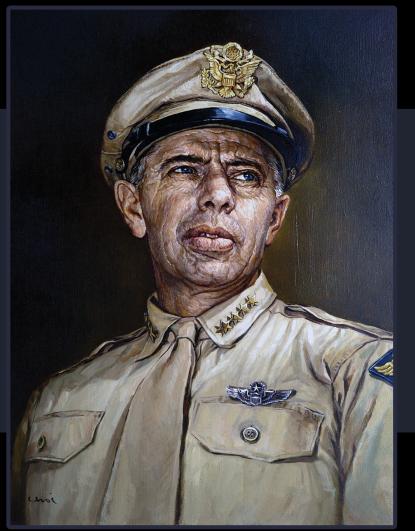
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# Securitization in the Indo-Pacific

A Comparative Discourse Analysis of India's and Japan's Responses to the "China Threat"

Dr. Chotani Vindu Mai



# AIR UNIVERSITY



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#### Foreword

The Kenney Papers series from Air University Press provides a forum for topics related to the Indo-Pacific region, which covers everything from the western shores of the Americas to the eastern coast of Africa and from Antarctica to the Arctic. Named for General George Churchill Kenney, Allied air commander in the Southwest Pacific during World War II and subsequently commander of Strategic Air Command and then Air University, this series seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the region, the geopolitics and geoeconomics that shape the theater, and the roles played by the US military in providing for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Dr. Sanat Sunasekara-Rodwell

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#### About the Author

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#### Abstract

Through the lens of securitization theory, this paper comparatively analyzes important Indo-Pacific issues in the context of India's and Japan's responses to China's rise. The India–Japan partnership is often touted as a bulwark against the "China threat" in the region. Yet their China policies and bilateral actions do not always align. This paper takes the position that the act of securitization is what reveals a state's threat perceptions, thereby giving credence to the other state's extant material capabilities. Studying this context enables a better understanding as to how a state perceives threats and when and why states choose to align (or not) on certain issues. A discourse analysis of India's and Japan's securitization practices in three case studies finds that India and Japan do demonstrate "common" securitization practices such as with maritime security and law in the Indo-Pacific. However, there are certain China-led initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, in addition to Quad 2.0, in which speech acts from India's and Japan's foreign policy elite and relevant ministries show starkly differing results. This study contributes to the application of securitization theory in the Indo-Pacific, advances the concept of what constitutes a "common" securitization practice, and expands the scope of India-Japan studies with the addition of policy implications.

## Introduction

In 1998, India's defense minister, George Fernandes, publicly stated that "China, not Pakistan, is India's 'potential threat No. 1."" Over two decades later, in 2021, India's defense chief stated that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "biggest security threat."<sup>2</sup> Japan, by contrast, has since the 1970s exercised more restraint when it comes to expressing its concerns over China's actions. A study by Oren and Brummer shows that Japan's three key documents (Defense of Japan, National Defense Policy Guidelines, and the Diplomatic Bluebook) have referred to China as a "concern."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the caution exercised in not referring to China as a "threat" was captured in a 2013 mishap, when then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida Fumio on a Sunday Japan Broadcasting Corporation appearance called China's military expansionism a "threat." However, two days later, he stated that, "in my remarks, I meant to say 'concern,' not 'threat."<sup>4</sup> Tokyo continues to use this term.

Language indicates a certain degree of change,<sup>5</sup> and these statements, in their respective capacities and differing intensities, are significant speech acts that enable us to put two things in perspective. First, notwithstanding the use of different terminologies, they demonstrate that both countries were/are feeling threatened by Chinese actions. Second, despite this, Japan and India in the Indo-Pacific region have still gone on to take starkly differing policy actions regarding certain Chinese policies and initiatives in the region.

It is important to raise because stronger bilateral relations between these two "like-minded" democracies and regional "anchors"<sup>6</sup> have increasingly been attributed to China's rise.<sup>7</sup> Yet upon closer observation, prospects of an alliance

<sup>1.</sup> Prabhash K. Dutta, "Doklam: When George Fernandes Called China as Threat No. 1 and How He Stood Vindicated," India Today, January 29, 2019, https://www.indiatoday.in/. John F. Burns, "India's New Defense Chief Sees Chinese Military Threat," New York Times, May 5, 1998, https://www.nytimes.com/.

<sup>2.</sup> Sudhi Ranjan Sen, "India Defense Chief Says China Is the 'Biggest Security Threat," Bloomberg, November 12, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/. 3. Eitan Oren, and Matthew Brummer, "How Japan Talks About Security Threats," *The Diplomat*,

August 14, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/. 4. "Kishida Retraction: China A 'Concern', Not 'Threat," *Japan Times*. March 27, 2013, https://thediplomat

<sup>.</sup>com/.

<sup>5.</sup> Hanna Samir Kassab, "What Is the Indo-Pacific? Genealogy, Securitization, and the Multipolar System," Chinese Political Science Review 8 (2023): 573-96, https://doi.org/.

<sup>6.</sup> Bharat R. Joshi, "A Strategic Framework That Works for Japan and India," Japan Times, September 3, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/.
7. Hiroshi Asahina, "Japan, India Agree on Closer Security Cooperation with Eye on China," Nikkei

Asia, September 9, 2022, https://asia.nikkei.com/; "Fear of China Is Pushing India and Japan into Each Other's Arms," *The Economist*, March 19, 2023, https://www.economist.com/; and Mitsuru Obe and Niharika Mandhana, "India and Japan Pursue Closer Ties to Counter China," *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 2014, https://www.wsj.com/.

remain weak and/or arguably unreasonable.8 And despite China's significant material gains in this century, their policy responses to Chinese actions and China-led initiatives in the region do not always align. For example, statements from Indian and Japanese leaders have demonstrated a growing convergence when it comes to Chinese assertive actions in the maritime sphere and more recently with regard to territorial disputes in the region. However, when it comes to China's Belt and Road Initiative and Quad 2.0, the results are starkly different.

To conduct a deeper examination of the issue, the two key research questions posed are: What do India's and Japan's securitization practices elucidate about their threat perceptions regarding China? When do India and Japan exhibit "common" securitization practices regarding China's rise in the Indo-Pacific?

This paper takes the position that the act of securitization is what reveals a state's threat perceptions, thus giving credence to the other state's extant material capabilities. Studying this becomes an important part of understanding when a state perceives threats and, importantly, why and how states choose to align (or not) on certain issues.9 Tracing and analyzing these processes in three case studies not only helps us understand India's and Japan's policy responses via-à-vis China but also gives us a better understanding of future policy implications we can expect from the bilateral partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

A time frame from 2012 to 2023 will be analyzed as the India–Japan partnership has made substantial progress and New Delhi's and Tokyo's Indo-Pacific policies have undergone significant change during this period. Additionally, China's foreign policy initiatives in the Indo-Pacific in this time frame provide a justifiably opportune period to conduct a comparative analysis of the selected case studies.

This paper draws from primary sources. Interviews conducted by the author as well inquires with relevant government ministries have been incorporated to substantiate arguments where appropriate. Qualitative analyses include bilateral statements and statements and speeches from respective state's leaders and diplomatic elites. Official documents analyzed for India are from the Ministry of External Affairs, the Annual Report of the Department of Defence, parliamentary (Lok Sabha) questions, and speeches and statements by Indian officials. For Japan, the National Defense Program Guidelines, Annual White Papers, the Defense of Japan, Diet Deliberations, National Security Strategy, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Diplomatic Bluebooks are assessed.

<sup>8.</sup> Some scholars argue that they remain better off aligned than allied. Rohan Mukherjee, "Japan and

India Are Better Off Aligned Than Allied," *The Diplomat*, July 2, 2018, <u>https://thediplomat.com/</u>. 9. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); and Zenel Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan and the Externalization of China's Securitization," Japan Studies Review 20 (2016), 158, https://asian.fiu.edu/.

