, and other institutions.

Policy recommendation III: Refrain from securitizing the ideological divide

Japan has in recent years embraced a more idealistic foreign policy; promoting democracy, values, and international law. This rhetoric has enlarged the ideological divide between the two countries. As a result of this, the public's perception on bilateral issues (on both sides of the East China Sea) has hardened, and both Japan and China find it more difficult to compromise on these sensitive issues. In order to effectively deal with the precarious situation, Japanese policymakers should refrain from using identity politics. It will only create stronger public positions on both sides, making it more difficult for policymakers to find agreements. India's policy on China has always emphasized finding pragmatic ways to cooperate and coordinate. Japan's value-laden foreign policy will thus mostly fall on deaf ears in New Delhi. It is unlikely that India will go along in any democracy promotion in its own neighborhood. In that sense Tokyo should refrain from courting India to become part of a democratic security diamond or an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.

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