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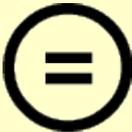
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Master's Thesis

Securitizing China's Military Rise:

**A study of security and defense policy reform
under the Abe Shinzô administrations**

중국의 군사력 강화에 대한 안전 보장화:
아베 신조 정권의 안보정책개혁에 관한 연구

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Seoul National University

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Abstract

Securitizing China's Military Rise: A study of security and defense policy reform under the Abe Shinzô administrations

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This study seeks to explain why major reforms in Japanese security and defense policy transpired in the first three years of the second Abe administration (2012-15), but not during his first stint as Prime Minister in 2006-07, despite retaining an almost identical political agenda.

As opposed to previous scholarship that marks domestic adjustments in leadership style and strategy as the predominant factors, this study argues that the genesis of change under Abe 2.0 began externally. It finds that threat perceptions of China's military rise gradually intensified in the period between the first and second administrations, and ultimately led to the emergence of a "China threat" consensus from 2013. This consensus was the result of two major processes: (1) the securitization of China's military rise by the Japanese defense bureaucracy, and (2) increasing newspaper media coverage of topics related to Chinese military activities that fueled notions of a rogue China. Concurrently, public attitudes toward both China and Japan's security posture underwent a gradual normative shift. This consensus essentially created a need for response as it established China's military rise as the most relevant and immediate threat to Japanese security.

A high level of political consolidation upon Abe's return in 2012, characterized by the resurgence of the Liberal Democratic Party and conservative forces, as well as the marginalization of the opposition then enabled the second Abe government to make effective use of the consensus. As a result, the government introduced three major policy responses that are subject to analysis in the study: The State Secrecy Law, the establishment of the National Security Council, and the reinterpretation of Article 9 including the 2015 collective self-defense legislation.

The study thus concludes that the first Abe administration lacked not only a "China threat" consensus, but also the successful consolidation of political power and public support at the time. As a consequence, security and defense policy reform in Japan is most likely to occur when high external threat perceptions meet with a strong government that favors a greater Japanese security stance.

.....

Keywords: Abe Shinzô, security policy, defense policy, China, securitization
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List of acronyms

ASDF	Air Self-Defense Forces
ATSML	Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law
CCS	Chief Cabinet Secretary
CSD	Collective Self-Defense
DB	Diplomatic Bluebook
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DWP	Defense White Paper
GSDF	Ground Self-Defense Forces
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MSDF	Maritime Self-Defense Forces
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
NIDS	National Institute for Defense Studies
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PLA	Chinese People Liberation's Army
PM	Prime Minister
PSPL	Peace and Security Preservation Legislation
SDF	Self-Defense Forces

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I. INTRODUCTION

The opportunity to study the resurrection of state leaders that have served non-consecutive terms in office is a rare one. In 2006, when Abe Shinzô was first elected Prime Minister, he was postwar Japan's youngest leader and set to follow into the illustrious footsteps of his predecessor Koizumi. After twelve months in office, an inglorious departure and five years working on his comeback, Abe was reelected Prime Minister of Japan in 2012 after a landslide LDP victory. This time, the New York Times (2013) called his cabinet “hyper nationalist” – a testament to the common media interpretation of Abe's security and defense pursuits and the adjustments to the intensifying security environment in East Asia it entailed.

On the policymaking side, it is no news that Japanese security and defense has changed a great deal in the past twenty years. How many of these changes can be ascribed to the direct workings of the Abe governments?

Indeed, recounting security and defense policy reform under Abe produces a list of considerable length. The passing of the State Secrecy Law, the establishing of the National Security Council along with formulating a National Security Strategy, as well as reinterpreting Japan's peace clause Article 9 and introducing its corresponding collective self-defense legislation are major examples of the administration's emphasis on a more proactive Japanese security and defense stance. These incremental but steady changes, which are often interpreted as embedded in a wider “normalization” or “(re-)militarization” process, have been discussed from a broader perspective of Japanese security by both Western and Asian scholars and politicians.¹ Some of these positions seek to explain how Japan *should* develop (politicians such as Ozawa and Abe, but also scholars preoccupied with the US-Japan alliance), while others attempt to shed light on where Japan *is* headed in reality (Samuels, Hughes, Hagström). None of them, however, answer the following question in detail: Why was the second Abe government able to introduce such a myriad of security and defense policies while its first incarnation was not? This study gives an alternative explanation

¹ Including: Ozawa 1994; Hook 1996; Green 2001; McCormack 2004; Tanter 2005; Abe 2006; Samuels 2007a; Hughes 2009a; Soeya et al. 2011; Oros 2015; Hagström 2015; Liff 2015; Sakaki 2015; Hornung and Mochizuki 2016.

to previous analyses of both Abe administrations which mark adjustments in leadership style and strategy as the predominant causes.

It argues instead that the perception of a gradually intensifying China military threat since 2007 and its concurrent securitization by Japanese bureaucratic elites, along with increasingly critical media coverage and shifting public attitudes toward both China and Japan's security stance, resulted in a "China threat" consensus from 2013. This consensus then enabled the second Abe administration, aided by a high level of political consolidation which was absent in 2006-07, to respond with the above policy reforms. Thus, the study concludes that security and defense policy reform under Abe 2.0 was predominantly a response to an outside process, namely China's military rise. As a consequence, security and defense policy reform in Japan is most likely to occur when high external threat perceptions meet with a strong government that favors a greater Japanese security stance.

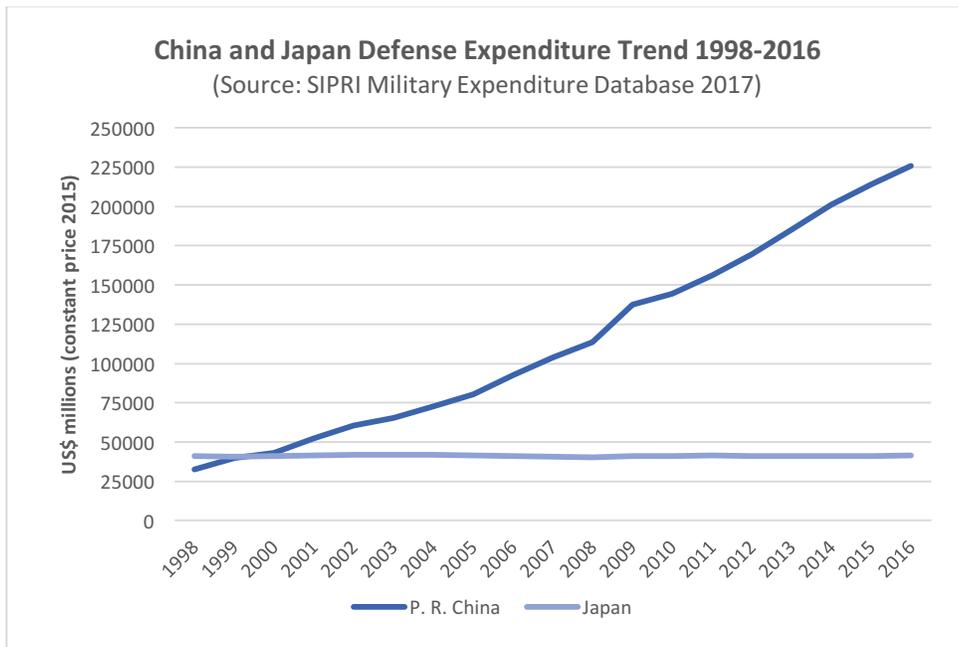
II. BACKGROUND: THE JAPANESE SECURITY DISCOURSE

2.1. CHINA'S MILITARY RISE

Potential for a large-scale military conflict in East Asia has long been seen in two particular contingency scenarios: a war on the Korean peninsula and/or a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. In recent years, however, Southeast Asian states, Japan, and non-regional observers alike have come to focus more on China's activities in the East and South China Seas. Closely associated with these activities are critical perceptions of a Chinese military build-up.

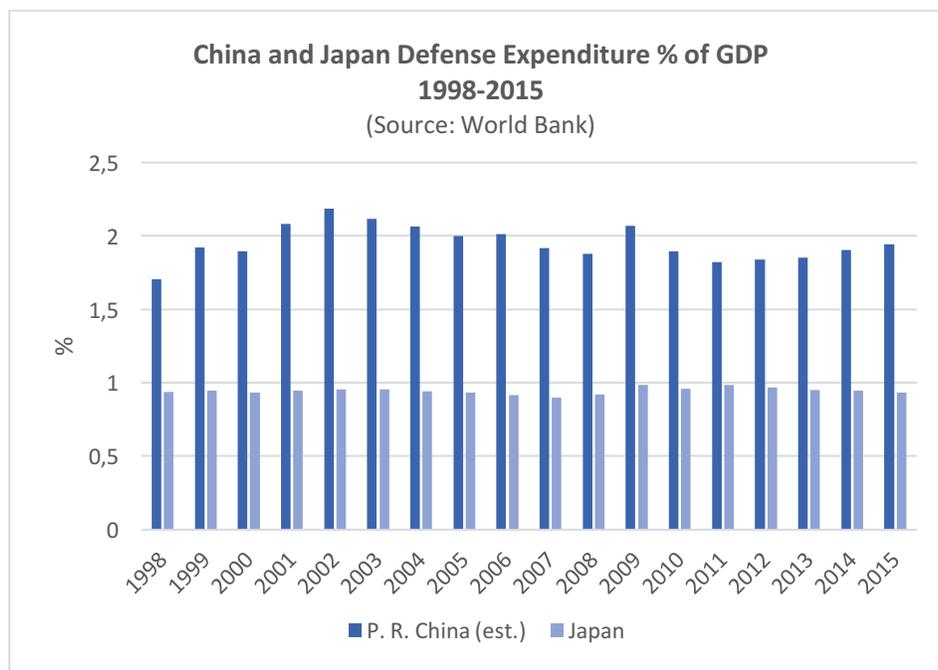
While exact numbers are largely unknown, there is little disagreement over the fact that China's military is rapidly rising. In the past twenty years, Chinese military expenditure has been estimated to have risen significantly, from around 32 billion in 1998 to 225 billion USD in 2016 (Figure 1). In 2000, it surpassed Japan's military expenditure which has stayed relatively constant for the past decades, despite experiencing recent rises under the second Abe administration.

Figure 1. China and Japan Defense Expenditure Trend 1998-2016



In terms of military expenditure as measured by GDP, both states are hovering around 1 (Japan) and 2 percent (China, Figure 2). However, when taking into account China's total GDP which has risen from around 2 trillion in 1998 to almost 9 trillion USD in 2015, the stark differences in military expenditure are more obvious. Meanwhile, Japan's GDP has only slightly increased from around 5.2 to 6 trillion USD in the same time frame (World Bank). The comparison of these values clarifies that China's military expenditure has indeed skyrocketed in the past decades.

Figure 2. China and Japan Defense Expenditure % of GDP 1998-2015



At the same time, China is not just modernizing the People's Liberation Army, including its ground, air, and naval forces, but it is also investing in advanced military technology ranging from ballistic missile defense over intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) to anti-access area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Western powers such as the US and others have stressed the unclear intentions of China's grand strategy and repeatedly criticized the non-transparency that marks Chinese Defense White

Papers and other official reports about PLA modernization efforts (Cordesman 2016: 225). Similar concerns are increasingly raised by Japanese defense experts which will be analyzed in detail in this study.

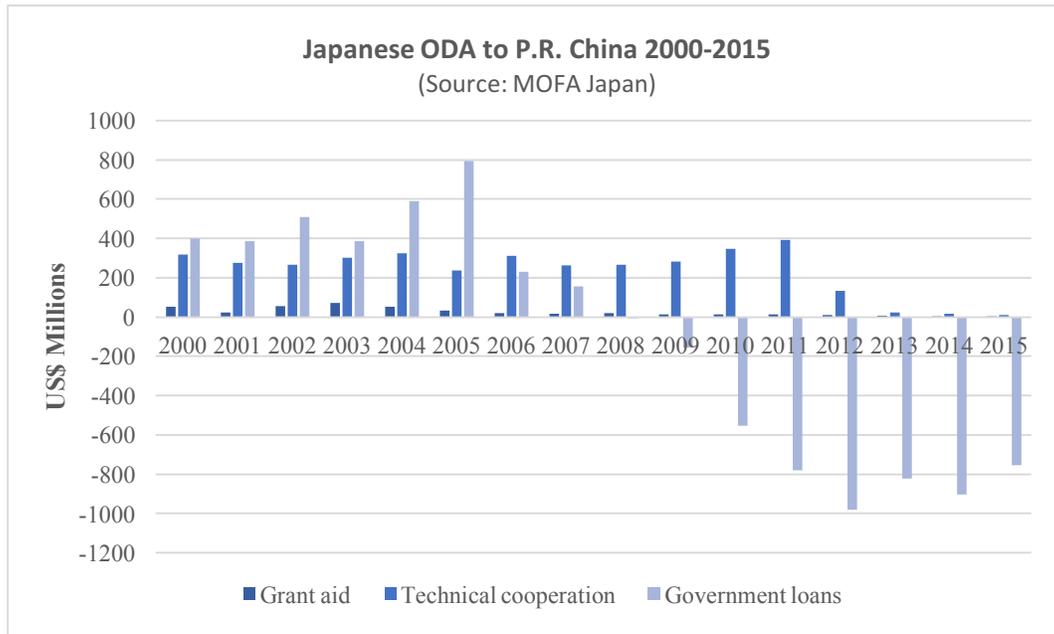
China's activities in both the South China and East China Seas seem to indicate that it is seeking a larger geopolitical role which is recently often associated with the "Chinese Dream", a narrative that the Xi Jinping administration coined in 2012. Chinese scholars have called it a new "signature ideology" of the Chinese Communist Party whose core concept contains notions of national rejuvenation and national glory (Wang 2014: 1).

The littoral states surrounding the South China Sea in particular have been experiencing Chinese assertiveness first-hand in recent years. The Middle Kingdom's activities include expansionary undertakings such as the advancement onto reefs, sandbanks, and shoals, land reclamation measures, and the strong assertion of territorial rights in its diplomatic discourse. More specifically, China has been reported to be developing and militarizing those maritime features via constructing channels, harbors, intelligence gathering facilities, as well as runways. A Pentagon report in 2016 estimated that China has reclaimed a total of 3,200 acres of land in the South China Sea while building 10,000ft of runways in the Spratly Islands, thereby significantly enhancing its long-term presence in the area (The Guardian 2016).

But also in Japan, perceptions of Chinese conduct in the East China Sea, particularly near the Senkaku Islands, have changed and amplified concerns over possible contingencies in the area in recent years.

Sato argues (1998: 11) that in the 1990s both the Japanese political and academic elite shared a consensus that American policymakers were most likely exaggerating Chinese economic and military capabilities. In this context, Rose concurs and notes that perceptions of a "China threat" emerged only in the late 1990s at the academic level, and later shifted to the elite level in the 2000s (2010: 149-50). Perceptions only started to slowly change under Abe's predecessor Koizumi, when China was still predominantly seen as an economic opportunity on the one hand, but also as an emerging military threat to Japanese security and sovereignty on the other (Ibid: 163). The narrative of China as an economic opportunity up to that point is also reflected in statistics such as those of Japanese ODA to China (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Japanese ODA to P.R. China 2000-2015



The Koizumi era thus marked the beginnings of a more active acknowledgment of the “China threat” in the Japanese discourse. For instance, Taniguchi (2005: 23) has found that Japanese defense policy-makers had been actively preoccupied with China as early as 2004 when North Korea was still used as a convenient proxy for policies that were increasingly aimed at China. This view is shared by Hughes who argues that Japan in the 2000s was “super-sizing” the North Korean threat in order to fill this role for the legitimization of security policy change, and largely avoided to explicitly name China as a threat out of fear of antagonizing its neighbor (2009b: 303-04).

Since the 2010s, this fear has given way to a new assertiveness by Japan to confront Chinese provocations and a readiness to reform Japan’s security policy stance. Miyamoto (2014: 1) argues that the intensification of the Senkaku dispute in particular constituted a “paradigm shift” in bilateral relations. Hornung (2014: 115) characterizes this shift as Japan moving from a “soft hedge” toward a “hard hedge” containment strategy. As this study will show, China as a military threat has indeed become the new consensus among not just bureaucratic but also political elites, and has even left a mark in media coverage and public opinion trends.

2.2. FROM THE YOSHIDA DOCTRINE TO THE “ABE DOCTRINE”?

For decades after World War II, the so-called Yoshida Doctrine formed the bedrock of Japanese foreign and defense policy. Named after Japan’s first postwar prime minister Shigeru Yoshida, this strategy declared economic reconstruction the primary objective and relied on the United States as the guarantor of Japanese security. It also stipulated that Japan was to keep a low profile in international politics while emphasizing foreign economic relations to support the reconstruction of the domestic economy. The Yoshida Doctrine emerged as a compromise out of diverging political interests in Japan’s party array. The Left sought for a pacifist, neutral, and low key Japan that would shy away from international entanglement and dedicate itself to social democratic ideals. The Right was divided about how to continue in the postwar political system, whether to foster the alliance with the United States or rearm and establish its own, independent foreign and defense policy (Cooney 2015: 64).

As a result of the end of the Cold War, the Japanese security discourse in which this doctrine is embedded in has evolved greatly in the past two to three decades. Security and defense policy that is possible today was inconceivable until not long ago. Scholars Pyle, Mochizuki, Samuels, and Hirata have sought to categorize, modify, and rename the different lines of thought that developed in the postwar security discourse among politicians and intellectuals according to their preferred vision of Japan’s future security identity (Table 1).

Table 1. Japanese security ideology by group and era			
Pyle (Cold War era)	Mochizuki (Cold War era)	Samuels (post-Cold War era)	Hirata (post-Cold War era)
Progressives	Unarmed neutralists	Pacifists	Pacifists
Mercantilists	Political realists	Middle-power internationalists	Mercantilists
Liberal realists	Military realists	Normal nation-alists	Normalists
New nationalists	Japanese Gaullists	Neo-autonomists	Nationalists

(Adapted from Pyle 1982; Mochizuki 1983-84; Samuels 2007b; Hirata 2008)

In essence, the end of the Cold War prompted Japan to thoroughly reevaluate its foreign and security policy, and thus, the Yoshida Doctrine. The fall of the East-West bloc system meant that the bilateral alliance with the United States would have to undergo new scrutiny to determine its future sustainability and strategic weight, as would the notion of bilateralism per se which a new world of multipolarity now began to challenge. Consequently, the Japanese foreign and security policy discourse of the 1990s developed several lines of thought on how to deal with this newly shifting international order.

After international criticism following Japan's financial contribution to the 1991 Gulf War, the so-called Ozawa Commission under prime minister Kaifu Toshiki's government proposed a peacekeeping law to provide a legal framework for international SDF engagement. This reproach by the international community resulted in the first significant controversy at home over Japan's military role on the global stage.

Ishizuka notes (2005: 3) how this experience helped shape a consensus among the main political parties that a more proactive role in international peacekeeping and security was needed, if not necessarily a consensus over how and by which means such a role should be achieved.

The early 1990s then saw the premierships of Hosokawa and Murayama who attempted to foster diplomatic dialogue with Japan's Asian neighbors while somewhat distancing themselves from the Security Pact with the US (LA Times 1994). Nevertheless, the bilateral alliance was quickly reaffirmed following the 1997 US-Japan Defense Guidelines under the Hashimoto government.

Since the time that Japan began these adaptations to its defense and security policy that looked beyond familiar bygone era contingencies and, in lieu thereof, elevated global matters to its national security agenda, scholars have been debating whether Japanese foreign policy has "matured" to act more independently on the international stage while slowly abandoning the Yoshida Doctrine, or whether it largely continues adhering to the doctrine, merely in altered form.

In this context, Samuels (2007b: 128) adds a two-axe model to sort Japanese politicians according to their attitudes toward the use of force and the alliance with the United States into the four categories above (Table 1), indicating their vision of Japan's long term strategy. He contends that "middle-power internationalists" and "normal nation-alists" embrace the US alliance as an important security element,

whereas “neo-autonomists” and “pacifists” reject deeper security integration with the US. Further, he asserts that “normal nation-alists” and “neo-autonomists” are more open towards the use of force while “pacifists” and “middle-power internationalists” shun its use (Ibid: 127-29).

As the lack of an independent foreign policy as well as the war-renouncing postwar constitution have often been cited as reasons that render Japan an “abnormal” state², strict advocates of the Yoshida Doctrine are likely to fall into one of the latter two categories. Proponents of these seek prestige and autonomy through economic prosperity, not through military strength. In reality however, very few Japanese politicians of any stripe have openly endorsed the complete abandonment of the doctrine (Ibid: 152).

The Abe cabinets, whom Samuels groups with the “normal nation-alists” that seek the “normalization” of Japan, have given rise to theories of a newly emerging “Abe Doctrine”.³ The shift from the Yoshida Doctrine to the Abe Doctrine is commonly understood as the departure from an overreliance on the US toward a more muscular and assertive foreign and security policy stance under Abe. Hughes (2015: 5) argues that while the doctrine appears to have the potential to redirect Japan’s international trajectory and has raised Japan’s international profile momentarily, it is ultimately short-sighted and incapable of producing medium to longer term benefits befitting Japan’s national interests. Effectively, this would then result in a new “dead end” in Japan’s foreign and security policy.