The first section addresses the extant literature on securitization theory and the India–Japan partnership and highlights the gap in the literature that this study will contribute to. The second section traces the language used in the past by New Delhi and Tokyo to express previous perceptions of threat from China. This provides for a deeper analysis and sets the stage to then apply securitization theory to the three selected case studies and comparative analyze them. The concluding section will discuss the paper's main findings and highlight the policy implications that this will have for both the bilateral partnership and the Indo-Pacific region.

#### **Review of Extant Literature**

#### The Evolution of Securitization Theory

The Copenhagen School (i.e., Ole Waever's and Barry Buzan's work) laid the foundation for securitization theory and identified a step-by-step process of what would need to take place for a successful act of securitization. When elites in a state declare an issue to be a security problem, this act in itself moves the issue from its politicized state or the realm of politicization to a securitized state or a state of securitization.<sup>10</sup> The "referent object" refers to the country or issue facing the urgent and/or existential threat, and it is this referent object that has to take "extraordinary measures" to deal with the threat being posed to it by the "referent subject."<sup>11</sup> To do this successfully, the referent object must be able to convince an audience.<sup>12</sup>

While this has been one of the most significant contributions to the field of security studies, the Copenhagen School has had its limitations. Key concerns regarding the "audience" have often been raised—who are they and how are they persuaded by the securitizing actors?<sup>13</sup> Additionally, it emphasizes the illocutionary dimension of the speech act: what the speaker means to convey through a speech act or simply what is meant by saying it. Yet arguably the perlocutionary dimension—the actual effect or what is accomplished by those acts is important, too. By focusing on the former and not the latter, we lose out on an analytical dimension that helps us better understand how states proceed

<sup>10.</sup> Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly*, 47 (2003): 511–31.

<sup>11.</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, Security.

<sup>12.</sup> Ralf Emmers, "Securitization," in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. A. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 131-44.

<sup>13.</sup> Harsh Vasani, "Practicing Security: Securitisation of Transboundary Rivers by Hydrocrats in Himalayan South Asia," *GeoJournal* 88 (2023): 3874, https://doi.org/.

to act and thus also an assessment of the policy implications of what we can also expect in the future.

To address this shortcoming, Balzacq's approach, which considers the more sociological and perlocutionary dimensions of the speech act, is helpful. He defines securitization as

an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development.<sup>14</sup>

To put into perspective the differences, and the value additions of both the Copenhagen School and Balzacq's work, see table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Securitization Theories: Copenhagen Schoolvs. Balzacq's Approach. (Source: Author, 2024)

Copenhagen School	Balzacq on Securitization	
The issue moves from a politicized state to a situation of existential threat, thus requiring immediate action.	The effect that the securitization speech act has, i.e., the implication or consequences that the referent subject will face due to the "customized policy" being taken.	
Illocutionary dimension: Constitutive explanations. <sup>15</sup> Focus on the act, i.e., the speaker's intention or what you do. <sup>16</sup>	Perlocutionary dimension: Causal explanations. <sup>17</sup> Focus on the effect of the act or speech. What you accomplish. <sup>18</sup>	
Philosophical approach	Sociological approach	
Core Literature: Ole Waever, 1995; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, 1998.	Core Literature: Thierry Balzacq and Stefano Guzzini, 2014; Thierry Balzacq, 2011; 2014.	

Given the importance of both approaches of securitization theory, this paper argues that drawing from both would prove beneficial in providing a more coherent picture of Japan's and India's threat perceptions, alignment preferences, and resultant behaviors toward China. This paper focuses on the intent of statements made by elites in Japan and India and what actions have

<sup>14.</sup> Thiery Balzacq, "A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants," in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. Thiery Balzacq (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 18.

<sup>15.</sup> Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan," 160.

<sup>16. &</sup>quot;Illocutionary Force," Pragmatics Stephen Politzer-Ahles, University of Kansas, <u>https://people.ku.edu/.</u>

<sup>17.</sup> Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan," 160.

<sup>18. &</sup>quot;Illocutionary Force."

ensued in the Indo-Pacific as a result of those speech acts. Indeed, supporting the utilization of both approaches/schools is an important study by Zenel Garcia, which advocates that both approaches don't have to be "mutually exclusive" and securitization theory in itself can benefit by drawing from both the "perlocutionary and illocutionary dimensions of speech acts."<sup>19</sup>

# Securitization Discourse on India, Japan, and the Bilateral Partnership in the Indo-Pacific

A review of the extant literature on securitization concerning India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific demonstrates two important gaps that this study seeks to fill. First, the studies utilizing securitization theory focus on either state's individual securitization of China and not a comparison of both.

For Japan, works have focused on how Japan's 2007 move to upgrade its Defense Agency to the level of Ministry of Defense was a result of the securitization of China<sup>20</sup>; or how acts of China's securitization enabled the Shinzo Abe administration to achieve its push for Japan's right to collective self-defense.<sup>21</sup> Scholars have also analyzed how the Abe administration successfully securitized China in the maritime commons domain by utilizing an indirect strategy of "transversal securitization."<sup>22</sup> Other analyses have studied the securitization and desecuritization of the Sino-Japanese territorial conflict over the Senkaku Islands<sup>23</sup> and how Diet deliberations in Tokyo and their resultant threat perceptions have facilitated acts of securitization from Japan.<sup>24</sup>

For India, much of the scholarship has focused on the increasing issues South Asia is facing with climate change and water scarcity. Some important works address India's contentious transboundary water dispute with China over the Yarlung Tsangpo Brahmaputra River.<sup>25</sup> Other works have focused on

<sup>19.</sup> Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan," 160.

<sup>20.</sup> Kai Schultze, "Japan's New Assertiveness: Institutional change and Japan's Securitization of China," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 18, no. 2 (2016): 221–47.

<sup>21.</sup> Petter Y. Lindgren, "Advancing the Role of Social Mechanisms, Mediators, and Moderators in Securitization Theory: Explaining Security Policy Change in Japan," *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (2019): 343–64, https://doi.org/.

<sup>22.</sup> Alice Dell'Era, "Securitizing Beijing Through the Maritime Commons: the 'China threat' and Japan's Security Discourse in the Abe Era," *Pacific Review* 37, no. 1 (2022): 147–80, https://doi.org/.

<sup>23.</sup> Lukas K. Danner, "Securitization and de-securitization in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Territorial Dispute," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2014): 219–24.

<sup>24.</sup> Eitan Oren, "Japan's Evolving Threat Perception: Data from Diet Deliberations 1946–2017," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 20, no. 3 (2020): 477–510. https://doi.org/; and Eitan Oren and Matthew Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization, and Political Instrumentality in Abe Shinzo's Japan," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 6 (2020): 721–45, https://doi.org/.

<sup>25.</sup> Anjan Kumar Sahu and Surinder Mohan, "From Securitization to Security Complex: Climate Change, Water Security and the India–China Relations," *Original Article* 59 (2022): 320–45; Lei Xie and Jeroen Warner, "The Politics of Securitization: China's Competing Security Agendas and Their Impacts on Securitizing Shared Rivers," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 63, no. 3 (2022): 332–61, https://doi.org/; and Jayashree

the Narendra Modi government's securitization by boycotting and banning Chinese apps.<sup>26</sup> Recently, the rise of China and India as space powers has also propelled forward the discourse in this domain.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in terms of Indo-Pacific spatiality, this is the first study to conduct a comparative analysis of solely India's and Japan's securitization practices in the region. The case studies additionally cover important themes of maritime security, geopolitics, connectivity, and economic ties, providing a much more in-depth view.

Second, when securitization theory has been applied to the Indo-Pacific region and the India–Japan partnership, it has done so in terms of their regional engagement in Southeast Asia. Chand and Garcia's 2017 paper examined how the "common" securitization of China by India and Japan has enabled them to pursue deeper security engagements with Southeast Asian states and also assisted them in increasing their military, political, and economic presence in the region.<sup>28</sup> Another study by Chand and Garcia in 2021 has a broader focus, looking at how the securitization discourse by Japan, the United States, Australia, and India, all key Indo-Pacific players, has allowed for a region-building process that centers on the need to contain China and its actions in the South China Sea.<sup>29</sup>

These studies have been important additions to the literature on securitization because they identify how the various referent objects are faced with existential threats posed by China's foreign policy actions, that is, the referent subject. However, what is defined as "common" securitization and the parameters that it entails remain unclear. What has to take place and when can an act be considered an act of "common securitization" deserves further scrutiny and academic rigor such that it can provide us with deeper policy insights.

