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The "Indo-Pacific" – Regional Dynamics in the 21st Century's New Geopolitical Center of Gravity

Guest-edited by

Brendon J. Cannon & Ash Rossiter



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Article

The "Indo-Pacific": Regional Dynamics in the 21st Century's New Geopolitical Center of Gravity

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Abstract

As the United States' titular position in the international system is seemingly in retreat, questions regarding the efficacy of the post-World War II liberal order have surfaced. In this emerging multipolar world, two distinct constellations of power are forming. In one camp are states that largely support the current global governance structure; in the other, states that wish to upend or at least refashion the American-led structure that many say favors status-quo powers over rising states. Nowhere is this division more apparent than in the "Indo-Pacific." As this article shows, the Indo-Pacific is increasingly used by governments and leaders as a central organizing idea around which choices are made about their position in the future global order. Although, as a concept, the Indo-Pacific means, and will mean, different things to different people, the number of nascent state strategies tethered to this neologism indicates the term's powerful salience. Under the banner "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," these strategies are crafted in response to the general "threat" of a China-dominated world and evince a shift in the position of certain state actors is underway; from causal adherence or outright disinterest in upholding the U.S. post-War global governance structure to one of increasing support.

Keywords

Indo-Pacific, Belt and Road Initiative, Global Governance, Balance of Power, Rising Powers

Global Shifts and the Indo-Pacific

During the five or so decades of the Cold War, the United States (U.S.) and the Soviet Union – despite being ideological and geostrategic foes – attempted to define an international system that included structures and laws that formed the basis of today's post-World War II global governance. With the demise of the Soviet Union, this bipolar world passed and an era of American unipolarity ensued that for some heralded a second "American century" (Krauthammer 1990; El-Doufani 1992; Zuckerman 1998). However, the era of U.S. hegemony with its emphasis on a liberal global order appears to have been relatively brief, and the longevity of both the Cold War structures of global governance and those of America's "unipolar decade" were increasingly questioned by the middle of the last decade (Blyth 2007; Layne 2012). First and foremost among the voices calling for alternatives or an outright overthrow of the existing structures were the so-called "rising powers" of Brazil, China and Russia, as well as Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, Nigeria, Indonesia and others.

Questioning the status quo has continued apace, bolstered by the emergence over the past two decades of a gradual but robust shift in economic power and resources from West to East with a much more modest shift towards the Global South (Posen 2009). What does all this mean to the post-World War II global governance system? This new multipolar world - for all of its inconsistencies and unknowns - seems to be forming into distinct constellations of power: states that support the current global governance structure or states that wish to upend or at least refashion the post-War structure with its perceived or real inequalities and inequities that favor status-quo powers over rising powers (Florini 2011; Terhalle 2011; Stephen 2012; Breslin 2010; Dal & Gök 2014; Newman & Zalle 2018).1 This may be a neat typology, but it hardly addresses the complexity of what we are experiencing. For example, if India is a rising power why has it signaled its interest - admittedly unevenly - in joining status quo powers such as Japan and the U.S. to thwart a rising China? Or why would Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a plethora of smaller but nonetheless rising powers, economically speaking, throw their lot in with a former and possibly resurgent global hegemon? Alternatively, states such as Kenya and the Philippines seem to be able to hedge and play interested states against one another.

Various international relations theories make answers to these simple conundrums appear easy, albeit contested depending on the school of thought. Yet the term "Indo-Pacific" as bandied about by statespersons and stakeholders from U.S.

¹ For example, according to Emel Parlar Dal and Gonca O. Gök (2014, 5-6), Turkey under President Erdogan has championed the so-called "Ankara criteria". This gives precedence to a uniquely Turkish vision of international relations seeking to reform an international system which Turkey sees as unjust, unequal, undemocratic and excessively militarized. Importantly, Turkey's challenging posture within the international order is also linked to its ascendancy to the club of "rising powers."

President Donald Trump to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the nascent strategy or strategies tethered to that term, is becoming increasingly the currency whereby individuals and states understand and make choices about the merits of an unknown, unclear but different global order as embodied by China, and a global order led by the U.S., Japan and other great powers that is well known but not particularly well liked. The fact that the order is not principally well liked does not mean that it has or will continue to be used and abused by what can be loosely termed rising and status quo powers. This is the case for Nigeria as well as Turkey, two rising powers that arguably chafe under the existing geopolitical and geoeconomic order but nonetheless use it because a better alternative does not exist ... yet.

The fact that references as well as some concrete moves have been made towards what appear to be the beginnings of a new or at least post-U.S. global order – as embodied by a rising China – has had the arguable effect of increasing the salience of the issue for states that fear or mistrust (or both) a China-dominated world (Pan 2014; Breslin 2017; Allison 2017). It is under this general "threat" that the positions of state actors have arguably begun to visibly shift from casual adherence or outright disinterest in upholding of the post-War global governance structure to one of increasing support. This shift is apparent in normative statements made by leaders about the "rule of law" or "sea lane safety," and has led increasingly to a constellation of hard and soft power and thereby the beginnings of strategy that includes one great power (the United States), one economic power (Japan), one rising power (India) and one lynchpin power (Australia). These four states, spread across the globe with very different sources of, and outlooks on, power now form the nucleus of what Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has nominated a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) strategy (Abe 2016).

This special issue of *Rising Powers Quarterly* was in part stimulated by the everincreasing use of this nomenclature by diplomats, policy-makers, leaders such as Prime Minister Abe, and scholars. Yet what the term actually means is unclear. If the term is unclear, the nascent strategies tacked on to the term are even more uncertain and therefore ripe for closer scrutiny.

Indo-Pacific-size Confusion

For many people in foreign policy circles, the term Indo-Pacific denotes a new spatially coherent zone combining the Pacific and Indian Oceans. An intensification of economic activity and the heightening of geopolitical competition within this vast maritime area are thought to provide the *raison d'être* for conceptualizing the Indo-Pacific as a distinct (albeit yet-to-be delineated) region. Under this view, the new geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century – especially the rise of India and China – are best captured by thinking of these two oceans, the islands

they contain and the countries that line their littoral, in the whole (Mohan 2012). This interpretation, however, is far from universally accepted. Indeed, some academics make the claim that this neologism (the Indo-Pacific) is little more than a discursive construction, the roots of which lie in anxieties in some capitals about China's growing power and influence (Cheng 2008; Manicom & O'Neil 2010; Pan 2014). Rather than a natural byproduct of global power and wealth shifting from the Atlantic zone eastward, the term Indo-Pacific, they argue, has been imagined and subsequently evoked to provide a concept around which a strategic response to China's rise can be organized (De Castro 2017; Pant & Reg 2018; Green 2018; Medcalf 2018; Soong 2018).

Debates around the utility or even the ontological basis of the Indo-Pacific concept will no doubt continue for some time; the Indo-Pacific means and will mean different things to different people. Nonetheless, policies taken by the main actors in the region - states and elite decision-makers in these states - will also have a powerful constitutive effect in shaping what the Indo-Pacific comes to look like. The dynamism of the region, specifically the aggregated rate of economic growth taking place and the concomitant share of world power that comes with this, means the Indo-Pacific is undergoing rapid transformation. Whilst the Indo-Pacific's broad trajectory points ineluctably to it acquiring increasing importance in world affairs, it is nonetheless difficult to anticipate what the consequences will be for the international relations of the region. Will the Indo-Pacific emerge as a zone of intense contestation between established and rising powers? If contestation is likely to be a key feature of the region, what form will it take? How will small and medium powers navigate through these challenging times? Analyzing recent developments will not lead to clear answers to these questions, but it may help us anticipate the direction the region is heading in. This is why the timing of this special issue of *Rising Powers Quarterly* is so crucial.

To date, much of the burgeoning literature and political commentary on the Indo-Pacific has focused overwhelmingly on the shifting balance of power between Washington and Beijing and what this means for the region (Tao 2017; Shirk 2017). Whilst these great power dynamics are a key feature of the region, they are far from the full story. Less attention has been given over, for example, to how other states in the Indo-Pacific are responding to the opportunities and challenges brought about by seismic transformations occurring in the region. A central objective – if not *the* central objective – of this special issue is to widen the debate about the Indo-Pacific by injecting a much broader set of perspectives and approaches into current discussions. To that end, it has sought to include a wide set of geographically and thematically diverse contributions.

One Power against Many

The issue opens with David Scott's thorough account of U.S. balancing actions. By cataloguing diplomatic initiatives and words, Scott argues that Washington's Indo-Pacific policy has essentially entailed co-opting one rising power (India) to help restrain another rising power (China), at a time when both the U.S., and indeed Japan, are facing relative power declines in the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis China. However, Scott calls into question the U.S. commitment – particularly in terms of financing - to an overarching and long-term Indo-Pacific Strategy, and demonstrates that President Trump's commitment to such a strategy may wax or wane depending on numerous factors. Despite confusing allies and strategic competitors alike, Scott concludes that the seemingly schizophrenic nature of current U.S. relations with the Indo-Pacific realm since 2008 - support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) then withdrawal from TPP, for example - has been fairly successful, particularly in the emergence of robust bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral arrangements. Additionally, Indo-Pacific concerns of key U.S. allies such as Australia and Japan have pushed the U.S. under both the Obama and Trump administrations to further position and reposition U.S. hard power in the western Pacific and eastern Indian Oceans. In this, U.S. rhetoric and actions meant to constrain a rising and assertive China have been reasonably effective.

By analyzing the competing visions of the U.S. and China, Emre Demir's article compliments Scott's work, but takes a different tack. After an instructive and critical theoretical section defining regions, conceptualizing regionalism and reviewing regionalization in Asia, Demir applies these theories and argues that the Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) contains inherent strengths not shared by the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Partnership (IPP) and corresponding Indo-Pacific strategy. According to Demir, China's BRI is an inclusive project based on economic connectivity and cooperation among countries, whereas the policies and strategies put forward by IPP states are mainly defined by security-related concerns and thus fail to naturally fit into the existing politico-economic structure of Asia. Furthermore, the author argues that due to a lack of leadership, difficulties in matching diverging priorities and the fractured approach of the IPP countries, the BRI maintains distinct advantages over the IPP – at least in its current state.

Caught in the Middle or Playing Their Best Hand?

Contrary to Demir's overall positive analysis of China's actions under the umbrella foreign policies of BRI and Maritime Silk Road (MSR), Mohan Malik argues in the issue's third article that Chinese attempts to influence small states in the Indo-Pacific have been largely negative. Using the examples of the Maldives and the Seychelles, Malik shows how small states are often the first to experience major geopolitical shifts and may play a disproportionate role in triggering major

crises between larger powers. As such, small states such as the Maldives – trapped between a rising China and a rising India – are caught in a tangled web. Malik illustrates this bind by demonstrating how the political landscape has provided Beijing the opportunity to influence politicians across a string of fragile democracies and thereby gain the advantage over its competitors, foremost among them India. Not surprisingly, India is deeply concerned about China's increasingly entrenched naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the choices of action facing New Delhi are difficult. Chinese strategic writings constantly remind India of China's overall technological, economic, and military superiority. But if India acquiesces or gives in during any future clash with Beijing, the impetus for small states to continue their slide into Beijing's orbit will increase. It is within this context that Malik places New Delhi's decision to actively engage with the lynchpin states forming the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) grouping.

Jagannath P. Panda picks up on India's strategic dilemma as encapsulated in Malik's article. But where Malik worries about an increasingly inevitable Sino-centric order that will hamper not only India's rise but the future of the other FOIP states, Panda sees an opportunity for New Delhi to pursue a pluralistic foreign policy. According to Panda, this means that India's outreach to Australia, Japan and the U.S. should not be viewed as a China-containment strategy. Rather, New Delhi's new-found interest in the FOIP states is meant to balance China's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean. In addition, it is possibly a way of ensuring a power equilibrium in the Indo-Pacific region. But the current incarnation of the FOIP does not necessarily guarantee India's security against China. Panda demonstrates how neither Japan, the U.S. nor Australia were willing to vocally express their stance on various China-India border disputes in New Delhi's favor. As such, India's current faith in the fellow FOIP states may be limited. However, what is not in question is that India must continue to engage its powerful neighbor, China. To do so in the best possible terms, according to Panda, New Delhi's approach is to position its security interests – maritime and otherwise – front and center in its relations with Beijing while at the same time further establishing consonance and compatibility with its FOIP partner states and fellow democracies.

Like Panda, Ash Rossiter looks at the emerging posture of one of the makeweight powers in the Indo-Pacific – in this case Japan rather than India. Unlike New Delhi, Tokyo has adopted a much more consistent position vis-à-vis its strategic alliances in the region. However, what is less clear is the degree to which Japan will play an active role in the security affairs of the Indo-Pacific. Rossiter first attempts to explicate the aims and objectives of the Abe administration's central policy initiative towards the region: the FOIP strategy, which was officially unveiled in 2016 (Abe 2016). His article argues that whilst the FOIP is talked of as one of the most important organizing ideas in Japan's contemporary foreign

policy, there is actually little consensus as to what the FOIP really entails and what it may mean for the country's emerging national security posture. Rossiter uses a novel analytical framework to test for potential points of contact between the FOIP and three critical strands of Japan's national security: key alliances; the role of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces outside of territorial defense; and security cooperation with ASEAN nations. Rossiter shows why extant constitutional constraints on the use of the force combined with limited resources given over to defense make it unlikely that Japan will play a more robust role in pursuit of the FOIP's main goal: the maintenance of open seas.

Middle Powers have their Say

The next two articles examine the actions and reactions of two middling powers to the rapid transformations occurring in the Indo-Pacific. Renato Cruz De Castro compares how two Philippine presidents have taken into account the on-going geo-strategic competition between the U.S. and China and why this resulted in two very different approaches. He elucidates why President Benigno Aquino III pursued a balancing policy towards Beijing, explaining that this was not only a result of China's maritime expansion into the South China Sea but that it also took into account the Obama administration's strategic rebalancing to Asia. Bringing the analysis to the present day, De Castro provides an explanation as to President Rodrigo Duterte's decision to unravel his predecessor's geopolitical agenda in the South China Sea. Using a theoretical decision-making framework that compares prospective costs and losses, De Castro argues that Duterte pursued an appeasement policy vis-à-vis China to take advantage of Beijing's BRI initiative.

Like many states in the region, Australia has also faced the challenge of steering a course between benefitting economically from China while maintaining and forging alliances to balance its growing power. Like Rossiter's contribution on Japan, Miguel Alejandro Hijar-Chiapa, attempts to shed light on Australian thinking towards the Indo-Pacific through officially stated policy. Unlike Japan, Australia's government has produced two White Papers that explicate in great detail Canberra's defense and foreign policy approaches to the region. Híjar-Chiapa shows why the growth of China's power, and the corresponding changes to the regional status quo, are a major concern for Australia. The main take away of his article is that navigating the decade ahead might prove very hard for Australia. Only time will tell if middle powers such Australia can extract advantages by conceptualizing the Indo-Pacific as a spatial zone and craft meaningful responses around this concept that help to address threats and seize opportunities.

Indo-Pacific Limits

The penultimate and final articles of this issue widen the geographical parameters

of the Indo-Pacific, examining how developments in the Indo-Pacific may affect states on its ostensible periphery. Jonathan Fulton makes the case that the Trump administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific, characterized by an attempt to contain China (contrast to previous U.S. administrations' efforts to integrate China into the liberal order) could potentially lead to balancing behavior across Eurasia, with competition increasing in multiple Asian regions. The Gulf, he argues in his article, is both deeply embedded in the American-led liberal order but is also increasingly engaged with China. It is, Fulton shows, a region that is thus ripe for being affected by Sino-American competition in the Indo-Pacific. This is especially true because the economic and strategic interests of external powers are coming into play at a time when the regional order in the Gulf is itself undergoing great change. He concludes that this confluence of tensions—at both the international and regional levels—will influence the Gulf's political, economic, and security environment.

Brendon J. Cannon's article concludes this special issue with a look at the western geopolitical bookend of the Indo-Pacific region: eastern Africa. An outlier in any Indo-Pacific strategy, Cannon argues that eastern African states will nonetheless play an increasingly important role in the minds of policymakers in Tokyo, Beijing and, to a lesser extent, New Delhi. His recent research in Japan informs his attempts to define specific policy alternatives for Tokyo by locating them contextually within the dynamic state of affairs in this huge and diverse region. Cannon argues that the states of eastern Africa possess complex foreign policies and a web of connections that are often ignored or misunderstood, thus making strategies pursued by powers such as China, India or Japan potentially fraught with difficulty as they may become enmeshed in regional power squabbles. He demonstrates that elites in lynchpin states such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania will pursue balancing strategies between Japan's FOIP and China's BRI, thereby avoiding having to choose sides and reaping the rewards of playing one party off against another. Cannon concludes by noting Japan should engage this region consistently on both bilateral and multilateral fronts with India, Australia, the U.S. and other partners - to include China where applicable. In doing so, Japan may see itself become a political player -with all the responsibilities and challenges that come from that - as well as an economic power in the region.

In many ways, an increasingly robust engagement in global governance informed by four very different powers but all adopting some form of FOIP strategy has only just begun. The role this nascent security architecture and normative structure may play across the vast region is yet to be revealed. Yet whatever shape the FOIP strategy – or their versions of it – may take, it will almost certainly play a significant part in shaping the region. These articles, read together, paint the beginnings of a portrait of the role a FOIP strategy may play in maintaining and

strengthening the current global governance architecture. As will becoming apparent in reading this issue, there is considerable interplay between the articles. The contributors, leading authorities in their chosen areas, have already written extensively on topics directly about or related to the Indo-Pacific. Although they come at the problem in very different ways, their contributions build upon one another. The end result is that the issue makes a larger contribution to the debate than the sum of each of its parts.