Whether this assessment will prove true or not, it is safe to say that the security and defense policy development of the past fifteen years has upset proponents of Japan’s postwar constitution, supporters of mercantile realism or a “Small Japan”, and those who have internalized pacifist principles as Japanese postwar identity. In other words, it has upset the postwar order of the Yoshida Doctrine.

² See for example Hagström (2015).

³ See Hughes (2015) for a detailed analysis, also Dobson (2016).

III. THEORY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Embedded in the Japanese security discourse, this study analyzes security and defense policy reform under the two Abe administrations over the period between 2006 and 2007 (Abe's first term), as well as from 2012 until 2015 (Abe's second term). It observes and evaluates relevant political occurrences and events, dynamics in behavior and influence of political actors, and their relations with external forces.

The main research question of this study is as follows: *Given that structural constraints, political contention, and public wariness over national security issues hold true for both administrations, why was the second Abe government (2012-15) able to reform Japanese security and defense policy by introducing institutional and legislative changes such as the National Security Council, the State Secrecy Law, and Collective Self-Defense, while its first incarnation (2006-07) was not?*

In spite of a complex domestic political situation including legal constraints by the pacifist constitution, a deep-seated antimilitarist, *gun wa aku da* ("military is evil") mentality among the public, and contention among political forces, major changes to and expansions of security and defense structures have occurred in altogether relatively short time under the second Abe administration.

In detail, the study finds that, despite both administrations exhibiting strong leadership initiative for policy change, the diverging perception level of China as an external threat to Japanese security is the most significant external factor that sheds light on why Abe 1.0 largely failed and Abe 2.0 succeeded at introducing policy reform.

In essence, China's military rise stimulated two processes that occurred between the first Abe government (2006-07) and the second (2012-). One is the increasing securitization of the "China threat" in publications by the Japanese defense bureaucracy. Another consists of steadily increasing newspaper coverage of China's military rise that reinforced the "China threat", while public attitudes toward both China and Japanese security policy underwent a gradual normative shift. These two processes then lead to the emergence of a "China threat consensus" from 2013 which facilitated a series of security and defense policy reforms under the second Abe government. Moreover, the second Abe government was able to make use of

this consensus precisely because it had successfully consolidated its political power upon return to office. This stands in contrast to the first Abe government.

The study proceeds to show that the lack of a “China threat consensus” was not the only factor missing during Abe 1.0. In 2006-07, a lack of political consolidation, exemplified through Cabinet scandals, little public support for Abe’s reformative agenda, and a relatively more resilient opposition negatively impacted the Abe administration. In addition, the LDP and China-critical revisionist forces did not enjoy the same dominance as later. Although potential for further policy change might have existed, the combination of these factors, and the absence of a tangible consensus regarding an external threat contributed to an early demise of the first administration without successfully reforming Japan’s security stance.

Nonetheless, the first Abe government did achieve certain security and defense policy changes that indirectly contributed to later changes and are thus subject to analysis in this study: upgrading the JDA to the MOD, as well as laws referring to the overseas deployment of the SDF. Furthermore, Abe 1.0 established ideational leverage points that shaped the policy discourse in a lasting manner by reinforcing debate on a range of security policy issues including CSD.

The second time around, the Abe government has successfully implemented policy agenda items which it carried over from the first administration: the NSC was established, the controversial State Secrecy Law enacted, Article 9 received a Cabinet reinterpretation while 2015 introduced new comprehensive security legislation to perform that reinterpretation. At the same time, focusing on economic issues via a comprehensive economic stimulus program dubbed “Abenomics” shows that the current Abe government aims to manage popular expectations better than before.

In essence, Abe 2.0 retains a largely unchanged security agenda while continuing previous efforts. The study intends to show that, since Abe 1.0, the most relevant factors have also shifted in its favor. Both elite and public perceptions of China’s military assertiveness have changed to the extent that China is now a clear threat to Japanese security that needs to be addressed. At the same time, the domestic environment has changed to facilitate Abe 2.0’s usage of the threat consensus. This includes a successful consolidation of power aided by the resurgence of the LDP and pro-revisionist forces, the weakening of opposition parties

at the same time, and the emergence of a more assertive MOD that is intent on contributing its part to Japan's defense policy.

Meanwhile, despite minor adjustments to the overall agenda, leadership style, and strategy of Abe during his second term, these changes may not alone explain why larger transformations of policy have occurred this time. During both administrations, many leadership characteristics have in fact remained constant, such as Abe's pursuing of a streamlined *kantei* approach in policymaking, his seeking to heavily influence personnel decisions, and a determined propagation of security and defense issues.

3.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Japan's grand strategy and Abe

Studies on the recent changes and dynamics in Japanese security posture are plentiful. Studies that focus on both Abe administrations at the same time and their joint impact on that posture, however, are not. Many scholars focus on Japan's "grand strategy" for the future, incorporating the different variants of security ideology as outlined in the previous section. This is the case with: Green (2001) who predicted that the changing security environment after the Cold War would cause Japan to adjust and pursue a "reluctant realism", Samuels (2007a) who favors the "Goldilocks approach" where Japan strikes a balance between Asia and the US, as well as Katzenstein (2008) who explores the concept of "comprehensive security" in domestic policy debates since the 1980s. Further, Oros (2008) employs a security identity approach by evaluating the process of a "normalizing" Japan, and more recently, Hughes (2015) offers the alternative theory of a "resentful realism" after predicting the country's remilitarization six years earlier (2009).

In addition, Lind (2004) looks at Japan's stance in the US-Japan security alliance between pacifism and buck-passing, while Hagström (2015) assesses Japan's changing security identity against the backdrop of the normalization discourse. Kliman (2006), on the other hand, sees the trajectory of Japanese security as in a stage of transitional realism that is marked by the eroding influence of external threats on antimilitarist principles.

Studies comparing both Abe administrations have been undertaken by the following: Envall (2011), who identifies the reasons leading to Abe's early political demise during his first term, Burrett (2016), who compares Abe's leadership strategies of his first and second terms, and Dobson (2016), who analyzes Abe's global governance behavior. While these studies explore the relationship between political leadership and institutions, their approach incorporates neither external factors nor an assessment of security and defense policy developments.

In terms of further institutional analysis, Arase (2007) identifies Abe, after taking office for the first time, as a leading agent toward streamlined national security decision making. Samuels (2007a) concurs and notes that even before Abe had come to power, neo-revisionists such as Koizumi had sought to transform policymaking structures in order to strengthen the position of the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*).

Further analysis of centralization tendencies under the Prime Minister, aided by a more prominent position of the Cabinet Secretariat following administrative reform in 2001, can be found in the scholarship of Shinoda (2011, 2013). He marks predecessor Koizumi as the forerunner in attempting to create a more focalized administrative structure, and analyzes the impact of Koizumi's legacy on the first Abe government. Shinoda's focus also lies on Koizumi's implementation of the *kantei* approach which Abe has sought to continue, and which he argues has created a new set of expectations for Japanese premiership.

In the context of political contention, Park (2015) has argued that the party environment has been undergoing a three-layered conservative shift in recent years, which effectively weakened and divided liberal and progressive forces, not just among parties but also within them. This suggests not just a centralization of the Prime Minister pushed for by individuals Abe and Koizumi themselves, but an overall reinvigoration of the LDP and neo-conservative forces in general. Clausen (2012) concurs and notes that forces within the main opposition party DPJ had been divided on policy since the party's inception, and this was especially true for matters of security and defense policy. Further, Mizohata (2016) argues that Abe

cabinet's strong affiliation with Nippon Kaigi⁴ suggests that certain right-wing groups with ties to the Diet have been playing an increasingly influential role in the agenda-setting process.

Finally, Midford (2011) explores the role of public opinion and media depictions of SDF deployments during the Iraq War and the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean during Abe's first tenure. This evaluation marks the media as one of the driving actors in contributing to changes in the security policy discourse.

In terms of changes brought about by strong leadership, Sakaki (2015: 6) argues that many observers falsely attribute seminal changes to Abe himself and instead points to long ongoing processes of incrementalism which Japanese security policy has been undergoing since the end of the Cold War. In terms of whether policy changes have changed Japan's general defense stance, the author points towards the public's massive distrust of the use of military power as a brake on the development of new militarist tendencies. Hosoya (2015) concurs by asserting that the 2015 security legislation in reality both supports Japan's commitment to maintaining its antimilitarist identity and its contribution to international peace. This view is shared by academic-turned-security advisor Kitaoka (2013) who advocates the current government's security policy course, a position undoubtedly imbued by his personal experience of serving as a close security advisor to Abe.

In terms of defense cooperation, Sakaki (Ibid) emphasizes that Abe is seeking defense cooperation beyond the framework of the US-Japan alliance by intensifying relations with partners such as Australia and India, thus suggesting a potential future change in the with security relationship with the US. In this respect, Kersten (2016) argues that the normative implications for Japanese security following Abe's revamping of security policy may complicate further potential of Australian-Japanese defense cooperation as they are based on questionable legitimacy. Furthermore, Hornung and Mochizuki (2016) conclude that, despite Japan's gradual "normalization" as an international actor, the restrictions attached to the new security legislation under Abe will continue to prevent Japan from discarding its "exceptional ally" status in the US alliance network.

⁴ 16 out of 20 cabinet ministers were Nippon Kaigi members in September 2016 (Mizohata 2016).

Finally, Liff (2015) returns to the question of whether the Abe administrations have fundamentally changed Japan's stance and argues – much like Sakaki – that recent developments have instead stretched the security discourse, but not completely altered its trajectory. He does so by referring to Abe's predecessors, including the DPJ, that have accelerated security and defense policy reforms, as well as sees the origins of the “Abe Doctrine” in decade-old concepts that have formed part of the Japanese security discourse since.

Liberalist, realist, and constructivist explanations of Japanese security

A traditional lens at security developments in the course of Japanese security discourse has been employed frequently in the literature. In 1998, Michael O'Hanlon and Mike Mochizuki proposed that the “US and Japan should endeavor to make their alliance as close, balanced, and principle-based as the US-UK special relationship” (127). In their article, they proceed to present their vision of an alliance that thrives through liberalist principles, and has the potential to develop a multilateral collective security arrangement that includes China. In order to do so, the authors call on Japan to expand its military posture, and on the US to give their ally more leeway and involvement in decision-making. In short, more linkage is deemed superior to less. Effectively, the liberalist approach to security holds that regional peace is possible through the institutionalization of close cooperation among states and individuals. Similarly, Berger (2007) argues that Japan's motivation for international contribution is essentially rooted in liberal philosophy.

Among these advocates, some stress that security balancing in the region is a result of competing political and economic interests. Samuels (2007a) has noted how the existing and potential future gains from close economic partnership with China have led to an underappreciation of the China “threat” until not very long ago. In other words, closer partnership is equated with what realists deem an extenuation of reality that ignores the ubiquitous existence of anarchy and potential for conflict among states.

Thus, realism asserts that Japanese security and defense policy is in need to evolve in order to meet the demands of an international, chronically instable, security environment. As a result, this has been a pivotal issue in Japan's security discourse and prominent conservative Japanese politicians have repeatedly stated

the need for Japan's military normalization (Ishihara 1989; Ozawa 1994; Abe 2006). At the same time, this has been the most prominent issue in scholarship on Japanese security and defense policy (Hughes 2004, 2009, 2015; Pyle 2007; Oros 2008; Soeya et al. 2011). Furthermore, realist conceptions of Japanese security have argued that structural changes such as the end of the Cold War prompted Japan to change its security policy because the following changes in the international structure have made this necessary (Waltz 1993).

Akimoto (2013) proposes four different models for Japanese security identity based on earlier scholarship that encompass both liberalist and realist conceptions of the sort summarized above. The models include the "Pacifist State" (classical liberalism), which is fully neutral and unarmed, the "UN Peacekeeper" (neo-liberalism) that only engages in peace-keeping missions, the "Normal State" (classical realism) that desires power and pursues the full normalization of its military, and lastly, the "US Ally" (neo-realism) who adheres to balance of power, exercises the right of CSD, and fosters the US-Japan alliance. Furthermore, Kawasaki (2001) challenges Japan's interpretation as a theoretic anomaly in realist thought as brought forward by Waltz and others by employing a postclassical approach as opposed to classical and neo-realism.

On top of this, the (re-)emergence of historical and territorial disputes has given rise to scholarship which holds that neither liberalist accounts nor realist approaches solely account for every policy dynamic in the region. In this regard, proponents of a constructivist approach to Japanese security stress that states' identities, norms, and values need to be taken into account. Hagström (2015), for example, analyzes Japan's identity as an "abnormal" state and asserts that three identity-producing processes are ongoing which focus on a Japanese "abnormality-normalization nexus" that shapes the trajectory of Japan's security policy. In addition, another salient example of the explanatory merits of constructivist approaches is found in the North Korean abduction issue. In analyzing the political and public response to the abductions, Hagström and Hanssen (2015) explore the reconstruction of Japanese identity through a redistribution of victim and assailant roles through which Japan's victimization shapes its national security discourse.

3.3. POLICY-/DECISION-MAKING MODELS AND DATA

In analyses of Japanese policymaking, different schools of thought attribute different levels of importance to partaking actors. For example, pluralist scholars such as Curtis (1999), Zhao (1995), and Scalapino (1995) argue that it can empirically be shown how societal groups affect policymaking. On the other hand, elitist advocates such as Johnson (1995) claim that this is an entirely top-down process. Others maintain that the nature of Japanese policymaking is inherently enigmatic and cannot be proven reliably (e.g. van Wolferen 1992). In respect to the “iron triangle”, Winter (2016) argues that the triad of LDP, big business, and bureaucracy has been replaced by a new triad of *kantei*, big business, and handpicked advisers under Abe 2.0.

In this study, the methodological approach employed is pluralist, albeit with a focus on elite-led pluralism. It focuses on the Abe Cabinet and associated agencies (*kantei*, Cabinet Secretariat) as the core executive, as well as on bureaucratic elites as driving forces in the policy- and decision-making process. Dunleavy and Rhodes define the core executive as serving to “pull together and integrate central government policies, or act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine” (1990: 4). The rationale for including the bureaucracy as a focus subject is exemplified, for instance, by Pempel (1992: 23) who goes as far as to claim that about ninety percent of all legislation is first drafted and devised by bureaucrats as opposed to elected politicians. While the actual number has surely changed since the advent of administrative reforms under Hashimoto (Curtis 2002: 12-13), the bureaucracy still plays a major role in steering policy directions, as this study will show. Furthermore, the impact of both the media and public on the decision-making process led by these elites will be assessed.

Thus, the nature of the Japanese decision-making process is understood in this study as conceptualized by the *bureaucratic politics model*.

The *bureaucratic politics model* views the state as a collection of bureaucratic agencies in which each agency has its own goals and pursues to increase its individual influence while competing with others. This model has, for example, been employed in Sebata’s studies of Japanese bureaucracy (1992, 2010). It

includes individuals as units of analysis (Allison and Halperin 1972: 43) and is helpful in regards to analyzing the peculiarities of Japanese bureaucratic processes and their relation to key political actors.

In this model, key individual decision makers are assumed to have different interests, perceptions, and priorities depending on their “various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals” (Allison 1971: 144). The head of state and other elite officials make up a pool of predominant decision makers where one group may triumph over the other, or where many groups with different directions may produce results that are a mixture of conflicting preferences and perceptions. In this model, not just the institutional affiliation but also the political clout and skill of decision makers determines actions (Ibid: 145).

This model serves as a theoretical framework in this study to conceptualize the decision-making process influenced by the defense bureaucracy as well as the core executive in driving policy change. The model’s explanatory power is achieved through analyzing the details of the decision-making process through a lens of the following elements: “the action-channel, the positions, the players, their preferences, and the pulling and hauling – that yielded (...) the action in question” (Ibid: 173).

Further, the peculiar characteristics of Japanese decision-making involve concepts such as *hanashiai* (talking together), *nemawashi* (consensus-seeking through informal talks), and *ringisei* (bottom-to-top policy debate inclusion). These are somewhat analogous to the three decision-making characteristics as spelled out in Hilsman’s *To Move a Nation* (1967), as cited by Allison (Ibid: 157) in relation to the *bureaucratic process model*: “(1) a diversity of goals and values that must be reconciled before a decision can be reached; (2) the presence of competing clusters of people within the main group who are identified with each of the alternative goals and policies, (3) the relative power of these different groups of people included is as relevant to the final decision as the appeal of the goals they seek or the cogency and wisdom of their arguments”. The characteristics of *hanashiai* and *nemawashi* roughly correspond to (1) and (2), while *ringisei* clearly contains the notion of fragmented authority emphasized by the circulation of proposals among different groups/individuals which results in a sort of “relative power (...) of people included” that is “relevant to the final decision” (Ibid). The *bureaucratic process model* should thus not be understood as

depicting an absolute reflection of the Japanese political process, but instead serve as an approximate guideline founded in well-established political theory.

Finally, both primary and secondary material is used in order to explain the security and defense reform process under Abe. In doing so, empirical evidence is used to demonstrate the impact of China's military rise as an external factor on the one hand, and the governments' level of political consolidation as a domestic factor on the other. Empirical data is drawn from official policy documents and handbooks, (parliamentary) speeches and statements, as well as media coverage (Japanese newspapers and polls), party manifestos and election data. In detail, this includes MOD publications such as the Defense White Paper and China Security Report, as well as newspaper reports and editorials about China's military rise found in the Asahi and Yomiuri dailies. Secondary material is used to present, compare, and assess views by previous scholarship at relevant junctures.

3.4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical security studies as developed by the Copenhagen School question the entire framework of how to conceptualize and define security. Here, the definition of security is widened from the traditionalist interpretation of "freedom from threat" to encompass a range of different sectors (e.g. political, societal, economic, environmental) in which security can both exist and be threatened.

This study employs the securitization approach based on Buzan et al. (1998) and Wæver (1995). The concept of securitization is a process by which threats are politically constructed, regardless of whether they constitute objective material threats to the state, society, or individual. Where realism observes a threat to security as an empirical fact that is non-subjective, the critical security approach claims it to be a politically motivated social construction that can be infused by the state itself and does not originate externally (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). These social constructions of threats, which are the result of securitization, emanate from a speech act that essentially labels something a security issue.

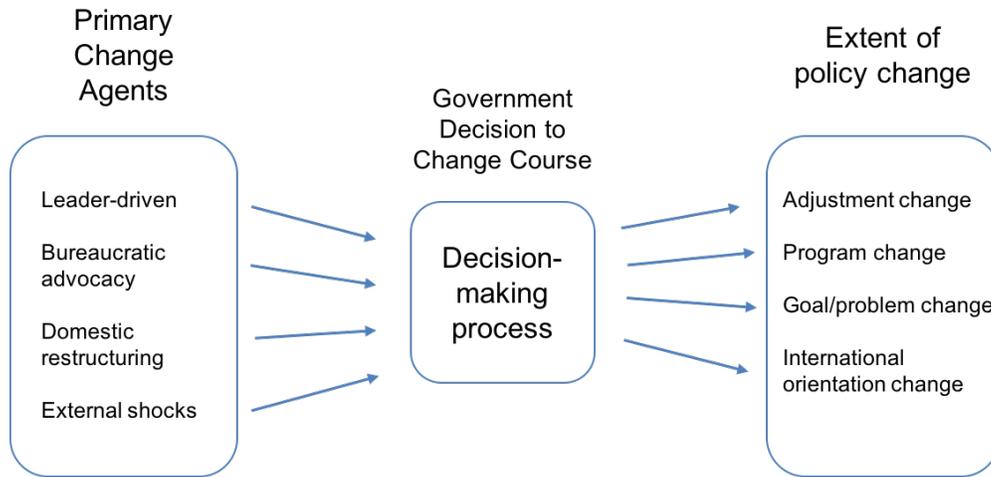
This constructivism-based approach can be employed to dissect the perception, framing, and prioritization of external threats in the Japanese security and defense discourse. It relies on the application

of three rhetorical criteria that define whether a political issue has been securitized: (1) the threat to a referent object, (2) the demand for extraordinary measures, and (3) the convincing of a target audience that rule-breaking behavior is justified.

The approach is useful in regards to showing how key actors in Japanese politics such as the defense bureaucracy and the decision-making elite frame and elevate certain phenomena such as China's military rise to an "emergency" status level. Hughes (2004: 8) calls this status "rarefied" and dangerous as it potentially overrides conventions and restrictions on state power. In theory, this emergency or "rarefied" status enables the securitizing agent to influence the policy formulation process which in turn facilitates the transformation of policy. The securitization of China's military rise in Japanese domestic politics is a particularly salient example for this process. In this context, the critical security approach is supported by Hook (1996: 136) who points out that the role of language and rhetoric is a particularly neglected area of study in Japanese security.

The study combines this securitization approach with the analytical framework by Hermann (1990, Fig. 4) who employs the concept of change agents in order to explain the sources and specify the outcomes of a government changing its policies. First, he labels agents of policy change as follows: (1) *leader-driven* (change results from the efforts of an authoritative policymaker, often head of government), (2) *bureaucratic advocacy* (a group within the government or affiliated agencies as the major redirector of policy), (3) *domestic restructuring* (a politically relevant segment of society becomes an agent of change), and (4) *external shocks* (outside sources that result from international events).