What can be grasped from Chand and Garcia's 2017 study is that a convergence of interests by actors on the same issue, followed by acts of securitization, constitutes an act of common securitization. While an important observation, this paper attempts to advance what should constitute or what can be framed as an act of common securitization in two ways.

First, for it to be a common securitization act, it should not only be based on a country's externalization of its securitization of China (or any other country)

Vivekanandan, "Where We Need Water, We Find Guns Instead": Understanding the Securitization of Sovereignty Claims on the Brahmaputra," *India Review* 23, no. 2, 2024: 134–53, https://doi.org/.

<sup>26.</sup> Joytsna Vilva, "India's Chinese Boycott and Securitization Discourse," *LSE Blogs*, July 29, 2020, https:// blogs.lse.ac.uk/.

<sup>27.</sup> Dimitrios Stroikos, "Still Lost in Space? Understanding China and India's Anti-Satellite Tests through an Eclectic Approach," *Astropolitics*, 21, 2–3 (2023): 179–205, https://doi.org/10.1080/; and Columba Peoples, "Assuming the Inevitable? Overcoming the Inevitability of Outer Space Weaponization and Conflict," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 29, no. 3 (2008): 502–20.
28. Bibek Chand and Zenel Garcia, "Power Politics and Securitization: The Emerging Indo–Japanese

<sup>28.</sup> Bibek Chand and Zenel Garcia, "Power Politics and Securitization: The Emerging Indo-Japanese Nexus in Southeast Asia," *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* 4, no. 2 (2017): 310–24, https://doi.org/.

<sup>29.</sup> Bibek Chand and Zenel Garcia, "Constituting the Indo-Pacific: Securitisation and the Processes of Region-Making," *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*, 52, no. 1–2 (2021): 310–24.

to a regional and international audience (externalization being the process where a state would obtain international consensus of its securitization of another).<sup>30</sup> Instead, for it to be common, the focus should first and foremost be on the consensus of securitization by elites from either country carrying out the acts securitization. That is, in this case, if we analyze New Delhi's and Tokyo's common securitization of China, for a successful securitization we would need to consider whether India's foreign policy and security elites, as well as key leaders, accept Japan's securitization of China, and vice versa, where whether Japan's foreign policy and security elites and leaders do the same. Once both have done so on a common issue-for example, maritime law in the Indo-Pacific-only then should we consider it an act of common securitization.

Second, the aforementioned study refers specifically to India's and Japan's "common securitization and strategic concerns regarding the rise of China." The issue with this is by taking their securitization of China's rise as a whole and not analyzing individual Chinese Indo-Pacific policies; policy insight and analytical rigor are lost and can thus be misleading.

Both points are important to consider when thinking about common securitization because, as the case studies will and do demonstrate, different Chinese Indo-Pacific policies have resulted in sometimes starkly differing foreign policy responses from New Delhi and Tokyo. The results and findings thus will be a valuable addition to the policy debate on the "China threat" in the Indo-Pacific as well as to India-Japan studies.

## Tracing Japan's and India's Threat Perceptions of China

Before delving into the case studies, an overview of how India and Japan perceive the China threat, and the language that has previously been utilized with regard to China is important. This will provide more insight into how both the Indian and Japanese establishments have framed China's actions and in turn responded to its rise. It also builds a better understanding of why certain threat perception gaps regarding the China threat exist between India and Japan.<sup>31</sup>

For Japan, the commonly held misconception, especially in the Cold War years, was that the US nuclear security umbrella and the large presence of its bases in Okinawa provided Japan with a relatively stable security environment.<sup>32</sup> However, in the 1960s, US President Lyndon Johnson's private exchanges with Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, demonstrated the contrary. Indeed, Sato

<sup>30.</sup> Garcia, "A 'Normal' Japan," 160.

<sup>31.</sup> Vindu Mai Chotani, "Bolstering Security Ties on the 70th Anniversary of India-Japan Relations," Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, May 9, 2022, https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/. 32. Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization."

thought of China as an "existential military threat," and by 1965 Sato had actively sought US reassurance and commitment to defend Japan.<sup>33</sup>

It was only after Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei's visit to Beijing, a historic trip taken to normalize Japan-China ties, that the changes in language regarding China as a threat can be observed. Indeed, since then, it can be said that there has been a certain reluctance or caution to label China as a threat. This trend in Japan's security discourse has continued to date, despite China overtaking Japan as the world's largest economy in 2011<sup>34</sup> and its significant material gains in the Indo-Pacific.

Kishida's retraction incident in 2013, mentioned previously, is a stark example of this cautious stance. Indeed, an overall analysis of the Defense of Japan (DoJ)—a publication of Japan's Ministry of Defense—in the past ten years' statements highlights that despite growing concerns expressed particularly in the 2015, 2021, and 2022 editions, Japan has yet to call China a "threat."35 In 2015 the Abe-led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) at that time, pushed for the inclusion of China's "assertive and coercive attempts to change the status quo," by referring to the PRC's construction of an offshore gas platform in the East China Sea as "one-sided" maritime actions.<sup>36</sup> And in 2020, despite Japan's DoJ mentioning China two times more than it did North Korea, this continuity persisted. The former's security actions are referred to as "a grave matter of concern," while the latter is directly referred to as a "grave and imminent threat to Japan's security."37

The 2022 DoJ states "Chinese military trends . . . have become a matter of grave concern to the region including Japan and the international community."38 And Japan's most recent DoJ in 2023 has continued to carry a similar tone, describing China's military activities as "a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community" and as presenting "an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge."39 Finally, the National Security Strategy 2022, an important document, states China's external and military posture is "shinkokuna kenen jikodeari"—a matter of serious concern—and "saidai no

<sup>33.</sup> Oren and Brummer, "Threat Perception, Government Centralization."

<sup>34. &</sup>quot;China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-biggest Economy," BBC News, February 14, 2011, https:// www.bbc.com/.

<sup>35.</sup> Defense of Japan (Ministry of Defense, Japan 2015, 2021, and 2022), https://www.mod.go.jp/.

<sup>36.</sup> Akhiko Endo, "東シナ海における油ガス田開発とその背景-「利益集団」といわれる中国海洋石油総 公司(CNOOC)の役割" [Oil and gas field development in the East China Sea and its background - The role of China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), which is called an "interest group], Ministry of Defense, Japan, <u>https://www.mod.go.jp/</u>. 37. Oren and Brummer, "How Japan Talks About Security Threats."

<sup>38.</sup> Defense of Japan (Ministry of Defense, Japan 2022), https://www.mod.go.jp/.

<sup>39. &</sup>quot;Defense of Japan."

*senryaku-tekina chōsendeari*"—the biggest strategic challenge—to both Japan and the international community.<sup>40</sup>

The Indian establishment shows a differing stance and use of language. India's first prime minister after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, had harbored hopes of Asian unity, which he explicitly expressed during the historic Asian Relations Conference in 1947.<sup>41</sup> According to Nehru, China, like India, was an age-old civilization and a developing postcolonial nation, and he thus envisioned that it would play a prominent role in Asia. However, this came to a halt as India and China diverged onto different paths-primarily instigated by the Tibet issue. But it was India's defeat in the 1962 war, further triggered by China becoming a nuclear state in 1964, that created a clear power differential between New Delhi and Beijing.