Bio

Brendon J. Cannon

Brendon J. Cannon is an Assistant Professor of International Security at the Institute of International & Civil Security, Khalifa University of Science & Technology (Abu Dhabi, UAE). His academic background includes a Ph.D. in Political Science (University of Utah, USA) with an emphasis on Comparative Politics & International Relations and an M.A. in Middle East Studies & History (University of Utah, USA). Dr. Cannon was previously a director of a university research institute in Hargeisa, Somaliland, Somalia and lectured in political science at Kisii University in Nairobi, Kenya. His research interests include the foreign policies of rising powers, the international relations and political economy of eastern Africa, the securitization of post-Ottoman identity politics, and Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Dr. Cannon's articles include Ethiopia, Berbera Port and the Shifting Balance of Power in the Horn of Africa (co-authored with Ash Rossiter 2017); Deconstructing Turkey's Efforts in Somalia (2016); Turkey in Africa: Lessons in Political Economy (2017); and Security, Structural Factors and Sovereignty: Analyzing Reactions to Kenya's Closure of the Dadaab Refugee Camp Complex (co-authored with Hirotaka Fujibayashi 2018). His full-length book, Legislating Reality and Politicizing History: Contextualizing Armenian Claims of Genocide (Offenbach am Main: Manzara Verlag: 2016) is now available in English and German, with a second edition forthcoming in early 2019.

Ash Rossiter

Dr. Rossiter joined Khalifa University in 2015 as Assistant Professor in International Security after a multi-faceted career across the Middle East and North Africa, spanning the private, government and military sectors. Dr. Rossiter's work specializes on the changing character of war and conflict, the use of military force both historically and in the contemporary world, and technology and international security.

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Article

The Indo-Pacific in US Strategy: Responding to Power Shifts

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Abstract

This article's purpose is fourfold. It starts with insights from theory in the shape of "power transition" theory and "balance of threat" theory. The empirical focus is a three-fold consideration of US presence, rhetoric and diplomacy concerning the Indo-Pacific. The section on "presence" pursues the US position as a resident and sovereign power across the Pacific Ocean with particular mention of the role of Guam, together with further basing facilities across into the Indian Ocean, along-side the role of the US Indo-Pacific Command (IPCOM). The section on "rhetoric" moves from the official discourse of the Obama administration initiated by Hillary Clinton, and advocacy of an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC), into the vigorous re-affirmation of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) by the Trump administration in late 2017 and through 2018. The section on "diplomacy" considers US bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral diplomacy with Australia, India, Japan and France that operate in both oceans. The article demonstrates that a key feature of US Indo-Pacific strategy is using one rising power (India) to help constrain another rising power (China).

Keywords

Balance of Power, Indo-Pacific, Strategy, Australia, Japan, United States

Introduction

In the 1950s–1970s the dominant regional narrative in United States (US) strategic thinking was the Pacific as an "American Lake" (Lattimore 1945). *Manifest Destiny* having carried the US westwards across the American continent, had moved on from California across the Pacific in two phases. First, US power rolled out to Hawaii and Guam (and the Philippines) at the end of the 1890s. Second, victory in the Pacific War of 1941–1945 against Japan resulted in US control of the Carolines and Marianas and indeed ongoing bases in Japan itself, which established the US as the Pacific hegemon. In the 1980s the dominant narrative in US strategic thinking was the so-called "Asia-Pacific" (Cummings 1997), in

which the economic dynamism of the Pacific Rim and related talk of the "Pacific Century" knitted together California, Japan and the *Asian Tigers* of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. The formation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) mechanism reflected this perspective.

However the dominance of this Asia-Pacific strategic narrative in US strategic thinking is now weakening. The "Indo-Pacific" emerged circa 2010 as a regional framework for US strategic discourse under the Obama administration, and became a key regional term for official US discourse by 2017 under the Trump administration. There are two reasons for this recent shift in strategic language, one is geo-economic and the other is geopolitical. The geo-economic shift is to do with the general volume of trade, including particularly significant energy flows between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The geopolitical shift is to do with the rise of China, and also India in the region. The US has been the leading power in the Pacific since 1945 and a prominent power in the Indian Ocean since the 1980s. Now the US, Japan and Australia are faced with Chinese assertiveness in the Western Pacific; while in the Indian Ocean the US and another key rising power, India are faced with an increasing Chinese presence. Not surprisingly, in the face of this Chinese challenge, the US has crafted an Indo-Pacific response.

This article now considers US Indo-Pacific strategy, in reality driven by Chinafears, in four sections dealing with insights from theory, presence (actorness), rhetoric (official discourse) and diplomacy in play by the US.

Insights from Theory

This article is not a theory application, but is primarily an empirically based exercise in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Just over a decade ago, John Mearsheimer (2006, p. 160) argued that "to predict the future in Asia, one needs a theory of international politics that explains how rising great powers are likely to act and how the other states in the system will react to them". The US Indo-Pacific strategy reflects three processes which follow from each other. First is that China's rise presents "power transition" challenge to the US. Second is that the US is responding to that challenge by pursuing "balancing", both in terms of building up its own strength ("internal balancing") and in strengthening its alliances and strategic partnerships ("external balancing"). Third is that in balancing terms "balance of threat" considerations are in operation not only for the US but also for Japan, Australia and India vis-à-vis China. In this light two related international relations theories are particularly relevant, and are what Mearsheimer had in mind; namely "power transition" theory and "balance of threat" theory.

The first theory deals with "fundamental shifts in world power – power transition" (Lemke and Tammen 2001, p. 14). Power transition theory argues that an

established hegemon brings hegemonic stability but is then faced with a challenge from a new rising rival. Before a new hegemon takes over there is a period of instability where the risk of war is at its height, where the established hegemon, feeling threatened may still try to take down its rival while it still has the strength. It is no surprise that at the start of the century Lemke and Tammen (2001, p. 7) considered that "today only China represents a potential challenger to the United States". This perception was clearly reflected in the *Quadrennial Defense Review* conducted by the Pentagon in 2006, which pinpointed China's as the main peer competitor challenging the US:

Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter strategy. (US 2006, p. 29)

The "counter-strategy" is US building up of its own military strength ("internal balancing") and seeking allies and partners ("external balancing") across the Indo-Pacific.

However, China is not the only significant rising power, there is India similarly pursuing an economics-driven rise in the international system. Faced with the two rising powers China and India, the then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson made an important distinction:

China, while rising alongside India, has done so less responsibly, at times undermining the international, rules-based order [...] It makes perfect sense that the United States – at this time – should seek to build on the strong foundation of our years of cooperation with India. It is indeed time to double down on a democratic partner that is still rising – and rising responsibly – for the next 100 years [...] The Indo-Pacific in particular – needs the United States and India to have a strong partnership. (Tillerson 2017)

Elsewhere in the State Department this focus on India is apparent; "our Indo-Pacific strategy, as well as our National Security Strategy [...] all recognize one salient fact: the importance of India's emergence as a rising global leader. We welcome India's rise" (Vajda 2018). The reason that the US welcomes India's rise is that it provides increasingly important balancing counterweight to China's rise.

A complement to "power transition theory" is the "balance of threat" theory put forward by Stephen Walt (1985). This is a refinement of the "balance of power" (*structural realism*) theory put forward by Kenneth Waltz (2010), which argued that a leading power will automatically face balancing coalitions against it by relatively weaker powers. Under Waltz's logic Japan and India would be balancing with China against the United States. However, they have gone the other way –

balancing with the US against China, within their own hedging strategies. Why? The answer is simple. Walt put forward four criteria for a country making "threat" calculations about another country. In addition to Waltz's aggregate power and military power considerations, Walt put forward (perceived) offensive intentions and geographical proximity as two further categories (Walt 1985, pp. 9–11). It is these two additional categories of perceived offensive intentions and geographic proximity that make India and Japan (and other regional actors) more concerned about Chinese power than about US power. The result is that US Indo-Pacific strategy can and does utilise the threat perceptions across the region concerning China. This was what John Mearsheimer (offensive realism) alluded to when he wrote that the application of balancing theory would mean that "most of Beijing's neighbors [...] will join with the United States to contain Chinese power" (Mearsheimer 2014). This is the strategic logic of the US Indo-Pacific strategy, formal alliances (Cronin 2017) and implicit strategic partnerships to constrain China.

Presence (Actorness)

The US is a well-established Indo-Pacific actor. Washington argues that it is part of the region, not an outsider.

As an Indo-Pacific nation ourselves [...] when we speak about the Indo-Pacific region, we are defining it as stretching from the US West Coast through the Bay of Bengal [...] From a security standpoint, the Indo-Pacific is the region in which the United States has our longest maritime border, several long-standing treaty allies, as well as being home to our Pacific fleet. (Rosenblum 2018)

This combination of assets was why the State Department emphasized that "the United States is and will continue to be an Indo-Pacific power" (Wells 2017). The US status as a *resident power* is through territorial possessions across the Pacific as well as bases in the Indian Ocean.

In and across the Pacific, the US is a *sovereign power* of the first order. Firstly with regard to its eastern littoral, California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska (including the Aleutian chain) swing around much of the eastern rim of the Pacific. San Diego is the resident homeport of the US Pacific Fleet; consisting of over 50 ships, including permanent aircraft carrier basing, and over 20,000 personnel.

Secondly, of particular significance was Hawaii's incorporation into the US in 1898, becoming a fully fledged state in 1959, and housing the US Pacific Command (PACOM), which was appropriately enough renamed as the US Indo-Pacific Command (IPCOM) in May 2018. Naval leaders have considered that "Hawaii remains the gateway to the Indo-Pacific" (Harris 2018a). In the southern Pacific, Samoa became US territory in 1899, complete with naval facilities.

Thirdly, in the Western Pacific, in the wake of the Spanish-US war of 1898, Guam became a US possession, and remains so to the present day. Within the pivot/ rebalance from the Atlantic to the Pacific announced by the Obama administration, Guam's significance has been raised by the decision to build it up as the US "tip of the spear" and the receptacle of military reinforcements redeployed from South Korea and Japan, as well as "forward deployment" from the eastern sectors of the Pacific (Crisostomo 2013; Erickson and Mikolay 2014). Guam sits in the "second island chain" which runs from Japan's Bonin Island holdings, through the Marianas (including US military facilities at Tinian) to Guam. Deep water facilities able to handle aircraft carriers are complemented with the long airstrip at Andersen airbase, able to house heavy strategic B-52 bombers. Guam is the site of the biennial large-scale Valiant Shield exercises, held by the US military since 2006. Guam is also the home for the *Cope North* air force exercises, run between the US and Japanese air forces since 1999, but now expanded to include the Australian air force since 2012. Finally, Guam was the host site in June 2018 for the trilateral Malabar exercises between the US, India and Japan, complete with the presence of the USS Ronald Reagan, the lead US nuclear powered aircraft carrier.

Fourthly, the US presence is also found along the so-called "first island chain" running from Japan (complete with US Carrier Strike Group Five based at Yokusaka) and its Ryukyu chain of islands (including the US 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force based at Okinawa), through Taiwan to the Philippines. A striking feature is Taiwan's re-emergence in US strategic thinking as a checkpoint on China (PRC) that must be maintained. Taiwan has been singled out again as a significant partner for the US; "the United States, Taiwan, and all our partners can work together to strengthen the free and open order of the Indo-Pacific" (Wong 2018a).

Fifthly, US deployments into the South China Sea have increased in strength and frequency, with deliberate Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises carried out within 12-miles of China's artificial islands. US basing facilities at Palawan in the Philippines facing the South China Sea were re-established in 2016. In turn de facto berthing facilities have been established at Da Nang amid growing US-Vietnam cooperation. The USS Carl Vinson carrier strike group made a particularly significant historic visit to Da Nang in March 2018, a powerful force with a powerful message for Beijing. It was deliberate that Secretary of Defense James Mattis' visits to Vietnam and Indonesia in January 2018 were depicted by the US military as "Indo-Pacific" in nature (PACOM 2018). With regard to Indonesia, another significant rising power, a "strategic partnership" was declared in 2015. The *Cope West* exercises between the Indonesian and US air forces have run annually since 2012, at times in Indonesia and at other times at Tinian in the Western Pacific. In welcoming the Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi to Washington in March 2018, Indonesia was described by Mattis (2018a) as "a

geographic and diplomatic fulcrum for the Indo-Pacific region", in which the US expressed support for Indonesian claims to the waters surrounding the Natuna Archipelago, waters in some dispute with China.

Sixthly, defence links with Singapore established under the 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement and further strengthened under 2015 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement have resulted in an ongoing Logistic Group West Pacific stationed there by the US. Special aircraft carrier berthing facilities, ongoing deployment of littoral combat warships and regular aircraft deployments at Singapore enable further US projection into the Eastern Indian Ocean and South China Sea. In this vein the US-Singapore Strategic Security Policy Dialogue meeting on April 2018 stressed their "mutual defense cooperation" focussing on "maritime security" in the region so as to "uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific" (US 2018c). Similar Indo-Pacific projection is enabled with the Marine Rotational Force agreed with Australia at Darwin in November 2011. In turn, the UK atoll of Diego Garcia has been the site of a significant US base since 1977, embedding US maritime power in the middle of the Indian Ocean, and "anchoring America's future presence in the Indo-Pacific" (Erickson, Ladwig and Mikolay 2013).

With regard to regional architecture, the US is a member of various organizations which include members from both the Pacific and Indian Oceans; most notably the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM). The US is also a member of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFC), which was originally and accurately termed the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council/Commission from 1948–1993 given that its membership included India. In addition, the US is a member of various Pacific Ocean bodies by virtue of its "sovereign" power status. These include the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) mechanism, and the West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).

One particularly important actor is the US military in the form of the US Indo-Pacific Command (IPCOM) based at Hawaii. Its area of responsibility stretches from San Diego to Diego Garcia, from the Pacific to the Eastern Indian Ocean (68 degrees east), including India. Previously called the Pacific Command (PACOM), the decision by Defense Secretary Mattis on 31 May 2018 reflected geographic and geopolitical reality, that "in recognition of the increasing connectivity of the Indian and Pacific Oceans today we rename the US Pacific Command to US Indo-Pacific Command" (Mattis 2018c). The *Rimpac* exercises organised by the US at Hawaii, represent Indo-Pacific naval diplomacy (Tran 2018), involving as they do an increasing range of Pacific Rim countries since 1971 but also India since 2012. In contrast, China though finally invited in 2014 and 2016 was disinvited to the 2018 exercises on account of its actions in the South China Sea.

Admiral Aquilino argued that "RIMPAC is not only the world's largest international maritime exercise, it also shows that like-minded nations who value a free and open Indo-Pacific want this opportunity to improve our cooperation with each other" (US Navy 2018).

This "Indo-Pacific" scope had been explicitly recognized by PACOM leaders since 2012. This was first shown when the then PACOM Commander, Admiral Samuel Locklear, invoked the "Indo-Pacific" nineteen times in one particular extended speech on "American commitment to the Indo-Pacific" (Locklear 2012). He emphasized two themes. Firstly with regard to US strength (*internal balancing*):

We will put our most capable forces forward in the Indo-Pacific... Through the tumultuous years of the last century, America's military served as a key stabilizing factor in the Indo-Pacific security environment—this will continue. (Lock-lear 2012)

Secondly, he drew out bilateral relationships with Indo-Pacific allies and partners (*external balancing*):

Our alliance with Australia [and Japan] will continue to underpin U.S. security objectives in the Indo-Pacific for decades to come. We are also developing and expanding our bilateral partnerships with nations throughout the Indo-Pacific with whom we have shared security interests. Nations such as Indonesia [are] a critical partner to a successful rebalance to the Indo-Pacific. And we will pursue a long-term partnership with India. (Locklear 2012)

Although, the term "Indo-Asia-Pacific" became the standard term used at PACOM during 2013–2017 for its deployments, defence partnerships and general strategic encapsulations entwining the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the term "Indo-Pacific" was then re-adopted in 2018. Consequently, in his last testimony to the US Senate Armed Forces Committee, PACOM's commander Admiral Harry Harris repeated that "the U.S. has an enduring national interest in the Indo-Pacific", but was faced with challenges from Beijing, "China's ongoing military build-up, advancement, and modernization are core elements of their strategy to supplant the United States [...] in the Indo-Pacific" (Harris 2018b). His answer was to highlight "allies and partners join us in addressing these global challenges to defend freedom, deter war, and maintain the rules which underwrite a free and open Indo-Pacific" (Harris 2018b).

Finally his successor Admiral Phillip Davidson, the incoming commander of the newly renamed Indo-Pacific Command, naturally enough stressed the Indo-Pacific firepower of the US to "continue to provide the combat power needed to defend freedom, deter war, and maintain the rules which underwrite a free and open Indo-Pacific region", thereby "maintaining favorable balances of power" since "for more than 60 years, the Indo-Pacific has been largely peaceful, in many ways made possible by the rules-based security architecture that our armed forces helped create, sustain, and preserve" (Davidson 2018). The reference to "balances of power" was with reference to China's disruption of that power equilibrium which was a challenge to US paramountcy in the region, with the US following balancing tactics of building up its military power ("internal balancing") and strengthening alliances and strategic partnerships ("external balancing").

Rhetoric (Official Discourse)

The first official use of Indo-Pacific rhetoric by the US can be seen during Barack Obama's first administration, where Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued that "the Indo-Pacific region is crucial to our future" (Clinton 2012). Strategic rethinking around Indo-Pacific regional conceptualization generated practical imperatives in Clinton's mind; to "translate the growing connection between the Indian and Pacific oceans into an operational concept" (Clinton 2011). Alliance dynamics were a tacit part of her utilization of Indo-Pacific formulations. She first used the term "Indo-Pacific" in 2010 to reflect closer naval cooperation with India; "we are expanding our work with the Indian navy in the Pacific, because we understand how important the Indo-Pacific basin is" (Clinton 2010). Whereas US relations with Australia had previously been described and conducted within an "Asia-Pacific" framework, Clinton extended this with "Indo-Pacific" references; "we are also expanding our alliance with Australia from a Pacific partnership to an Indo-Pacific one" (Clinton 2011).