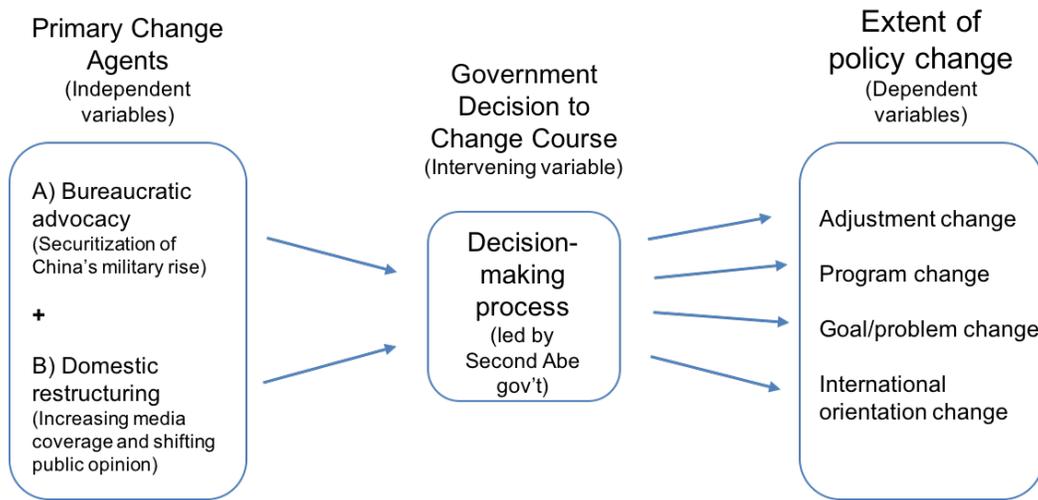
Figure 4. The mediating role of decision processes between change agents and degree of policy change, adapted from Hermann (1990: 13)



Then, he defines the decision-making process as assuming a mediating role in resulting in policy changes which can be grouped into four categories, depending on their transformative extent: (1) *adjustment changes* (level of policy effort, mainly quantitatively), (2) *program changes* (changes to methods and means by which a goal/problem is addressed), (3) *problem/goal changes* (purpose of policy, replacement or forfeit), and (4) *international orientation change* (fundamental shift in country’s role on the world stage).

Based on this framework, we can define the roles of political actors which shall be analyzed in detail, using as a criterion their relevance for the particular perspective of explaining security and defense policy outcomes in this study. As the main focus of the study lies on two processes that are led by *bureaucratic advocacy* and *domestic restructuring*, namely by the defense bureaucracy and the media/public as principal change agents, or “enterprising agents” as Oros (2014: 236) terms it, the framework is accordingly adapted and applied. Thus, the applied framework presents as follows (Fig. 5):

Figure 5. The mediating role of decision processes between change agents and degree of policy change, applied

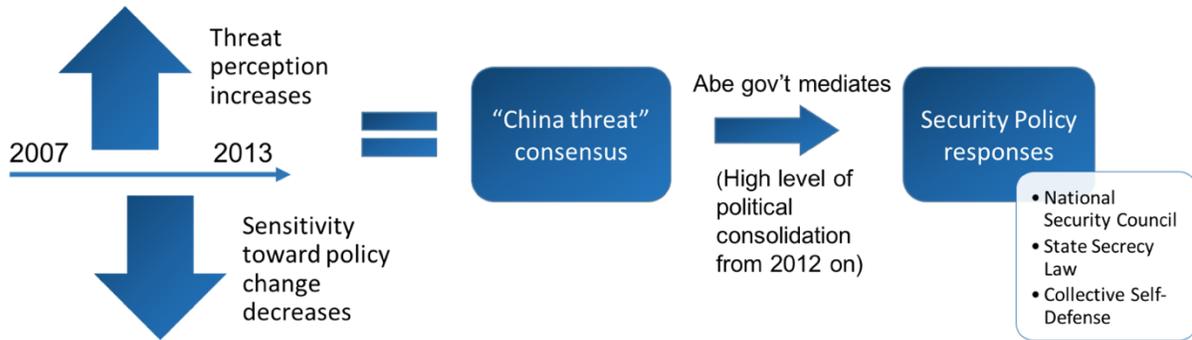


The Japanese defense bureaucracy as well as the media and public together form the independent variables in the study. The defense bureaucracy, consisting of the MOD and, partially, MOFA, begins to securitize China's military rise increasingly from 2007 and thus impacts the decision-making process on the level of political elites. This process is thus driven by *bureaucratic advocacy*.

At the same time, increasing media coverage of China's military rise reinforces the "China threat" in newspaper reports and editorials. Part of the the same process is a gradual normative shift in public opinion that begins to be more critical of China's military rise and less sensitive toward security policy change. This entire process is thus driven by *domestic restructuring*.

Figure 6 visualizes again the core argument that arises from employing the securitization approach in combination with Hermann's analytical framework.

Figure 6. Security policy change under the second Abe administration



The two concurrent processes between 2007 and 2013 led by change agents *bureaucratic advocacy* and *domestic restructuring* result in two things: (1) Threat perception regarding China increases, and (2) sensitivity toward policy change decreases. Together, this makes up the “China threat” consensus which in turn facilitates the security policy changes in question. The second Abe government thus assumes the function of the intervening variable that mediates the policy changes from 2013.

In terms of the policy assessment itself, the study then proceeds to employ Hermann’s (Ibid) four policy change dimensions in order to group and evaluate the changes resulting from both administrations. Thus, the security policy responses form the dependent variables in the study. A focus lies on the establishment of the National Security Council (*program change*), the State Secrecy Law (*adjustment change*), and the introduction of collective self-defense legislation (*problem/goal change*).

IV. SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY UNDER THE ABE ADMINISTRATIONS

4.1. THE SECURITIZATION OF CHINA'S MILITARY RISE: BUREAUCRATIC ADVOCACY

4.1.1. PROLOGUE: SHIFTS IN BUREAUCRATIC POWER

Before delving into the analysis of how the Japanese bureaucracy has come to securitize the “China threat” increasingly since the first Abe government, it is necessary to briefly sketch the circumstances of bureaucratic power which have shifted in recent years, particularly since the advent of the MOD under Abe in 2007. The elevation of the JDA to the MOD was a significant event for Abe’s security policy agenda as the bureaucracy as a highly relevant actor in the Japanese policymaking process complements Abe’s intentions to elevate Japan’s security stance.

Ascendance of the MOD

As Tsuneki notes (2012: 49), the dominance of bureaucratic agencies in drafting and planning laws is tangible due to the fact that most legislation is introduced not by individual Diet members, but by the Cabinet in liaison with bureaucratic proposals. Iio (2007) even goes as far as to claim that, for much of the postwar era, the Cabinet had acted as a mere “clearing house” for policies that originated inside the ministries or within its sections, with ministers representing ministerial instead of Cabinet interests, effectively rendering Japanese policymaking the result of a “bureaucratic cabinet system” (*kanryō naikakusei*). This suggests that relations and consensus-building between the Cabinet and bureaucratic agencies are of essential priority to facilitate the smooth realization of the government’s agenda.

The JDA’s upgrade to the MOD and the associated revision of the JSDF Law, while technically authorized under Koizumi’s leadership, marked a historic moment in Japanese postwar politics. After decades of “incremental change”, “muddling through”, and “pulling and hauling”, as Sebata (2010: 11) characterizes the Japanese defense decision-making process, this change constituted a symbolic pivot point of tremendous momentum in Japan’s security identity. Not only did Japan’s defense lobby win new formal privileges to further partake in the policymaking process, the change also exuded a redefinition of the public

image of the SDF and the Japanese defense complex as a whole. As Saltzman rightly notes (2015: 504), “more than just symbolism – it was an opening shot for a revision of Japanese security policy and entirely reforming the defence establishment”. At the same time, prestige and morale gains for JDA officials accompanied the upgrade, with three major privileges added to the ministry’s toolbox: The minister could now (1) directly propose legislation to the Diet and (2) convene immediate Cabinet meetings; (3) budget requests did not have to go via the Cabinet Office anymore, but could be submitted directly to the MOF. In addition, the upgrading in conjuncture with the revision of the SDF Law further enhanced opportunities of policy formulation regarding national security policy, particularly in respect to SDF deployment and missions. It did so through its (1) newly acquired decision-making privileges, and by (2) fostering an agreeable climate for the handling of Japanese defense policy as a result of its prestige boost. Effectively, the elevation to the MOD thus ensued a greater role in defense policymaking that would prove advantageous to the implementation of Abe 2.0’s agenda.

In the days before the existence of the MOD, the MOFA was indubitably the dominant bureaucratic agency to shape Japan’s security and defense policy, with its Foreign Policy and North American Affairs Bureaus leading much of MOFA’s effort to devise those policies (Oros and Tatsumi 2010: 29). While the Cabinet Office played a coordinating role in the inter-agency competition among the MOFA, NPA, and JDA, the latter had long been considered a “management agency” (*kanri kanchō*), rather than a “policy agency” (*seisaku kanchō*). Only with the upgrading to full ministerial status, the MOD gained in procedural influence and could now demand equal involvement in developing Japan’s security and defense policy (Ibid: 33).

In fact, Anno (2011: 31-32) argues that the 2007 Australia-Japan Joint Defense Declaration was brought about not by *kantei* or LDP initiative to initiate policy for deeper security cooperation with Australia, but by senior officials in the MOFA and the newly established MOD. Neither the Cabinet nor other policy bodies such as the Policy Affairs Research Council were involved in an institutional capacity, and the issue had never been discussed within Cabinet meetings or in the Diet. This recent inclusion of the MOD into the

proposing aspect of the security policymaking process equally suggests its emergence as a more influential change agent. This would become more apparent in the years leading up to the second Abe administration.

The growing assertion of vested bureaucratic interests in the defense sector can also be seen in the process of elevating the JDA itself. Prior to the ministerial upgrade, agency officials had lobbied intensely by distributing 290,000 pamphlets explaining how the change would create a stronger institution that is more efficient at its job of defending the country and securing peace. Publicity meetings were also held at local government offices and even foreign embassies in order to promote arguments speaking for the upgrade and to dispel overseas concerns that viewed the plans with suspicion (Asahi Shimbun⁵ 2006a). Abe himself declared the upgrade to constitute the “first major step and the foundation toward building a new country” (*aratana kuni-dzukuri wo okonau tame no kiso, ôkina dai-ippo to naru*; Mainichi Shimbun 2007). It is likely that Abe was expecting the redefinition of the MOD’s role to become a valuable tool in his pursuing of policy implementation, and thus encouraged the elevation process early on.

Emergence of an assertive MOD

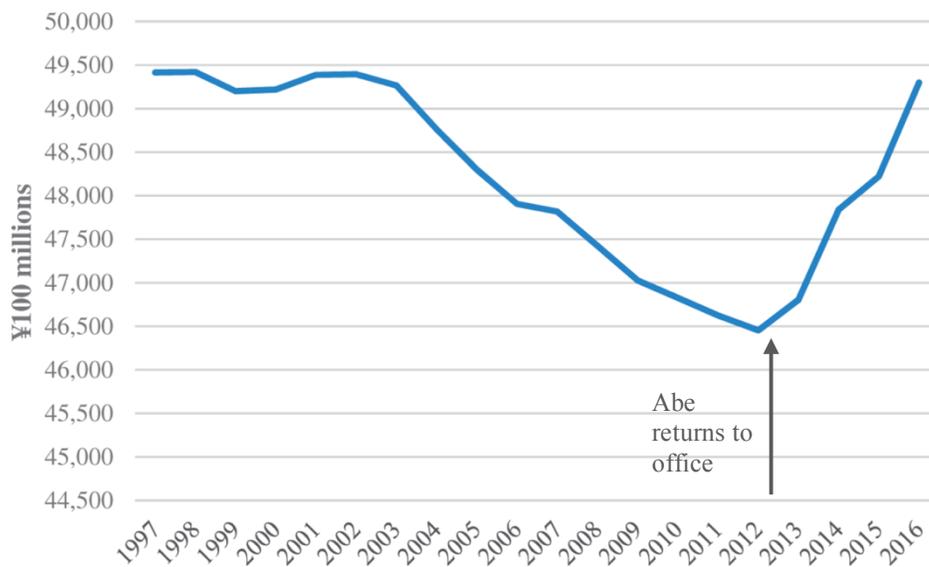
Abe’s restarting of his key agenda after his comeback in 2012 naturally pushed the MOD and policy-influencing functions back into the limelight. Under the new leadership, the MOD saw its chance to expand its authority toward a more “normal” military agency while improving its public image which had suffered from various scandals and incidents in the years between the two governments. In a rare publicity campaign, various SDF-related commercial products including DVDs and miniature model tanks were produced, military manufacturers emboldened by the Abe government’s arms procurement relaxations sought media attention, and research surveys indicated that “public trust” in the SDF had increased since the Koizumi administration (Asahi 2013a).

To complement Abe’s ever-assertive security agenda, the MOD responded by expeditiously booting up its activities in 2013 and 2014 in anticipating a series of changes under new (and old) leadership. These

⁵ Henceforth: Asahi.

activities included bold budget requests that reverted a 11-year downward trend (Fig. 7) and extensive SDF equipment procuring. The budget requests had in mind the not just an increase in personnel and equipment, but also R&D spending on various new projects including Global Hawk surveillance aircrafts, Osprey transport aircrafts, and the development of an amphibious special unit. It also stepped up its efforts to develop defense protocols in order to counter Chinese encroachment by drones.

Figure 7. Defense Expenditure Trend 1997-2016 (MOD: FY 2016 Budget Request)



The MOD made record budget requests five times in a row up to FY 2017 when it asked for 5.1 trillion yen. This was in line with efforts by the core executive to expand Japan’s security architecture under the myriad of reformulated defense outlines including the NSS, the NDPG, and the Mid Term Defense Plan, showcasing the role of the MOD in implementing central government agenda. Thus, the MOD took further incremental steps toward asserting its ministerial authority after Abe’s comeback, welcoming the returning PM’s reprised emphasis on proactive security and defense policy but also averring its policymaking competences. In August 2013, the Committee to Study Defense Ministry Reforms (*bôeishô kaikaku kentô iinkai*) presented to Defense Minister Onodera a proposal for organizational reform that would eliminate the ministry’s Bureau of Operational Policy, a division of civilian oversight. The proposal argued for the

centralization of JSDF oversight by uniformed personnel while simultaneously adding new senior uniformed and non-uniformed positions. The reform plans had originally been proposed to Abe by *kokubôzoku* lawmakers within the LDP (Asahi 2013b). This showed the LDP's intention to realign the framework for SDF operations more in line with international practices. At the same time, the MOD indicated that it intended to enhance the policy planning ability of its Bureau of Defense Policy in order to balance the centralization sought after by Abe through establishing the NSC (Asahi 2013c). It is noticeable in this instance that inter-agency competition increasingly reemerged as a concern with the entrance of another agency actor on the policymaking stage, potentially poised to challenge existing power structures.

Thus in 2015, the Internal Bureau's Operations and Planning Division was dissolved and unified under the Joint Staff, while limiting the Internal Bureau's role to that of policy matters. As Musashi (2017: 257) notes, through revising Article 12 of the MOD Law, uniformed and non-uniformed personnel were put on an equal footing in terms of their advising capacity and influence vis-à-vis the defense minister. This constituted a major shift in the basic structure of the MOD that is sometimes overlooked in analyses of Japanese security. Civilian oversight of the SDF, which had long been a stalwart feature of Japan's military, was effectively undermined through this change.

In terms of inter-ministerial competition, it can also be said that the centralization of strategic thinking coming with the establishment of the NSC staffed with elite bureaucrats and Abe's close aides has triggered a shifting of ministerial influence on national security. The MOD now has much say in the National Security Staff, removing the MOFA from its long-held superior responsibility (Ross 2017: 2). For instance, the NSC staff includes uniformed personnel for the first time to represent SDF interests in policymaking at a direct intersection with the executive.

Research and development drive

Since Abe 2.0, the MOD has also become more involved in promoting military research. Encouraged by the administration's lift on arms exports in 2014 and its efforts to engage in joint weapon system development with partners such as Australia, it subsequently moved to establish a research funding program endowed

with 300 million yen by which universities could apply to receive up to 30 million yen annually to be spent on national security and defense-related research. In addition, the MOD established the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency, an agency to promote weapons development, procurement, exports, and international arms exchanges. The entity was also designed to assist defense industry companies in administrative procedures to facilitate overseas selling and joint development with foreign firms.

In the past, such R&D was limited to the defense industry as the experience of government-led military research during World War II had rendered such projects highly sensitive in Japan's postwar psyche. Accordingly, the MOD's decision to reach out to academia was met with wariness and criticism. The next year the total subsidy was increased to 600 million yen, and for FY 2017, *kokubōzoku* lobbying within the LDP achieved a drastic increase to 11 billion yen, nearly twenty-fold of its initial budget (Asahi 2016). The 2013 NDPG revision had stressed the need for further defense research through engaging with domestic academia (28) and, thus, this proved to be yet another example of an increasing convergence of ministerial and national interests, as represented by the MOD (*shōeki*) and the Abe government (*kokueki*).

4.1.2. MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Securitization of China's military rise in MOD publications from 2007

The process through which the defense bureaucracy increasingly asserted its positional power thus started in 2007. Following its upgrade, the same year also marked the beginning of the Defense Ministry's gradual securitization of China's military rise. The principal document which is accountable for this process is the Annual Defense White Paper (*bōei hakusho*, DWP).

It covers a range of global security issues, including the defense policies of major military powers, issues in the international community such as regional conflicts, terrorism, military use of outer space, cyberspace, and maritime trends, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It also outlines Japan's basic defense concepts and policies, military expenditure, defense capabilities, and trends in its alliance with the US. In addition, it explains Japan's activities and efforts in international security cooperation, peacekeeping operations, and defense equipment and technology research.

The relevant sections about China are contained within the segment “Security Environment Surrounding Japan” (*waga kuni wo torimaku anzen hoshô kankyô*), chapter “Defense Policies of Other Countries” (*shogaikoku no kokubô seisaku nado*).

Earlier DWPs such as the 2006 edition had referred to Chinese military trends as “[drawing] attention from countries in the region” (*chiiki no kakkoku ga sono dôkô ni chûmoku suru sonzai to natte iru*, 40; 37)⁶, with the neutral term “attention” (*chûmoku*) being used. While a lack of transparency in Chinese military expenditure as well as PLA modernization had already been noted in these earlier editions, the overall rhetoric in outlining China’s military situation remained relatively neutral until this point.

From 2007 on, however, there is a clear drift toward a “China threat” rhetoric that manifests itself for the first time in the DWP edition of the same year and coincides with Abe’s first term. The term *kenen* (“concern”) is introduced to replace the former *chûmoku*. As a result of troop modernization and non-transparency in military capabilities, the DWP 2007 finds that “concerns over the future modernization of the Chinese military forces have been thus increasing” (*Chûgoku no gunji-ryoku kindaika no yukue ni kansuru kenen ga takamatte iru*, 53; 49).

Furthermore, the DWP urges for the first time to “carefully analyze” (*shinchô ni bunseki shite iku*) what impact this modernization “will exert on the regional situation and Japan’s national security” (*Waga kuni no anzen hoshô ni ataeru eikyô*, Ibid). At the same time, the DWP 2007 stressed that explanations given for a Chinese anti-satellite weapon test in the same year did not alleviate Japanese concerns, thus incorporating the Japanese government’s position more explicitly into its analysis. In addition, this edition marked the first time that a detailed comparison of Chinese and Taiwanese military capabilities was included, emphasizing a steady increase in the procurement of Chinese fighter jets in relation to Taiwan’s.

The 2008 edition largely continued the trend started in 2007. Rhetoric and structure remain similar, “concerns” about China’s military strength and its impact on Japanese security are reiterated. It also notes that, despite rapid military modernization, “China does not show a clear, specific future vision” (49).

⁶ First page number refers to the English translation of the DWP, while the second indicates the original Japanese text.

From 2009 on, several structural changes including content additions are made to the DWP. The analysts delve more into the rationale behind Chinese military conduct and find that “China prioritizes the defense of national sovereignty (...) and the interests of the Chinese people *above all else*”. The 2009 edition also focuses more in detail on China’s maritime activities, expressing concern over the PLA Navy’s enhancing of blue-water capabilities and tracing Chinese activities in waters near Japan with map illustrations. The DWP notes that Chinese vessels passed near Japanese territory in a number of instances and conducted illegal navigational operations in Japanese territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands (55-57).

The 2010 edition then renames the sections of China’s maritime activities to focus more heavily on waters near Japan while noting incidents that involved a 10-vessel Chinese fleet including submarines passing through the Nansei trough near Okinawa on its way to military exercises and Chinese helicopters surveying Japanese destroyers from a sensitively close range (61-63).

The 2011 edition increases the China chapter length, analyzing in further detail China’s evolving military capabilities, including nuclear and missile forces as well as military use of space and cyber warfare capabilities. It continues to note a growing list of Chinese incursions around Japanese internal waters while pointing out further incidents in which PLA helicopters flew close to Japanese destroyers engaged in patrolling in the East China Sea (82). It is also the first time that Chinese behavior is characterized as “assertive” (Ibid: 72). In the Japanese original, the term *kôatsuteki* is used which translates into “high-handed” or “domineering”, thus carrying a decidedly more negative connotation than the English translation. The timing of these changes is unlikely to be coincidental as the Senkaku dispute had just begun to intensify after the fishing trawler collision in September 2010.