After this, especially from the early 1980s, India's Ministry of Defence annual reports have been persistent in identifying China as India's most formidable threat.<sup>42</sup> By the mid-1990s, India's defense elite were using much more direct language to express the China threat. For example, in 1998, the Indian defense minister at that time, George Fernandes, declared publicly that China, not Pakistan, was India's main military threat.<sup>43</sup> Following this, a letter from Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Bill Clinton in 1998 further highlighted India's perception of threat by referencing Chinese "aggression."<sup>44</sup> Over two decades later in 2021, India's defense chief stated that China is the "biggest security threat."<sup>45</sup> The annual reports archived by the Ministry of Defence between 2002 to 2023 also consistently highlight India's concerns regarding the asymmetry of nuclear forces that are in China's favor, alongside the assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile program that China assists.<sup>46</sup>

From the above, it can be seen that the differing time frames of Chinese threat perceptions, or in some instances similar time frames but starkly differing language and terminology, can make it difficult to conduct a comparative analysis or understand what we can classify as a "common" securitization practice. The upcoming Indo-Pacific-focused case studies provide a more level playing field to overcome this. Chinese foreign policy actions are the referent

41. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India (London: Meridian Books, 1956), 49.

<sup>40.</sup> 国家安全保障戦略 [About national security strategy], 2022. https://www.cas.go.jp/.

<sup>42.</sup> Ming Zhang, "India's Nuclear Tests: Sino-Indian Mutual Concerns", in "China's Changing Nuclear Posture: Reactions to the South Asian Nuclear Tests," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999: 13, https://carnegieendowment.org/. 43. Dutta, "Doklam."

<sup>44. &</sup>quot;Nuclear Anxiety; Indian's Letter to Clinton On the Nuclear Testing," New York Times, May 13, 1998, https://www.nytimes.com/.

<sup>45.</sup> Sen, "India Defense Chief."

<sup>46.</sup> Annual Reports archived between 2002 and 2023 on India's Ministry of Defence website, https:// mod.gov.in/.

objects of securitization. The referent subjects are India and Japan, which, when securitizing China's actions, are seen to be convincing an international audience in the Indo-Pacific and domestic audiences at home.

#### Case Study One: Maritime Security and Law in the Indo-Pacific

The concept of the Indo-Pacific was first brought up by former Japanese Prime Minister Abe at the Indian parliament in 2007, where he talked about the "confluence of the two seas." He stated that "[o]ur two countries have the ability-and the responsibility-to ensure that it [Asia] broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparence."47

Despite Abe's short first tenure, other Japanese leaders arguably tried to promote different variations of what would later evolve to become Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Policy. Scholars and analysts were quick to attribute these initiatives to containing or balancing China. For example, Aso's "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity,"48 or even the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)'s "new Asianism," as Sneider argued, were meant to manage China's rise.<sup>49</sup> However, it was Abe's 2012 "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond" op-ed that clearly confirmed the threat Abe perceived from China and what also gave significant meaning to China's material gains and actions. His likening of the South China Sea and the possibility of it becoming "Lake Beijing," and his emphasis on how China's navy would be able to base their "nuclear submarines," was arguably Abe not insinuating but *declaring* the threat it would pose to the maritime commons.

Additionally, his emphasis on how it would "scare China's neighbors" is indicative of his appeal to a regional audience. Abe also stressed that, if Japan were to vield to the Chinese Government's coercive activities in the East China Sea, it would give China more jurisdiction in the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands and that the impact of this would reverberate in the South China Sea, which would resultantly become more fortified, once again affecting "international water,"50

Then in 2014, Abe compared China-Japan ties to that of Germany and England before the start of the World War I-an analogy highly suggestive of the road that Sino-Japanese ties were heading down.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, though

<sup>47.</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas" [Speech at the Parliament of the Republic of India]. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan (22 August 2007), https://www.mofa.go.jp/.

<sup>48.</sup> Taro Aso, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, March 12, 2007,

<sup>https://www.mofa.go.jp/.
49. Daniel Sneider, "The New Asianism: Japanese Foreign Policy under the Democratic Party of Japan,"</sup> 

<sup>50.</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," Project Syndicate, December 27, 2012, https:// www.project-syndicate.org/. 51. Jane Perlez, "Japan's Leader Compares Strain with China to Germany and Britain in 1914," New York

Times, January 23, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/.

Japan's Ministry of Defense does not directly use the word "threat," it can be taken as what Dell'Era argued are acts of "transversal securitization."52 The DoJ 2015 white paper stated that China's actions were "assertive" and that it had been making "coercive attempts to change the status quo."53 In 2022 the National Security Strategy identified China as "the biggest strategic challenge."54

The referent subject is China and its policies, the referent object is Japanese interests in the South and East China seas, freedom of navigation, and the status quo of the maritime commons. Abe is the securitizing actor in the former cases, while the Ministry of Defence in the latter. Both are appealing to international audiences-particularly "like-minded states"-as well as domestic audiences in Japan.

Abe's and Japan's success in securitizing China can be seen from the polls conducted in the Indo-Pacific region. After Abe's op-ed, a 2013 Pew Research survey showed that states in the Indo-Pacific region had expressed strong apprehension about territorial disputes with China and negatively viewed China's expanding military capabilities and power.<sup>55</sup> In 2014, the Pew Research poll showed similar results.<sup>56</sup> A 2015 survey also showed concerns over territorial disputes with China and highlighted that 49 percent of Japanese surveyed had "very unfavorable" views of China.57

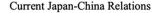
<sup>52.</sup> Dell'Era, "Securitizing Beijing."

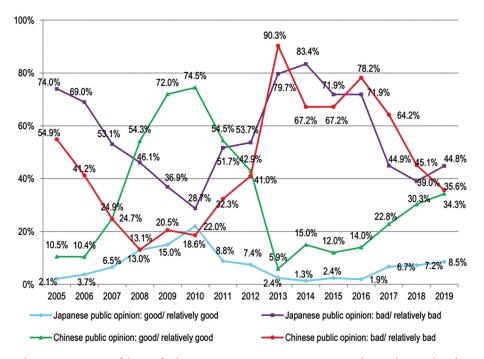
<sup>53.</sup> Defense of Japan (Ministry of Defense, Japan 2015), Section 3, 33, <u>https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/</u>. 54. 国家安全保障戦略 [About National Security Strategy], 2022, <u>https://www.cas.go.jp/</u>.

<sup>55. &</sup>quot;Chapter 3. Attitudes Toward China" (Pew Research Center, July 18, 2013), https://www.pewresearch .org/.

<sup>56. &</sup>quot;Chapter 4: How Asians View Each Other" (Pew Research Centre, July 14, 2014), https://www .pewresearch.org/.

<sup>57.</sup> Bruce Stokes, "How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders" (Pew Research Centre, September 2, 2015), https://www.pewresearch.org/.





**Figure 1. Japan–China relations, 2005–2019.** (Source: Yasushi Kudo, "Why do the Japanese have negative views of China?" (The Genron NPO, October 25, 2019), https://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion\_polls/archives/5506.html.)<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, in Japan the Genron NPO has for the last 19 years been conducting a joint public opinion poll with China. Findings in figure 1 show views from the Japanese and Chinese public regarding the China–Japan bilateral partnership. Japanese public opinion on bilateral ties around the time of Abe's op-ed up until 2017 is visibly poor.<sup>59</sup> While the report also attributed media reports for molding Japanese people's negative views of China, the relation between media and securitization practices is beyond the scope of this paper but worth exploring further.

<sup>58.</sup> Yasushi Kudo, "Why do the Japanese have negative views of China?" (The Genron NPO, October 25, 2019), https://www.genron-npo.net/. According to the president, Mr. Kudo, the poll has been conducted even during the years where the bilateral partnership faced significant challenges: "It is rare for the opinions and attitudes of the Chinese people to be surveyed continuously, and this is the only such survey in the world."

<sup>59. &</sup>quot;The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey 2019" (The Genron NPO, October 24, 2019), <u>https://www.genron-npo.net/.</u>

India's securitization of China in the maritime sphere was a lot less straightforward than what we saw with Abe's tenure and Japan. The release of India's 2012 Non-Alignment 2.0 document<sup>60</sup> raised questions regarding the direction India would take, especially when it came to formulating regional strategic partnerships with states such as Japan and the United States, as these partnerships carried connotations of China containment or China balancing.