Indo-Pacific talk at the Department of State was matched by similar talk at the Department of Defense. The Defense Secretary, Chuck Hagel, was ready to invoke Indo-Pacific frameworks, like Clinton with regard to India; "our interests across the full span of the Indo-Pacific region are aligning more closely than ever" with "shared interest in maritime security across the region, including at the global crossroads of the South China Sea" (Hagel 2014a). Still wider frameworks were emerging for US defence policy; "at today's AUSMIN [Australia-United States Ministerial Consultation meetings] having just come from New Delhi and having consulted closely with our Japanese and Korean allies and ASEAN defense ministers, I see a new, committed resolve to work together, to work together to build a security system across this Indo-Pacific region" (Hagel 2014b).

The then US ambassador to India, Nancy Powell, welcomed Obama's re-election in 2012 as maintaining an Indo-Pacific drive:

The continuing recognition in the United States of the importance of the Indo-Pacific region is certainly a very very important part and part of the continuity in a second Obama administration [...] Certainly the Obama administration's rebalancing of our military forces and our defense policy towards the Indo-Pacific region is another thing that will continue under this administration. (Powell 2012)

Admittedly with Hillary Clinton's departure, the Middle East and the terrorist group ISIS had more prominence under John Kerry, the subsequent Secretary of State. Nevertheless Kerry did invoke "the modern and dynamic Indo-Pacific region" where "the United States is already providing leadership on maritime security [...] in association with close friends and allies across the [Indo-Pacific] region, including India, Australia, Indonesia, and Japan" (Kerry 2015a). China's absence from such a listing of friends is no surprise. Kerry's take on the first ministerial meeting of the US-India-Japan (USIJ) trilateral held in September 2015 was that the meeting reflected "our interest in the Indo-Pacific region" and "an opportunity here to talk a little bit about the maritime security issues" (Kerry 2015b).

Extended Indo-Pacific underpinnings were given in a joint piece by Kerry and Penny Pritzker, the Secretary of Commerce. Common attitudes between the US and India were alluded to; whereby "both recognize that peace, prosperity, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region can only be secured by connected economies, freedom of navigation and overflight, and a rules-based architecture where maritime and territorial disputes are settled amicably" (Kerry and Pritzker 2015). The point about freedom of navigation and overflight, and maritime disputes was aimed at Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. Military convergence, in part generated by this Chinese assertiveness, was further pointed out by them. The specific example given by them was the Malabar exercise between the US, India and Japan in the Western Pacific in 2014 and the Indian Ocean in 2015, thereby demonstrating how "our navies are partnering to promote maritime security across the Indo-Pacific region" (Kerry and Pritzker 2015).

Alongside the Obama administration's espousal of a political and military pivot/rebalance to the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia was the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC) initiative, aimed at "shaping the future of trade and connectivity in the Indo-Pacific" (Sumar 2014; also Biswal 2016). It was made with explicit reference to links between South Asia and Southeast Asia, did not involve China, and was implicitly a countermeasure to China's espousal of a Maritime Silk Road (MSR) that Xi Jinping made in autumn 2013. In addition, US aid was earmarked for IPEC schemes, and Obama adopted the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral trade framework with US allies and partners around the Pacific Rim which did not involve China.

US involvement in the TPP proved short lived as Donald Trump, upon inaugura-

tion in January 2017, took the immediate decision to pull the US out of the TPP. This reflected Trump's distrust of multilateral and state-led overseas economic initiatives. However after months of little clear foreign policy formulation, a very much explicit Indo-Pacific direction has emerged.

Trump's approach to the Indo-Pacific has been to avoid multilateral initiatives. Instead, the Trump administration has pursued security in bilateral and minilateral (trilaterals and quadrilaterals) settings and pushed private sector economic initiatives amid budget cuts in aid. This particular type of Indo-Pacific rhetoric in the Trump administration first became noticeable in late 2017 and early 2018. Indeed, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, having spent the previous part of 2017 talking of the "Asia-Pacific" and the "Pacific", used the "Indo-Pacific" term for the first time in September 2017:

A peaceful and prosperous future in the Indo-Pacific region is based on a strong rules-based international order and a shared commitment to international law, to peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for territorial integrity. U.S.-India defense cooperation has steadily expanded in recent years, underpinned by a strategic convergence between our two countries based on common objectives and goals in the region. (Mattis 2017)

The linkage to India was significant, the venue being his joint Press Conference with India's Minister of Defence Nirmala Sitharaman, carried out in Mattis' trip to India. Mattis made a point that "we value India's leadership across the Indo-Pacific" (Mattis 2017), and pointed to the trilateral *Malabar* exercises between India, Japan and the US as illustrating this strategic convergence. Whereas his warning about Chinese activities in the South China Sea were couched in specific "Asia-Pacific" frameworks at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2017, similar warnings about China were couched in equally specific "Indo-Pacific" frameworks at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018 (Mattis 2018d).

An extended Indo-Pacific frame of reference was deployed in Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's speech to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, which included 18 separate mentions of the "Indo-Pacific". He argued that "the world's center of gravity is shifting to the heart of the Indo-Pacific", and that "the Indo-Pacific – including the entire Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific, and the nations that surround them – will be the most consequential part of the globe in the 21st century" (Tillerson 2017). In an implicit aim at China, Tillerson emphasized that the US sought "a free and open Indo-Pacific". Bilateral partnership was highlighted where "the U.S. and India – with our shared goals of peace, security, freedom of navigation, and a free and open architecture – must serve as the eastern and western beacons of the Indo-Pacific" (Tillerson 2017). Bilateral cooperation was also again entwined with trilateral cooperation with

Japan, with the 2017 *Malabar* naval exercise given as "a clear example of the combined strength of the three Indo-Pacific democracies" (Tillerson 2017).

This embrace of the Indo-Pacific was signalled at the highest level during President Trump's visit to Pacific Asia in November 2017. The highlight of the visit was his remarks in Vietnam. These included comments about "our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific", his reaching out to "friends, partners, and allies in the Indo-Pacific", and in a criticism of China, stressing "we must uphold principles that have benefited all of us, like respect for the rule of law, individual rights, and freedom of navigation and overflight, including open shipping lanes" (Trump 2017). The "Indo-Pacific" was referred to ten times and the "Asia-Pacific" no times, despite this being an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Not surprisingly, Chinese comments were negative about this US embrace of "Indo-Pacific" strategy formulations (Fang 2017).

The National Security Strategy of the United States, released in December 2017 contained a specific section on "The Indo-Pacific". It warned that "geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region, which stretches from the west coast of India to the western shores of the United States" (US 2017a, pp. 45–46), in which "China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region" (p. 25), but for which "the United States must marshal the will and capabilities to compete and prevent unfavourable shifts in the Indo-Pacific" (p. 45). The National Security Strategy argued that this was to be achieved through forward deployment of US forces complemented by quadrilateral arrangements with Australia, India and Japan, together with other bilateral arrangements with countries like Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Similarly, the 2018 National Defense Strategy released in January 2018 was damning in regards to China:

China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States. (US 2018, pp. 1–2)

Its remedy against this "strategic competitor" was a mixture of US forward positioning, continuing robust Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises in the South China Sea and strengthening security ties with like-minded China-concerned nations. It was revealing that whereas the *National Security Strategy* mentioned

the "Indo-Pacific" eleven times as a point of strategic reference, the "Asia-Pacific" was unmentioned save for one passing reference to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) mechanism.

A synthesis of US administration thinking on the Indo-Pacific was provided by Alex Wong, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau at the State Department, who made a substantive speech titled *The Indo-Pacific Strategy* in April 2018. He made a point of emphasizing "the main focus of my time right now is the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" (Wong 2018b). In his explanation of the strategy he focused on its two aspects of "free" and "open", and the particular relevance of the term "Indo-Pacific".

In regards to the qualifier "free", Wong used it at both the international and national levels:

First of all, the international plane. We want the nations of the Indo-Pacific to be free from coercion, that they can pursue in a sovereign manner the paths they choose in the region. Secondly, we mean at the national level, we want the societies of the various Indo-Pacific countries to become progressively more free – free in terms of good governance, in terms of fundamental rights, in terms of transparency and anti-corruption. (Wong 2018b)

This was an implicit challenge to China's coercive assertion in the South China Sea, and indeed to its domestic policies in terms of human rights.

With regards to the qualifier "open", Wong pinpointed four applications, in the shape of open sea lanes, open logistics-infrastructure, open investments, and open trade. References to open trade and open investment were meant as a criticism of the Chinese internal market. With regard to logistics-infrastructure:

There's an infrastructure gap throughout the Indo-Pacific. What is needed throughout the region to encourage greater regional integration, encourage greater economic growth? We want to assist the region in doing infrastructure in the right way, infrastructure that truly does drive integration and raises the GDPs of the constituent economies, not weigh them down. (Wong, 2018b)

Again this was a criticism of China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative saddling participants like Sri Lanka with debts to China. However, within this qualifier of "open", Wong prioritized open sea lines of communication and open airways:

By open, we first and foremost mean open sea lines of communication and open airways. These open sea lines of communication are truly the lifeblood of the region. And if you look at world trade, with 50 percent of trade going through the

Indo-Pacific along the sea routes, particularly through the South China Sea, open sea lanes and open airways in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly vital and important to the world. (Wong, 2018b)

This again was an implied criticism of Chinese assertiveness in the sea lines and airways of the East China Sea and particularly of the South China Sea.

The final significance of his outline was the way Wong explained the relevance of the term "Indo-Pacific".

Turn your attention to the term "Indo-Pacific." It's significant that we use this term. Before, people used the term Asia Pacific [...] but we've adopted this phrase for two reasons, and it's significant for two reasons. Number one, it acknowledges the [...] current-day reality that South Asia, and in particular India, plays a key role in the Pacific and in East Asia and in Southeast Asia. [...] Secondly, it is in our interest, the US interest, as well as the interests of the region, that India play an increasingly weighty role in the region. India is a nation that is invested in a free and open order. It is a democracy. It is a nation that can bookend and anchor the free and open order in the Indo-Pacific region, and it's our policy to ensure that India does play that role. (Wong, 2018b)

In effect the "Indo" part of the "Indo-Pacific" pointed for Wong not just geographically to the Indian Ocean, but also and more importantly geopolitically to India. India was therefore identified as a player across the Indo-Pacific that the US sought to actively work with; India and the US are to form the two bookends (India in the west and the US in the east) of the regional order. Implicit balancing undertones are present with this fellow democracy, with China the non-democracy seen as the main challenge to that Free and Open Indo-Pacific order.

In such an official vein, the bipartisan *Asia Reassurance Initiative Bill* (ARIA) introduced in the Senate in April 2018, opened with the declaration that it sought "to develop a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled United States policy for the Indo-Pacific region". Within the Bill, the "Indo-Pacific" was mentioned 56 times, "Asia" five times and the "Asia-Pacific" three times. Bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral links with India, Australia and Japan were given specific Indo-Pacific underpinnings in the text. It also recommended further joint maritime and Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises in the South China Sea (section 112), amid a programme of "countering China's influence" (section 101) in the region. Spending of \$1.5 billion during 2019–2023 was explained as being not only "to bolster the United States military presence and readiness in the Indo-Pacific region", but also "to advance United States foreign policy interests and objectives in the Indo-Pacific region in recognition of the value of diplomatic initiatives" (section 1010). Additionally, the bipartisan

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2019, passed by the House of Representatives in May 2018 commits funds for an Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative (IPMSI), to include India. China, perhaps unsurprisingly, noted this with palpable concern (Xinhua 2018).

A final twist on US thinking was provided at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce in July 2018. This included the presence of officials from the US (Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Energy Secretary Rick Perry), as well as officials from Japan, Australia, Singapore, India and Indonesia. At the Forum, Pompeo (2018) gave the keynote speech entitled *America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision*. The unstated message was that this would provide a US alternative to China's MSR initiative.

Diplomacy

At the start of 2018, the State Department Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs stressed the importance of "strengthening U.S. partnerships in the Indo-Pacific" (Thornton 2018). US diplomacy has long operated a network of bilateral alliances across the Pacific, most importantly with Japan and Australia. These bilateral alliances reflected Cold War concerns about the Soviet Union but have been strengthened still further with the rise of China. Such traditional Pacific alliances have been complemented by more recent security partnerships established further eastwards with Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, and most significantly India. The China-related need for *constrainment* was evident in the US Defense Department, with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs' admission that "for this administration's vision for a free and Indo- Pacific to be realised we also have to deal with the rising challenges presented by China", where "the Chinese Communist Party's vision for a new security architecture in Asia with China at the center is in many ways at odds with our own aspirations for the region" (Schriver 2017).

With regard to Japan, strong bilateral military cooperation continues to be strengthened in the Ryukyu chain and around Guam in the West Pacific. It is significant that Trump's specific adoption of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific framework in autumn 2017 followed on from Japan's initiation of the concept in 2016. Their common focus remains on China's growing presence across the Indo-Pacific. Hence, Mattis' welcome to the Japanese Foreign Minister at the Pentagon in April 2018 was aimed at China; "together, we stand for a free and open Indo-Pacific region, reinforced by the international rule of law. And we oppose the use of predatory economics by those seeking to impose their will on others in the region" (Mattis 2018b). The reference to "rule of law" was an implicit criticism of China's rejection of the June 2016 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) tribunal ruling on the South China Sea, while the reference to

"predatory economics" was an implicit criticism of China's MSR initiative.

Traditional security links with Australia have also been strengthened. The most obvious sign was the agreement for the deployment of US marines to Darwin in November 2011, with deployment potential into the Western Pacific, South China Sea and Eastern Indian Ocean. *Talisman Saber* has been a well established biennial military exercise between the two militaries, the 2017 one involving 33,000 US and Australian troops aboard varied battleships. Since 2011, the annual AUS-MIN meetings between US Secretaries of State and Defence Secretaries with their Australian counterparts have made a point of considering the Indian Ocean as well as the traditional focus on the Pacific, and have included repeated concerns raised over Chinese actions in the South China Sea. An Indo-Pacific orientation has become explicit since 2017, with AUSMIN pledges "to increase bilateral collaboration in relation to the Indo-Pacific" (US-Australia 2017). The 2018 summit between Donald Trump and then-Prime Minister of Australia Malcolm Turnbull cast the relationship in suitable Indo-Pacific anchoring:

Across the Indo-Pacific, our two nations are committed to deepening our engagement with our allies and all partners [...] A free, open, and prosperous rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region is in both our nations' enduring national interests. (US-Australia 2018)

The key word was "across" the Indo-Pacific, i.e. cooperation with Australia not only in the Pacific but also in the Indian Ocean. It was also significant that other "allies and partners" in the Indo-Pacific were noted, in other words Japan as an ally and India as a partner. The AUSMIN Joint Declaration of 24 July 2018 was particularly extensive in its numerous "Indo-Pacific" references.

The significant shift from Pacific to Indo-Pacific security arrangements being made by the US are primarily focussed around India. The New Framework for Defense Cooperation (NFDC) established in 2005, and strengthened further in 2015, has been followed by increasingly significant naval and air force bilateral exercises in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans between the two countries, which are strategic partners if not formal allies. Their Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), signed in August 2016 further opens the way for mutual use of each other's bases in both oceans. Specific regional underpinnings were apparent in the drawn up in January 2015 between Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (US-India 2015). Joint common concerns have been expressed by US and Indian officials over maintaining freedom of navigation and airspaces in the South China Sea, and for UNCLOS tribunal findings to be upheld – both of which are comments aimed at China. As has already been seen, officials from the Obama (for example Clinton, Hagel, Kerry, and Pritzker) and Trump (for example, Tillerson, Mattis and Wong) administrations, as well as

naval leaders (for example Locklear and Harris) all made a point of repeatedly invoking shared "Indo-Pacific" interests in their analysis of US relations with India.

The Joint Statement drawn up between Trump and Modi in June 2017 defined their two countries as "democratic stalwarts of the Indo-Pacific" ready to cooperate together as "responsible stewards of the India-Pacific" (US-India 2017), which is an implicit criticism of an undemocratic China as being "irresponsible" in the South China Sea. Typical of ongoing US priorities with India was the latest Maritime Security Dialogue held in April-May 2018, which "discussed developments in the maritime domain of the Indo-Pacific" (US 2018d); with the maritime domain being where the US is faced with a growing Chinese maritime push in the Western Pacific, and where India is faced with a growing Chinese maritime push in the Indian Ocean.

At the bilateral level, US cooperation with France has also developed an Indo-Pacific character. This is facilitated by France being a resident sovereign power in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Naval exercises have been held between the US and French navies in both oceans. In December 2015 the French frigate Provence was embedded in the Carrier Strike Group headed by USN Truman in the Arabian Sea, before sailing further eastwards across the Indian Ocean. The then PACOM chief Admiral, Harry Harris was enthusiastic about these widening links in February 2018:

France has significant equities in the Indo-Pacific, and I welcome France's growing involvement in the region [...] France aims to become more involved across the Indo-Pacific [...] I am very excited about France's increased willingness to stand by the U.S. as we confront revisionist state [i.e. China] and non-state actors across the region. (Harris 2018b, pp. 39–40)

He gave as an example the current deployment of the French frigate Vendémiaire in the East and China Sea, operating there with the US Pacific Fleet, to China's unease. This US-French bilateral cooperation also led to trilateral exercises between the US, French and Japanese navies in the Western Pacific in May 2017.