In 2012, the DWP warns that Chinese advancements into the Pacific Ocean near Japanese waters are becoming “routine” (36). At the same time, it points out that Chinese monitoring activities have increased and returns to a 2010 helicopter incident which it now calls “very dangerous” (38) behavior by China (*kiken-na kôï*, 38).

Roughly coinciding with the return of the LDP and Abe, the DWP 2013 marks another drift toward more aggressive rhetoric and a clearer framing of China as a threat. Beside continuing to stress China’s rapid

expansion in “surrounding airspace and waters”, it bluntly states: “(...) China has *attempted to change the status quo by force* based on its own assertion which is *incompatible with the existing order of international law*” (*chikara ni yoru genjô henkô no kokoromi; kokusai-hô chitsujo to wa aiirenai*, 30; 30). As a result, the DWP urges Japan to pay “utmost attention” (*tsuyoi kanshin*, 32; 32) to every Chinese move.

In the section “Chinese activities in waters near Japan”, it goes on to criticize more openly Chinese “intrusions” into Japan’s waters, the “violation” of its airspace, and “dangerous actions that could cause a contingency situation, *which are extremely regrettable*” (*kiwamete ikan de ari*, 39; 39). It subsequently calls on China to “accept and stick to the international norms” (Ibid).

There are other examples of this more direct and aggressive rhetoric in the DWP 2013. This edition clearly represented the shifting view among Japanese defense policymakers that China had gone from a state that was gradually and understandably modernizing its military for the sake of national defense, to a belligerent neighbor that is continually and routinely violating Japanese sovereign rights, thus posing an obvious threat to Japanese security. Defense Minister Onodera at the time stated that the DWP’s contents were “based on the *reality* that China is engaging in unpredictable acts that could bring about a contingency situation” (*kiken-na kôdô ga okonowarete iru ni motozuite*, Yomiuri Shimbun⁷ 2013ab).

In the 2014 DWP, with the second Abe government being in its second year of office, descriptions of Chinese behavior continued to be equally explicit. While referring to China’s adoption of “coercive measures”, the paper proclaims that “Japan has great concerns” (*tsuyoku kenen shite ori*, 34; 34). This marked the first time that the term *kenen*, which had been used since the 2007 edition, was now paired with another to express even “stronger” (or “greater”) concerns. In terms of structure, 2014 also introduced a new subsection about Chinese activities in Japan’s airspace which made note of China’s controversial announcement of an Air Defense Identification Zone over the East China Sea in November 2013. The DWP further stressed unprecedented increases in aircraft scrambles against Chinese aircraft in the past ten years (42-44).

⁷ Henceforth: Yomiuri.

Through these rhetoric changes and structural additions, the bureaucrats and policymakers of the MOD gradually elevated and framed China's military rise as a threat to Japanese security in the Annual Defense White Papers. This trend of increasingly disseminating information about Chinese military conduct with respect to its implications for Japan has visibly grown since the 2007 edition. The implications for Japan, in particular, are what the DWPs have come to stress more bluntly. In a way, the relatively objective character of earlier editions has given rise to a more biased interpretation of Chinese military activities.

On top of this, the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), a think tank under the MOD that conducts policy research and serves as an educational institution for the training of SDF officers, has come to play a supplementary role in calling attention to the "China threat" more recently. But even as early as 2008, the NIDS publicly issued a statement (which the Yomiuri called "rare") in which it openly criticized China's propagation of the "human exchange" slogan in military exchanges as a means to "promote [China's] image as a peace-loving nation" (Yomiuri 2008a).

Since 2010, the NIDS has been publishing annually the *China Security Report* which exclusively analyzes the strategic and military trends of China. This is the first time that a single state gets its own research publication under the MOD umbrella. The NIDS does not officially represent the position of the government or the MOD, but due to its organizational proximity and information sharing, similar views are to be expected. Many NIDS researchers are former SDF or MOD officials. In fact, the *China Security Report* covers Chinese military trends in more detail than the DWP, as well as delves into the domestic politics that surround it. It is also less neutral and even more critical than the DWP in its overall language.

The inaugural edition in 2010, for instance, rhetorically questions the intentions of China's military buildup, noting that China has been focusing on military strength since the end of the Cold War more than 20 years ago. It also notes that Chinese responses in conflicts with surrounding states have been "forceful", especially in the South China Sea where Chinese vessels have "acted menacingly" toward the patrol boats of other states (3). The report further stresses the discrepancy, or "inconsistency", between official statements that emphasize cooperation with surrounding states and actual behavioral trends by the PLA. These trends are said to have "created a sense of insecurity among East Asian countries (...)" (Ibid: 3-4).

The columns found in the *China Security Report* take the “China threat” a step further. Covered by the fact that they are seemingly opinion pieces, the columns detail single incidents or issues with an even more forthright rhetoric. In the 2010 edition, one calls Chinese behavior against a US Navy surveillance ship as “obstructive” and “violating the international norm of freedom of navigation” (Ibid: 19). The column also criticizes China’s unlawful conduct regarding maritime zones and accuses it intending to restrict the freedom of navigation in international waters.

The 2011 edition then practically starts off with a chapter titled “Uncompromising External Behaviors” which details the “renewed assertiveness” of Chinese foreign policy and the influence that the PLA’s aggressive conduct in the region may be having on this policy development. It goes on discuss China’s development of Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles including potential clashes with the US and its potential impact on Japanese safety (3-4; 14).

The 2012 edition focuses more on civilian control of the Chinese military including party-army relations and supposed efforts by the PLA to increase its autonomy in policy coordination. The report warns that effective control by the government is necessary in order to prevent contingencies and crises arising from uncoordinated PLA actions (55).

In 2013, the *China Security Report* coincided with the DWP of the same year in terms of another drift toward harsher rhetoric. The report pointed out that China had become increasingly assertive in tone and action, detailing China’s pursuit of “core interests without compromise” and arguing that Chinese politics of crisis management were mostly based on “propaganda” and “coercive diplomacy” (22). 2013 also coincided with the fire-control radar incident in which a PLAN vessel directed its target aim on a MSDF destroyer. Both the DWP and the *Report* vehemently argued that this constituted the first instance of a direct threat from China.

The 2014 edition then continues this cumulative trend of China condemnation, warning of China’s constant military budget increases and “forceful maritime expansion” (37). This edition also focuses on China’s outer space and cyberspace military capabilities. A column directly accuses the China of being engaged in “state-sponsored industrial espionage” by proclaiming that information was stolen and leaked in

a hacking attack on the Society of Japanese Aerospace Companies. It also warns of potential spyware in Chinese technology, and implies Chinese government ties to a patriotism-encouraged hacker group known as Honker Union (53).

In addition to the MOD's flagship DWP publication, the NIDS *China Security Report* thus adds to the securitizing behavior through which the Japanese defense bureaucracy began to elevate China's military rise and subsequently framed it as a threat to Japanese security. At times, a distinction between securitizing behavior and simple "China bashing" on the part of NIDS is not clear-cut. Additionally, the MOD provides numerous other publicly available documents that analyze and warn of Chinese military activities, including graphs showing stark increases in Chinese aircraft scrambles in Japanese airspace from 2010, as well as Chinese vessel incursions around the Senkaku islands from 2008. In this way, it disseminates information to a wide audience about the urgency of the "China threat" and the need to address it.

It is worth remarking that the shift toward stronger securitization of China in the DWPs coincided with the MOD upgrade in 2007, while just a few years later the NIDS presents its own rendition of China analysis that incorporates rhetorical elements as well as expands content and structure found in the DWPs. Due to the similarities, it is plausible to conclude that both arguments and views of the MOD and NIDS are largely convergent. The think tank and its parent ministry thus form a united front whilst mutually reinforcing their positions on China.

This also shows that the defense bureaucracy had been considering China a threat for a while before this consensus in the bureaucratic discourse shifted onto the political elite discourse. In fact, when looking at the East Asian Strategic Review, another NIDS publication, it is observable that critical appraisals of China had existed as early as 2000 but were likely not representing the consensus at the time. In the English translation of the edition, the authors note Japanese "concern" over growing Chinese marine research activity in Japan's EEZ (209). Furthermore, the Japanese original of the 2001 edition mentions "trends to be concerned about on the Chinese side have also been observed" (*Chûgoku-gawa ni kenen subeki dôkô mo mirareta*, 153). It is conceivable that bureaucratic officials were possibly either unable to openly articulate

their concerns beyond this at the time, thus explaining why the shift toward threat rhetoric in official government publications had not happened earlier.

4.1.3. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MOFA depictions of China's military rise

In contrast, the Diplomatic Bluebook (DB) produced by the MOFA employed a milder approach in its depictions of China and China-Japan relations that lasted longer before they gave way to more critical assessments. In the years up until 2010, the DB stress bilateral dialogue, trust-building, economic cooperation, and efforts for improvement of the bilateral relations. For instance, efforts under Fukuda to create a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests” are mentioned consecutively. These efforts are defined as cooperative endeavors in a range of fields such as energy conservation, people-to-people exchanges, middle- and high-level reciprocal visits, as well as economic and financial issues.

In 2008, the 30th anniversary of the Friendship Treaty is highlighted, which entailed a series of mutual visits including Hu Jintao's visit to Japan after a decade with no visits by a Chinese leader. The tone is rather optimistic, emphasizing both countries' intentions to “contribute jointly to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region (...)” (13).

In the 2009 edition, those intentions are reiterated while joint development of an oil and gas field in East China Sea is mentioned in connection with the conclusion of the “Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship” agreement (15-16). However, at the same time the term *kenen* (“concern”) is first used to refer to Chinese military modernization, two years after it was introduced in the DWP. The Bluebook points out that the biannual Chinese Defense White Papers are “not enough to alleviate the concerns of the international community including Japan” (*kenen wo fusshoku suru ni taru mono dewa nai*, 36).

The 2011 edition of the DB then begins to assess China more critically, and in referring to the trawler collision near the Senkaku islands in September 2010, reads “Japan will encourage China to play a more appropriate role as a responsible member in the international community” (10).

Until the 2013 edition, depictions of China and its military activities are not expanded or changed. Coinciding with the harsher rhetoric in the 2013 DWP, this also changes in the 2013 DB. In particular, the DB in that year focuses heavily on recent developments around the Senkaku islands and criticizes China's assertions that the islands are Chinese territory. It stresses that "Japan cannot by any means tolerate the behavior of the Chinese government (...)" (11).

The trend towards harsher appraisals continues with the 2014 edition which dedicates a large section in the China chapter to the ongoing Senkaku dispute. It asserts that Chinese intrusions into Japanese waters, as well as its announcement of an ADIZ in November 2013 constitute infringements on international law (12). It also adapts a more similar rhetoric to previous DWPs, including the claim that Chinese moves near the Senkaku islands represent a "unilateral attempt to change the status quo" (*ippôteki-na genjô henkô no kokoromi*, 28). This adoption of rhetoric comes a year after the DWP had already warned of Chinese attempts to change the status quo by force.

Clearly, until relatively recently the MOFA Diplomatic Bluebooks largely concentrated on cooperative efforts of trust-building and dialogue, while avoiding to incorporate overly partisan information and positions about ongoing rows such as the Senkaku dispute. The later adoption of similar rhetoric and content as in the DWPs may suggest two things: (1) that views among Japanese foreign policymakers began to be affected more noticeably by the defense bureaucracy's assessments of China's military rise, or (2) that the consensus built by the defense establishment, which was later largely adopted by the *kantei* as the study will show, simply constrained the MOFA officials in their depictions of China in the DBs to the extent that it had to follow suit.

There are a few indications that speak for the latter scenario. Sebata (2010: 335) notes in this context that the process through which the MOFA's political clout began to slowly decline in relation to the JDA/MOD had been ongoing since the 1990s. Concurrently, the LDP, and *kokubôzoku* (defense lobby) members as representatives of MOD interests in particular, had been gaining influence on the decision-making process in respect to policy and budget formulation. With this in mind, the transition from JDA to MOD, which was advocated by both the Koizumi administration and defense lobby members within the

LDP prior to Abe 1.0's arrival, seemed rather natural. Due to this and as the core executive has been gaining greater control of the bureaucracy as a whole, the MOFA has been declining in relevance since, also exemplified by the shifting of management of the US alliance to the MOD, as well as numerous scandals eroding trust in the ministry (Rathus 2011: 62-63). This shows that the MOD's influence in the security and defense policy process relative to the MOFA had begun to increase at least since its upgrade under Abe 1.0, if not earlier. As a result of the upgrade, the defense bureaucracy had increased its positional power and voice in the security discourse in a way that concomitantly impacted the MOFA's standing rather negatively, thus giving priority to MOD assessments on the national level.

4.2. REPRODUCING CONCERN OVER CHINA: DOMESTIC RESTRUCTURING

In addition to the increasing securitization of China's military rise by the Japanese defense bureaucracy, another process transpired during the period between the first Abe government (2006-07) and the second (2012-). This process consists of two pillars that supported the threat elevation led by the bureaucratic sector.

On the one hand, the Japanese newspaper media started to increasingly cover topics concerning the regional security environment, China's rise more generally, and Chinese military activities more specifically. Its reports about China began to employ more critical language, while its columns directly called for security and defense policy reform as well as criticized the Japanese government. As a result, the media discourse contributed to the securitization of China's military rise by "fueling" the "China threat".

On the other hand, Japanese public opinion toward China became more critical and disapproving during the same time frame, while its attitude toward the SDF and potential changes to Japan's security policies gradually turned more favorable. This constitutes a gradual normative shift as a larger portion of the public now increasingly supports a harder stance vis-à-vis China, and a more assertive Japanese defense stance. This section analyzes in detail how this process occurred in the media and public discourses.

4.2.1. MEDIA DISCOURSE

Increasing media coverage of the security environment and China from 2007

From around 2007, Japanese newspapers including the Asahi and Yomiuri Shimbun began to report increasingly on topics that dealt with Japan's regional security environment, China's rise, and Chinese military activities. In assessing the frequency of articles related to these topics, trends regarding the number of articles produced in a given year between 2007 and 2015 have been analyzed on a quantitative basis. This has been done via keyword searches consisting of relevant and commonly used terms and phrases in these articles.⁸ The Asahi and Yomiuri have been chosen as they each represent two different sides of the

⁸ Data stems from the Kikuzo II Visual (Asahi) and Yomidata Rekishikan (Yomiuri) online archives.

ideological spectrum, with the Asahi considered more liberal and center-left, and the Yomiuri more conservative and center-right.

Figures 8 and 9 give an indication of the number of articles containing the keywords “security environment” (*anzen hoshô kankyô*) and “region” (*chiiki*), commonly used together to refer to Japan’s regional security environment in the media. This is particularly the case when reporting about Chinese and North Korean military activities.

Figure 8. Number of articles containing relevant keywords (1)

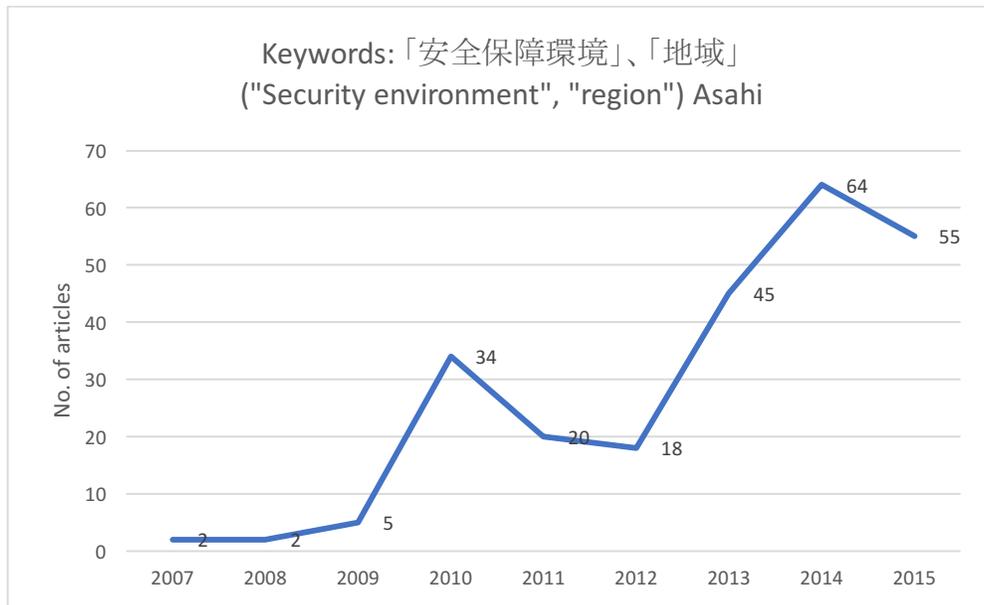
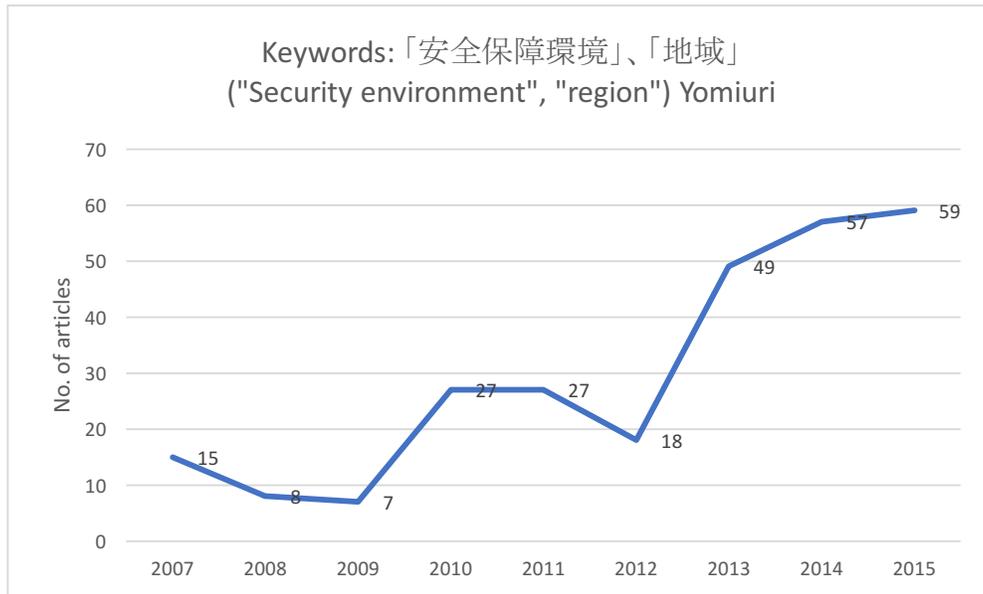


Figure 9. Number of articles containing relevant keywords (2)



For both the Asahi and Yomiuri newspapers, there is overall a clear increase in the number of articles concerning the topic of the regional environment between 2007 and 2015. While only a handful of articles were written between the years 2007 and 2009, there is a dramatic increase in 2010, over six-fold for the Asahi and over three-fold in the Yomiuri. In 2007, the Yomiuri reported more frequently about developments in the security environment than did the Asahi, potentially due to developments on the Korean peninsula including a recent North Korean missile test and its first nuclear test in October 2006. However, in 2009, North Korea launched further missile and nuclear tests, yet a larger increase did not take place until 2010. This absence suggests that developments on the Korean peninsula were not chiefly responsible for the changes.

Indeed, the most striking incident in the regional security environment in 2010 was related to China: the intensification of the Senkaku dispute, characterized by the collision of a Chinese fishing trawler with Japanese Coast Guard vessels in September 2010. The Japan Coast Guard proceeded to arrest and detain the captain which resulted in a heavy diplomatic row between China and Japan. The fact that no other major

developments in the security environment occurred in the same year gives weight to the assumption that the worsening of China-Japan relations is largely responsible for this increase.

The next two years saw a temporary easing in tensions. In 2012, before Abe returned to office at the end of year, frictions intensified yet again. In the summer, dozens of nationalist activists from both China and Japan attempted to assert sovereignty over the islands by planting flags on the islands. In addition, then-Governor of Tokyo Ishihara controversially stated in the same year that he intended to purchase three of the islands from its private owner. This sparked outrage in China including loud criticism from government officials as well as anti-Japanese protests among the public.

In this context, it is striking that the newspaper media has concurrently been reporting more frequently about China's rise in general (Fig. 10).