However, from about 2011 onward, regarding the Indo-Pacific as a concept, an analysis of the Indian perspective on the debate of the Indo-Pacific that was taking place at that time is quite telling. Some scholars raised questions regarding the symbolic values that terminologies have vis-à-vis tangible change and outcomes that would come of it.<sup>61</sup> Chacko cautioned about the "contested nature" of the Indo-Pacific<sup>62</sup> and how, as the concept developed for India, it did so within the ideational parameters of change and continuity.<sup>63</sup> Yet by 2014, it can be said that the term "Indo-Pacific" was readily being used and addressed by prominent scholars and commentators such as C. Raja Mohan,<sup>64</sup> Harsh Pant,<sup>65</sup> and Shyam Saran.<sup>66</sup> Some raised maritime naval concerns and others had China-associated undertones. In addition, the term also steadily appeared across Indian media.

It was under Abe and Modi that the India–Japan partnership took a big step forward with the signing of the 2014 Tokyo Declaration for the "India–Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership."<sup>67</sup> Though there was no mention then of the Indo-Pacific in the 2014 bilateral statement, in 2013 Prime Minister Singh had already used the term "Indo-Pacific" at a speech he delivered in Tokyo. He referred to it in terms of the social and economic changes the region was undergoing.<sup>68</sup> By October 2015, the Indian navy's maritime security strategy report

<sup>60.</sup> Sunil Khilnani et al., "Non-alignment 2.0. A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century" (Report, Centre for Policy Research India, 2012). https://cprindia.org/.

<sup>61.</sup> D. Gnanagurunathan, "India and the idea of the 'Indo-Pacific," *East Asia Forum*, October 20, 2012, https://eastasiaforum.org/.

<sup>62.</sup> Priya Chacko, "Three Countries, One Centre of Gravity," *The Hindu*, December 12, 2012, <u>https://</u>www.thehindu.com/.

<sup>63.</sup> Priya Chacko, "The Rise of the Indo-Pacific: Understanding Ideational Change and Continuity in India's Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, No.4 (2014): 433–52.

<sup>64.</sup> C. Raja Mohan, Samudra Manthan. Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2012), https://doi.org/; and C. Raja Mohan, "Indispensable India," in American Review, America in Asia (Issue 6, October 17, 2011), https://www.ussc.edu.au/.

<sup>65.</sup> Harsh Pant, "India's Policy Crisis," Yale Global Online, October 29, 2013. https://archive-yaleglobal\_yale.edu/.

<sup>66.</sup> Shyam Saran, "Mapping the Indo-Pacific," *Indian Express*, October 29, 2011, <u>https://indianexpress</u>.com/.

<sup>67. &</sup>quot;Tokyo Declaration for India–Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 1, 2014, <u>https://www.mea.gov.in/.</u>
68. "PM's Address to Japan-India Association, Japan-India Parliamentary Friendship League and

<sup>68. &</sup>quot;PM's Address to Japan-India Association, Japan-India Parliamentary Friendship League and International Friendship Exchange Council," Former PM of India Website, May 28, 2013, <u>https://archivepmo.nic.in/.</u>

stated that "[t]he shift in worldview from a Euro-Atlantic to an Indo-Pacific focus and the repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment in tangible ways."<sup>69</sup>

On the 12 December 2015, India and Japan signed the "Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World." An observation of this joint statement highlights several important points. First, the use of "Indo-Pacific" signals a certain acceptance of the term. One can see the Indian government starting to acknowledge this construct by linking it to India's newly minted Act East Policy.<sup>70</sup> Second, this joint statement preceded Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision that was released in 2016.<sup>71</sup> Third, and very important, it clearly underscored the importance of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and freedom of navigation in the global commons, while also condemning any unilateral actions about the sea lines of communication in the South China Sea.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, by 2016, when Japan released its first FOIP vision statement, it was not a surprise that the Indian Ocean was a prominent part of it and the vision that Abe had for India and the Indian Ocean region (IOR) in establishing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.<sup>73</sup>

The August 2017 border clashes between India and China at Doklam—a disputed territory between them—instigated confrontation between New Delhi and Beijing. However, it was Prime Minister Modi's stronger speech acts that revealed and gave credence to Beijing's material capabilities. Modi had previously called out Chinese actions in 2014 while he was still a prime ministerial candidate, telling China to "shed its expansionist policy."<sup>74</sup> This time around his words were stronger: "Those who are driven by expansionism have always posed a danger to the world. History bears testimony that such forces have either been destroyed or been forced to turn back. It is due to this experience that the world is coming together against expansionist forces."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69. &</sup>quot;Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy," Indian Navy, October 2015, ii, <u>https://</u>bharatshakti.in/.

<sup>70. &</sup>quot;Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, December 12, 2015, <u>https://www.mofa.go.jp/</u>.
71. See Ministry of Defense, Japan, "Achieving the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)' Vision: Japan

<sup>71.</sup> See Ministry of Defense, Japan, "Achieving the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)' Vision: Japan Ministry of Defense's Approach," n.d., <u>https://www.mod.go.jp/</u>.

<sup>72. &</sup>quot;Japan and India Vision 2025.

<sup>73. &</sup>quot;Towards a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, November 2019), <u>https://</u>www.mofa.go.jp/.

<sup>74. &</sup>quot;China Should Shed Expansionist Mindset: Modi," *The Hindu*, February 22, 2014, <u>https://www.thehindu.com/</u>.

<sup>75. &</sup>quot;Age of Expansionism Is Over': PM Modi Sends Message to China," *Times of India*, July 4, 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.

In 2021, India's Defense Chief stated that China is the "biggest security threat,"76 and by 2023 India had changed its 2016 cautious or "neutral"77 stance regarding the South China Sea tribunal ruling over the disputed islands between China and the Philippines. The 2023 bilateral statement between India and the Philippines underscored the need to adhere to the tribunal ruling and also the need to respect international law- such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>78</sup> This was a first for India and one that can be viewed as a noteworthy shift.<sup>79</sup>

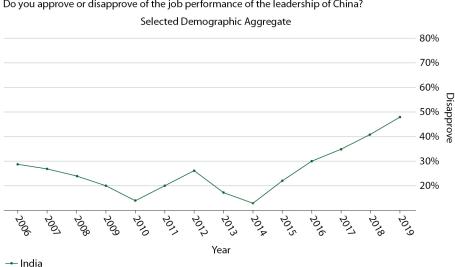
The referent subject is China and its policies, and the referent object is Indian interests in what New Delhi considers its traditional sphere of influence, that is, from its neighborhood to the IOR. And as India's concept of the Indo-Pacific evolved, this scope for India also expanded to freedom of navigation and the status quo of the maritime commons in the Indo-Pacific. Modi and then India's Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs are the securitizing actors appealing to international audiences and domestic audiences.

<sup>76.</sup> Sen, "India Defense."

<sup>77.</sup> Premesha Saha, "India Calibrates its South China Sea Approach," The Observer Research Foundation, July 19, 2021, https://www.orfonline.org/. 78. Sachin Parashar, "India Asks China to Abide by SCS Ruling Beijing Calls Null and Void," *Times of* 

India, June 30, 2023, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.

<sup>79.</sup> Nian Peng, "India's Growing Involvement in the South China Sea Disputes," The Diplomat, November 10, 2023, https://thediplomat.com/.



**Approval of China's Leadership** 

Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of China?

Figure 2. Indians' level of approval of China's leadership, 2006–2019. (Source: Staniland, 2020).