The strategic trilateral arrangement between the US, Australia and Japan is particularly well-established (Shearer 2017). This was initiated in 2002, and was then upgraded to ministerial status from 2006, with an extra Security and Defense Cooperation Forum (SDCF) added in 2007. Their trilateral military cooperation has included naval exercises in the South China Sea in 2011 and 2016, submarine exercises in the Sea of Japan in 2017, and the *Cope North* air force exercises at Guam from 2012 onwards. The US Pacific Air Forces which hosts the *Cope North* event considered that the purpose of the 2018 trilateral exercise was clear; "the annual exercise serves as a keystone event to promote stability and security

throughout the Indo-Pacific" (PAF 2018). Typical of the shared concerns of the trilateral was the US Secretary of Defense Mattis' discussions with his Australian and Japanese counterparts in 2017, which highlighted their "strong opposition to coercion" posed by Chinese militarization in the South China Sea", and where they "reaffirmed the importance of further increasing cooperation among countries with shared interests in the peace and stability of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, including India" (US 2017a). A significant development was their agreement in August 2018, which "underscored their commitment to working together to maintain and promote a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region", recorded their "serious concerns" over Chinese actions in the South China Sea, and announced that the United States Overseas Private Investment Corporation working with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation on "significant infrastructure investment needs in the Indo-Pacific" (US 2018b).

The US trilateral with India and Japan, initiated in 2011 and upgraded to ministerial level in 2015, has adopted explicit Indo-Pacific reference points (Berkshire-Miller 2017). The then US ambassador to India considered that "by establishing a permanent US-India-Japan ministerial mechanism, we have institutionalised a conversation among the three pillars of the Indo-Pacific community of democracies" (Verma 2015). Their meeting in April 2018, "agreed to remain engaged and strengthen cooperation in support of a free, open, prosperous, peaceful, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region" (US 2018b). The security side of this format has been initiated with Japan permanently joining the annual US-India Malabar exercises in 2015, which alternate between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. An important geo-economic spin-off from this US-India-Japan trilateral was reflected in 2018 when they "agreed to continue to collaborate to promote increased connectivity in the Indo-Pacific" (US 2018b), as an overt alternative to China's MSR initiative. This followed a successful Trilateral Infrastructure Working Group (TIWG) meeting in Washington in February 2018, with an announced readiness of the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation to provide grants, loans and insurance to help local companies tackle various infrastructure projects linking South Asia and Southeast Asia. They agreed to share information on their current Indo-Pacific projects with their trilateral counterparts, with joint loans and joint ventures also up for consideration.

In the light of these bilateral and trilateral links, the strategic logic was straightforward: renewal of the Quadrilateral format between the US, Australia, India and Japan. This had first surfaced in 2007 but had been halted following Chinese criticisms and subsequent Australian and Indian hesitations. A decade later, US officials met their quadrilateral counterparts in November 2017 for *Consultations on the Indo-Pacific*:

To discuss their shared vision for increased prosperity and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The officials examined ways to achieve common goals and address common challenges in the region, such as: upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, including freedom of navigation and overflight, respect for international law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes; increasing connectivity consistent with international law and standards [...] and maritime security efforts in the Indo-Pacific [...] The quadrilateral partners committed to deepening cooperation, which rests on a foundation of shared democratic values and principles, and to continue discussions to further strengthen the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. (US 2017b)

China was not mentioned but it was China's maritime assertiveness - especially in the South China Sea but also elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific as well as its MSR initiative - that was in mind with the re-formation of the Quad.

Conclusion

Admiral John Aquinilo, on taking up command of the US Pacific Fleet in May 2018, warned his audience that "great-power competition has re-emerged as the central challenge to security and prosperity. Nowhere are the stakes of that great-power competition higher than here in the Indo-Pacific" (Aquinilo 2018). The US "unipolar moment" (Krauthammer 1990–1991) in the post-Cold War 1990s decade is now giving way to multipolarity, with several centres of power in which China and India are new factors. What is clear is that US Indo-Pacific policy involves co-opting one rising power (India) to help restrain another rising power (China), at a time when both the US, and indeed Japan, are facing relative power decline in the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis China.

The financial commitment of the US is still subject to commentary. Mike Pompeo may have announced in July 2018 that the US would "allocate \$113 million dollars in immediate new funds to expand economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific" (Pompeo 2018a), but that was still tiny compared to the billions of dollars being poured into its MSR initiative. He may also have announced in August 2018 that "as part of our commitment to advancing regional security in the Indo-Pacific, the United States is excited to announce nearly \$300 million in new funding to reinforce security cooperation throughout the entire region" (Pompeo 2018b), but the sums were still relatively modest compared to Chinese spending. "Geoeconomics on a shoestring" (Panda 2018) was one immediate comment on it, and the response in Southeast Asia to the US Indo-Pacific economic initiative remained reserved.

Nevertheless, the military-strategic impact of the US Indo-Pacific strategy has been fairly successful, particularly with its bilateral, trilateral and indeed quadri-

lateral arrangements that have emerged. The US military positioning in the Indo-Pacific, for example the continued build up of Darwin and Guam, has also given a sharper US presence in both the western Pacific and eastern Indian Oceans. The US has also maintained a greater forward presence in the South China Sea. The way that China continues to denounce this US Indo-Pacific strategy (Global Times 2018a, 2018b) indicates that as a China constrainment process the US strategy is proving reasonably effective in the geopolitical-security area.

Bio

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Article

Fragmented or Integrated Asia: Competing Regional Visions of the US and China

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Abstract

With its (re-)emergence as a pivotal player in world political economy, and especially since the introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, China's new place in the world order has driven the US and Beijing's neighbours to find ways to deal with its rising power and influence. To counter China's growing influence, in 2011, President Obama initiated the 'Pivot to Asia' strategy. However, in 2017, the Trump administration abandoned this strategy and put forward the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' policy that aims to bring Australia, India, Japan and the US together under the Indo-Pacific Partnership (IPP). The Chinese-led BRI and the US-led IPP represent competing visions for how political, economic and security structures of the Asia-Indo-Pacific region should evolve in the coming decades. This article, based on official policy documents and speeches of Chinese and IPP states' leaders, aims to provide insights into the competing regional visions proposed by the BRI and the IPP. It argues that due to a number of reasons, the BRI has an advantage over the IPP.

Keywords

China, US, Belt and Road Initiative, Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Regionalism

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the success stories of expeditiously developing Asian economies have increasingly received the attention of the world; the 'Japanese miracle', the 'Four Asian Tigers' and finally, the 'rise of China' captured the headlines. This enormous development and regional cooperation was achieved under the US dominated world order and the economic leadership of Japan. However, things started to change in the 1990s, especially after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997/8. Before the crisis, Asian regional cooperation was driven mainly by non-state, especially market forces. After the crisis, to boost the slowing regional cooperation, states became more involved in the process and

¹ Hong Kong, Singapore, Republic of Korea and Taiwan.

implemented policies that supported the cooperation attempts of non-state actors (Dent 2008, p. 7). Furthermore, as the Japanese economy experienced a decadelong economic crisis in the 1990s, China, with its huge potential and dynamic economy, emerged as the driving force in regional cooperation.

As it climbs the steps towards leadership in the world political economy, and especially since the introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's new place in the world order has driven the US and Beijing's neighbours in the wider Asia-Pacific region to find ways to deal with its rising power and influence. To counter China's growing influence, in 2011, US President Barack Obama initiated the 'Pivot to Asia' strategy as an attempt to change the focus of US foreign policy from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific. However, shortly after taking office, the Trump administration abandoned this strategy and withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral trade deal unprecedented in scope and content, and started following the 'America First' vision, which, according to President Trump, aims at putting the security and interests of the US people first (The White House 2018). This move aroused anxiety among US allies in the region. However, since Trump's trip to Asia in November 2017, his administration's attitude towards Asia has started to change. Despite once again declaring he will be following the 'America First' strategy and favouring bilateral trade agreements that are 'mutually beneficial', Trump also pledged support for the idea of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) region. Subsequently, the US 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) and the summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) clarified the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' policy that aims to bring Australia, India, Japan and the US together under the Indo-Pacific Partnership (IPP). While first proposed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2006/7 and adopted by the Australian and Indian governments in early 2010s, as the most powerful player among the four, the US was and remains the leading power of the grouping.

As socially constructed political projects, the Chinese-led BRI and the US-led IPP represent competing visions for how political, economic and security structures of the Asia-Indo-Pacific region should evolve in the coming decades. This article, based on official policy documents and speeches of Chinese and IPP countries' leaders, aims to provide insights into competing regional institutional arrangements as proposed by the BRI and the IPP. It argues that the Chinese-led initiative is an inclusive project based on economic connectivity and cooperation among countries, whereas the Indo-Pacific is mainly a security-related concept. Furthermore, due to a lack of leadership, difficulties in matching diverging priorities and the fractured approach of the IPP countries, the BRI has an advantage over the IPP.

The first part of this article focuses on how to define regions, how to conceptualise

regionalism as well as offering a review of regionalisation in Asia. The second part continues with the changing features of Chinese foreign policy under the leadership of Xi Jinping and how his signature project is reshaping the wider Asian region with Chinese characteristics. The third part examines the US FOIP policy and the approaches of Australia, India and Japan to the IPP. The article concludes with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of these regional rescaling attempts and the likelihood of their successes.

Defining Regions and Regional Cooperation in Asia

Defining regions and conceptualising regional cooperation and integration has been a matter of debate among scholars from various disciplines. Rather than being natural realities that are obvious geographical manifestations, regions are socially constructed through political processes. A region, which encompasses several interdependent countries, can be defined in a number of ways according to varied material, social and cognitive dimensions. These constructions all have their roots in political practices (Acharya 2012; Beeson 2018; Dent 2008, p. 6; Hettne 2005, p. 544; Katzenstein 2002, p. 105). Since these processes involve different aspects of life from economics to politics and different sectors of society from governments to social movements, an eclectic approach that combines several different disciplines and theories is needed to analyse the complexity of 'a world of regions' (Katzenstein 2002, p. 105; Söderbaum 2016, pp. 32-33).

Politics can be defined as 'competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership' (Merriam-Webster 2018, para. 3). That is to say, political processes are biased processes in which a group of people aims to favour their own interests over others'. Since regions cannot be defined without any reference to politics, they are not neutral processes but rather reflect the competing views and interests of different claimants. In other words, defining regions is a type of political struggle for creating a space that favours the gains of a group of states over the gains of other states (Wilson 2018).

Against this backdrop, this study defines regions as 'social constructs that make references to territorial location and to geographical or normative contiguity' (Börzel & Risse 2016, p. 7). Regions are spaces that cover three or more countries. In other words, they lie in between national and global levels and can be sub-continental, continental and transcontinental (Börzel & Risse 2016, pp. 6-7). Regionalism, in the widest scope, is defined as 'the structures, processes and arrangements that are working towards greater coherence within a specific international region in terms of economic, political, security, socio-cultural and other kinds of linkages' (Dent 2008, p. 7). Within this scope, regions result from two main processes that go hand-in-hand, namely from regionalism, which is 'more of a policy-driven, top-down' state-led process and regionalisation, which is 'more

of a societal-driven, bottom-up' non-state-led process. In case of an insufficient level of regionalisation, state-driven efforts of regionalism may take place in the first instance to realize regional cooperation and integration (Dent 2008, p. 7). Thus, state- and non-state-regionalisms and the actors involved in these processes do not act autonomously but act together in mixed-actor coalitions (Söderbaum & Shaw 2003, p. 222). While regionalism does not necessarily mean only formal inter-governmental regional arrangements, regionalisation is not an entirely apolitical process in which states and politics have no place (Acharya 2012, p. 12). Regionalism can exist without the existence of formal institutions (Acharya 2009; Jetschke & Katada 2016, p. 232) and states can play a role in regionalisation efforts.

Another important distinction is between regional integration and cooperation. Regional integration requires transfer of sovereignty rights and authority, either voluntarily or through pressure, of states to regional organizations as in the case of the European Union (EU), whereas in regional cooperation inter-governmental relations do not require loss of sovereignty (Börzel & Risse 2016, p. 8; Acharya 2012, p. 12). This difference reflects the divergence of the regionalism debate in the literature. While old regionalism was based on regional integration through state-led initiatives that focused on and influenced by the European experience, with the end of the Cold War new regionalism approaches that take into account the multiplicity of regional integration and cooperation and the importance of non-state actors came to the surface. Currently, the field is strongly influenced by comparative regionalism studies that both build upon previous studies but also aim to transcend them by moving beyond their EU-centrism through considering the distinctiveness of different regions and their cooperation types and designs. To achieve this, comparative regionalism studies are both eclectic and inclusive in their approaches to regionalism (Acharya 2016, p. 110; Söderbaum 2016, pp. 30-33).

In this sense, the initiation of the concept of Indo-Pacific and the BRI are examples more of state-driven regional cooperation efforts without the existence of a formal regional organization. Furthermore, like all regional projects, as discussed by Wilson (2018), they are an example of 'rescaling' the scale of governance practices, which 'refers to the process where social, economic and political systems are reconstructed to operate at different spatial scales'. Rescaling is composed of two types of transitions: *institutional rescaling* and *functional rescaling*. The former is about defining the scale of a region. In other words, institutional rescaling is important in determining who is included or excluded from the scope of a region and thus, in designating the distribution of power and the relations among the members (Wilson 2018). Since regions are social constructs and contingent upon processes of affiliation, identification and recognition, the degree of institutionali-

sation is important for a newly proposed conception of a region to be successful (Beeson 2018). Functional rescaling, on the other hand, is about the motivations and justifications of a regional project. As the scale of a region changes, to accommodate with the new scale, forms and purpose of underlying governance practices also change (Wilson 2018). The success of an institutionalisation process, either through the creation of social realities or of organizations, plays an important part in defining a region.

In the Asian context, regionalism through institution-building has been a rather challenging process when compared with other parts of the world, especially Europe. The ultimate aim of regionalism in Asia was not integration as in the case of Europe, but autonomy and cooperation. In other words, regional organizations in the region are examples of regional cooperation rather than integration. One of the reasons for this is the sensitivity of Asian nations, due to the history of colonialism, when it comes to renouncing their sovereignties to other institutional settings such as regional or international organizations. Because of that, Asianbased regional institutions function either as discussion forums with non-legally binding obligations as in the case of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or on the basis of unanimous verdict as in the case of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). One other related feature of Asian regional organizations is the existence of weak and/or ineffective secretariats, which automatically affects the capacity of these institutions to function effectively (Acharya 2016, p. 110; Beeson 2018; Jetschke & Katada 2016, p. 238; Risse 2016, p. 96). In such a case, the power distribution in the international and regional system has an important role to play for regional arrangements. An effective regional leadership, especially, can have a significant impact on building effective regional institutions. However, both due to animosities and mistrust created by historical legacies such as the Japanese invasion, the US bilateral hub-and-spoke system and the Sino-Indian War as well as due to the high number of powerful countries, the region lacks an effective leadership. In the post-Second World War period, the US played the role of an off-shore balancer to 'stabilize' the region. But especially since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/9, its previously dominant position has been eroding due to relative decline of its power and China's rising status in the region (Beeson 2016, 2017a, p. 236, 2017b). Today, the Asia-Indo-Pacific region has five strong countries, China, India, Japan, Russia and the US, that have the capacity and desire to lead regional cooperation efforts. While this situation complicates such efforts in the region, it also gives weaker states and institutions like ASEAN the chance to play an important role in mediating these powers (Zhao 2011, pp. 167-168). These characteristics of regional cooperation in Asia contribute to the fragmented regionalism and underinstitutionalization in the region and the complexity of the competition among different visions and ideas of region building efforts of leading powers, including

the BRI and IPP.

For all these reasons, the IPP states' intention of shifting the focus of attention from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific is not just a neutral geographical expansion of existing regional institutions in the region by including Indian Ocean countries in the picture. Rather it is a way of improving both their own particular positions and the interests of 'likeminded countries' against a rejuvenating China, which has been in the last decade slowly but steadily re-forming the regional landscape especially through the BRI. In other words, redefining the region as the Indo-Pacific and forming a partnership based on this definition should be seen as the IPP states' response to China's ambitious BRI initiatives.

Integrating Asia with Chinese Characteristics: Belt and Road Initiative

President Xi is an ambitious leader aiming to rejuvenate his country as head of state until the middle of 21st century. China under Xi will remain under the firm leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) with a two-stage development plan. These are called the Two Centenary Goals (两个一百年目标). According to these goals, by 2021, the centenary of the founding of the CPC, China will complete the building of a moderately prosperous society. After this first achievement, the country will continue its efforts of modernizing itself until the goal of transforming China into 'a great modern socialist country' is achieved by 2049, the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Xi 2018, p.32-34). To accomplish the Chinese Dream (中国梦), Xi has adjusted some parts of post-Mao era Chinese foreign policy and followed a combination of proactive, assertive and offensive but simultaneously at times defensive, restrained and cautious foreign policy strategies. These are a reflection of China's multiple identities, to include those of a developing country, a developed country, a major power and a rising power (Ferdinand 2016, p. 949; Hong 2016, p. 4; Tekdal 2018, p. 374; Wang 2016, p. 461).

Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping

As was clear from the messages delivered by Xi during the 19th National Congress of the CPC,² China under Xi has emerged as one of the major regional powers in Asia and aspires to become a global power. During his three-and-a-half hours long speech at the congress, he declared his desire of transforming China, till the mid-century, into 'a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful' (Xi 2017, p. 10). Xi calls this goal realising the 'Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation' (中华民族伟大复兴中国梦) (2017, p. 1), which means, to use IR terminology, achieving superpower status. To reach this goal, Xi began changing the course of Chinese

² Brown (2017) defined this congress as the CPC's first global congress.

foreign policy in 2013. While some of the features of China's foreign policy show continuity with the era of former President Hu Jintao, Xi managed to make substantial changes from placing more emphasis on neighbourhood diplomacy to closely linking domestic objectives to foreign policy goals.