Figure 10. Number of articles containing relevant keywords (3)

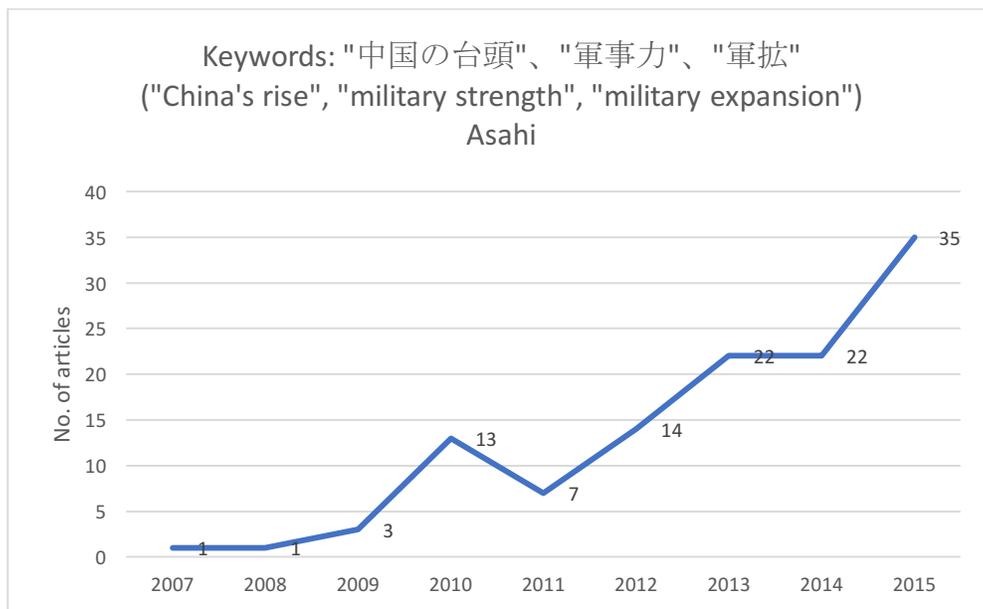


The graph shows a relatively consistent increase in the number of articles containing the subject matter of China's rise. Similar to Figures 8 and 9, 2010 sees a considerable jump from earlier years. In fact, there were over twice as many articles dealing with China's rise at the end of 2012 (Abe's return) than there were

during 2007 (Abe’s first term). Although China’s rise (*Chûgoku no taitô*) as a term used in the media does not necessarily refer to military developments and instead may be used to describe China’s economic development and other activities, further data suggests that the Japanese newspaper media was in fact mostly preoccupied with the military element of China’s rise.

Figure 11 traces the frequency of newspaper articles by adding the more specific keywords “military strength” (*gunji-ryoku*) and “military expansion” (*gunkaku*, includes *gunkaku rosen*) to the existing “China’s rise” (*Chûgoku no taitô*).

Figure 11. Number of articles containing relevant keywords (4)



While the total amount of newspaper articles per year is considerably lower compared to more general articles mentioning China’s rise, the same consistent upwards trend is observable between 2007 and 2015. 2010 again stands out as a year with more reports on average, again suggesting that the intensification of the Senkaku dispute was perceived to be closely associated with China’s rise and Chinese military developments. Similarly, there is another increase visible before the beginning of Abe’s second term after a decrease in 2011.

Figure 12 presents another graph with alternative keyword searches (*Chûgoku, gunji-ryoku zôkyô*), thus showing that the trends in the number of newspaper articles concerning China's military rise are not necessarily subject to random statistical fluctuations, but instead imply a strong correlation between actual levels of Chinese assertiveness and their prominence in the media.

Figure 12. Number of articles containing relevant keywords (5)



Especially from the (relative) beginning of the DPJ administration in 2010 to the return of the LDP and Abe in late 2012, the frequency in reports mentioning China's military buildup remained high as opposed to before 2010 and after 2013. This again implies the centrality of the Senkaku dispute as well as the increased Chinese maritime presence in the East China Sea as a result of the intensification. The years between 2010 and 2013 saw additional incidents in which Japanese and Chinese military forces came close to clashes. For instance, this was the case when Chinese helicopters flew into the close vicinity of patrolling MSDF destroyers, and more critically, when a Chinese warship locked its fire-radar onto another MSDF vessel in early 2013.

These figures thus show that there exists a convergence in the frequency of newspaper coverage dealing with the regional security environment and China's military rise between 2007 and 2015. The Japanese newspaper media became increasingly preoccupied with reporting Chinese military assertiveness after 2007, and even more so after the intensification of the Senkaku dispute in 2010. This suggests that perceptions of China as a potential military threat had changed and become more dominant in this time frame. But because a quantitative analysis of the trends in newspaper reporting alone does not necessarily give a highly accurate indication of China perceptions in the media discourse, the following section explores the contents of this reporting on a qualitative basis.

Threat “fueling” in the media discourse

News reporting of China had not only increased between the first and second Abe governments, but also the language used to describe Chinese moves in the region became harsher and often more critical in tone. At times, this mirrored the language used in official government publications such as the DWP. The newspaper media, here again chiefly considering the Asahi and Yomiuri, effectively supported perceptions of an increasingly dangerous China with political and ideological positions bearing little significance on its reporting. As a result, it “fueled” the “China threat” and did so in two ways: (1) Extensive newspaper reports about regional developments and incidents *implicitly* reproduced concerns about China, and (2) editorials *explicitly* reproduced concerns through deliberately framing China as a threat and criticizing as well as recommending government responses.

Reports about China

On the one hand, newspaper reports extensively cover the annual DWPs as well as the *China Security Report* since 2010. For the 2009–2012 editions, article titles include alarmist vocabulary that is originally found in the ministry's publications. For instance, the article detailing the 2009 edition is entitled *Chûgoku-gun no kaiyô katsudô, kappatsu-ka ni tsuyoi kenen* (“great concerns toward Chinese maritime activities and expansion”, Asahi 2009a). It is interesting here that *tsuyoi* was automatically added although the

combination for emphasis did not appear in the DWP before the 2014 edition. The 2010 article then reiterates *kenen* in its title while in 2011 Asahi includes a quote from the DWP noting its *kôatsuteki taiô ni fuan* (“anxiety about high-handed responses“, 2011a). In an article covering the 2013 edition, the Yomiuri notes that the DWP was using “unprecedented severe language” (*kore made ni nai kibishii hyôgen de keikai-kan wo shimeshita*, 2013c; 2013d). In its coverage of the 2011 DWP, the newspaper even faults the MOD for coming up “shallow” in its descriptions of “crucial developments regarding Japan’s national security, with notable omissions including (...) China’s increasing maritime activities” (2011a). This is despite an extension of the China chapter from the 2011 edition.

Furthermore, the English versions of the articles possess similar titles that underline the MOD’s evaluations, such as *China buildup stokes concern* (2009b), *Defense Paper cites concern over China* (2010a), and *Japan clearly concerned about China’s growing military build-up* (2012a). In addition, an article covering the 2011 NIDS China Security Report notes that “[the Report] sounded the alarm about China’s growing military presence (...)” (Asahi 2011b).

In this way, the coverage by both the Asahi and Yomiuri effectively echoes the concerns expressed in the corresponding White Papers and other MOD publications. As a result of this coverage, the newspaper media concomitantly broadens the target audience of the government publications and thus their reception by the public.

But also beside the coverage of ministry and think tank publications, the reports note dangerous implications for Japan, such as China’s new missile capability as being “also a grave concern for Japan” (Asahi 2011c). Another article states that “China is moving into regional bully mode” (Asahi 2010b) while its Japanese original title proclaims that China is assuming a *Gun-chûshin ni kyôkô-ron* (“Army-centered hard line”, 2010c). Furthermore, amid heightened tensions in the Senkaku dispute in 2013, the Yomiuri produced an extended article series detailing Chinese incursions and violations around the islands. In this way, newspaper reports additionally inform the public and other target audiences of China’s ostensible jeopardizing of Japan’s national security in recent years.

Editorials about China and Japanese government responses

The editorials take this reporting by the Asahi and Yomiuri a step further. In many cases, the rhetoric employed to describe China and its military developments, as well as responses by the Japanese government is unflattering at best, and highly critical at worst.

In 2008, a Yomiuri editorial argues that “China’s military build-up must be closely watched” and that Japan should “patiently keep pressing China” to make its military spending more transparent (2008b). In 2012, it reiterates those warnings by calling on Japan to remain “vigilant” over China’s budget increases for which “explanations are insufficient”. It also argues that the downwards trend in Japan’s defense budget must be “halted as soon as possible” in view of China’s military rise (2012a). In the same year, another editorial entitled *Stop defense budget cuts, keep eye on future* heavily criticizes this downwards trend in military spending and notes vast differences between Chinese and Japanese expenditures. It demands the government to “make the SDF bigger, and more dynamic” (2012b). In this manner, the editorials link Chinese assertiveness with a perceived inadequacy of Japanese capabilities.

Other editorials argue for institutional changes. In 2011, one urges the Noda administration to establish the NSC in order to better handle future contingencies and emergencies. In doing so, it presents the trawler collision incident in 2010 as a symptom of China’s military emergence (2011b).

After the helicopter incidents in the same year, both Yomiuri and Asahi also criticize the responses of the DPJ leadership. The Yomiuri argues that the “Japanese government’s response was too slow” and that the “Hatoyama administration’s view of the status quo is too optimistic” (2010a), while the Asahi finds it “extremely regrettable” (*kiwamete ikan da*) that Hatoyama chose to downplay the incidents during a China-Japan summit (2010d).

Assessments of China’s conduct in the region and its implications for Japan’s security equally strike an alerting tone in the newspaper editorials. In 2010, the Yomiuri interprets new Chinese legislation designed to assert sovereignty on several islands as potentially facilitating an invasion of the Senkaku islands (2010b). At the same time, the Asahi details a tactical plan by the Chinese military to seize isles in the South China

Sea. It stresses that China may shift its focus toward the East China Sea after consolidating its power in the South China Sea, thus posing a risk to Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku islands (2010b).

In 2013, the Yomiuri proceeds to further condemn China by calling its behavior “totally unacceptable” (*danji de juyō dekinai*), and the “core interest” comment it made to refer to its sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas as “uncalled for” (*o-kadochigai*). The editorial then calls on Japan to “continually inform the international community of China’s transgressions” (*Nihon seifu wa kokusai shakai ni taishi, Chūgoku no futōsei wo nebaridzuyoku uttaeneba naranai*, 2013e; 2013f).

The editorial sections of the Yomiuri and Asahi thus show that the reception of Chinese assertiveness by the newspaper media during 2008 and 2013 was often overwhelmingly critical. In addition to emphasizing the potential dangers of China’s military development and advances (much like in its reports), Japan’s inadequacy to respond properly as marked by government inaction and SDF underfunding is often underlined. While the Yomiuri may appear somewhat more forthright in language and rhetoric, particularly in criticizing the DPJ administration during its years in power, similar positions are also found in the more left-leaning Asahi. In terms of the framing and depiction of Chinese assertiveness in the region, there is surprisingly little difference between these two major newspapers.

Consequently, the combination of newspaper reports and editorials found in the Asahi and Yomiuri contributed to the gradual threat elevation and prioritization of China in the period between the first and second Abe governments. In doing so, this development in the media discourse ultimately supported the primary process by which China came to be securitized in the Japanese national discourse as a whole.

4.2.2. PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Along with the threat elevation of China in the media discourse, the public discourse, as consisting of citizens’ opinions, attitudes, and demands, developed in such a way between 2007 and 2013 that it additionally benefitted the emergence of the “China threat” consensus.

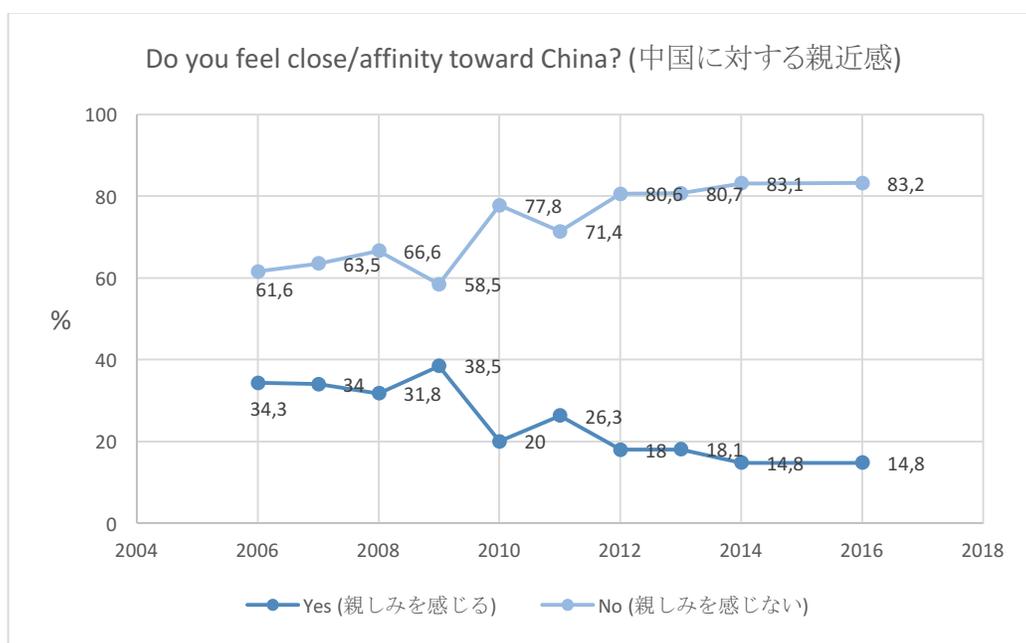
Statistics on public opinion toward national politics as well as (diplomatic) relations with China indicate three things: (1) the Japanese have been viewing China increasingly critical since 2006, (2) attitudes toward

Japan's security posture and the SDF have become more favorable, and (3) attitudes toward the government's security policy agenda have changed. The data compiled stems from Cabinet Office publications in the period from 2006 to 2016. The study here assumes a causal relationship between the mass media's role in opinion shaping and its impact on public opinion trends (cf. Paletz 2002; Graber 2002; Baum 2003).

Attitudes toward China

Figure 13 traces the changing public attitude of the Japanese public towards China.

Figure 13. Public attitude towards China



While the gap between respondents that felt close/affinity toward China and those who did not stood at an approximately three to two ratio in 2006, with over 60 percent saying they did not while over 30 percent said they did, this has been widening considerably since. At the beginning of Abe's second term, only 18 percent replied that they felt close or affinity toward China, while the vast majority at over 80 percent denied feeling so. In 2009 and 2011 the widening trend recovered slightly. Throughout the second Abe

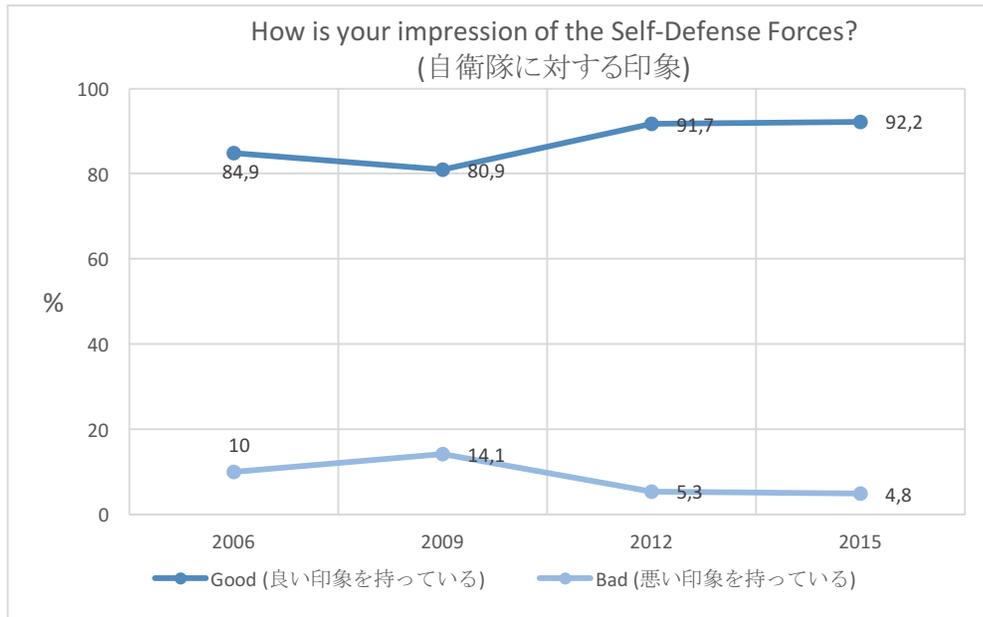
administration, the perceived distance toward China has increased again and feelings of affinity have dropped to under 15 percent. Other surveys undertaken by NPO Genron show similar data, as well as that favorable Chinese views of Japan have likewise plunged (Genron 2014).

What possible external correlations exist that help explain this trend of growing unfavorable feelings toward China in Japan? The first Abe cabinet proclaimed the will to repair ties that had been damaged under Koizumi. In addition, successor Fukuda and counterpart Hu signed an agreement designed to better relations during Hu's visit to Japan in 2008, while next Prime Minister Asô went to Beijing in the same year to attend the 30th anniversary celebrations of the China-Japan Friendship Treaty. Clearly, attempts to improve relations were made, at least at the surface level. But much like the analyses of the MOD publications as well as newspaper media show, the (re-)ignition of the Senkaku dispute in 2010 spurred unfavorable impressions of China considerably. 2010 also marked the year that China surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy, triggering concern in Japan over its own economic trajectory.

Attitudes toward the SDF

At the same time, the Japanese public has grown more accustomed to the existence of its own military forces, and to the idea of increasing its size and presence. Figure 14 indicates a gradual shift in public attitude toward the SDF.

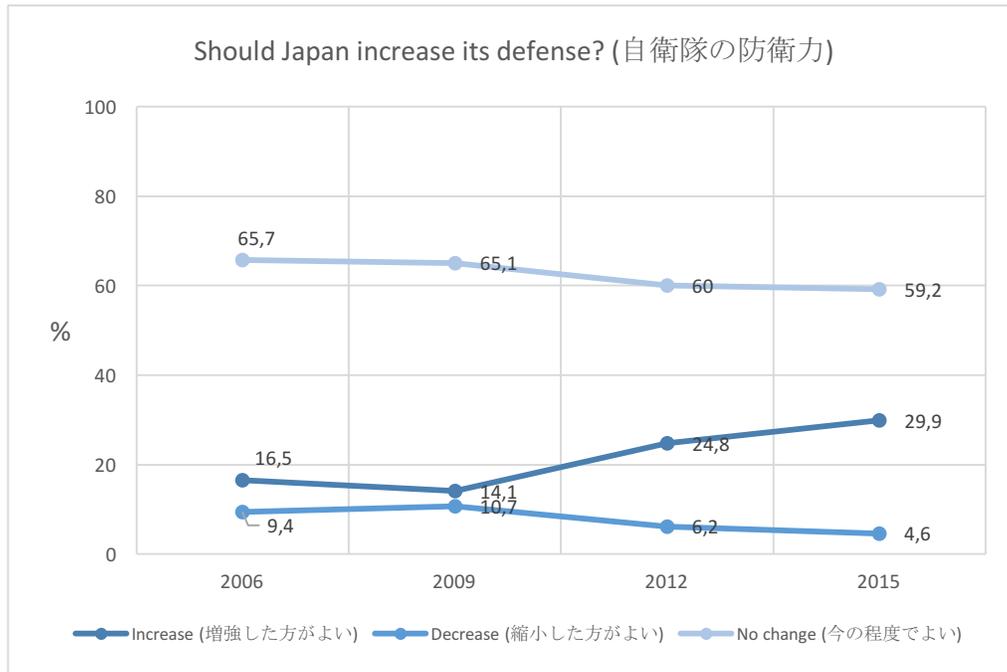
Figure 14. Public impression of the SDF



The majority of citizens harbored a good impression of the SDF even in 2006 (both answers include “relatively good” and “relatively bad”, respectively). Almost 85 percent of respondents replied their impression was good (*yoi inshō wo motte iru*) while only 10 percent disagreed (*warui inshō wo motte iru*). By the time of the second Abe administration, those numbers had increased to over 90 percent, and decreased to around 5 percent, respectively. These numbers stand in stark contrast to public attitudes toward Japan’s military in the latter half of the 20th century when the nation’s dominant antimilitarist structures appeared more salient than they do now. In particular, the majority of the public was highly sensitive toward public displays and symbols of military culture, including uniformed SDF personnel in a governmental capacity and military equipment.

The expansion of its size and scope of activities has been equally controversial in postwar Japan, but Figure 15 suggests that attitudes toward the “normalization” of Japan’s security stance have somewhat changed since 2006.

Figure 15. Public attitude toward SDF expansion



From 2006 throughout 2015, over half of respondents have found that the defense capabilities of the SDF are sufficient. In the same time period, advocates of a reduction of capabilities have decreased from 9.4 to 4.6 percent. The most striking change, however, can be found in the percentage of proponents of a stronger Japanese military stance: from 16.5 up to almost 30 percent in 2015. Only in 2009 did opponents of a stronger SDF experience a slight uptick while the percentage of proponents slightly declined. One may speculate that a series of scandals involving the MOD and SDF around 2008 impacted peoples' perceptions of Japan's defense establishment negatively. At the time, corruption allegations were raised against former Vice Defense Minister Moriya while the SDF reportedly attempted to cover up uncomfortable details regarding its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean (Asahi 2008). In addition, in February a MSDF destroyer collided with a local fishing boat, killing two.

Nevertheless, the changing trend in public attitude toward Japan's military stance is quite obvious. Only advocates of a more muscular SDF role have increased while numbers of both opponents and status-quo backers have declined. As a result, the two main contesting opinions are now expansion versus no expansion

of the SDF. Pacifists and antimilitarists, as mainly found in supporters of very left-leaning parties, appear to be diminishing.

Attitudes toward policy reform

In addition, when comparing attitudes toward the government's security and defense agenda under Abe 1.0 and Abe 2.0, it is noticeable that the public has also become less sensitive toward security and defense policy reform. Under the first government, public reception of Abe's security agenda was largely marked by opposition, whereas under the second government, opposition has moved toward greater ambivalence.