A Pew Research poll conducted in 2014, "Indians View the World," found that 56 percent of Indians had the view that China's power and influence were a major threat to the country, and over 37 percent of the Indian public held the view that China was an "enemy."<sup>80</sup> In addition to this, a study by Paul Staniland in 2020, utilizing data from the Gallup World Poll, found that there has been a steady increase in India in recent years regarding the disapproval of China's leadership.81

While Japan took the lead in proposing the concept and securitizing maritime security and law, especially under Abe's leadership, once New Delhi received assurance that the Indian Ocean would be a core part of the region-especially with China's increasing forays into the IOR-we see the Indian government becoming more proactive in conducting securitization acts. Without a doubt, the strong ties between Modi and Abe also deepened the India-Japan partnership,<sup>82</sup> and apart from the acceptance of regional and domestic audiences, it also enabled both leaders to successfully securitize China among the

<sup>80. &</sup>quot;Chapter 2: Indians View the World," (Pew Research Centre, March 31, 2014), https://www.pewresearch .org/.

<sup>.// 81.</sup> Paul Staniland, "Indian public opinion and China," Paulstaniland.com, August 10, 2020, https:// paulstaniland.com/.

<sup>82.</sup> Purendra Jain, "Abe and Modi Deepen Japan-India Ties," East Asia Forum, December 17, 2015, https://eastasiaforum.org/.

foreign and defense policy elites in New Delhi and Tokyo. Therefore, in the case of maritime security and maritime law in the Indo-Pacific, we do see India and Japan conducting common securitization practices—in terms of region, in terms of each other's policy elites and leaders, and in terms of regional and domestic audiences.

#### Case Study Two: The Belt and Road Initiative

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) makes for an interesting comparative case study essentially because, even though India and Japan initially started on the same cautious footing regarding what was then the 2013 One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, the discourse on their policies by 2017 had taken completely different directions.

When the BRI was first announced in 2013, the Abe administration's response was minimal. This was mainly due to the inability to coherently evaluate President Xi Jingping's initial OBOR proposal, which, according to the Japanese government, was lacking in clarity and scope on its possible regional impacts.<sup>83</sup> In Jakarta in April 2015, Abe conveyed to Xi that Japan would closely watch the OBOR and how it would emerge in the future.<sup>84</sup> Japan's attitude at this point was characterized by some as dismissive,<sup>85</sup> and by others as "cautious and suspicious,"<sup>86</sup> and at the very least it can be classified as one of "non-engagement."<sup>87</sup>

However, by 2017 Tokyo had begun to look at the BRI more positively. Diet deliberations on the BRI peaked between 2017 and 2018,<sup>88</sup> and Tokyo's approach underwent a drastic shift to that of "conditional engagement."<sup>89</sup> The change in Japan's actions can in particular be seen at China's first Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in May 2017. To the surprise of many Japan analysts, Tokyo deviated from the position of even its ally, the United States. A high-level delegation was sent to Beijing, including then–LDP Secretary General Nikai Toshihiro, *Keidanren* chairman Sakakibara Sadayuki, and Abe's executive secretary and influential former Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) official, Imai Takaya. Nikai was also asked to hand over a personal letter from Abe to

<sup>83.</sup> Masafumi Iida, "Japan's Reluctant Embrace of BRI?," Working Paper, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, October 2018.

<sup>84.</sup> Iida, "Japan's Reluctant Embrace."

<sup>85.</sup> Hidehito Fujiwara, "One Belt, One Road: A Japanese Perspective," International Institute for Asian Studies, *The Newsletter* 74, 2016, <u>https://www.iias.asia/</u>.

<sup>86.</sup> Iida, "Japan's Reluctant Embrace."

<sup>87.</sup> Ito, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Japan's Response: from Non-participation to Conditional Engagement," *East Asia* 36 (2019): 122.

<sup>88.</sup> Ito, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Japan's Response."

<sup>89.</sup> Ito, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Japan's Response."

Xi.<sup>90</sup> By May 2018, a Memorandum of Third-Party Market Cooperation between China and Japan had been signed,<sup>91</sup> and in October 2018 52 cooperation agreements were signed in the first China-Japan Third Country Business Cooperation Forum.92

Questions regarding how these turn of events occurred, and how meaningful these agreements were and are, continue to be debated. Regarding the former, the change in Japan's course of action can arguably be attributed to the Abe Kantei, METI's influence in the Kantei, and also then-Secretary General Nikai's close ties with China.<sup>93</sup> In pursuing Japan's long-standing policy of seikei bunri with China-wherein political issues are separated from economic relations-stronger economic ties with China were sought. For the latter, opinion is divided on how significant these agreements are. For instance, an interview in 2020 with a former key member of the Abe Kantei and former MOFA official (which has a dominant US school) suggests that these agreements were superficial in nature and lacked substance.<sup>94</sup> Yet another interview with a Keidanren official in 2019 highlights their economic significance and the importance of Japan's participation in BRI projects.<sup>95</sup> Direct inquiries made with Japan's METI state that, though the Japan-China Forum on Third Country Business Cooperation has not been held, since then "various private initiatives, including those based on the memorandum of understanding (MOU) concluded at the first forum, have been making progress."96

As for the Japanese government's current position on the BRI, a direct inquiry with METI stated that Abe's response to a question by Hiroshige Seko, councilor at a plenary sitting of the House of Councilors on October 8, 2019, should be referred, too. Abe stated: "Regarding the 'One Belt, One Road Initiatives' as you mentioned, I expect that they will make a positive contribution to regional and global peace and prosperity by being implemented in a manner that fully incorporates the ideas common to the international community, such as infrastructure openness, transparency, economic efficiency, and debt sustainability (Provisional translation)."97 Abe's statement complemented his earlier

<sup>90. &</sup>quot;Xi tells LDP's Nikai he wants to move bilateral relations in 'right direction," Japan Times, May 16, 2017, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/.

<sup>91. &</sup>quot;Prime Minister Abe Visits China," Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Japan, October 26, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/.

<sup>92.</sup> JETRO, "1st Japan-China Third Country Market Cooperation Forum at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on October 26, 'JETRO, October 26, 2018, https://www.jetro.go.jp/.
93. Vindu Mai Chotani, "Leading from the *Kantei*: Japan and the Quad," *Tokyo Review*, October 5, 2020.

https://tokyoreview.net/.

<sup>94.</sup> Former member of the Abe cabinet, interview by author.

<sup>95.</sup> Official at the Keidanren, interview by author.

<sup>96.</sup> METI Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, Japan, Direct Website inquiry form-e-mail response, May 1, 2024.

<sup>97.</sup> METI.

move in April 2019 where he once again sent his special envoy and LDP Secretary General Nikai to attend the second BRF.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, what is overarchingly clear with the BRI is that there was no securitization from the Abe administration or its relevant ministries involved such as the METI. Japan's actions can be categorized as that of politicization. That is, what the Copenhagen School classifies as falling within and remaining in the realm of national politics, not raising it to an issue that would become "above normal politics," which an act of securitization would have done.

Yet when we study the Indian establishment, after OBOR was rebranded as the BRI, India's concerns in both its neighborhood and in the IOR grew progressively. This was primarily due to issues New Delhi has with China's growing power projection and the resulting competition that ensued. At the 2015 Raisina Dialogue that was held in New Delhi, India's foreign secretary at the time, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, without explicitly naming China, stated: "The key issue is whether we will build our connectivity through consultative processes or more unilateral decisions. Our preference is for the former. . . . But we cannot be impervious to the reality that others may see connectivity as an exercise in hard-wiring that influences choices."<sup>99</sup>

Then in 2016, India's then external affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj, outlined some of the challenge's connectivity projects were posing for India, stating: "We bring to bear a cooperative rather than unilateral approach and believe that creating an environment of trust and confidence is the pre-requisite for a more inter-connected world."<sup>100</sup>

By early 2017, Jaishankar explicitly named China. He expressed significant concern regarding what China's BRI would mean for India's territorial sovereignty, stating that "[t]he fact that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is part of this particular initiative. CPEC violates Indian sovereignty because it runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)."<sup>101</sup> Before the May 2017 BRF, New Delhi further expressed its intention to boycott the forum—and did boycott it—stating that "no country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>102</sup> These are acts of securitization and India's significant move to boycott the BRF, an extraordinary measure.