The decade-long leadership of Hu has often been regarded as 'the lost decade' by many Chinese and foreign observers because of increased inequality in Chinese society, high levels of corruption, environmental pollution and an uncoordinated and fragmented foreign policy approach (Li & Cary 2011). Hu, as his predecessor Jiang Zemin, followed the foreign policy strategy of keeping a low profile (韬光养 晦) that was formulated by Deng Xiaoping in the aftermath of the Tiananmen incidents of 1989. Even though he raised his voice in demanding a more democratic and multilateral world order by proposing the concept of 'Harmonious World' (Hu 2005), and engaged with international institutions and norms as well as joining other states in the establishment of new international initiatives such as the BRICS³, Hu's focus was mainly on economic growth at all costs. In line with this domestic orientation, under his presidency China continued the policy of remaining non-committal to requests for action and providing leadership (Ferdinand 2016, p. 942). One other reason for this passivity in its relations with the outside world was the lack of a concrete and holistic foreign policy (Breslin 2013, p. 633), which was inadmissible for the new leadership.

Almost as soon as he took office, Xi set about changing this fragmented and non-committal foreign policy of Hu by initiating a two-tiered approach. First was to reform decision-making structures by creating new institutions such as the National Security Commission of the CPC to coordinate domestic and foreign policymaking and by centralizing power in decision-making by positioning Xi at the centre of CPC Central Leading Groups related to domestic and foreign affairs (Beeson 2017b; Wang 2017; Zhang 2016, pp. 452-456). Second, in order to convey and coordinate the main foreign policy principles and directions, Xi gathered all important actors who contribute to China's foreign policymaking and implementation processes at the Conference on the Diplomatic Work on Neighbouring Countries in October 2013, and then at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in November 2014.

These two conferences were useful in providing a general view of the regional and international system and in setting an integrated strategy to regional and global issues. In this context, the CPC determined a foreign policy strategy that focuses on four related areas of neighbourhood diplomacy, major-country relations, developing country relations and multilateral diplomacy (FMPRC 2014, para.11). Some features of this four-layered strategy are a continuation of previous era for-

³ Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

eign policy strategies whereas some others are new. These new features represent a departure of Chinese foreign policy from the strategy of keeping a low profile to what Yan Xuetong names the strategy of 'striving for achievement' (奋发有为) that is more efficient in creating favourable conditions for national rejuvenation. The importance of this change comes from the different approaches of these two strategies feature. While the former is oriented towards the economy, aims to stay non-committal to leadership demands in international issues and favours economic gains in relations with other countries, the latter is politically-oriented, open to undertaking responsibility by focusing on strategic relations rather than economic gains, especially in relations with neighbouring countries and favours political morality over profits (Yan 2014). Thus, all the above mentioned four areas of Chinese foreign policy essentially aim to link China's domestic objectives of realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation and international objectives of establishing a stable and peaceful regional and international order that is favourable to the stability and development of China (Xi 2014, pp. 328-329, 2018 p. 22). In other words, the goal of the Xi era Chinese foreign policy is to deepen both economic and trade ties and security relations, especially with neighbouring countries and regions by linking them to China's development trajectory. Xi's signature project, the BRI, was designed to just achieve this goal by turning the Chinese Dream into the world's, or at least Asia's, 'dream' (Ferdinand 2016, p. 957).

Belt and Road Initiative: A New Way of Organizing Asia?

The BRI, which was first proposed by Xi during his state visits to Kazakhstan in September 2013 and then to Indonesia in October 2013, aims to build two sets of grand initiatives, the Silk Road Economic Belt (hereinafter Belt) and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter Road), to connect the two edges of Eurasia from East Asia to Europe by linking the Asian, European and African continents with a network of land, sea and air passages (NDRC 2015). While the principal aim of the initiative is to achieve regional economic development by furthering trade and investment via increased connectivity, official documents and declarations of Chinese officials also point to the need and desire to maintain closer links among the peoples of a variety of countries with diverse cultures by creating the environment to learn and understand different civilizations, and this way to promote friendship and peace in the wider region (NDRC 2015; Xi 2017). Thus, although it is a Chinese state-led initiative, the BRI aims to integrate Asia through the twin processes of regionalism and regionalisation, or state-led and non-state-led regionalisms that include mixed-actor coalitions of governments, market actors and other non-governmental players.

The BRI is an ambitious project that intends to cover and connect all of Asia through six land corridors: the Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, China-

Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and two maritime transport routes linking major sea ports through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean route and the South China Sea and the South Pacific route (NDRC 2015). Even though these projects are not new and many others included predate the BRI, the importance of this initiative is its desire and ability to coordinate and combine all these projects under a holistic approach (Summers 2016, pp. 1632-1634).

The BRI is a political-economic project and thus is driven by economic, political and security motivations. China is eager to highlight the economic motivations of exporting excess labour and capacity in industries such as steel and cement, relocating some overcapacity in production, furthering the strategy of 'going out', ensuring the development of inland south and western regions like Yunnan and Xinjiang, lowering the excessive exchange reserves and internationalization of the renminbi, or RMB (Chung 2018, p. 316; Hong 2016, pp. 3-6; Ren 2016, pp. 440-441; Summers 2016, pp. 1636-1637; Tekdal 2018, pp. 378-384; Wang 2016, p. 457; Zhang 2017, p.320). However, several security concerns are also important for understanding the BRI. China is dependent on imported energy, and uninterrupted energy flows are vital for the Chinese economy to function smoothly. This means energy security is a top priority for the CPC. Some 80 percent of China's Middle Eastern energy imports flow through the Strait of Malacca, where the security is mainly provided by the US and Indian navies. China is wary of a possible blockade by these two powers in case of disagreements. Therefore, it follows a two-tiered strategy of constructing pipelines to bypass the Malacca Strait and diversify its energy supply by building-up ports and refuelling stations in the Indian Ocean (Chung 2018, p. 316; Tekdal 2018, pp. 380-381). This second policy, labelled as the 'String of Pearls' strategy by many Indian commentators, causes anxiety in India and the US (Chung 2018, p. 317) and can be regarded as one of the reasons for the IPP.

The above-mentioned underdevelopment of China's western regions, especially Xinjiang, is another major security concern for China. Through linking this region via pipelines, highways and economic zones to Central Asia, Beijing aims to modernize and develop the economy of Xinjiang and thus, decrease the tendency for ethnic separatism, religious extremism and terrorism (Miller 2017, Wang 2014, p.131). Finally, the BRI can be seen, to some extent, as a response to the US Pivot to Asia, which was regarded as a US strategy for containing China's rise (Wang 2016, p.461).

A critical part of this ambitious and wide scope initiative with such economic, political and security aims is financial backing. As its initiator, China is the main financier of the BRI with declared contribution of over US\$1 trillion. To fund in-

frastructure investments and other projects that are under the BRI banner, China established both new unilateral and multilateral funds and institutions like the Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and channelled funds from existing institutions such as China's policy and state-owned banks. China also intends to integrate other multilateral funding institutions such as the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and possible future institutions like the SCO Bank to the BRI (NDRC 2015).

An important feature of the BRI is its all-inclusive approach to membership. In other words, it is open to all countries and international and regional organizations that have the intention to become a part of this mega project (NDRC 2015; Xi 2017). Therefore, it is fair to say that the Chinese attitude to Asian cooperation, at least in this case, is an example of inclusive regionalism. However, despite its inclusiveness, the BRI aims to favour Chinese interests by positioning it at the centre or the starting point of Asian connectivity and cooperation in which all roads lead to Beijing. Furthermore, as all efforts of (re)defining a region, this initiative is also a political and socially constructive process that combines institutional and functional rescaling processes by proposing new ideas, institutions and policies to reshape the region. Due to its wide scope and focus on both hard and soft infrastructure of connecting ideas and institutions, Callahan (2016) defines Xi's grand strategy as an attempt for building a Sino-centric regional order and even promoting the Chinese style of global governance.

However, despite the great magnitude and ambition of the BRI, at the discourse level, till today neither Xi nor other Chinese officials proposed a new term to redefine the mainstream concept, Asia-Pacific. Furthermore, China has no intention of embracing the Indo-Pacific definition and continues to prefer the established Asia-Pacific instead. The reason for this may be the BRI's economy-centric approach. The terms 'Pacific community' and 'Asia-Pacific' were coined by Japan and the US in the 1970s and 1980s and supported keenly by Australia till the early 2010s (Dirlik 1993, p. 7) mainly due to concerns of managing the increased economic connectivity of the developing and developed Asia-Pacific countries through deepening trade and investment ties (Wilson 2018). Notwithstanding its security logic, since the BRI is essentially an 'international economic cooperation project' (Wang 2016, p. 461) China's choice of continuing to use the term Asia-Pacific seems logical despite the BRI's ambitious goal of integrating all of Asia, both through territorial and maritime domains.

Despite all the positive sides of China's proposal, there are some problems as well. First and foremost, China cannot overcome the perception that it poses a threat to some countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. While some of its neighbours worry about sovereignty issues and border disputes, others are afraid of being swallowed by China's massive economic capabilities. Finally, some of the

projects that are included in the BRI are in financially or even at times strategically risky areas that may end up as bad loans. To accomplish its objectives China needs to find solutions to these (possible) problems.

Indo-Pacific Partnership: Hub-and-Spokes System 2.0?

The idea of FOIP, on the other hand, is first and foremost an attempt to redefine the region through a political process. The proponents of this new conceptualisation deliberatively aim to replace the Asia-Pacific with the Indo-Pacific through a political process that favours the interests of IPP states versus those of others', especially those of China, which is the main target of the IPP (Pan 2014, p. 454). Thus, as all politically oriented social constructions, this is not a neutral rescaling process where only the definition of the region is changed by enlarging the geographical scale. In other words, the Indo-Pacific idea encapsulates both institutional and functional rescaling processes.

Some commentators and official documents of IPP governments base the need to redefine the region as the Indo-Pacific on economic grounds like the rising importance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes in the world trade and strengthening ties among the Pacific and Indian Ocean economies (Medcalf 2014, p. 472; Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. 8). However, as Wilson (2018) shows, economic motivations are not strong enough to support this rescaling. Thus, the Indo-Pacific neither is a 'natural' economic region nor has the necessary economic institutional architecture. On the contrary, due to lack of a strong economic basis, this attempt carries the risk of undermining the sound economic connectivity of the Asia-Pacific by diminishing the existing spatial fit between regionalisation and regionalism. Thus, rather than economic motivations, the primary reason for IPP is security, especially the need for preserving maritime security against a strengthening China (Beeson 2018, Wilson 2018).

US Foreign Policy under Donald Trump

Due to the rising importance of South and East Asia in political-economic and security issues, in 2011, Obama initiated the 'Pivot to Asia' policy, which was composed of four main features; geographical scope, security, diplomacy and economics. With the Pivot, in line with the rising importance of the Indian Ocean in the world political economy, the US expanded its focus from Northeast to Southeast and South Asia by strengthening security relations with its regional allies and partners and by improving bilateral and multilateral ties with regional actors. (Indyk, Lieberthall & O'Hanlon 2012). In short, the US interest in the Indo-Pacific started long before the initiation of the FOIP strategy in late 2017.

With the new Trump administration, the US policy changed significantly from being the leader of multilateralism to a more inward looking nationalistic strategy.

This shift inherently included a changing policy towards China. While Obama pursued an engagement policy towards China, Trump changed this liberal pragmatic attitude and started following a 'principled' realist approach that is based on power calculations among states (NDS 2018; NSS 2017, p. 1). His foreign policy vision can be clearly seen both from the 2017 NSS and 2018 NDS documents as well as from his threats and actions for a trade war with China and even with US allies. These strategy documents specify inter-state strategic competition as the primary concern for the US and define China as a 'strategic competitor' and a 'revisionist power' that is 'actively competing' against the US and its allies. Furthermore, 'China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor' (NDS 2018, pp. 1-2; NSS 2017, pp. 25-27). Therefore, to win the long-term strategic competition with China, maintaining the power balance in a FOIP is the principal priority of the US. To reach that goal, Washington defined its regional priority policy as creating a networked security structure that brings together both multilateral and bilateral security alliances and partnerships (NDS 2018, pp. 4, 9).

Even though the 2017 NSS claims that the US vision for Indo-Pacific excludes no country, it also argues that a geopolitical rivalry is ongoing among repressive and free world order visions. Besides, Washington claims that Beijing is using all necessary means from economic 'inducements' to military threats to achieve its political and security agenda and, if successful, this may result in the diminishing sovereignty of regional states, which ask for an enduring US leadership for a collective action against China's dominance. To resist the threat emanating from China, and others like North Korea, and to keep the Indo-Pacific free and open, the US welcomes both the increased role of its long-term allies like Japan and Australia and an emerging power like India as a strategic and defence partner. Moreover, it also welcomes the intensified multilateral cooperation with the three countries under the quadrilateral partnership (NSS 2017, pp. 45-47).

In line with this, the US has been following a policy to strengthen its strategic and security partnership with India. In August 2016, two countries signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement that allows military forces of each country to use the facilities of the other. In 2017, India and US participated the Malabar naval exercises together with Japan. Moreover, ever since the US recognized it as a major defence partner in 2005, India has become an important military hardware market for US defence industry. Apart from security, the two countries are also deepening their energy cooperation and strengthening economic ties. Finally, the US supports the Indian refusal to join the BRI due to sovereignty issues regarding the Kashmir region (Borah 2018, pp. 86-87).

Despite the deepening ties among the US and India and their shared interest to

limit China's rise, is India, and are also Australia and Japan, willing to fully accept and ready to bear the costs of an exclusive Indo-Pacific vision of the US?

The Attitudes of Australia, India and Japan

Among the three other partners of the IPP, Japan is the country that most closely embraces the Indo-Pacific idea the way the US defines it. Indeed, the Trump administration borrowed the term 'FOIP' from the Japanese government. Prime Minister Abe was the first official to propose the idea of connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans in his 2007 speech at the Indian Parliament where he mentioned the formation of 'a region called "the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity"... along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent' (Abe 2007). In his bid for a 'democratic security diamond' in Asia, Abe thinks that India, with the US and Australia, should play a greater role against an assertive China 'in preserving the common good' in the Indo-Pacific region (Abe 2012). Japan's India move is helpful in getting important support from a 'like-minded' country but also in diverting some of China's attention and resources to India and the Indian Ocean (Chanlett-Avery 2018).

In a joint statement issued by Japan and India in 2016, Abe together with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the importance of 'improving connectivity between Asia and Africa through realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific' (Ministry of External Affairs 2016). This was a precursor declaration of Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' that aims to 'improve "connectivity" between Asia and Africa through free and open Indo-Pacific, and promote stability and prosperity of the region as a whole' (MoFAJ 2017, p. 9). Compared to the US's, the Japanese Indo-Pacific strategy is more comprehensive and wider in scope. While the former basically focuses on the security dimension, the latter also underlines the development and infrastructure investment by improving connectivity. In this manner, Japan aims to become an important player in 'quality' infrastructure building, which is something the peoples of the wider Indo-Pacific region may be more interested in than politically and militarily challenging China, a prominent (potential) source of investment and financial aid for developing countries (Green 2018, p. 29; MoFAJ 2017, p. 2; Thankachan 2017).

From the fact that India and Japan share a similar geopolitical logic in redefining the region and safeguarding the freedom of navigation in international waters, it should not be concluded that the motivations they share and the policies they follow towards China are completely compatible with each other. Above all, India regards the Indian Ocean as part of its sphere of influence. This is why India is so worried about China's 'intrusion' into its backyard (Hemmings & Hull 2018). However, it should also be noted that India is also wary of its IPP partners' increasing influence in the region and this may hinder future efforts to further the

IPP's security partnership in the Indian Ocean (Xue and Liu 2018). Second, Indian officials are less eager to challenge Beijing directly than their Japanese and US partners. Unlike the administrations of Trump and Abe, India's official policy towards the Indo-Pacific has been moderate and focused more on ASEAN's role in regional economic and security structures for forming 'an open, balanced, inclusive and transparent regional architecture' (Chacko 2014, p. 447). Moreover, since the early 1990s, to develop its economy, India has been following policies to deepen its economic ties with East Asia. As the most dynamic country in the region, China has an important role in this process. Therefore, the likelihood of India playing a balancing role as the 'lynchpin' of the Indo-Pacific, for the time being, is not a viable one (Chacko 2014 pp. 441-443; He 2018; Pan 2014, p. 461).

Australia was the second country, after Japan, to embrace the Indo-Pacific term into its official use. Indeed, the Indo-Pacific reflects Australia's identity and favours geographical place much better than the Asia-Pacific because the country positions in the middle of Indian and Pacific Oceans. However, Australia's stance is different than that of both the US and Japan and in some sense also that of India. On the one hand, it is quite clear from its 2016 Defence White Paper and 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper that Canberra's main objective is to convince the US to support the Indo-Pacific idea and to continue being Australia's main ally and security guarantor and leading the like-minded democracies of the IPP against a rising and assertive China. In return, Australia is ready to share the costs of the US engagement with the region by increasing its defence spending to 2% of its GDP by 2020 and supporting the US leadership in the world as it has been doing since the Second World War. On the other hand, notwithstanding the underlying fear of a rising China, due to its strong trade and investment links with Beijing, Canberra does not want to antagonize its largest trade partner by directly challenging its position in the region (Commonwealth of Australia 2016; Commonwealth of Australia 2017). Furthermore, as Medcalf (2014, p. 472) states, China is an indispensable part and the main reason for redefining the region as Indo-Pacific, and rather than India, China is the quintessential power in the region. Due to this 'China-dilemma' it faces, Australia is against an exclusionary Indo-Pacific vision that specifically leaves China out. In short, Canberra plays a delicate balancing game in which it tries to hedge against a rising China by including India and Japan to its partnership with the US while at the same time tries to avoid antagonizing China (Pan 2014, p. 459).