In an Asahi survey from March 2007 that focused on security and defense issues for instance, 69 percent of respondents opposed the government's plan to extend the SDF reconstruction mission in Iraq. The majority of respondents principally disagreed with Japan's cooperative role by deploying SDF troops in Iraq to support US efforts in the "war on terror". Even among supporters of the Abe cabinet, favorable views toward an extension of the deployment were the exception (Asahi 2007a). At the same time, a Yomiuri poll early after Abe's ascendance suggests that the public was generally indifferent toward national security at the time. A majority of voters named welfare and economic issues as their top priorities (59.2 and 50.6 percent, respectively), while Abe's security agenda received little attention (5.7 percent).⁹

Under Abe 2.0, public opinion toward security and defense policy moved further toward ambivalence. In response to the LDP proposal of amending Article 9, 32 percent of respondents initially expressed support whereas 53 percent opposed it (Asahi 2012b). Ahead of the reinterpretation in 2014, 67 percent of poll respondents deemed the procedures of doing so via Cabinet approval as "improper", with around 50 percent of Abe Cabinet supporters percent being of the same opinion (Asahi 2014a). A month later, polling further indicated that not solely the general public considered debate on the issue to have been insufficient (76%), but also that supporters of the reinterpretation did so (59%, Asahi 2014b).

⁹ These figures are cited by Fujihara in "Japan's Political Mess: Abe failed, can Fukuda do better?" (2008: 11).

Polls thus indicate that a large proportion of the public was particularly irked by the manner in which Abe chose to operate, but perhaps not necessarily by the contents of legislation per se. Ahead of proposing the controversial “Peace and Security Preservation Legislation” (PSPL) in 2015 for instance, 52 percent opposed the expansion of SDF overseas activities under the banner of CSD while 33 percent were in support of it and the rest remained unsure (Asahi 2015a). Questioned whether the legislation would contribute to securing Japan, 31 percent agreed while 42 percent disagreed (Asahi 2015b).

Although public opposition primarily outweighed approval in most surveys, the results’ relative proximity suggests that they can be no clear indicator for invariable public opposition toward policy change. In fact, other surveys suggest that the LDP’s much-reiterated phrase “public understanding will come later” was not entirely false. As Midford and Scott argue (2017: 125), “elite influence over Japanese public opinion has been most effective at promoting the gradual erosion of antimilitarist structure of the Japanese state’s ability to wield the sword”. Promoted by repeated state reassurance, and in view of a world order in flux and Japanese perceptions of an increasingly assertive China, public opinion as a whole had become less fazed by the idea of Japan assuming a greater security role in the future.

Surveys undertaken by others such as the Yomiuri confirm this existence of mixed feelings. In June 2014, 60 percent opposing the exercise of CSD agreed to its exercise in particular cases while more than 70 percent supported SDF operations to defend US transport vessels carrying Japanese civilians and joining international minesweeping operations (2014a). In a similar joint poll by Sankei Shimbun and Fuji News Network, as much as 70 percent supported the limited exercise of the right (Ibid). It is also noteworthy that national security issues as a policy priority had almost doubled to 11 percent since Abe 1.0 (Asahi 2012b).

In conclusion, poll data analyzing attitudes toward China, Japan’s military, as well as the government’s policy agenda since 2006 shows that the Japanese public has been undergoing a gradual normative shift. In combination with the China threat “fueling” by the newspaper media, this normative shift thus formed an accelerating process that originated in the media and public discourses, and ultimately impacted the possibility of policy reform.

4.3. EMERGENCE OF A CHINA THREAT CONSENSUS

The threat-framing and -elevation led by *bureaucratic advocacy* as well as *domestic restructuring* processes facilitated the prioritization of China as the most immediate threat to Japanese security. In essence, this successful securitization process in the period from 2007 to 2013 led to two outcomes: (1) Threat perception of China increased and (2) sensitivity toward policy change decreased.

During this period, the Japanese political elite discourse began to slowly embrace the narrative of a China that had become a danger to Japanese security. The universal acceptance of the “China threat” in not only the bureaucratic, media, public, but also in the political discourse from 2013 then effectively finalized the emergence of the “China threat” consensus. On a more practical level, this acceptance by the Japanese political elite can be characterized as the adoption of bureaucratic expertise at the hands of political decision-makers on the one hand, as well as their response to public opinion trends.

Studies on the influence of bureaucratic expertise on Japanese decision-making have been undertaken by numerous scholars (Pempel 1979; Johnson 1995; Curtis 2002; Hook et al. 2011). The political clout and vested interests that bureaucratic agencies have established over decades in the postwar system stand testament to the capabilities and efficiency of the bureaucratic apparatus. The executive, in particular, relies heavily on bureaucratic policymaking expertise and knowledge in leading the state’s decision-making process. As a result of the relatively frequent staff turnover in cabinet positions, ministers are often utterly dependent on the information provided by their ministries due to their own lack of experience and insight. In turn, this gives the bureaucracy considerable leeway in asserting its interests in front of the executive. The securitization of China’s military rise is one such example where the executive adopted the bureaucracy’s position on national security. In particular, it appears that the executive chiefly responded to MOD interests while the MOFA acquiesced. This is most notable in the formulation of the NDPG after 2004, and the NSS in 2013.

The NDPG and NSS are jointly produced by representatives of the MOD, MOFA, the NSC (formerly Security Council), as well as political elites, their aides, and academics. As such, they constitute strategic

documents that are compiled at an intersection of the bureaucracy and executive, and thus reflect a broader consensus over national security issues.

In the 2004 edition, the NDPG reflected earlier cautious evaluations of China by simply noting that “attention” (*chûmoku*) should be given to its future behavior (2). From the 2010 edition on however, reservations expressed in the DWP are increasingly reflected. China’s rapid military modernization and steady defense expenditure increases are explicitly noted while the term *kenen* (“concern”) is incorporated after it had been introduced in the DWP in 2007, and in the DB in 2009. In 2013, the NDPG further includes the phrase “attempts to change the status quo by coercion” (*chikara wo haikei to shita genjô henkô no kokoromi*, 3). This phrase was introduced earlier in the same year in the DWP, while the DB only began to use it from 2014. In addition, both the 2013 NDPG and the NSS phrased their reservations toward Chinese military developments and regional conduct in a way that are found in almost identical form in the DWP.

At this point, it is worth noting that the MOD’s successful propagation of the “China threat” was equally accompanied by an overall decline of the China School within the MOFA since the 2000s which had been in favor of appeasement policies. As Rathus (2011: 63) notes, China School officials have lost influence in relation to a younger, US-educated generation of officials which shares this ideological outlook with its counterparts in the MOD.

Thus, it appears that the MOD’s China evaluations largely prevailed in the formulation of Japan’s national strategy from 2010 on. The executive adopted those evaluations and thus proceeded to put them into practice. In other words, the “China threat” had become so dominant in the minds of policy- and decision-makers that it could not be ignored any longer. In its coverage of the DWP 2013, the Yomiuri noted that “the government is now expected to create defensive structures and formulate legislation to address the security threats described in the White Paper” (Yomiuri 2013b). That is exactly what the executive proceeded to do, and increasingly actively so after the return of Abe.

Initially, the government discourse began to reflect this shift more prominently from 2010. Under the DPJ administration, an advisory panel under PM Kan argued for a large-scale SDF redeployment to Japan’s southwestern islands in view of the Chinese threat. At the same time, the 2010 NDPG introduced the concept

of “dynamic defense capability” which was aimed precisely at the protection of those islands by increasing surveillance equipment and troops in the area. Under Noda, the SDF then started unprecedented large-scale exercises in Kyūshū and Okinawa in which troops and equipment originally stationed in the north of Japan were moved to the southwest (Asahi 2011d). Until the return of the LDP in late 2012, China continued to extend its security reach in the region and increasingly displayed its military capabilities more assertively, thus prompting a gradually stronger consolidation as the main issue in Japanese security agenda under the DPJ.

Furthermore, the emergence of the “China threat” consensus not only drove Japan’s security policy responses after 2012 out of necessity, but also further facilitated the implementation of the Abe government’s very own, ideology-driven agenda within that larger response. In essence, the securitization of the “China threat” as an external factor expedited a policy trajectory that could then be confidently pursued and ultimately framed as a reactive scheme by Japan under Abe.

As a result, Abe 2.0 politicized the China threat increasingly. For instance, in a Diet address to begin debate on the PSPL, Abe opened by saying: “(...) China has been stepping up its maritime advancement. The number of scrambles increased sevenfold from 10 years ago. (...) Threats easily cross borders. Seamless preparations and legislation is necessary.” (Yomiuri 2015). In addition, after recurring incursions by Chinese vessels around the disputed islands, in the fall of 2013, China proclaimed an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that overlapped with Japan’s in the East China Sea. This unilateral ADIZ declaration triggered harsh criticism by the Abe administration and, coincidentally, came at a time when the NSC bill was just being discussed in the Diet (Asahi 2013d).

Similarly, this politicization occurred throughout various governmental ranks. After Chinese fighter jets had flown into Japan’s ADIZ in May, LDP Secretary-General Ishiba rhetorically asked: “Will peace and stability in the region be maintained if Japan does nothing when a third country comes under armed attack (...)?”, suggesting the need for CSD (Mainichi Shimbun 2014).

The Abe government began to respond to these perceived provocations by China not just by investing in local defenses and nurturing debate on policy reform, but also conceived novel ways of thwarting Chinese

expansion that prove just how dominant the “China threat” consensus has become in Japan’s political discourse. During Abe’s Third Cabinet, for instance, Japan’s ODA charter was blue-penciled to allow for the providing of aid to foreign militaries under the developmental assistance umbrella. The new “Development Cooperation Charter” now included typical China-critical rhetoric such as the stressing of “democratization” and the “rule of law”, and mentioned Japanese “national interests” for the first time (2015: 2).

4.4. MEDIATING CHANGE: ABE AND THE CORE EXECUTIVE

The “China threat” consensus thus facilitated the implementation of policy reform under Abe 2.0. But what exactly constituted the two Abe governments’ security and defense policy agenda? Furthermore, why was the second Abe government able to make effective use of the “China threat” consensus? In other words, how had domestic circumstances changed since 2006-07?

The following section first provides an overview of the policies that the Abe administration had been pursuing since its first materialization in 2006-07. It then proceeds to explain why diverging levels of political consolidation during Abe 1.0 and Abe 2.0 show that the “China threat” consensus by itself would arguably not have sufficed to bring about extensive policy reform. It was ultimately the resurgence of the LDP and the marginalization of opposition parties after 2012 that enabled the instrumentalization of the “China threat” consensus from 2013.

4.4.1. POLICY AGENDA

Abe 1.0: Ascendance, vision, and personnel appointments

As first Japanese Prime Minister born after the Second World War, Abe Shinzô was supported with an overwhelming majority within the LDP and thus became Koizumi’s successor on September 26th, 2006. His goal of “breaking away from the postwar regime” (*sengo rejîmu kara no dakkyaku*) by means of augmenting Japan’s security stance on the international stage became obvious early on.

Upon ascendance, Abe immediately arranged for a government panel to form on the establishment of a Japanese NSC (Asahi 2006b). The panel was tasked with devising an organizational system until February 2007, modeled after the US equivalent but compatible with Japan’s parliamentary government in which the PM’s executive means are more limited. At the same time, Abe early on sought to influence the Japanese security discourse. During an interview with the Washington Post, he raised eyebrows by calling for a study on whether Japan could intercept missiles destined for the United States. This prompted criticism by coalition partner Kômeitô as the remark questioned the governmental interpretation of CSD (Asahi 2006c).

In his first policy speech as PM a few days after assuming office, Abe dedicated a large part of the speech to stressing the need for proactive security measures against the supposed growing danger of regional instability. In detail, North Korean missile launches in the same year, the strengthening of the US-Japan Alliance as well as relations with China and South Korea find mentioning. Further, Abe offered an early glimpse into what was going to become regarded by many observers as a step toward more aggressive security policymaking: “(...) We will thoroughly study individual, specific cases to identify what kind of case falls under the exercise of the right of collective self-defense which is forbidden under the Constitution (...)” (2006). Abe also made remarks regarding Japan’s spot on the grand stage of things by stressing his concept of Japan as a “beautiful country” that fosters national pride.

In addition, Abe’s first cabinet appointments speak for his ideological inclinations as they included a long list of conservative supporters that would later return during Abe 2.0. Among those: Suga Yoshihide (Minister of Internal Affairs, later CCS), Shiozaki Yasuhisa (CCS, later Minister of Health), and Asô Tarô (Foreign Minister, later Finance Minister and Deputy PM). The majority of cabinet members was and is affiliated with the revisionist lobby Nippon Kaigi.

Equally visible in deeds, Abe’s intent to focus on national security matters can be seen in the appointment of three of his five PM aides: Koike Yuriko (special advisor on national security issues), Nakayama Kyôko (special advisor on the North Korean abduction issue, a major popularity magnet for Abe during his campaign), and Yamatani Eriko (special advisor on revitalizing education, worked with Abe on the abduction issue before). The decision to pick these aides whose expertise was composed of matters relating to national security and regional relations showcased the grand-stage focus of Abe’s policy agenda. Not only did this mark the first time that a Japanese PM appointed five direct advisors to the *kantei*, but it also implied that Abe felt he needed to invest extra resources and advice on security issues to realize his political agenda.

Early reform attempts

After upgrading the Defense Agency to a full-fledged Ministry of Defense in early 2007, Abe moved to sign the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March. This security pact was unprecedented in that it marked just the second time Japan signed a security declaration with another state, following the bilateral alliance with the United States from 1960.

It can be seen in numerous instances that Abe attempted to expand the deployment potential and overseas mobility of the SDF as well, now having the persuasive backing of a redefined defense institution at home equipped with new prerogatives. On a diplomatic round through Europe, Abe assured British PM Blair his willingness to continue the Iraq deployment of ASDF personnel while emphasizing the necessity for the international community to engage in this joint effort to support the reconstruction of Iraq (Asahi 2007b).

Thus, Abe early on tried to popularize a narrative in which international joint efforts were positively associated with the overseas deployment of SDF, promoting the idea of a peace-building Japanese involvement in international developments while departing from the image of Japan as a hesitant and indecisive reactive state still haunted by the Gulf War experience.¹⁰ Another indicator for this commitment followed soon after when the government dispatched the SDF to Nepal as part of an international peacekeeping mission. Based on the legal framework of the PKO Cooperation Law, this marked the first such deployment under the newly upgraded MOD.

Around the same time, the government panel tasked with devising a Japanese NSC issued its report to Abe. Not only was the NSC to become an entity that would support streamlined decision-making by the *kantei*, Abe also used this opportunity to demand new legislation to protect information classified as national secrets. Despite opposition from panel members to include such legislation with the establishment of the NSC, Abe's close confidantes Koike and Shiozaki expressed support (Asahi 2007c).

In relation to these early demands for a State Secrecy Law, Abe 1.0 spearheaded an effort in the following months to sign the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with the US. This

¹⁰ Japan's hesitance to support the US-led coalition forces resulted in financial contribution only which was met with international criticism, causing a shock in the Japanese security discourse. See Dobson (2003) for a detailed analysis.

agreement was to facilitate information exchange on military intelligence and defense programs in order to deepen bilateral security cooperation between the US and Japan. While the signing was reported to result mainly from the urging of Washington which had voiced concerns about Japan's existing legislation administering the protection of military secrets, it coincided exactly with Abe's recent touting for introducing a secrecy law to guard classified information (Asahi 2007d). In his January policy speech, Abe emphasized this need for greater preoccupation with intelligence matters within the government by pledging to "enhance the intelligence capability of the Cabinet" (2007). He also reiterated his earlier promise to "establish structures to strengthen the functions of the Prime Minister's Office as [national security] headquarters" (Ibid), again implying a push toward streamlined decision-making in security and defense matters.

Concurrent with these developments, Abe initiated debate on another infamous agenda upon which a large fraction of his administration's security policy was dependent, crossing into revisionist territory: the right of collective self-defense. In April, Abe convened the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security. The panel was in charge to map out recommendations on the issue of CSD, particularly in the event of an attack on the US in form of missile strikes or attacks on US vessels operating jointly with the MSDF. Unsurprisingly, the 13-member panel, principally made up of supporters of Abe's security policy agenda, indicated that its report would urge Abe to push for a reinterpretation of Article 9 (Asahi 2007e). In this way, the panel's work was highly significant as it shaped basic policy ideas and directions under which Abe revived the panel in early 2013.

Abe 2.0: Unfinished business

On September 26th, 2012, Abe prevailed against former Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru in the LDP presidential election and on December 26th, he was formally reelected as Prime Minister of Japan. This time, Abe would last at least two terms in office, much longer than during his first stint as head of government in 2006 and 2007.

In the first press conference upon reelection, Abe swiftly emphasized his commitment toward issues that unmistakably reconfirmed that this was indeed Abe Shinzô returning to power after five years on hiatus: national security, constitutional revision, and “rebuilding” the US-Japan alliance. He further called for stronger diplomacy to protect Japan’s national interests, announced plans to establish the long desired NSC and other measures to strengthen national security, as well as portentously expressed: “National security is not somebody else’s business but is a crisis that exists right in front of us” (Asahi 2012c).

Abe’s reformulated agenda consisted of both unfinished business from his first administration, as well as of new policy additions that were aimed at further expanding Japan’s security and defense role. These new additions included the formulation of Japan’s first postwar NSS, a revision of the NDPG and the US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines, and lifting the ban on arms exports. While Abe’s security and defense policy efforts had been mostly inward-focused during his first term, this time, Abe directed his attention also toward actors in Japan’s regional environment by coupling security issues with foreign policy adjustments. His government was intent on expanding security discussions on the role of regional alliance cooperation with Australia, Southeast Asian countries, and India. Abe’s diplomatic efforts in the same year would become a testament to his goal of constructing regional security architecture as part of a larger China containment policy.

By the end of his first year back in office, Abe had not only established the NSC and introduced the State Secrecy Law, he was also the first Japanese leader to visit all ASEAN states while in office. During each of these symbolic visits, Abe put priority on security matters and attempted to garner support for his China containment policy. He also did not shy away from engaging with states that were considered pro-China, such as Laos and Cambodia. Considerable influence in developing this strategy is attributed to long-term special advisor Yachi Shôtarô who had also devised the first Abe administration’s “value-based diplomacy” (*kachikan gaikô*) and worked on Abe’s private advisory panel on CSD (Daily Yomiuri 2013).

In addition, Abe reconvened the private Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, citing once more the need for more security discussion in view of the intensifying regional environment. The panel, again chaired by pro-revisionist Yanai Shunji and made up of the identical

members as in 2007, broadened its original four contingency scenarios to consider additional scenarios under which CSD could be exercised (Panel Report 2014).

Article Nine and Collective Self-Defense

In August 2013, Abe appointed Komatsu Ichirô as director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB). This proved controversial as Komatsu, a MOFA official, had no prior experience within the bureau, but had previously worked on Abe's private advisory panel on CSD and was a backer of plans to lift the ban (Asahi 2013e). This move was clear evidence that Abe wanted to pave the way to revising Article 9 by appointing like-minded officials in relevant positions around him. In doing so, he effectively asserted *kantei* dominance over the CLB which had traditionally chosen its chiefs from within. The Bureau now effectively catered to the demands of the Abe Cabinet, and Abe made sure that it continued to do so after Komatsu had to be replaced with Yokobatake Yusuke due to failing health. In July 2014, the Abe administration approved the reinterpretation of Article 9.

In May 2015, the ruling coalition introduced the PSPL into the Diet. The eleven bills were debated into an extended Diet session until September and culminated in delay tactics and scuffles when the DPJ and other opposition parties unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the voting from being called in the Upper House in order to rally additional public protest and create negative exposure for Abe (NY Times 2015a).

Coalition partner Kômeitô's influence was, much like during debating Article 9 a year earlier, largely limited to extracting minor concessions during the deliberation process. Yet, in view of the Kômeitô's reservations and domestic resistance, the Abe Cabinet stipulated three strict conditions for exercising CSD in order to partially accommodate the critics (Japan's survival is threatened; no alternative means to respond to the threat exist; use of force will be limited to the minimum necessary). In addition, the LDP agreed to include the need for Diet approval in every instance of overseas SDF dispatches under the proposed International Peace Support Law. Eventually, the bills were approved and became law on September 19th (NY Times 2015b).

4.4.2. LEVEL OF POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION – ABE 1.0

Expectations and the Koizumi legacy

The legacy of the past administration, fronted by a popular, determined, and forceful political figure such as Koizumi, meant that expectations for the next PM in charge were invariably high. As Uchiyama notes (2010: 154), the Koizumi administrations popularity ratings and the impression they left in people's minds contributed to an overall change in the public image of the PM. Koizumi's strong-hand efforts to strengthen the position of the *kantei* and its role in policymaking also led to the new precondition of being a "strong leader" whose active role in taking personal initiative began to be emphasized more heavily, and at the same time was expected by the Japanese public.