<sup>98. &</sup>quot;Xi Jinping met with foreign leaders attending the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation," Belt and Road Portal, April 29, 2019, <u>https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/</u>.
99. "Speech by Foreign Secretary at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi," Ministry of External Affairs,

<sup>99. &</sup>quot;Speech by Foreign Secretary at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, March 2, 2015, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>100. &</sup>quot;Speech by External Affairs Minister at the inauguration of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, March 01, 2016, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>101.</sup> K. J. M. Varma, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor violates sovereignty, India tells China," *Livemint*, February 22, 2017, https://www.livemint.com/.

<sup>102. &</sup>quot;Official Spokesperson's response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, May 13, 2017, https://mea.gov.in/.

With the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) set to meet in June 2018, New Delhi's participation for the first time brought with it the potential for India to lighten its BRF stance, yet this was not the case. Indeed, in the Qingdao joint declaration which saw the eight members of the SCO successfully sign 22 pacts, India was the only one who refused to support China's BRI.<sup>103</sup> Modi also stressed that India welcomes "new connectivity projects that are inclusive, sustainable and transparent, and respect countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>104</sup> And this stance continued in 2019, with New Delhi once again boycotting the second BRF forum.<sup>105</sup>

From Jaishankar's, Modi's, and the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) statements, the BRI is viewed as something that challenges India's own "neighbourhood first" approach.<sup>106</sup> In the case of the BRI, the referent subject is China's BRI, in particular the CPEC part of the project, which India states is "illegal."<sup>107</sup> The referent object is not just India's but also the "sovereignty, equality, and territorial integrity of other nations"<sup>108</sup> and "universally recognized international norms."<sup>109</sup> Jaishankar, Modi, and India's MEA are the securitizing actors appealing to international audiences.

India's position has also been successfully received by the audience. The joint US–India statement after Modi's meeting with then–President Donald Trump in June 2017 showed America's support for India's position on the BRI. The statement called upon "all nations to support bolstering regional economic connectivity through transparent development of infrastructure and the use of responsible debt financing practices, while ensuring respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the rule of law and the environment."<sup>110</sup> Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis went a step further by supporting India's objection to OBOR, as it "goes through disputed territory."<sup>111</sup>

Further, the September 2017 India–Japan joint statement also underscored the need for connectivity and infrastructure projects to be developed in a

<sup>103.</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "SCO Members Sign 22 Pacts Including Pacts on Terror and Deradicalization," *Economic Times*, June 11, 2018, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/.

<sup>104.</sup> Prashant Prabhakar Deshpande, "China's Belt & Road Initiative with Likely Implications for India & the world," *Times of India*, July 31, 2023. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.

<sup>105. &</sup>quot;India Rejects China's Invite to Attend Belt and Road Initiative Meet for the Second Time," Business Today, April 8, 2019, https://www.businesstoday.in/.

<sup>106.</sup> Soyen Park, "Why India Boycotted the Belt and Road Forum," *East Asia Forum*, June 13, 2017, https://www.eastasiaforum.org/.

<sup>107. &</sup>quot;Question No.606 BRI and CPEC," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 5, 2020, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>108. &</sup>quot;Question No.606 BRI and CPEC."

<sup>109. &</sup>quot;Question No.849 One Belt and One Road initiative", Ministry of External affairs, Government of India, June 26, 2019, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>110. &</sup>quot;Joint Statement—United States and India: Prosperity Through Partnership," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, June 27, 2017, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>111. &</sup>quot;Many Belts and Many Roads," CSIS, October 11, 2017, https://reconasia.csis.org/.

transparent and nonexclusive manner such that responsible debt financing practices were adhered to and a country's sovereignty and territorial integrity were respected.<sup>112</sup> In 2018, a joint communication released by the European Commission emphasized that the approach taken by the European Union to connectivity is rules-based, that is, "economically, fiscally, environmentally, and socially sustainable in the long term."113

The findings in this case study on the BRI demonstrate successful securitization practices by India among key Indo-Pacific states, while the Japanese establishment demonstrates politicization. These differences highlight New Delhi's and Tokyo's respective threat perceptions regarding the BRI. While India stressed that its territorial integrity and sovereignty were threatened, Japanese policy was directed more by its longtime policy of separating economics and politics with China.

#### Case Study Three: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to Quad 2.0

This case study addresses the Quad 2.0. First it provides a short background on the evolution of the Quad to help better understand the positions of Japan and India. In 2007 the first Abe administration pursued the concept of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)—an "informal grouping" that linked Japan, India, the United States, and Australia. While the Quad's initial proposition had some political ambiguities, the understood "rationale" implied by it was that China was a threat, and thus it became essential to defend the international rules-based order.114

However, this Abe-led initiative was received by India with, at best, "limited enthusiasm."115 Indeed, India's reservations and hesitancies regarding any initiative that aimed at containing China were expressed during Prime Minister Singh's visit to Beijing in January 2008, where he noted that the Sino-India partnership was a "priority."116

Then, in 2012, Abe on the very first day of his second term as prime minister published an op-ed: "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," in which he "envisage[d] a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from

<sup>112. &</sup>quot;Japan-India Joint Statement, Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, https://www.mofa.go.jp/. 113. "Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy," European Commission,

Brussels, September 19, 2018, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/. 114. Kevin Rudd, "The Convenient Rewriting of the History of the 'Quad," Nikkei Asian Review,

March 26, 2019, https://asiasociety.org/.

<sup>115.</sup> Rudd, "The Convenient Rewriting of the History." 116. Rudd, "The Convenient Rewriting of the History."

the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific."117 As mentioned in the first case study, he also clearly identified China and its actions in the East China Sea and South China Sea as the primary threat. The use of terms such as "Lake Beijing," and the comparison of China's growing military and nuclear submarines potential to that of the former Soviet Union, are clear indicators of Abe's securitizing speech act. Anxious of the possibility of these developments, Abe further emphasized the need to coordinate joint efforts with India, whose Andaman and Nicobar Islands deserved "greater emphasis," especially when it came to "safeguarding the maritime commons against any destabilizing force."<sup>118</sup>

Then in 2016, when Abe announced Japan's FOIP, where arguably Japan's emphasis at that time was that the Quad would serve as the predominant framework in carrying out its FOIP strategy.<sup>119</sup> However, given the concerns raised by Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states, especially in getting wedged between a potentially anti-China narrative and China itself, the Japanese government changed its FOIP strategy to a vision and focused more on the importance of ASEAN's centrality in this framework.<sup>120</sup>

By 2017, as "Quad 2.0" made a comeback, it can be said that Abe's goal this time was not to emphasize the threat of China's rise but to instead double down on the importance of "maintaining and enhancing the rules-based international order under the banner of the (FOIP) concept."121 As such, a number of informal meetings were held between the four states, where the conversation was mainly centered around the aforementioned concerns.

India's foreign policy elite, as with the Quad in 2007, exercised caution when in 2017 Quad 2.0 made a comeback. Though New Delhi was arguably more proactive in Quad 2.0, its actions cannot be qualified as those of acts of securitization. It is important to raise this because the revival of Quad 2.0. came in tandem with substantial connotations of it being a China containment strategy.<sup>122</sup> Especially due to the increasing recognition that each individual, Quad states had heightened doubts about their relationships with China.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117.</sup> Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond."

<sup>118.</sup> Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond."

<sup>119.</sup> Kei Koga, "Next Priorities for Japan's FOIP Vision. The Quad, ASEAN and Institutional Linkages in the Indo-Pacific," US Department of Defense, 24 https://media.defense.gov/.

<sup>120.</sup> Koga, "Next Priorities."

 <sup>121.</sup> Kei Koga, "Japan's Role in the Quad: Clarifying the Institutional Division of Labor in a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," National Bureau of Asian Research, October 30, 2023, <u>https://www.nbr.org/.</u>
 122. Derek Grossman, "The Quad Is Poised to Become Openly Anti-China Soon," RAND, July 28, 2020,

https://www.rand.org/. 123. Tanvi Madan, "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the 'Quad," *War on the Rocks*, November 16, 2017,

https://warontherocks.com/.