In short, the IPP lacks many of the strengths of the BRI. First, there is no single country leading the process and designing the general features of it. Second, there is no consensus on the scope of the region among the partner states. While Australia and the US prefer a narrow definition that includes the area from the eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, Japan and India include some parts

of Africa and the Middle East as well. Third, the Indo-Pacific idea is a discursive construct without the necessary economic basis. Finally, there is an important division among the members as to what kind of a regional cooperation project the Indo-Pacific is to become. The US and Japan prefer an exclusive region in which they can leave China out and, even more importantly, challenge or contain its rise. India is concerned with the Chinese intrusion into its sphere of influence but at the same time does not want to challenge China directly. Australia, on the other hand, is in favour of an inclusive regionalism in which China can take its place as one of the leading actors in the region. Still, as a group, what they all have in common is their fragmented approach to Asia. Even the most inclusive and broad in scope approach to the Indo-Pacific covers only the maritime territories of Asia and excludes territorial areas, which include energy-rich Central Asia. This exclusionary characteristic of the IPP reflects the Cold War era US hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances which has arguably been harmful for Asian regional cooperation and integration by fostering the creation of a fractured region.

Conclusion

The decade since the Global Financial Crisis has seen increased competition between the US and a steadily rising China. As it climbs the steps towards leadership in world political economy, China's new place in the world order has driven the US and its partners in the wider Asia-Pacific region to find ways to deal with Beijing's rising power and influence. To counter China's growing influence, the US initiated the 'Pivot to Asia' strategy. China responded to this by proposing the BRI. After taking office, President Trump abandoned the Pivot policy but, to counter China's BRI, initiated the FOIP strategy which, at least for the moment, remains unclear and contested. As such, the Indo-Asia-Pacific region is now faced with two distinct regional visions.

The main driver of the BRI is achieving regional economic cooperation and development and through this overcoming the current and possible future problems of the Chinese economy. However, security related goals are also an important incentive for Beijing to initiate and finance this huge project. In contrast, the motivation behind the IPP is the need to curb growing Chinese influence and safeguard the freedom of navigation in the Indian and Pacific oceans. In other words, its priority is to keep things as they are in the region. Furthermore, while the BRI involves a combination of political economic and societal cooperation of both states and non-state actors, the IPP is basically a politics and security driven approaches among states. Despite China's and Asian states' attitude towards informal and soft approach with regards to regional cooperation, under the BRI, as in the case of the AIIB, institutionalisation has been started. The IPP states, on the other hand, till today, have not taken any steps for such institutionalisation other than irregular meetings among government officials of respective states and

military exercises. Finally, the BRI offers an inclusive vision for Asian cooperation. It is open to all countries and multilateral institutions that want to take part in this ambitious project. Notwithstanding that there is an important division among the members as to what kind of a regional cooperation project the Indo-Pacific may be, the IPP states currently limit the membership of the grouping by excluding both China and huge territories of Asia other than the Indo-Pacific region. In other words, there is an important difference among the two regional visions on the issue of institutional recalling where the BRI offers an integrative regional vision to Asia whereas the IPP, instead of accommodating China's rise, proposes the continuation of a fragmented Asian region.

Judging from the responsiveness of the Eurasian countries to the BRI, it seems that inclusive proposals for mutual economic gains and development are more attractive than exclusive security groupings. Even states that have territorial disputes with China like the Philippines and Vietnam, and the most prominent US allies like the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia are charmed by the opportunities China offers. On the other hand, it is hard to tell whether the idea of the Indo-Pacific has attracted even Asian countries that are wary of China's regional intentions. At present, no other country outside the four IPP states has used the Indo-Pacific term in official statements and showed willingness to be a part of the grouping. For all these reasons, it seems the BRI is presently in a better position to shape the future of the Asian region.

Bio

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Article

China and India: Maritime Maneuvers and Geopolitical Shifts in the Indo-Pacific

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Abstract

China and India are engaged in a tug-of-war over naval bases and forward presence in the Indo-Pacific. The crisis in the Maldives and wrangling over a naval base in the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean illustrate the rapidly shifting geopolitical dynamics. For small states, economic engagement with China has strategic consequences. Electoral politics provides Beijing with the opportunity to court and entice politicians of fragile democracies along the "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) to gain an advantageous position for itself over its competitors. In fact, China's investments in littorals are less about development and more about Beijing's desire to establish itself as a "resident power" in the Indian Ocean – much as the United States, Britain, and France have done. Ironically, China's quest for resources, markets, and bases follows the direction taken by old imperial powers and attempts to establish an empire of "exclusive economic enclaves" run by Chinese conglomerates to usher in the age of Pax Sinica. This is now bringing former European imperial powers back to Asia in order to maintain a rules-based international order.

Keywords

China-India, Naval Rivalry, Geopolitics, Indian Ocean, Great Power Politics, World Order

Introduction

Asia's old rivals, China and India—each a rising power in its own right with a distinct vision of regional order—are now competing furiously to establish bases for the forward deployment of their naval assets and to gain relative advantage and leverage over the other. Speaking at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 1, 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—in a veiled criticism of China — called for the Indo-Pacific region to embrace freedom of navigation and overflight, territorial integrity, and respect for all nations, regardless of their size: 'We will promote a democratic and rules-based international order in which all nations, small and large, count as equal and sovereign. We

will work with others to keep our seas, space and airways free and open (Gallo 2018). For his part, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, in far more pointed terms, called out China for its intimidation and coercion of smaller nations in the region. Both Modi and Mattis were expressing concern over China's military buildup on the artificial islands in the South China Sea and Beijing's 'debt-trap diplomacy' whereby China establishes naval presence through a string of bases along the Indian Ocean maritime chokepoints by bankrupting its trading partners (Malik 2018). However, from Beijing's perspective, China's military expansion is natural and commensurate with its status as the world's largest trading nation and supports its strategic imperative of protecting its vital sea-lanes and ever-growing economic assets, including large numbers of Chinese nationals across the region. Therefore, Beijing sees any criticism of its maritime expansion or adoption of countermeasures by India (and others) as containment.

To illustrate the ongoing shifts in geopolitical alignments, this article focuses on the growing Sino-Indian rivalry over two small island states in the Indian Ocean which bears remarkable resemblance to naval competition to acquire access to markets, resources and bases amongst rising industrializing powers of earlier eras in history. This analysis is grounded in Power Transitions theory which argues that shifts in the balance of economic and military power are often a sufficient trigger for a rivalry where previously none had existed (Lacey 2018). Rising powers compete for power and influence to impose their will on the global order. Due to an exponential growth in Chinese power over the last four decades, the Indo-Pacific today is home to both sub-regional and pan-regional rivalries, mostly involving China. Ganguly and Thompson (2011, pp. 8-9) and Goertz and Diehl, (1993) contend that many regional conflicts are prolonged by territorial disputes and complicated by interstate competition for predominance within their spheres of influence, for example, Sino-Japanese clashes in the East China Sea, Sino-Vietnamese confrontations in the South China Sea, and Sino-Indian frictions in the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. Needless to say, Asian rivals do cooperate when their interests converge but compete when their interests and visions diverge. Actually, cooperation on economic, environmental and other transnational challenges helps moderate their geopolitical, nuclear and naval rivalries rooted in history, territorial disputes, contests for forward military presence and preeminence in their spheres of influence, regional and global institutions and so on.

Paradise Lost

Much like Sri Lanka, the Maldives archipelago in the central Indian Ocean, is strategically located along the vital sea lanes of communication. Although the Maldives has long been within India's orbit, concerns about growing Chinese influence came into sharp focus in early 2018 following a Beijing-backed 'self-coup' by President Yameen Abdulla Gayoom. In early February, the Maldives' President

Yameen declared a state of emergency in response to a Supreme Court order for the release of political opponents, including his rival and former president Mohamed Nasheed, sacked police chiefs, chief justices and prominent parliamentarians. Consequently, life in the archipelagic nation of 390,000 people has been thrown into turmoil. Since becoming president in 2013 after a controversial election, Yameen has systematically weakened democratic institutions, crushed all dissent, curbed civil liberties, and actively courted Beijing.

This 'all-out assault on democracy' by President Yameen drew widespread condemnation, including from the UN human rights chief. While India and the United States deplored the move and called for the restoration of the constitutional order and release of opponents, President Yameen dispatched envoys to 'friendly nations' China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia to shore up support.

In response, former President Nasheed, who now lives in exile, appealed to rival India to send a military-backed envoy to resolve the crisis. He accused China of 'buying up the Maldives,' adding that this year's presidential election could be 'the last chance to extricate the Maldives from increasing Chinese influence' (*Associated Press*, 8 February 2018). Beijing, of course, dismissed Nasheed's accusations, claiming that 'China has offered selfless assistance' for social development.

Amidst reports of India putting its special forces on alert, Beijing voiced its opposition to external interference, saying that 'China did not want Maldives to become another "flashpoint" in bilateral relations' (*Times of India*, 9 February 2018). While the Foreign Ministry spokesperson invoked the 'principles enshrined in UN Charter,' the *Global Times* reported that China had threatened to 'take action to stop' an Indian intervention in the Maldives (Ai Jun 2018). China then indeed took action to match its words. To deter Indian intervention and to show solidarity with the beleaguered autocrat, a Chinese naval flotilla of eleven warships centered around a Type 071 amphibious assault ship entered the Andaman Sea through the Sunda Straits, emboldening Yameen to extend the state of emergency despite India's strong opposition (*China Military Online*, 26 February 2018).

Thus, six months after the military standoff over Bhutan's disputed Doklam territory in the Himalayas, China and India found themselves again watching each other warily, this time in the Indian Ocean. The growing political crisis in the Maldives is a direct consequence of the intensifying Sino-Indian geopolitical rivalry. As their need for resources, markets, and bases grows, Asia's rising powers are increasingly running into each other in third countries. The hastily arranged informal Modi-Xi meeting in Wuhan in May 2018 was aimed at ensuring that ever-growing divide between China and India over a range of issues (e.g., the boundary dispute, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership, and China's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean region)

does not lead to disputes and conflicts either in the Himalayas or in the Indian Ocean (Godbole 2018). However, China may slow down but will not stop its penetration of India's periphery.

For both China and India, 'forward presence' has acquired greater salience in their national security strategies to achieve 'situational awareness' in areas of strategic interest (Brewster 2018; Chandran 2018). For Beijing, this means having a presence in the Indian Ocean; for New Delhi, having a naval presence in the Pacific Ocean becomes critical for its strategic deterrence against Beijing. Having consolidated its hold over the South China Sea by militarizing artificial islands, China's navy has now set its sights on the Indian Ocean. Chinese strategists argue that it is a question of when, not if, a Chinese aircraft carrier battle group is deployed in the Indian Ocean to protect Chinese interests and assets there (Zhou 2018). Beijing's stance that the South China Sea is China's sea, but the Indian Ocean cannot be treated as India's ocean, draws New Delhi's ire and derision.

Historically, small states are the first to experience major geopolitical shifts. Usually 'the bit players' on the periphery of rising powers play a disproportionate role in triggering major crises, which prove to be turning points during power transitions. Tiny Bhutan, the Maldives and the Seychelles fit the bill. The changing geopolitical configurations in Asia—China's growing power and presence and India's response to it—have indeed put small states in a bind. And the vast Indo-Pacific region from East Africa to East Asia is fast emerging as a major arena of contestation amongst major powers.

Move Over, India - Here Comes China

Until the ouster of President Nasheed in 2012, the Maldives was tied closely to India economically and militarily under its 'India First policy.' In 1988, when a group of mercenaries tried to seize power, India intervened militarily in support of then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who ruled for three decades, and later aided the Maldives' transition to democracy.

However, over the last five years, Beijing has made significant inroads into the Maldivian economy and politics. The shift began with the abrupt termination of a contract to an Indian company to develop the Malé international airport in 2012 and its subsequent award to a Chinese company. Following Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to the Maldives in 2014, the Yameen government amended the Constitution to allow foreign ownership of land, thereby paving the way for the island of Feydhoo Finolhu to be leased to China for 50 years. Since then, large Chinese investments in infrastructure, housing projects, and tourism have drawn the tourist paradise in the Indian Ocean into Beijing's tight embrace. Faced with the possibility of extinction due to rising sea levels, the Maldives also hopes to

leverage Chinese technical prowess in land reclamation and in creating artificial islands via dredging.

Meanwhile, ties with New Delhi plunged to an all-time low as the Yameen government adopted a 'go-slow' policy on India-backed economic and defense projects (Bagchi 2018). While India boycotted China's Belt and Road Forum held in May 2017, the Maldives enthusiastically supported the One Belt One Road (OBOR, now renamed as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in English)¹, which envisages linking China with Africa, Asia, and Europe through a network of ports, railways, roads, and industrial parks. Then came Yameen's decision to allow three Chinese ships to make 'good will visits' in August 2017, which raised hackles in New Delhi.

Media reports suggest a dual-use Chinese marine observatory is going to be constructed on one of the islets not far off from the Indian coast. Furthermore, days before President Yameen's meeting with President Xi in Beijing in December 2017, a hurriedly convened parliamentary session rammed through a 1,000-page free trade agreement with China in less than an hour, leading to sharp criticism from the opposition. At Beijing's behest, the Maldives neither participated in India's premier multinational MILAN naval exercise nor did Male take part in the DefExpo2018, thereby signaling China's growing heft in India's front yard (Yin 2018b).

For small states, economic engagement with China has strategic consequences. Electoral politics provides Beijing with the opportunity to court and bribe politicians of fragile democracies along the BRI to gain an advantageous position for itself over its competitors. In actual fact, China's investments in littorals are less about development and more about Beijing's desire to establish itself as a 'resident power' in the Indian Ocean—much as the United States, Britain, and France have done. There is invariably a strategic element attached to enterprises that begin with commercial port construction or management and end with a naval presence and long-term ownership rights, as in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Myanmar.

The secrecy surrounding the financing terms of various development projects arouses suspicions about a hidden political agenda. An International Monetary Fund report projects the Maldives' external debt will hit 51.2 percent of GDP in 2021, up from 34.7 percent in 2016. The Maldives also has a US\$286 million trade deficit with China (Lo 2018). Former President Nasheed claims that 80 percent of the Maldives' foreign debt (approximately US\$1.5 to \$2 billion) is

¹ OBOR and BRI are used interchangeably in this paper because the Chinese-language phrase *yi dai yi lu* (一帶一路 literal translation: One Belt One Road) remains unchanged. Following criticism of the OBOR as too exclusive for others' comfort, it was later renamed in English as the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) to placate non-Chinese audience.

owed to Beijing and that inability to repay the debt would 'force the Maldives to cede territory to China as early as 2019.' Alleging that 'China has already taken over 16 islands,' he claimed that '[w]ithout firing a single shot, China has grabbed more land than the East India Company at the height of the 19th century' (Kuronuma 2018).

Beijing denies any ulterior motives. True or not, the pouring in of Chinese money has the fledgling democracy in tatters and its future mortgaged to the Middle Kingdom. Though Nasheed promises to review deals signed with Beijing if he is returned to power, he may find his hands are tied in the same way as Sri Lanka's President Sirisena did over the Hambantota and Colombo port projects. At any rate, the next presidential elections scheduled for September 2018 are unlikely to be free and fair elections.

The Seychelles Saga

More often than not, small and weak states' attempts to extract benefits by playing one great power off against the other boomerang as they fall prey to intervention by external forces to influence and shape domestic political outcomes to advance their own vested interests. A case in point is the Seychelles' decision to defer its decision to award India the right to develop one of its islands, which is attributed to China's discomfiture. As part of India's riposte to China's expanding naval footprint in the Indian Ocean region, Indian Prime Minister Modi visited the Seychelles and Mauritius in 2015 and signed agreements for developing infrastructure on Seychelles' Assumption Island and Mauritius' Agalega Island. However, the Assumption project (i.e., the construction of an airstrip and a jetty for the Seychelles Coast Guard and Indian Navy) could not take off as the Seychelles government failed to get the opposition's support for the agreement. Then days before the Maldivian crisis erupted, India inked a revised version of the agreement on January 27, 2018 during Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar's visit to the Seychelles. The revised pact sought to allay domestic concerns about its impact on the environment and infringement of Seychellois sovereignty. The Indian government also committed in the new pact that no vessels or aircraft carrying nuclear weapons will be allowed to 'land, dock or use the facilities.' It further promised not to use the facilities 'in any way whatsoever for the purposes of war.' Still, those opposed to the pact continue to hold protests against the project, and on March 6, the bilateral agreement to build military facilities and station Indian naval personnel at Seychelles' Assumption Island was leaked online alleging that 'the Seychelles government had "sold off" the island to India to build a "military base" (Mitra 2018). The online leakage of classified pact is said to be the handiwork of forces seeking to wean the Seychelles away from India's orbit.

Chinese Checkers

Distant countries and regions have now become part of China's critical interests as Beijing invests heavily in those countries. Beijing is indeed on a base-buying spree. Nearly two-thirds of the world's 50 major ports are either owned by China or have received some Chinese investment (Kynge et al. 2017). The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy is militarizing the first island chain, which stretches from the Japanese archipelago to parts of the Philippines and Malaysia and encompasses the South China Sea. And Beijing is busy expanding into the second island chain further into the Pacific Ocean. Projections are that within a decade, China will have the largest naval and submarine fleets in the world. Despite China's propensity to conceal its naval ambitions, and despite the rhetoric of mutually beneficial 'win-win' relationships, the strategic approach dominates in the Indian Ocean. The incorporation of smaller states into a Sino-centric economic and trading hub-and-spokes system also lays the foundation for a China-led security system in the future. Beijing is increasingly dictating coercing small and weak countries to agree to its economic and foreign policy goals.