While not always successful or popular with his policies, Koizumi forced the Japanese political sphere to rethink its nature, questioning intraparty factionalism and Japan's global outlook. At the same time, analysts and politicians were worried about Japan collapsing into a "reform fatigue" which would slow down essential reform processes and lead to relative inertia on an individual level. Shortly before Abe's ascendance as PM in 2006, Yosano Kaoru, then Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy, expressed his concerns about the course the succeeding government was taking and was quoted as saying: "(...) Simply parroting Prime Minister Koizumi's calls for reforms (...) will not get us anywhere" (FT 2006). He also stressed that Koizumi's reforms had met with criticism for leading to increased income inequality and were not sufficient to maintain Japan's international competitiveness (Ibid). In short, Abe inherited a highly polarized and sensitive domestic political environment upon taking office.

There are indicators that Abe's jump on the Koizumi-style leadership wave and his attempted continuation of the *kantei* approach were not quite as successful. As Shinoda points out (2013: 111), the appointment of five advisors along with Diet member assistants more often than not resulted in confusion and turf battles between cabinet ministers and members of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy (CEFP). The same can be said for the relationship between special advisors and high-ranking bureaucrats, as seen in the case of the Koike-Moriya feud. Moreover, despite Abe's strong leadership on the initiation of legislative proposals on national security matters, the majority of such bills was not introduced by the

Cabinet Secretariat as in Koizumi's top-down decision-making manner. The MOD, for example, proposed its own upgrade at an opportune moment following raised public exposure of the SDF's global role during Koizumi's administration. Similarly, a bill passed in May 2007 meant to facilitate the realignment of US military forces by providing subsidies to local governments was submitted on the initiative of the MOFA and MOD (Ibid: 112).

Opposition parties: Counteracting Abe 1.0

In 2006-07, the opposition still posed a relatively large obstacle to the implementation of the ruling coalition's policy agenda. At several junctures, the DPJ and others blocked legislation from passing in the Diet, as well as succeeded in obtaining concessions from the ruling block.

For instance, upon the upgrade of the JDA to ministerial status in December, the DPJ as the main oppositional actor agreed to the legislation only in exchange for the LDP's support for a seven-point supplementary resolution. This resolution included calls for increasing civilian control over the new ministry, a thorough investigation of bid-rigging and information leakage scandals, as well as sufficient accountability to the Diet about overseas dispatches of SDF personnel (Asahi 2006d).

Furthermore, during the pension scandal in which the Social Insurance Agency lost millions of citizen's records, the DPJ continued its course of condemning Abe's leadership in harshest words. When Abe attempted to steamroll through the Lower House three bills concerning the dismantlement and reform of the Social Insurance Agency as well as regulatory reform of the *amakudari* job placement system, the DPJ (with other parties) replied with delay tactics and an unsuccessful no-confidence motion. While the DPJ found itself unable to obstruct much of the legislative proceedings (despite pushing for further debate on grounds of preparing its own *amakudari* bill), it did take advantage of the situation by raising attention to the fact that Abe bluntly ignored public reception in this instance.

The DPJ eventually gained confidence after relieving the LDP of its majority in the July Upper House elections (Table 2).

Table 2. House of Councillors Election Results 2007 (Totals)¹¹

Party	District Seats	List Seats	(New) Total	Change
Liberal Democratic Party	23	14	83	-27
Kômeitô	2	7	20	-3
Democratic Party of Japan	40	20	109	+28
Japanese Communist Party	0	3	7	-2
Social Democratic Party	0	2	5	-1
Independents	7	-	13	+6
Others	1	2	5	+1

In this unprecedented situation, DPJ leader Ozawa tested the new power balance resulting from a “Twisted Diet” (*nejire kokkai*) by firmly opposing Abe’s plan to extend the ATSMML. As Govella and Vogel note (2008: 100), in light of its newfound opportunity to trigger a major shift in Japanese party politics, the DPJ treaded cautiously by blocking the Abe administration’s progress without acting too obstructionist, so as not to alienate potential nonaligned voters. This proved successful in preventing Abe from achieving an extension of the law.

Then in June, the ruling coalition submitted a bill to the Diet to rescind a 1969 resolution that forbid Japan to use outer space for military purposes. After deliberations between the LDP and Kômeitô Policy Research Councils, the LDP’s coalition partner agreed to the bill upon adding a stipulation that would guarantee the use of reconnaissance satellites for defense purposes only (Asahi 2007f). Due to the pressure exerted by the DPJ and other opposition parties at the time, the bill only passed in 2008 after resubmission as a three-party effort (LDP, Kômeitô, DPJ) to become Japan’s Basic Space Law.

Public opinion 1.0: disapproval

Around the turn of the year, only three to four months after taking office, support for Abe’s cabinet had already fallen below 50 percent. In a February poll when support fell to 37 percent, voters cited Abe’s poor job performance and their disappointment with his policies as reasons (Asahi 2007g). Only Abe’s stance

¹¹ Seats in bold for emphasis. Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

toward North Korea during the Six Party Talks did the public endorse (81 percent), likely owing to its connection with the handling of the abduction issue, a sort of media pet project.¹²

In terms of policy, the polling results reflect a general trend that would prevail throughout Abe's first administration and could be summarized thus: despite general wariness of any SDF and national defense issue handling, the public was not so much opposed to Abe's security policy agenda as it was incommensurably more concerned with other key policy areas at the time, namely economic revitalization and social security issues.

In some ways, a large part of the public was simply awed by the charismatic image of a young Abe whilst being largely ignorant of the policy platform he campaigned on. In a survey conducted shortly before the 2006 LDP presidential election, over half of respondents regarded Abe as "most suitable" to succeed Koizumi while only 5 percent were convinced by his policies and beliefs. In fact, only 11 percent replied they even knew the contents of Abe's campaign pledges. The survey also showed that over 60 percent named his "personality and image" a distinguishing feature, and identified economic and welfare issues as policy priorities (65 percent), whereas only 2 percent were interested in security policy-oriented constitutional revision (Asahi 2006e). The results of public opinion polling during Abe's first administration suggest that Abe and the voting public were at cross purposes while an incongruence in policy interests and priorities exacerbated Abe's incomplete grasp of the current public mood.

In addition, the series of scandals that his cabinet was beset with early on further aggravated public opinion. Abe's mishandling of the pension issue and political funding scandals clearly impaired the administration's credibility. Over 50 percent of respondents called for Abe's resignation after the LDP's loss in the Upper House elections in July. Out of these reasons, the loss of 50 million pension records proved particularly detrimental to Abe (Asahi 2007h). Once again, this attested to voters' priorities and preoccupation with economic and welfare policies. Security and defense policy issues were poorly reflected in these results, as were issues of constitutional revision.

¹² See Lynn (2006) for a detailed analysis of the public reception to the abduction issue.

The personnel factor

The first Abe administration was further constrained and ultimately harmed by the personnel factor. Criticism regarding Abe's cabinet appointments, verbal gaffes and misbehavior by ministers, and other personnel clashes between politicians and bureaucrats was fundamentally ubiquitous during his one-year tenure. Cabinet posts were filled with ideological confidantes and old friends, earning it the nepotistic title "cabinet of friends" (*o-tomodachi naikaku*) in the media (Asahi 2007i). Three ministers had to resign (Sata, Kyûma, Akagi), while one committed suicide (Matsuoka).

Equally salient, however, was the manner in which Abe dealt with other ministers who did not resign upon their missteps. Despite much criticism, Abe chose to keep on Health Minister Yanagisawa after he had referred to women as "birth-giving machines". A poll showed that the public highly disapproved of this decision (Asahi 2007g). Further, his reaction to the personnel feud between then Defense Minister Koike and Vice Defense Minister Moriya was slow despite the fact that it would likely further harm the administration's standing in the aftermath of the Upper House election defeat. Koike, who also proved aggressive in pursuing the extension of the ATSMML, was replaced by Kômura Masahiko during the August Cabinet reshuffle. After the Upper House elections, Abe concentrated on the successful extension of the law and, in anticipation of a major debate with the opposition, appointed both Kômura and Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka as they presented themselves more accommodating during debate.

But even within the LDP, displeasure with Abe's personnel choices emerged as CCS Shiozaki, a close ally of Abe without prior cabinet experience, had failed to consult LDP factions before making decisions in a number of instances, most notably regarding a plan to convene an extraordinary Diet session (Asahi 2007i). Therefore, the Abe administration was ultimately beset with misfortunes that impaired its political integrity, many of which arose from Abe's immediate entourage and that were amenable to chance.

4.4.3. LEVEL OF POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION – ABE 2.0

Resurgence of the LDP and conservative forces

The political power matrix changed a great deal in the period between 2007 and 2012. The following years after Abe 1.0's demise saw political struggle which culminated in the LDP's historic defeat in 2009. However, the LDP as well as Japanese conservatives in general managed to reclaim political power during the years as opposition, and this resurgence is ultimately what facilitated Abe 2.0's high level of political consolidation.

The retirement of leading conservative dove Koga Makoto in 2012 constituted an anecdotal instance for the ongoing process of “hawkization” and homogenization within the LDP that had been continuing at least since the diffusion of Kôchikai in 2000 (known as *Katô no ran*). Simultaneously, the growing domination of the Mori faction (to which both Koizumi and Abe belonged) began around the same time and led to a further strengthening of the hawkish camp inside the LDP (Zakowski 2011: 199). After all, beginning with Mori, almost all consecutive PMs and leaders of the LDP had relatively strong right-wing inclinations (e.g. Koizumi, Abe, Asô).

Kôno Yôhei, another former leading dove, argued that the introduction of single-seat electoral districts narrowed the range of political opinion within the LDP, thus resulting in a consolidation of political forces having little choice but to follow the hawkish course of PM Abe (Asahi 2013f). In this context, Park notes (2015: 2) that Japan had been undergoing a conservative shift whose right-wing and hawkish tendencies have become more noticeable since the second Abe administration. He argues that the shift occurred on three levels: a surge of conservative parties (inter-party), weakening of liberals within parties (intra-party), and a surge of right-wing diet member associations as a whole (Ibid: 6-15). Indeed, under Abe's first administration alone five associations were established.¹³ Abe himself founded *Sôsei Nippon* (“Japan Rebirth”), and has served as Deputy Chief Secretary of the Japan Conference Diet Members' Advisory

¹³ They include: Association to Corroborate the Truth about Wartime Comfort Women and Nanjing Massacre, Association for the Institution of a New Constitution, Congressmen's Society for Promoting Value Diplomacy, Association to Demand the Removal of Injurious Pictures from Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and the Society for Demanding Historical Truth of 'Comfort Women' Issue (Ibid: 21-22).

Group (*Nippon kaigi kokkai giin kondankai*). The former group is dedicated to “rethink the postwar order” and to “protect Japan’s national interests and make Japan a country respected by international society”, and the latter constitutes the political wing of Nippon Kaigi, equally aimed at popularizing nationalistic and conservative ideas (Penney 2013: 4-6). The vast majority of Abe Cabinet members is affiliated with one or more of these groups whose nationalistic inclinations often render them China-critical at the same time.

Furthermore, Winkler’s analysis of the Asahi-Todai Elite Survey (ATES), which evaluates ideological positions on policy issues among electoral candidates during elections, reinforces this argument. It shows a marked drift to the right on average policy positions from 2003 throughout 2010 for not just the LDP but all party candidates (2013: 207), thus further confirming that liberal influence as a whole has weakened over the past fifteen years. By then cross-comparing these results with electoral outcomes and public preoccupation with policy areas, Winkler concludes that the rise of neoconservative forces is indeed an internal process rooted in the party landscape, and not in voters’ electoral preferences (Ibid: 212).

A marginalized opposition

Overall, the opposition parties experienced a marginalization under the second Abe government.

After the 2012 LDP landslide victory, the DPJ entered a crisis period. During the three-year leadership, various factors had contributed to its demise, including governmental inexperience, intra-party dissonances, failed attempts at institutional change, and collateral factors such as the 3/11 Triple Disaster. However, as for example seen during Abe’s first tenure, intra-party consensus and decision-making issues as well as the lack of clear policy alternatives were no new phenomenon. Thus ensued a period of disorientation followed by attempts at reorganization with the drafting of a party structural reform in February 2013.

As Zakowski notes (2015: 60), the fact that the DPJ’s members had originally come together through a series of mergers inevitably led to wide ideological gaps in policy vision, particularly concerning security policy. After the LDP’s 2012 comeback, those gaps had not been filled. For instance, the DPJ’s 2014 manifesto remained utterly ambiguous on formulating a viable alternative to Abe’s policies. While it criticized the Cabinet decision to reinterpret Article 9, it failed to present any alternative stance on the issue

altogether, let alone a unified party one (DPJ 2014: 7). As a result, it was also the DPJ's interests and goals in participating in the security realm that suffered from the same ambiguity. This is despite the fact that, paradoxically, it was the DPJ who initiated a significant push to reconceive the SDF's basic defense orientation toward a more mobile and assertive "dynamic defense force" as part of the 2010 NDPG.

In addition, the opposition parties as a whole suffered from stark inter-party differences that impeded the forming of a united front against the ruling coalition. In regards to amending Article 9, differences in opinion were obvious and often just as disagreeable with each other as they were toward the LDP. While the Japan Innovation Party and the Party for Future Generations advocated amending Article 9, the Japanese Communist Party and Social Democratic Party maintained their long-held opposition toward revision. The DPJ on the other hand principally supported constitutional amendment but was struggling to formulate a unified party line.

Counteracting Abe 2.0

The DPJ and other opposition parties' lack of influence in obstructing security and defense policy changes under Abe's second government can be seen in a number of instances. Before the Abe Cabinet moved to have the State Secrecy Law passed in 2013, the DPJ, Japan Restoration Party, and Your Party demanded to limit the scope of defining state secrets and the length of classified designation. While the LDP already retained a simple majority in both Houses, it needed not to give into these demands, albeit it sought to mitigate "railroading" criticism by gaining partial acceptance by the opposition which resulted in a deal with Your Party (Asahi 2013g). Subsequently, the ruling coalition considered it unnecessary to make additional concessions to other opposition parties, including the DPJ and Japan Restoration Party.

The second Abe administration thus clearly benefitted from the DPJ's fall from grace after three years in power during which the DPJ struggled with overturning the political order and realizing its policy goals. This was reflected not only in the 2012, but also in the subsequent 2013 Upper House and 2014 Lower House snap elections. The DPJ and other opposition parties gradually lost seats to an extent that has provided

the ruling coalition with a two-thirds majority in both houses since 2016 (with independents; Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. House of Representatives Election Results 2012 and 2014 (Totals)¹⁴

Party	2012			2014		
	District Seats	List Seats	Total Seats (480)	District Seats	List Seats	Total Seats (475)
Liberal Democratic Party	237	57	294	223	68	291
Kômeitô	9	22	31	9	26	35
Democratic Party of Japan	27	30	57	38	35	73
Japan Innovation Party	14	40	54	11	30	41
Japanese Communist Party	0	8	8	1	20	21
Social Democratic Party	1	1	2	1	1	2
Independents	5	-	5	8	-	8
Others	8	21	29	4	0	4

Table 4. House of Councillors Election Results 2013 and 2016 (Totals)¹⁵

Party	2013			2016		
	District Seats	List Seats	(New) Total	District Seats	List Seats	(New) Total
Liberal Democratic Party	47	18	115	36	19	120
Kômeitô	4	7	20	7	7	25
Democratic Party of Japan ¹⁶	10	7	59	21	11	49
Japanese Communist Party	3	5	11	1	5	14
Social Democratic Party	0	1	3	0	1	2
Independents	2	-	3	5	-	12
Others	7	10	31	3	5	20

As Kushida and Lipsy note (2013: 26), the DPJ's arguably greatest policy achievement was one that proved extremely unpopular with the public: doubling the consumption tax. It failed in implementing bureaucratic

¹⁴ Seats in bold for emphasis. Source: Yomiuri Online.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Democratic Party from 2016.

sector reforms that were aimed at empowering politicians and had constituted the cornerstone of its policy manifesto. As can be observed through opinion polls, the DPJ's three-year regime had a lasting negative impact on its popularity following the LDP victory in 2012 (Asahi 2012b). After the Ozawa faction's exit in July 2012, it continued to struggle throughout the second Abe administration due to the lack of a unified front and clear policy alternatives. The DPJ eventually dissolved and merged with Japan Innovation Party and Vision of Reform to form the Democratic Party (DP) in early 2016.

In conclusion, the opposition parties' impact on Abe 2.0's security drive appears rather negligible. In view of its growing majority in subsequent elections, the ruling coalition had little incentive to respond to oppositional demands and make meaningful concessions. As opposed to 2006-07 when the DPJ had succeeded in obstructing policy goals such as the extension of the ATSMML, it did not manage to achieve the same when it attempted to rally political and public opposition against the PSPL, as well as submitted a joint no-confidence motion against Abe. Rather, it was coalition partner Kômeitô that assumed the role of moderation, and even this did not lead to a significantly reduced scope of the proposed security package by the LDP.

Economic consolidation

Another domestic factor to consider for Abe 2.0's high level of political consolidation was its improved handling of economic issues.

In 2006, Koizumi had left the Japanese economy in a relatively healthy state with stable growth (Govella and Vogel 2008: 104). As a result, Abe's economic agenda consisted of longer-term issues such as international competitiveness, labor market growth, and fiscal reform. However, he somewhat lacked a clear plan in tackling those issues. In particular, Abe avoided the issue of raising the consumption tax, a move unpopular with voters but crucial in balancing the budget and financing increasing welfare costs. During his first administration, his lackadaisical dealing with economic issues was a strong point of criticism for both the opposition and the public, and thus ultimately constrained the pursuance of his security agenda.

Upon returning for a second tenure on the other hand, Abe had made sure not to take economic issues lightly. His all-out economic attack Abenomics proved this commitment, but at the same time, he once again treaded cautiously with raising the consumption tax. While he proceeded with the first stage of raising the tax from 5 to 8 percent in April 2014, Japan hit a technical recession during the second and third quarters of 2014 (BBC News 2014). This in addition to fear of losing public support prompted Abe to call a snap election, and to postpone the second tax hike to 10 percent first until April 2017, and then again until October 2019.

Although the results of Abenomics are largely considered a mixed success¹⁷, they have instilled a sense among the public that Abe 2.0 is actively taking on the economy and producing tangible results which was not the case during Abe 1.0.

Personnel appointments 2.0

In terms of personnel appointments, Abe retained confidants CCS Suga and Asô as Finance Minister and Deputy PM respectively. His new Cabinet which he dubbed a “crisis relief cabinet” (*kiki toppa naikaku*, Asahi 2012d) also enlisted close allies Inada Tomomi and Furuya Keiji. This time around, he decided to appoint three personal aides of which Yachi, former Deputy Foreign Minister, would go on to retain an influential role as first NSC director. The Cabinet was surprisingly stable in comparison with Abe’s first “Cabinet of Friends” in 2006-07, with no ministerial changes until a reshuffle in September 2014. After the 2014 snap general election through which Abe solidified his legitimacy at a time of relative popularity, Abe chose to let go new Defense Minister Eto Akinori due to a funding scandal, but retained almost all other ministers from the September reshuffle. As Eto was also in charge of implementing new security legislation following the reinterpretation of Article 9, Abe mindfully preempted growing criticism from the opposition parties and public opinion by choosing to dismissing him in a timely manner. This stands in stark contrast to Abe’s handling of personnel during his first term as PM.

¹⁷ See for example De Michelis and Iacoviello (2016).

Public opinion 2.0: ambivalence

Upon formation of the second Abe cabinet, an Asahi poll signaled that 59 percent supported Abe's return to power (Asahi 2012b). While the figure was below his initial support rating of 63 percent during his first tenure, it surpassed the ratings of the Fukuda, Asô, and Noda cabinets upon establishment. Much like in 2006, the public was once again wary of Abe's personnel decisions with only 46 percent supporting his selection of ministers. Also, greatest public interest was again found in economic stimulation and jobs (48%), while national security issues and constitutional revision occupied the lowest ranks (11% and 3%).

The speed and amount of policy changes undertaken by the second Abe administration initially entailed considerable public opposition and caused an atmosphere of aversion against the political establishment. Across Japan, university professors, student activists, filmmakers, actors, and writers, some organized as citizen's or advocacy groups, independently released statements, as well as signed and submitted petitions containing a considerable number of signatures to the Diet in protest of the legislation (Asahi 2015c). In response, Abe attempted to placate the public by holding Q&A sessions on the internet and even appeared on live television in an attempt to deliver an easy to understand explanation of the implications of the security legislation.

Despite that, it is dubious whether the protest actions had a noticeably detrimental impact on the ruling coalition's consolidation of power. If anything, there is evidence that the ambiguous stance of the public toward exercising the right to CSD actually benefitted the LDP in negotiations with Kômeitô (Yomiuri 2014b). The fact that public opinion was rather indefinite in its normative evaluation of expanding SDF missions abroad mitigated damage incurred to the pacifist principle-based identity of Kômeitô and, thereby, enabled it to more easily forego additional policy concessions by the LDP. In addition, one poll indicated that over 40 percent of cabinet supporters were willing to continue backing the administration despite disagreeing with the security policy reforms (Asahi 2014c).

After the legislative marathon, Abe then began to reemphasize bread-and-butter issues. Clearly with view toward the upcoming Upper House elections, he stated he would initiate "Abenomics 2.0" and address demographic problems (Asahi 2015d). The time seemed ripe to initiate the next phase of security and

defense policy reform only after this major electoral hurdle. In the run-up to the election, Abe, aware of lingering public discontent with his security reforms, avoided campaigning publicly in favor of security issues and constitutional revision. In doing so, Cabinet support ratings recuperated from its low point after passing the PSPL.