For India, its mounting frustration with China at that time was a combination of China blocking its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers' Group,<sup>124</sup> concerns over CPEC in China's OBOR (case study two), and in August 2017 the India and China standoff and clash at Doklam—a disputed border between both states.<sup>125</sup>

Despite this, India's actions vis-à-vis that of the Quad 2.0 can arguably be classified as that of politicization. When we observe the way that New Delhi has been comfortable in positioning itself in Quad 2.0, it is evident that India seemed and (still seems) to be more comfortable with the "functional cooperation" that coordination among Quad members can bring about.<sup>126</sup> To elaborate, when we study Lok Sabha questions posed on the opposition of China to the Quad,<sup>127</sup> responses and documents from India's MEA show that New Delhi views the Quad as a plurilateral framework that has a constructive agenda on issues such as "health security, climate change and energy transition, supply chains, connectivity and infrastructure, education[,] and space" in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>128</sup>

Pankaj Saran, India's ambassador to Russia, further clarified India's position when he stated: "The Quadrilateral format of US-Japan-India-Australia is one of the many multilateral dialogues in the region, and not directed against any country. It is not part of the Indo-Pacific region concept outlined by Prime Minister Modi in Shangri-La."<sup>129</sup> From India's stance it is clear that its participation in Quad 2.0 is not explicitly aimed at balancing China or countering it; it is about maintaining India's principle of strategic autonomy. Therefore, for India, the purpose of the Quad should be decoupled with its Indo-Pacific vision.<sup>130</sup>

On these lines, Kutty and Basrur's 2021 article argues that, despite the narrative surrounding the Quad 2.0 making a comeback to counter China, with some even referring to it as an "Asian NATO," it should be viewed as "a loose-knit network of like-minded partners aiming at a broader purpose."<sup>131</sup> Mahbubani emphasizes how the Quad's tenacity is and will continue to be

<sup>124.</sup> Subhajit Roy, "No Entry in NSG: India Blames One Country (China), Others Said No," *Indian Express*, June 25, 2016, <u>https://indianexpress.com/</u>.
125. Gordon Fairclough, "India-China Border Standoff: High in the Mountains, Thousands of Troops

<sup>125.</sup> Gordon Fairclough, "India-China Border Standoff: High in the Mountains, Thousands of Troops Go Toe-to-Toe," *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2014, https://www.wsj.com/.

<sup>126.</sup> Sheila Smith, "The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: What to Know," Council of Foreign Relations, May 17, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/.

<sup>127. &</sup>quot;Question No.397 Quad Group," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 3, 2023, https://www.mea.gov.in/.

<sup>128.</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Quad," https://www.mea.gov.in/.

Suhasini Haidar, "U.S.-Japan-India-Australia Quad: New Delhi Charts New Line on Indo-Pacific Policy," *The Hindu*, December 1, 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/.
 130. Vivek Mishra and Udayan Das, "India's Understanding of the Quad & Indo-Pacific: Distinct Narrative

<sup>130.</sup> Vivek Mishra and Udayan Das, "India's Understanding of the Quad & Indo-Pacific: Distinct Narrative or A Flawed One?" *Raisina Debates*, Observer Research Foundation, March 19, 2019, <u>https://www.orfonline.org/</u>.

<sup>131.</sup> Sumitha Narayanan Kutty and Rajesh Basrur, "The Quad: What It Is—And What It Is Not," *The Diplomat*, March 24, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/.

watered down by the starkly differing "geopolitical interests and vulnerabilities" of its four member states.<sup>132</sup>

Successive Quad meetings highlight this to a certain extent. For instance, the 2019 first Quad foreign ministers' meeting in New York, the second foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo and the 2021 Quad leaders' joint statement ("The Spirit of the Quad"), like its 2019 and 2020 predecessors, all stress the importance of promoting a free and open rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, the importance of international law in the maritime commons and high seas, and their interests as democratic states, yet they do not specifically mention China.<sup>133</sup> And as we await dates for the next Quad leaders' summit, which is proposed to be held in India in 2025, India's position has not changed: "The next Quad Summit will seek to address the priorities of the Indo-Pacific countries pertaining to climate, critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure and connectivity, health, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, counterterrorism and other aspects."<sup>134</sup>

Therefore, while some take this as an implicit demonstration of China balancing, it has never been explicitly mentioned—especially for India. In this case study we see Japan, primarily Abe's initial unsuccessful attempt at securitization of China through the Quad. While the democratic security diamond was successful in terms securitizing the maritime commons and law, with regard to the four nations banding together it once again did not occur. By 2017, Abe's approach to the Quad 2.0 had changed to that of politicization. India's actions from the Quad up until now clearly remain within the realm of politicization, arguably because smaller groupings that emphasize security relations go against India's norms of strategic autonomy and nonalignment. When India does become comfortable with Quad 2.0, it does so as the scope of Quad 2.0 expands to other arenas of functional cooperation.

#### **Findings and Conclusion**

This paper analyzed dissected how New Delhi and Tokyo's responses to China's ascent are shaped by their unique histories, cultural nuances, and strategic needs. From the maritime commons to the BRI and the Quad, the distinctions are as illuminating as the overlaps. Our three case studies vividly illustrated both the convergences and the stark divergences in Tokyo and New Delhi's China policies.

<sup>132.</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, "Why Attempts to Build a New Anti-China Alliance Will Fail," *Foreign Policy*, January 27, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/.

<sup>133.</sup> The White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: "The Spirit of the Quad," March 12, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/.

<sup>134. &</sup>quot;Government of India Ministry of External Affairs Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No-2186, Quad Summit 2024," December 15, 2023, https://sansad.in/.

Firstly, our analysis showed that the term "common securitization" inadequately captures the complex dynamics at play. Instead, for an act to be truly defined as common securitization, it must involve the successful externalization of security concerns among the foreign policy elites of the involved states, coupled with a shared securitization of a foreign policy issue or case, recognizing that regional foreign policies can differ significantly.

In the realm of maritime security, Japan's securitization of China's actions in the maritime domain is more pronounced, reflecting Tokyo's support for international norms and its direct concerns over territorial disputes and freedom of navigation. Conversely, India's response, while significant, is tempered by its principles of nonalignment and strategic autonomy. However, as the IOR became recognized as part of the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi showed a more concerted effort in securitizing China's maritime actions.

In examining the BRI, we found that India's foreign policy elite securitized the initiative in 2017 due to the perceived threat to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, even boycotting the BRI in an extraordinary move. Japan, initially cautious, opted for cautious cooperation by 2017, highlighting Tokyo's strategy to separate economics from politics amid growing Sino-US tensions.

The third case study revealed that while initial attempts to securitize China through the Quad and the security diamond were unsuccessful, the Abe administration eventually pursued Quad 2.0 to promote a rules-based order. India's renewed interest in Quad 2.0, spurred by incidents like the Doklam standoff, has been characterized by caution, clearly differentiating Quad 2.0 from its Indo-Pacific vision.

Looking ahead, future policies from Tokyo and New Delhi in the Indo-Pacific will likely prioritize an accommodation of their norms. The prospect of a formal India–Japan alliance remains elusive, constrained by differing threat perceptions and strategic priorities. Instead, pragmatic collaboration is the path forward. Policies must respect each state's sovereign instincts while advancing collective security, leveraging initiatives like the Blue Dot Network, and refocusing on projects such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor. Deepening functional partnerships within frameworks like the Quad is vital, and further studies on securitization acts by all four Quad states would enrich academic and policy debates.

In the Indo-Pacific's theater of great-power competition and rapidly evolving geopolitics, India and Japan are anchors of stability. Their cooperation is not a containment strategy against China but a necessary measure to ensure and encourage China's constructive participation in the region. The stakes are monumental; success here could define the region's trajectory for decades.

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