China's strategy of fusing its maritime expansion with regional economic development and multilateral integration is yielding rich dividends. Having acquired leasing rights to Pakistan's Gwadar port for 40 years, Greece's Piraeus port for 35 years, sections of Djibouti port for ten years, Sri Lanka's Hambantota port for 99 years, 20 percent of Cambodia's total coastline for 99 years, and the Maldivian island of Feydhoo Finolhu for 50 years, Beijing is now pressuring Myanmar to raise China's stake from 50 percent to 75 or 85 percent in the Kyaukpyu port on the Bay of Bengal, and to lease it for 99 years as well – at least if Myanmar does not want to pay a penalty for reneging on the US\$3 billion Myitsone energy dam deal (interviews and conversations with senior officials and diplomats 2017-18). A Chinese base in Myanmar would further threaten India's naval dominance of the Bay of Bengal and heighten its sense of encirclement by the Chinese navy. In the western Indian Ocean, Beijing may also be eyeing Mombasa in Kenya, the gateway to East Africa, as 55% of Kenyan foreign debt is owned by China.

A military base in Djibouti, along with major port development projects in Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Cambodia define the contours of China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) —an oceanic connectivity project that is part of the BRI centered on the Indian Ocean. The assumption underlying this strategy is that China's rivals, finding themselves encircled or obstructed by countries aligned with Beijing, will be sufficiently deterred from threatening China's economic and security interests.

Not surprisingly, India is increasingly uneasy with China's maritime forays. The internal power dynamics in many small states provide an opportunity for the Chi-

nese to entrench their naval presence among the islands strung along the south of India. As corrupt, weak regimes addicted to cheap Chinese loans keep falling into Beijing's strategic debt traps, New Delhi's traditional influence is now under serious challenge. China's economic weight has already replaced India as the most significant player in South Asia.

New Delhi Dilemmas

China's MSR has prompted the Indian navy to unveil a three-pronged strategy to ensure a stable balance of power in littoral Asia: fortify its defences in the Indian Ocean by acquiring privileged access to bases in Indonesia, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Madagascar, Oman, and Iran; conduct joint naval exercises in the East and South China Seas; sign logistics exchange agreements with the United States, Singapore, and France to gain access to naval bases in the Indo-Pacific, and launch an ambitious naval expansion program. Furthermore, India has stepped up aid to littorals and has offered an alternative vision to China's MSR with 'Project SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region)—a counter-move designed to revive India's ancient trade routes and cultural linkages around the Indian Ocean. Much to China's chagrin, Indonesia has granted India economic and military access to the strategic island of Sabang at the northern tip of Sumatra and close to the Malacca Strait, through which almost 40 percent of India's trade passes. India's attempts to place itself at the center of regional relationships with Japan, the United States, Vietnam, Australia, and Indonesia as part of a regional security architecture to balance China has drawn Beijing's fury. The state-owned Global Times warned in an editorial: 'If India really seeks military access to the strategic island of Sabang, it might wrongfully entrap itself into a strategic competition with China and eventually burn its own fingers' (Hu 2018).

The Maldives and the Seychelles are now caught in a tug-of-war between China and India. Both have strategic interests to protect. Both are jostling to gain the upper hand, but only one can emerge victorious. Seeing the Maldives as a critical component of its MSR, China has developed strong investments in the Indian Ocean microstate and wants the autocratic ruler of this state, President Yameen Abdulla Gayoom to stay in power. Likewise, Beijing is reportedly supporting forces opposed to the Indian project on the Seychelles' Assumption Island.

China's military and commercial links with Indian Ocean littoral states weave a coercive power web around India, making it politically costly for New Delhi to take action detrimental to Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean. However, India does not want its southern neighbor to turn into China's newest colony. New Delhi would welcome the return of former President Mohamed Nasheed to power to shift the balance of influence back in its favor. So, how will India respond to the ongoing crisis in the Maldives? What are India's options?

Given the Maldives's proximity and strong historic ties, doing nothing is not an option. But no option is cost-free. Military intervention might end either in a quagmire or become politically costly for India's long-term interests. Further, it would reinforce India's image as a big, bad bully. On the other hand, a lack of action would greatly undermine India's claim of being a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, emboldening adversaries and disappointing friends who look to India as a strategic counterweight to China.

The possibility of an Indian military intervention cannot be ruled out if New Delhi perceives its vital strategic interests as under threat. India has increased its naval presence in international waters about an hour from the Maldivian capital of Malé. But so too has China, with a bolstered naval presence that allows it to both intervene and evacuate. Chinese diplomats have made it known that Beijing stands ready to help Yameen if India tries to unseat him (Miglani 2018). However, given Beijing's current limited naval capability in the Indian Ocean, a military offensive in the Himalayas would be a more realistic option should China decide to 'teach India a lesson.'

Chinese strategic writings constantly remind India of China's overall technological, economic, and military superiority should a combination of disputes—related to Tibet, Pakistan, disputed Himalayan borders, India's energy exploration in the South China Sea, or the elbow-bashing in the Indian Ocean—snowball into an armed confrontation. If India backs off or otherwise acquiesces during any clash with Beijing, the small and weak states will quietly slide into China's orbit and a new Sino-centric order will then emerge in the Indo-Pacific.

A Clash of Values and Visions: BRI vs. FOIP

Beijing's nod to the military coup in Zimbabwe in 2017 and support for the Maldivian and Cambodian regimes' suppression of democracy reveal China's willingness to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states if it perceives vital Chinese interests are at stake and if the costs of intervention are relatively low. China sees itself as being engaged in a long, protracted competition with India, Japan, and the United States, and would want Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Pakistan to remain within its orbit. Beijing also wants to send a strong message that countries along the BRI—which envisages a network of ports, railways, roads, and industrial parks linking China with Africa, Asia, and Europe—can look to China for both economic growth and military security, and that challenges to its expanding sphere of influence will no longer be tolerated.

Despite a growing chorus in India's strategic circles for military intervention, the Modi government has thus far chosen a diplomatic pathway to pressure Yameen's government to uphold the Supreme Court's ruling and restore democracy. India

has also asked the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to the Maldives. However, with China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia blocking attempts to have the Maldivian crisis tabled on the UN Security Council's agenda, the UN cannot be of much help.

India has, in turn, sought the support of the United States, Japan, and Australia to oust the pro-China Yameen from power through diplomatic, economic, and political means. The United States, with its own base south of the Maldives in Diego Garcia, shares India's concerns about an autocratic regime heavily indebted to Beijing being manipulated to provide access to Chinese naval vessels. Regional concerns about Chinese behavior regarding maritime disputes coupled with the PLA's acquisition of expeditionary capabilities worsen the security dilemma, and result in balancing behavior from China's neighbors. Indonesia, for example, has proposed a plan called the 'global maritime fulcrum' that is 'designed to balance the Belt and Road Initiative' (Chaudhuri 2018). As noted earlier, common concerns about Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean have led Indian and Indonesian governments to take up the Sabang port development project.

At the normative level, the Maldivian crisis challenges the resurrected Quad (comprising the United States, India, Japan, and Australia) and its quest for a rules-based 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP). The crisis highlights the need for a coordinated Quad response but to date the Quad meetings have been high on rhetoric and low on deliverables (Mullen 2018). Not surprisingly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has dismissed the 'Indo-Pacific' concept and the Quad as a 'headline grabbing' idea which will 'dissipate like sea foam' (PTI 2018). The Maldives' fledgling democracy is, however, yet another casualty of President Xi's megaproject. High-interest Chinese loans worth hundreds of billions of dollars are saddling small littoral states with unsustainable debts and giving Chinese military access to strategic infrastructure such as ports and airstrips near international waterways. Evidence from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Djibouti, and the Maldives suggests that BRI-related investments undermine democratic institutions, increase corruption, restrict civil liberties, and favor autocratic and military rulers. Let us call it the 'OBOR collateral' (Malik 2018). Wary of closer strategic alignment amongst democratic and maritime powers and sensing a once in a century opportunity, Beijing seems in a hurry to lock in its economic, geopolitical, and institutional gains vis-à-vis rival powers before forecasts of China's demographic and economic decline sets in (Yin 2018a).

Obviously, a broader contest of clashing values and visions between the FOIP and BRI is ongoing, which requires a multilateral response at different levels to prevent democracy from falling like dominoes under the march of authoritarianism. One country's response alone, whether that be from India or the United States,

cannot deal with the ideological and strategic challenge from China. Hyper-nationalism, a belief in Han exceptionalism, and certainty about the inevitability of a post-American Sino-centric world now shape Beijing's Asia policy. The Trump administration's transactional foreign policy and vacillating stance on U.S. commitment to its allies and friends have emboldened Xi's China to spread its wings diplomatically, economically and militarily (Townshend 2017).

Spellbound by the grandeur of sea power, Chinese strategic thinkers wax lyrical about resurrecting China's fifteenth century naval expeditions to the 'Western Ocean' (the old Chinese name for the Indian Ocean). China's cultivation of friendly, pliant regimes via economic inducements and strategic coercion all along the maritime choke points in the Indian Ocean sea lanes is similar to the Ming Court's past attempts to control the maritime lanes by changing political regimes in Malacca, Sumatra, and Sri Lanka so as to facilitate commercial and maritime dominance. Whereas the collapse of the Soviet empire led the West to declare victory and 'the end of history,' the East saw Beijing resurrecting China's imperial past.

The Geometry of Geopolitics

Ironically, China's quest for resources, markets, and bases following the direction taken by old imperial powers and attempts to establish an empire of 'exclusive economic enclaves' run by Chinese conglomerates to usher in the age of Pax Sinica has brought former European imperial powers back in Asia. French and British navies, backed by South and Southeast Asian countries, are now operating naval task forces in the Indo-Pacific to maintain a rules-based international order (Deng 2018; Pickrell 2018). In other words, China's attempts to establish a Sinocentic unipolar order via BRI are being frustrated by fluid, short-term, purpose-specific partnerships and alignments because the Indo-Pacific is inherently multipolar. Australia is seeking to build security ties with fellow democracies in the Indo-Pacific and to persuade European powers to re-engage with the Pacific to act as a bulwark against China's growing power (Smyth 2018). Since Beijing's economic expansion is strengthening authoritarianism and weakening democracies, the FOIP states may well be reinforced by a Concert of Democracies (COD) comprising Canada and the European Union at the global level to uphold a rules-based order. The infrastructure competition between Japanese and Chinese firms now extends throughout the Indo-Pacific. Tokyo is developing ports in three eastern Indian Ocean nations - Dawei in southeast Myanmar, Trincomalee in northern Sri Lanka and Matarbari in southeast Bangladesh – as part of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's FOIP strategy. And the U.S. Congress has passed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act which reaffirms alliances with Australia, Japan and South Korea, while calling for deeper military and economic ties with India and Taiwan.

The next 15 to 20 years in the Indo-Pacific are fraught with risks – this is where some of the world's most powerful states are forging new alliances, arms racing, pursuing mercantilist policies, extracting resources, and viewing competitors with growing distrust and engaging in containment of peer competitors. New strategic balances will emerge as partnerships and allegiances among states shift. Faced with an aggressive China, Asia's major maritime powers—Japan, Australia and India—are working in a more synchronized manner in the quadrilateral FOIP grouping with the United States. They are largely backed by middle powers (e.g., Vietnam, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia) which tend to cooperate with each other to defend a rules-based order that does not advantage big and powerful nations at the expense of small and weak states. A complex web of security relationships is thus beginning to emerge amongst 'China-wary' nations. The future of regional security cooperation is likely to be in the trilateral or triangular, quadrilateral and multilateral formats. As Prime Minister Modi told the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN): 'We will work with them, individually or in formats of three or more, for a stable and peaceful region' (Gopalakrishnan 2018). Flexible, issue-specific threesome, foursome balancing games are popular these days. Having multiple partners is in vogue. Over time, various trilateral (e.g. Japan-Vietnam-the Philippines, the U.S.-Japan-India, Australia-Indonesia-India, India-Japan-Vietnam, France-Australia-India) and informal multilateral efforts to constrain China could coalesce into a maritime coalition or the 'Indo-Pacific Maritime Partnership'. Though one-on-one 'Cold War-like' bilateral alliances currently seem old-fashioned, the crystallization of fluid relationships into rigid alignments could occur in the event of a major rupture in the U.S.-Chinese or Indian-Chinese relations.

Whoever prevails in this geopolitical poker game will ultimately determine the future of the world order (Malik 2014). In the meantime, the risk of miscalculation lies with the Chinese military overestimating its strength, and the rest of the world underestimating Beijing's ambitions, power, and purpose. Absent a rulesbased order, Asian giants will continue to jostle over the territory, resources, and allegiance of small states from the Himalayas to the Indian and Pacific oceans, and the so-called Pacific Century may then turn out to be just another bloody century in Asia.

Bio

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Article

India's Call on China in the Quad: A Strategic Arch between Liberal and Alternative Structures

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Abstract

India's approach to the Quadrilateral consultative forum, which comprises Australia, India, Japan and the United States, is a statement of New Delhi's plural foreign policy arch in an evolving Indo-Pacific construct. Balancing China's growing outreach with the Indo-Pacific region while concurrently affirming bilateralism with Beijing explains India's strategic autonomy and pluralism in its foreign policy. This does not suggest India is engaging in a China-containment strategy, but rather denotes New Delhi's strategic outreach to position itself better in a liberal-order framework. The principal intent behind aligning with the Quad countries also lies in India's desire to protect its maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The competing India-China interests in securing energy resources, protecting maritime and other national interests are bound to collide, coupled with the boundary dispute. India's pluralistic foreign policy under Narendra Modi and Chinese leader Xi Jinping's "new era" foreign policy have manifested obstructing national trajectories. However, for India, its relationship with China is most imperative, with their relationship now playing a more defining role in the Indo-Pacific construct. Likewise, India's approach to the Quad should not be construed as an anti-China proposition.

Keywords

India, China, Quad, Indo-Pacific, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Japan

Introduction

If pluralism is the arch of Indian foreign policy, then New Delhi's adherence to the "Quad" (MEA 2017)¹ needs to be understood within a plural and compound

¹ In popular strategic parlance, the consultative forum is called the "Quad", because of its quadrilateral character. India officially prefers to avoid the term as "Quadrilateral". The press release of November

context of India's evolving relationship architecture with major powers while protecting its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Taking advantage of its geographical centrality in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India's approach to the Quad has been an evolutionary experience in the emerging Indo-Pacific construct where India's interdependent but complex relationship with China is a strong factor. Aligning with "likeminded" countries without making a formal alliance or discounting its relationship with countries outside the Quad is the hallmark of India's evolving foreign policy strategy. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at the Shangri-La dialogue on June 1, 2018 in Singapore explains this narrative. As eloquently stated by Modi, "India's strategic partnership with the United States is a new pillar of our shared vision of an open, stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region" (MEA 2018). At the same time, Modi expressed that India's relationship with China has "many layers", making it important for global peace and progress (MEA 2018). Likewise, India's relationship with Russia constitutes a crucial part in the shared understanding of a "multipolar world order" (MEA 2018).

As India tailors its approach towards the Quad consultative forum in Indo-Pacific, this article seeks to identify the bearing of any anti-China tendencies. It essentially argues that New Delhi's Quad stance is not an explicit move against China but rather is a calculated strategic move to protect its interests, including maritime ambitions, in view of a "revisionist" China (The White House, NSS 2017; MEA 2018) in the Indo-Pacific.² India's rendezvous with the Quad is to strengthen its foreign policy outreach against China's strategic non-equilibrium stance that poses multiple challenges to India's strategic ambitions. The Quad can therefore signify New Delhi's plural foreign policy strategy to engage more intently with a prevailing power structure, otherwise known as the liberal power structure, led by the United States to eventually gain ascendancy over the alternative structure, known as the revisionist power structure, led by China. Concurrently, India has been nurturing its relationship with China, seeking to manage the age-old boundary disputes and engage in better economic relations.

The article is structured into five parts. The first part examines the arrival and return of the Quad. The second part examines the Indian rationality behind the endorsement of the Quad proposition. The third part examines how the Quad

^{12, 2017} states that it is a "consultation on Indo-Pacific". See, MEA 2017.

² The *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House (hereafter *NSS*), December 2017, explicitly terms China as a "revisionist power" along with Russia. India does not call China a revisionist power. In the Indian official assertion, India acknowledges China's emergence as a power and informally demands equilibrium with China. For example, a press release of the Indian government after the recent Wuhan informal summit meet between Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping states that "... the simultaneous emergence of India and China as two large economies and major powers with strategic and decisional autonomy has implications of regional and global significance." MEA 2018. In the Indian strategic community too, the debate on China as a revisionist power varies.

is a proposition of the post-Cold War rivalry legacy between the US and China and how India witnesses this unfolding US-China rivalry. The fourth part examines how India-China relations act as a balancer to ensure that the Quad does not emerge as an anti-China proposition, even though it does intend to negate China's growing unilateralism in the IOR. The concluding section analyses the undertones of the Quad's prospects from an Indian perspective.

Arrival and Return of the Quad

The Quad's growth trajectory is roughly a decade-and-a-half-old affair, beginning in 2004. The proposition died down in 2007 to return again in 2017, to be popularly called in public discourse as Quad 2.0 (Tan and Hussain 2018; Rej 2018). Arriving initially as an "ad-hoc coordinating mechanism" after the Tsunami in December 2004 at the Foreign Secretary level, Quad 1.0 was primarily stimulated by an American suggestion in 2006 that the four democratic countries had substantial naval capabilities and hence must have a consultative regional forum to deal with "maritime emergencies and security threats such as piracy" (Saran 2017). As Shyam Saran (2017) puts it, Quad 1.0 was formed with an understanding that it would not take a "military dimension" but instead be a regional consultative forum. China nevertheless called it an emerging "Asian NATO." The Chinese strategic community soon followed suit (Li 2017).4 Both China and Russia see the Quad proposition as a military and security coalition in-the-making in the IOR. It should be noted that though Beijing is familiar with India's independent foreign policy thinking, it has yet to shelve its prejudice of seeing India as a pro-American country. As Jayant Prasad aptly argues, "China has often viewed India as following a foreign policy subservient to Western interests. This is a mistake."5

In December 2006, during the former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Tokyo, India and Japan had a formal discussion to further the idea of the Quad. They attempted to initiate a dialogue mechanism by establishing modalities with "likeminded" countries in Asia-Pacific (MEA 2006). Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech at the Indian Parliament on August 22, 2007, entitled "Confluence of the Two Seas", called for a "broader Asia" with the cooperation of Japan and India along with the United States and Australia in the entirety of the Pacific Ocean (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017). This strength-

³ Shyam Saran, India's former Foreign Secretary, notes that China criticized the emergence of the Quad in 2005 itself during the first India-China strategic dialogue. The Indian view was that this initiative was more of a consultative mechanism and did not subscribe to any military understanding. See, Saran 2017.