4.5. POLICY ASSESSMENT

A vast number of policy decisions in regards to security and defense issues were made over the course of both Abe administrations. This policy assessment focuses on three main policy items which had been on the original agenda in 2006-07, but were only implemented after 2012: The State Secrecy Law, the establishment of the NSC, as well as the reinterpretation of Article 9 including collective self-defense legislation (Table 5).

As outlined previously, this section employs the analytical framework by Hermann (1990) through which policy outcomes can be grouped into four different categories: adjustment changes, program changes, problem/goal changes, and international orientation changes.

Table 5. Security and defense reform under the first and second Abe administrations

Administration	Adjustment changes	Program changes	Problem/goal changes
Abe 1.0 (2006-07)	State Secrecy Law (X) (Extension of prison sentences for information leaks, ministries can classify information)	National Security Council (X) (Institutional addition for decision- and policymaking)	Reinterpreting Article 9 and Collective Self-Defense (X) (Breach on exclusive self-defense, expansion of SDF scope, missions)
Abe 2.0 (2012-15)	State Secrecy Law (O)	National Security Council (O)	Reinterpreting Article 9 and Collective Self-Defense (O)

4.5.1. ADJUSTMENT CHANGES

Adjustment changes are understood as changes in the level of effort or scope of policy recipients, often expressed in quantitative terms (Hermann 1990: 5). Most fundamentally, Abe in office equals a preoccupation with the state of Japan's security stance on the grand stage. The agenda make-up under both administrations is a testament to Abe's reform drive in national security and defense policy. Thus, in

comparing the first Abe administration with the second, it is not particularly surprising that much continuity reigns in regards to the contents and type of policies pursued. Abe's agenda had largely remained a constant owing to the deep ideological roots and political conviction at its core.

The State Secrecy Law constituted the most significant adjustment change originating from the unfinished business of Abe's first government. Its passing marked the formulation of a fresh legal foundation to tighten the handling of national security-related information while introducing stricter punishment for its leaking. The law has been widely criticized for encouraging ambiguous censorship whose supervision lies within a committee established through *kantei* ordinance (Pollmann 2015).

The Abe administration's main incentive for the law consisted of greater intelligence sharing with the US embedded within the framework of Japan's general national security strategy, thereby elevating its intelligence capabilities and authority on directing military information flows. In doing so, the Abe administration has used the threat of regional security contingencies, specifically Chinese military advancement, to justify the law. While it is difficult to assess the impact of the law at any given moment due to its occlusive nature, it is possible that the law will be instrumentalized to obscure decision-making processes brought about by the arbitrary designation of state secrets by government officials. Its enactment in late 2014 entailed a prompt implementation by the MOD and other ministries. Attitudes toward information disclosure, however, differ. While the NPA became the first government agency to announce the designation of classified information, other entities such as the MOD and the newly established NSC have been reluctant to publicly share any information about number and contents of secrets designated (Asahi 2014c).

In addition, other adjustment changes include: consistent defense budget increases as well as the procurement of new defense equipment and SDF unit expansions. Since FY 2013, the MOD has consistently raised the amount cited in its defense budget requests, reverting a 11-year downward trend. While the total defense budget as a percentage of the GDP continues to adhere to the 1% ceiling, repeated increases nevertheless prove a commitment on the part of both ministry and government to turn increased military build-up and equipment maintenance into a long-term trend. The MOD also moved to procure new defense

equipment in response to the second Abe Cabinet's lift on the arms exports ban and its diplomatic efforts to strengthen joint development with friendly states. In comparison to the 2010 NDPG, the 2013 NDPG increased the total amount of SDF personnel, GSDF brigades, surface-to-ship missile units, MSDF divisions, maritime destroyers, ASDF combat aircraft, BMD Aegis-equipped destroyers, and air warning units. At the same time, it reduced the number of tanks and artillery as well as rearranged divisions and brigades of regional deployment units (DWP 2016: 179).

4.5.2. PROGRAM CHANGES

Program changes refer to changes in the method or means by which a goal or problem is addressed, often expressed in qualitative terms.

Early on, Abe pursued the establishment of a White House-style NSC. Although this did not translate into actual policy change as the administration failed to establish the council during its first run, it should be considered an important step toward laying the groundwork for a major program change that would succeed at a later point. During the administration of opposition DPJ for example, plans to establish the NSC were temporarily revived (Asahi 2012e). As Oros and Tatsumi noted in 2010 about the position of national security advisor: "If former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had been successful in establishing [the NSC] to support the Prime Minister and Chief Cabinet Secretary, as well as making decisions on Japan's national security, this position would have been critical in heading the envisioned organization" (36). This assessment is indicative of the political clout to be exercised by later advisor Yachi as first NSC director.

The NSC saw its birth in the first year after Abe's return. In replacing the obsolete Security Council of Japan, the NSC constituted a landmark addition to the institutional landscape of Japanese security politics, and the most important structural change since the transition from JDA to MOD under Abe 1.0.

The NSC represents a centralization of security policy, embodied by its regular conference attended by the PM, the CCS, and the MOD and MOFA ministers. Its establishment has effectively streamlined the national security decision-making process, and is likely to continue doing so. After all, the NSC's first major task of formulating Japan's first NSS is telling as to the medium to long-term policy influence wielded by

appointees to the council. As the key element of Abe 2.0's doctrinal rhetoric, the NSS outlines the concept of *sekkyokuteki heiwashugi* ("proactive contribution to peace").

The NSC is thus arguably the most relevant institutional addition to Japanese security and defense policy. Its biweekly four-minister meeting as well as the "Emergency Situations Minister Meeting" were designed with the intention to mitigate notorious bureaucratic sectionalism in the policymaking process (Liff 2015: 84). In establishing the NSC as a sidekick outfit in security matters, Abe also aimed to curtail the former clout enjoyed by the MOFA in formulating policy, and at the same time, widen the scope of *kantei* leadership. Pugliese argues (2017: 165) that the NSC is slowly demoting the MOFA to an implementation agency which can be seen in the growing prestige of the NSC and in the personnel mobility between the two institutions.

In addition, another program change ought to be mentioned: upgrading the JDA and revision of the SDF law during Abe 1.0. Through establishing the MOD, the privileges held toward other agencies and instruments at the ministry's disposal to influence the policymaking process were expanded. Moreover, SDF overseas missions were elevated to primary duty status, thus resulting in a qualitative upgrade. The upgrade marked an increase in the MOD's positional power in the Japanese national security discourse.

Finally, the elevation of China as a threat has led to a renewed emphasis on expanding regional security ties with existing allies and friendly states. While security agreements had been reached in the past with Australia and India, the Abe government now focused on canvassing alliance potential in Southeast Asia. Employing a reformulation of "value-based diplomacy", Abe continued a hedging strategy against China in an effort to balance the region in Japan's favor. In doing so, the second Abe administration is attempting a "value maximization" through forming new security ties.

4.5.3. PROBLEM/GOAL CHANGES

Problem/goal changes refer to changes in the purpose of a policy. The problem or goal is either replaced or forfeited.

In addition to increasing efforts to address security and defense issues through both quantitative and qualitative adjustments, the Abe governments have also worked toward transforming the goals and problems that Japanese security policy is meant to tackle. In this regard, deliberations cease to revolve around questions of *how* and *to what extent* to respond to security issues, but rather *what kind* of issues and contingencies thus far not covered Japanese security identity is incorporating to address. These transformative efforts under the second Abe administration have yielded far more substantial outcomes than seen during his first term.

While ultimately unsuccessful at the time, the first Abe administration fundamentally sought for the revision of laws that governed the permission scope of JSDF and other security and defense activities by the state. Abe made his position on constitutional interpretation clear early on during his opening policy speech and worked toward laying the groundwork for a reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow for CSD. However, the expert panels and study groups he arranged for were limited by their recommendation capacity, and actual policy formulation never took place as the issue of constitutional revision, and reinterpretation of Article 9 specifically, never went past debate in the Diet.

Nevertheless, the first Abe administration's efforts to bring about such a change by which the purpose and *raison d'être* of the SDF would shift from exclusive self-defense to include CSD, have to be mentioned in this regard. The successful implementation, which did not proceed until Abe's second administration, would have effectuated a critical turning point in Japan's national security identity at this earlier stage. At any rate, the Abe administration succeeded in nurturing the discourse for this future problem/goal change at this juncture.

Under Abe 2.0, this goal was reached in a two-stage process. As a result, the Cabinet reinterpretation of Article 9 in 2014 and the neutralization of the ban on CSD by introducing the PSPL in 2015 arguably form Abe's most significant policy achievement up to date. The implications for Japan's security role are widespread and have yet to fully emerge as the legislation only came into effect in March 2016. The first practical application mandated under the new legislation consisted of an expansion of SDF activities in

South Sudan as part of a UN PKO (Japan Times 2015a). Under the Three New Conditions, use of force is now theoretically allowed in the event of attacks on states that are considered Japan's allies.

With this policy change whose contents are beset with much ambiguous rhetoric, the ruling coalition with Abe up front has significantly expanded the characteristics and application possibilities of Japan's military abroad. In transitioning from individual to CSD, the SDF can now engage in international military conflict when decision-making actors deem it necessary to do so under the banner of a "proactive contribution to peace". Goals are thus no longer limited to defending the Japanese state, its territory and its citizens, but have been expanded to cover situations where the livelihood and safety of allied powers is in danger, and when that *constitutes a threat to Japanese security*. The inherent logical contradiction of the term "*collective self-defense*" exemplified by its rhetorical foundation is sure to shape the Japanese security discourse considerably in the years to come, with domestic political conflict likely to be intensifying over the exercise of the right.

In this context, another mainstay of Abe's security agenda constituted the revision of the US-Japan Defense Guidelines in tandem with the 2013 NDPG and NSS. By formally elevating the alliance to a global level, the security goals and problems to be addressed by it were reinterpreted to include contingencies of CSD for the first time in the history of the alliance. These contingencies are subject to the Abe Cabinet's guidelines on CSD, in particular those of the International Peace Support Law (*kokusai heiwa shienhō*).

4.5.4. INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION CHANGES

International orientation changes involve the redirection of the actor's role and activities on the world stage. In the process, a multitude of policies is often simultaneously changed.

During Abe 1.0, many of the administration's efforts were already geared towards elevating Japan's international security role and could be said to have achieved a profile boost in some areas. Nevertheless, the basic posture of Japan's security and defense policy and its outlook into the region remained largely unchanged in practice. Abe – like most revisionists – was and is opposed to the Yoshida Doctrine, but he treaded carefully not to present Japan as a state that is seeking military autonomy. Instead, the general

framework as followed during his first term in office, can be summarized as continuing the “normalization” of Japan (cf. Oros 2008).

In this respect, Samuels’s claim that Japan would take a “Goldilocks approach” (2007a) that essentially translates into pragmatism and balancing its position in between the US and East Asia can largely be confirmed as far as Abe’s first term is concerned. The first Abe administration generally sought the reinforcement of the US-Japan alliance by taking several steps to revise and upgrade inter-state agreements, encouraging American protection by way of requesting the deployment of additional military equipment as well as closer regional cooperation.

At the same time, however, further incremental steps toward profiling itself as an independent, assertive security actor were taken by way of both enlarging security and defense policy issues in domestic politics, as well as through promoting the image of a proactive Japan in external relations. In this regard, while Green’s argument (2001) that Japan would pursue a “reluctant realism” generally held true at this point in time, the first Abe administration already began to show signs of a not-so-reluctant development in the future.

Has the emergence of the “China threat” consensus in the period leading up to the second administration thus led to an international orientation change under Abe 2.0?

While one may consider the nexus of altered security policies with CSD as its core piece sufficient evidence to argue for a change in Japan’s global security role, this study finds instead that the second Abe government has solidified and perhaps stretched – but not changed – Japan’s existing international orientation through advancing a process of integration within the frameworks at its disposal and which it is ultimately bound by. The policy responses brought forth by Abe 2.0 have undoubtedly augmented Japan’s security identity significantly, but they have done so within existing constraints and in a familiar fashion. To a large extent, this is due to a number of constants under Abe and the ruling coalition’s leadership which hold true for both his first and second administrations.

On the one hand, the base frame of Japan’s security policy is still grounded in the complex interdependency of the US-Japan alliance and thus far both Abe administrations have pursued Japan’s even

deeper integration. In addition, surveying public opinion on security and defense policy suggests that although a normative shift is gradually occurring, ambivalence overweighs. This shift would thus be unlikely to support and legitimize a complete change in international orientation or a new strategic culture at this point. As Oros notes in this context (2014: 243): “On a conceptual level, however, increased public discussion of alternative security policies – even those advocated by powerful political actors – is not the same as a new security identity, new strategic culture, or even necessarily new security policies.”

As a result, Japan under Abe has *elevated* the significance of its present international orientation but it has not *changed* the orientation as a whole. Rather, in view of the “China threat”, further military build-up via budget and equipment increases, expansion of SDF missions and capabilities, as well as aspirations toward international defense cooperation are symptomatic of an increasingly assertive Japan and its resolute “normalization” as an industrial military power after decades of hesitation.

Thus, through expanding the institutional and legislative foundations in regards to security and defense, Abe has steered Japan in the direction of exercising a more active security role in the future, yet this newly acquired potential has remained largely latent in practice thus far. Once the domestic political discourse and external circumstances develop (or escalate) in such a that way a new strategic consensus emerges, Japan may then choose to truly alter its international orientation to become a major military power.

V. CONCLUSION

As this study has shown, security and defense policy reform was particularly successful when the perception of an immediate, external threat to Japanese security met with a high level of political consolidation of the government seeking reform.

While China's rise as a whole had been met with interest, uncertainty, acquiescence, and concern to various extents until the early 2000s, the first Abe administration marked the point in time when Japanese perceptions of China's military rise in particular began to be steered decidedly toward notions of concern and anxiety. The MOD, whose upgrade proved a major step in increasing the role of the defense bureaucracy, commenced to actively construe Chinese military modernization and activities as a threat. In the 2007 edition of the DWP, a rhetoric shift transpired that would from then on increasingly securitize China's military rise. In the following editions, China would thus gradually come to the fore as the most salient and immediate danger to the stability of the regional environment, as well as to Japanese security. From 2010 on, the MOD's think tank NIDS chimed in to lend weight to DWP depictions of China through further detailing the PLA's every moves in its *China Security Report*. The ostensibly independent nature of the NIDS publications allowed it to use more direct and partisan language in its analyses of China's military which is particularly conspicuous in segments labelled as columns.

By 2013, the MOD publications had not only become explicit in their condemnation and threat-framing of Chinese military advancements, but their perspectives had also found its way into the MOFA Diplomatic Bluebooks. In this way, through *bureaucratic advocacy*, the defense bureaucracy had become a dominant agent in laying the foundation for policy change.

At the same time, the analysis of the media and public discourses shows that another process occurred almost simultaneously. The newspaper media increased its coverage of developments concerning Japan's security environment, as well as China's military rise specifically. In doing so, it elevated issues of national security in the minds of the target audiences while associating them with China. In addition, both newspaper reports and editorials implicitly and explicitly fueled the notion of a "China threat". They did so through reproducing concern over Chinese military moves while extensively covering and echoing the MOD

publications. Editorials even went as far as to both criticize directly and recommend government responses to the “China threat”.

Reflecting this process, the Japanese public underwent a gradual normative shift in the period between the first and second Abe governments. Data indicates that this normative shift comprised changing attitudes toward China in general, the SDF as the citizen’s safety guarantor, Japanese military buildup, and the government’s security and defense policy agenda. Positive opinions of China had plunged while the public had become somewhat more accustomed to the idea of Japan assuming a greater security role. As a result, sensitivity toward security policy change decreased.

Thus, the combination of these two developments led by *bureaucratic advocacy* and *domestic restructuring* processes, expedited the emergence of the “China threat” consensus. In order to make the consensus final, the political elite increasingly adopted the bureaucracy’s policy expertise, responded to public trends, and thus accepted the narrative of a dangerous China.

However, as the analysis of Abe 1.0 has shown, in addition to the absence of a threat consensus, Abe 1.0 was missing another crucial component necessary for policy change: a high level of political consolidation. The lack of a strong LDP and conservative forces, little public support, and an abundance of political scandals foiled the potential reform success of the first Abe administration. Upon comeback, however, Abe 2.0 has enjoyed stronger support through the resurgence of the LDP, a marginalized opposition, and thus fulfilled this criterion. This consolidation of power is precisely the reason why the second Abe incarnation has been able to make efficient use of the “China threat” consensus. The successful securitization of China’s military rise created a need for response, and during his second term, Abe gave that response. In the context of the *bureaucratic process model*, the defense bureaucracy thus became somewhat “complicit” in pursuing policy reform as its “ministerial interest” (*shōeki*), as represented by the MOD, overlapped with the dominant “national interest” (*kokueki*), as represented by Abe’s security and defense agenda. This was due to both political actors exhibiting largely convergent interests in elevating Japan’s security stance.

What are the implications for Japanese political phenomena? First and foremost, this study has shown that Japan possesses an increasingly assertive defense bureaucracy that has been playing a major role in

steering the nation's security posture at least since its ministerial equalization in 2007. It is noteworthy that, for example, even under more dovish or pro-Asia leadership as seen during the DPJ administration, the proactive securitization of China by the MOD persisted without halt. The same can be said for the years during the Fukuda and Asô governments (2007-2009) when attempts at rapprochement were made. This suggests that the bureaucracy and its agenda enjoy considerable independence from a change in political leadership. In addition, this new assertiveness on the bureaucracy's part also extends to the SDF which has been encouraged by greater societal acceptance in recent years. As the first institution in postwar Japan, the NSC includes uniformed representation at a direct intersection with the executive and thus provides the SDF with more opportunities to represent its interests in national decision-making.

Furthermore, the study has shown that convergent media representations may assume an equally relevant role in reinforcing the framing of threats by the state. The media's inherent need for novelty and competition for readership exacerbates the sometimes uncritical reception of controversial events. It is striking that ideological differences seemed to bear little impact on commenting the developments related to China's military rise. Moreover, there are indicators that toeing the government line and growing self-censorship have recently become more problematic issues for independent, investigative journalism in Japan. This has arguably worsened since the enactment of the State Security Law which is apparent in the nation's steady fall in its ranking in the World Press Freedom Index since the return of Abe (72th as of 2017).

At the same time, public reception of these events and their convictions as to the existence of a national security threat continues to be the linchpin of policy change legitimization. As multiple examples of the past including the Abe 1.0 experience show, public attitudes toward policy reform are vital to its success, and that applies, a fortiori, to controversial legislation concerning the nation's security and defense policies. Although ambivalence has prevailed thus far, the absence of outright opposition on historico-cultural grounds should be considered a major transition by itself. After all, it appears that the past decade alone has substantially chipped away at Japan's ubiquitously professed dominant postwar culture of antimilitarism.

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Abstract (Korean)

중국의 군사력 강화에 대한 안전 보장화: 아베 신조 정권의 안보정책개혁에 관한 연구

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이 연구는 왜 일본 안보방위정책의 주요 개혁이 제2차 아베 정권의 첫 3년 동안 이루어지고, 거의 동일한 정책의 제1차 아베 정권 때에는 이루어지지 않았는가를 설명하는 연구이다.

지도력 유형과 전략의 국내 조정에 초점을 둔 이전 학문과는 달리, 이 연구는 아베 2.0 하에서의 변화 기원은 외부적으로 시작되었다고 주장한다. 중국의 군사력 강화에 대한 위협 인식이 1차 정부와 2차 정부 사이의 시기에 서서히 심화되고, 결국 2013년부터 "중국 위협"이라는 합의(consensus)가 형성되었다. 이 합의는 두 가지 주요 과정의 결과였다: (1)일본방위 관료제에 의한 중국 군사력 강화의 안전 보장화, 그리고 (2)불량국가의 개념을 북돋는 중국군사활동 관련 주제에 대한 언론의 보도 확대. 동시에 중국과일본의 안보 태세를 대하는 대중의 태도가 점진적인 변화를 겪었다. 결국 이 합의가 중국의 군사력 강화를 일본의 안보에 대한 가장 중요하고 즉각적인 위협으로 확립하면서 대응의 필요성을 창출한 것이다.

제2차 아베정부는, 자유당과 보수세력의 부활, 야당의 소외 등, 2012년 아베 총리의 복귀 후 높은 단계의 정치 통합 덕에 합의를 효과적으로 활용할 수 있었다. 그로 인해 정부는 이 연구에서 분석 대상이 되는 3가지 주요 정책 대응책을 도입했다: 특정비밀보호법, 국가안전보장회의의 설립, 그리고 2015년 집단 자위 법안을 포함한 헌법제9조의 재해석.

궁극적으로 이 연구는 제1차 아베 정권 당시에는 "중국 위협"이라는 합의가 없었을뿐 아니라 정치적 권력 강화와 대중의 지지 또한 없었다는 결론을 내린다. 결과적으로 일본의 안보방위정책 개혁은, 높은 외부 위협 인식과, 안보태세를 추구하는 강력한 정부가 만났을 때 발생할 가능성이 높다.

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주요어: 아베 신조, 안보정책, 중국, 일본 국방부, 안전 보장화
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