⁴ Experts in India maintain that it is partly due to China's insecurity concerning American strategies which make Beijing see such a proposition as an "Asian NATO". My interviews with Prof. Alka Acharya and Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.

⁵ Author's interview with Shri Jayant Prasad, Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.

ened the Chinese-Russian assertion that the Quad is an anti-China formulation. The Malabar naval exercises involving the US, Japan, Australia and Singapore in September 2007 also confirmed an Indian interest in pursuing the Quad forum further (see Table 1. Exercise Malabar). There was a general view that the Malabar exercises were a regional consensus in response to China's continuous naval expansion in the Indian Ocean and ever-expanding military cooperation with the Central Asian states within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Auslin 2009). Meanwhile, China exerted pressure on Australia to go easy on the Quad formulation. Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith publicly assured the Chinese Foreign Minister that "... Australia would not be proposing to have a dialogue of that nature" (Australian Government 2008). Kevin Rudd's arrival in power in 2007 signalled how Australia signified China as a key partner and would not like to support interests seemingly detrimental to China. Hence, Australia retracted from the Quad proposition and the Quad formulation was shelved in 2007-08.

Table 1: Excercise 'MALABAR'

SL. No.	Name	Countries Involved	Period	Venue	Objectives
1.	Malabar-I	USA and India	May 1992	Off the coast of Goa, India	Introductory and exploratory in nature
2.	Malabar-II	USA and India	1995	Indian Ocean	To jointly conduct military exercises at a modest scale
3.	Malabar-III	USA and India	1996	Indian Ocean	To jointly conduct military exercises at a modest scale
4.	Malabar-IV	USA and India	Sept 26-Oct 03, 2002	Near Kochi, India	To increase interoperability between the two navies
5.	Malabar-V	USA and India	Oct 06-Oct 08, 2003	Near Kochi, India	To enhance mutual under- standing of the two navies and increase regional cooperation
6.	Malabar-04	USA and India	Oct 01-Oct 09, 2004	Southwest coast near Goa, India	To increase interoperability and enhance cooperative secu- rity relationship between India and the US
7.	Malabar-05	USA and India	Sept 25-Oct 04, 2005	Southwest coast off Goa, India	Towards greater interaction, greater interoperability and building bridges of friendship
8.	Malabar-06	USA and India	Oct 25-Nov 05, 2006	Southwest coast of India	To develop functional skills and go beyond tactical exercises.
9.	Malabar CY-07/1	USA, India, Japan, Aus- tralia and Singapore	April 06-April 11, 2007	Pacific Ocean, off the Japanese island of Oki- nawa	To increase interoperability and enhance cooperative security relationship between India and the US.
10.	Malabar CY-07/2	USA, India, Japan, Aus- tralia and Singapore	Sept 04-Sept 09, 2007	Bay of Bengal, off Visakhapat- nam coast, India	To increase interoperability and develop common under- standing and procedures for maritime operations.

11.	Malabar-08	USA and India	Oct 15-Oct 28, 2008	Arabian Sea, off the coast of Goa, India	Focused on functional skills like ASW operations, VBSS techniques, etc.
12.	Malabar-09	USA, India and Japan	April 26-May 03, 2009	Off the coast of Okinawa, Japan	Featured execution of functional skills
13.	Malabar-10	USA and India	April 23-April 30, 2010	Near Goa, India	Fundamental coordination and communication to more advanced and complex strate- gic naval operations
14.	Malabar 2011	USA, India and Japan	April 03-April 10, 2011	Western Pacific Ocean, near the Luzon Strait, Philippines	To enhance military-to- military coordination and help strategize and execute tactical operations in a multinational environment
15.	Malabar 2012	USA and India	April 09-April 16, 2012	Bay of Bengal, Chennai, India	To advance multinational maritime relationships and mutual security issues
16.	Malabar 2013	USA and India	Nov 05-Nov 11, 2013	Bay of Bengal and Chennai, India	To advance multinational maritime relationships and mutual security issues
17.	Malabar 2014	USA, India and Japan	July 24-July 30, 2014	Port Sasebo and the Western Pacific Ocean, Japan	To enhance maritime coopera- tion among the navies of the participating nations
18.	Malabar 2015	USA, India and Japan	Oct 14-Oct 19, 2015	Chennai, India	To enhance naval cooperation among important navies of the Indo-Pacific region which helps in enhancing mutual understanding
19.	Malabar 2016	USA, India and Japan	June 10-June 17, 2016	Harbour phase: Sasebo, Japan Sea phase: Pacific Ocean	To increase interoperability amongst the three navies and develop common understand- ing of procedures for Maritime Security Operations
20.	Malabar 2017	USA, India and Japan	July 10-July 17, 2017	Bay of Bengal, India.	To promote common under- standing and demonstrate their shared commitment to enhance maritime security and stability in the region
21.	Malabar 2018	USA, India and Japan	June 7-June 15, 2018	Off the coast of Guam, Philip- pine Sea Harbour phase: Naval Base Guam Sea phase: Phil- ippine Sea	To achieve greater inter- operability between the three navies to have a better strategic holding in the Indo-Pacific region. It also seeks to develop the working relationships be- tween the countries' maritime forces more

Note: What started as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the United States in 1992 became an annual exercise the two countries conduct, known as the Malabar exercises, so as to improve regional security cooperation. While Canada, Australia and Singapore were non-permanent participants for some years, Japan was included as a permanent partner in 2015. These exercises have always been very diverse in nature, becoming more complex and broad-ranging as time went by. So far, there have been

21 such exercises, of which three were conducted before India acquired the status of a de-facto nuclear power in 1998. Following those nuclear tests, Washington, D.C. imposed economic sanctions on New Delhi and also suspended the naval military exercises. It was only after 9/11 that the military contacts were reinitiated.

(Sources: From various open sources, such as Rediff.com, The Quint, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Asia Times, The Diplomat, The Times of India, The Economic Times, Press Information Bureau: Government of India, Ministry of Defence: Government of India. Also, Sumit Ganguly, Andrew Scobell and Brian Shoup (eds.), US-Indian Strategic Cooperation into the 21st Century: More Than Words, Routledge: 2006)

The Quad idea resurfaced strongly in December 2012 when Shinzo Abe, upon his return to power, talked about "Asia's democratic security diamond". He explicitly argued, T envisage a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean Region to the western Pacific' (Abe 2012). Even though a progressive trend was noticed in Japan's relationship with India and with the other two Quad countries over the next few years, India was hesitant to endorse the Quad proposal publicly. Yet Japan continued to push the concept further through Abe's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) foreign policy advocacy. It also tried to establish strategic consonance with Barack Obama's "Pivot to Asia" strategy and India's "Act East" policy, in particular. A number of trilateral frameworks, such as US-India-Japan and India-Australia-Japan, have equally been nurtured to strengthen the Quad proposition further, endorsing the essence of the liberal spirit such as "rule of law" and "freedom of navigation". The Quad proposition received a new thrust when Harry B. Harris, Commander of the US Pacific Command, acknowledged India's importance and contextualized the term "Indo-Asia-Pacific" at an event in India in 2016. He stated that the United States would like to join the India-Japan-Australia trilateral cooperation since it provided an opportunity to "likeminded" nations to become ambitious in the high seas and air space (Parrish 2016).

On November 12, 2017, the Quad framework - now dubbed Quad 2.0 - returned with the officials of the four countries formally meeting in Manila. Instead of releasing a joint statement, the countries had four different press releases, indicating how their strategic objectives and preferences in the region differ from each other. The release of these four separate press releases was indicative of Quad 2.0 being simply a consultative forum among the four countries. A commonality in agenda was missing in action even though all four press releases reflected upon the security challenges posed by terrorism and North Korea's nuclear and missile programme. There was also a collective endorsement of upholding "rule based

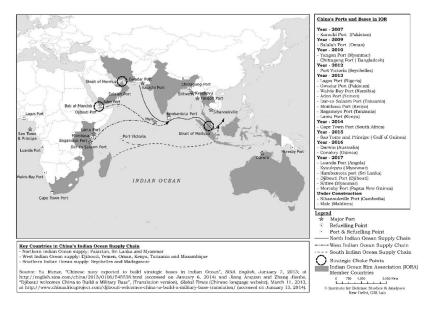
order" and promoting a FOIP, but in varied tones and languages. For example, the Indian perspective endorsed a FOIP and emphasized the necessity of an "inclusive" character to achieve it. The US press release emphasized the enhancement of connectivity, "freedom of navigation and overflight" and "maritime security" consistent with international law and standards (Nauert 2017). Japan, as a alliance partner of the US, echoed the American spirit and stressed "rule based order", "freedom of navigation" and "maritime security" in the Indo-Pacific region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2017). The Australian press release stressed "rule-based order" and "freedom of navigation and overflight", apart from enhancing connectivity (Australian Government 2017).

The Indian press release, it may be noted, was somewhat more cautious than of the other three partners. It expressed concerns on terrorism, North Korea's proliferation linkages and also stressed promoting connectivity. It reiterated the centrality of the Act East policy in the Indo-Pacific and advocated a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific" (MEA 2017). The significance of "inclusiveness" in the Indian narrative indicates that the Indian perspective on the Quad does not necessarily run into the Chinese wall, even though New Delhi maintains a strategic consonance with Australia, Japan and the United States in the Indo-Pacific. The term "inclusive" points to India's advocacy of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific and does not exclude China's presence in the region, despite New Delhi's concerns about a stronger Chinese maritime presence in the IOR. This perspective became stronger after Modi's speech at the Shangri-La dialogue on June 1, 2018 when he stated that "India does not see the Indo-Pacific as a strategy or as a club of limited members ... And by no means do we consider it as directed against any country" (MEA 2018; Ungku & Kim 2018). In fact, Modi's speech not only clearly articulated India's Indo-Pacific vision but also endorsed China and Russia as prospective partners in the Indo-Pacific configuration. As Jayant Prasad rightly views, Modi, through his Shangri-La dialogue speech, had "indirectly invited China and Russia to be part of the Indo-Pacific, which he said was not directed against any country".6 Strengthening this testimony was India's recent decision not to be a direct part of the US-led trilateral initiative involving Japan and Australia in the Indo-Pacific Business Forum that will theoretically act as a counterweight to China's infrastructure projects.⁷

⁶ Author's interview with Shri Jayant Prasad, Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.

⁷ The US-led trilateral initiative to finance infrastructure development to counter China's outreach in Indo-Pacific was launched on 30 July 2018. India decided not to join this initiative, promoting the spirit of "inclusiveness" and "multipolarity" in Indo-Pacific. Chaudhury, 2018.

Map 1



(Source: GIS Lab, IDSA)

Why Does India Endorse the Quad?

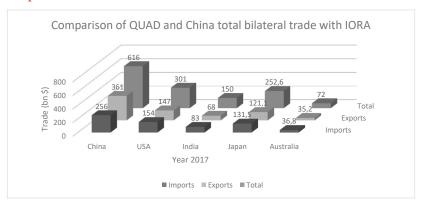
The debate continues over the prospects of Quad 2.0 in India and elsewhere. A second official consultation meeting of Quad 2.0 was held on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit on June 7, 2018 to express stronger cooperative resolve towards a FOIP. The Indian endorsement of Quad 2.0 has led to a debate about whether India has abandoned its traditional non-aligned foreign policy in order to embrace a strategic formulation such as the Quad that explicitly endorses a US-led liberal order (Raja Mohan 2017, p. 2). India certainly foresees Quad 2.0 as a strategic pivot against China, but the Indian perspective is more open as well as opaque than it appears to be. The puzzling element in this regard is New Delhi's changing relationship discourse with China as an immediate neighbour, both within and without the context of Indo-Pacific region. Their relationship has improved and has become more institutionalized from 2004 onwards - at about the same time as the commencement of the Quad. India too, has been simultaneously increasing its association with the other Quad countries, bilaterally, trilaterally and multilaterally.

India's importance to Quad 2.0 appears unquestioned and it has been termed the "strategic fulcrum" of the Indo-Pacific. Australia sees India as a "significant strategic partner" in the IOR (Padmanavan 2018). Japan views India as a key strategic

partner in Shinzo Abe's FOIP strategy (MEA 2017). The US acknowledges India as a "leading global power" in the making in the region (NSS 2017). It recently renamed the US Pacific Command as the US Indo-Pacific Command, factoring India's centrality in its Indian Ocean strategy (The Economic Times 2018). The intent is unequivocal: all the three countries want India to play a constructive and crucial role in shaping the Quad.

However, Beijing's emergence as a stronger "maritime power" has endangered the Quad members' strategic interests. The prime context behind Quad 2.0 is Beijing's Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which is an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) under Xi Jinping. What coerces India to endorse the Quad as a strategic proposition is to protect its own maritime interests which are being threatened by the rising Chinese presence in the IOR. Since Hu Jintao's ascendancy to power in 2003-04, China has been focusing more on critical maritime infrastructure, emphasizing key maritime zones, investment in port construction, protection of maritime zones and finding alternative routes in the Indo-Pacific region (see Map 1). Beijing's blunt statement that the "Indian Ocean is not India's Ocean" (Wang 2010, p.97) has come as a challenging portent to India's maritime superiority in the region for some time now.

Graph 1



The Indian Ocean along with the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca and the Arabian Sea are seen as being the "maritime lifeline" for Beijing because of China's increasing demand for energy resources in order to sustain its economic growth. However, analysts and strategists in Beijing realized early on that China had never had an overarching Indian Ocean strategy. To overcome this deficiency, China has worked hard over the years to strengthen its contacts with key countries in the region, including the most important multilateral institution, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (Panda 2014). China's collective bilateral trade contacts with the IORA countries at present are much higher than those of the other Quad-associated countries (see Graph 1). Special commercial

and strategic contacts have been established with some of the IORA members since they are central to China's energy transportation in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the three chokepoints: Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb, and Strait of Malacca (see Table 2). Beijing's approach has not only been how to overcome the challenges it faces in the Malacca Strait but also to find a new alternative medium of routes in the IOR and to combine it with emerging maritime strategy have been the hallmark of China's Indian Ocean strategy. Additionally, under Xi Jinping's leadership, more autonomy, authority and power have been offered to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), where PLAN is emerging as one of the most powerful blue-water navies in the world. Indeed, the first-ever bluebook by Beijing, released in 2013, signalled how India's Act East policy is a key challenging portent to China's maritime interests in the IOR (WantChinaTimes 2013).

Table 2: China, Major Chokepoints and Key IORA Members

Major Chokepoints	Significance in China's Energy Transport	IORA Countries
Strait of Hormuz	Almost 40 per cent of China's crude oil transport from three IORA countries pass through it	Iran, UAE, Oman
Bab el-Mandeb	China is dependent on oil transport from South of Sudan on the Red Sea	Yemen
Strait of Malacca	Almost 37 per cent of China's LNG imports, 46 per cent of gas imports and 59 per cent of oil imports pass through IOR and enter this strait	Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore

Another pressing reason behind the return of Quad 2.0 and India's embrace of it is the Chinese Silk Road initiative. Beijing has used the Silk Road concept traditionally to expand its overseas business and expand commercial interests in the IOR. If the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) is the key initiative behind China's land corridor connectivity routes, the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is attached to protect its ever-growing security interests in the IOR and enhance critical infrastructure in the region (Panda 2017). Underlying China's MSR strategy is an orderly diplomatic, economic and maritime quest for power. Xi Jinping's speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) replicated this ambition. Xi explicitly stated that "China will coordinate land and maritime development, and step up efforts to build the country into a strong maritime country" (Xinhua 2017). A core aim behind this strategy is to rebrand China as an economic, political and maritime power in the IOR as well as in the neighbouring region. Accordingly, China's relationship with the IOR countries - including the South Asian countries - has been given the utmost importance. This however, brings Indian maritime interests into direct conflict with Chinese interests. For instance, China's relationships with the Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka are all on the ascendancy, challenging not only India's influence and investment interests in its immediate neighbourhood but the other Quad countries interests in the IOR.

New Delhi has tried to revitalize its maritime strategy in recent years. Initiatives such as Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), the Cotton Routes, the Spice Routes, Project Mausam and an inter-continental consultative framework like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) are intended to protect India's commercial and maritime interests in the IOR. These initiatives aim at empowering India's coastal provinces through the upgrading of infrastructure and by linking them strategically with the IOR countries. In order to restrict the rising Chinese influence, India has been attempting to concede as little strategic depth as possible to China in the IOR and therefore finds strategic consonance as a local power with the other Quad countries (Panda 2017, p.84).

The Quad countries' strategic and maritime interests are constantly challenged by Beijing as it signs new contracts, agreements and memoranda of understanding with various IOR states along with building strategic infrastructure such as ports and bases (see Map 1). Countries like the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Djibouti have shown significant interest in China's maritime investment projects under the MSR, with China possessing a military base operated by the PLAN in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa (Parasar 2015; Panda 2017). These Chinese actions encourage India to participate in a consultative forum like the Quad. But will India ever nurture the Quad as a strategic proposition, primarily against China? Answering this fundamental question requires an understanding of how India has positioned itself and responded to China's rise in the two contrasting power structures: the liberalist power coalition led or dominated by the United States, and an alternative power coalition that is still emerging and is centred on and around China.

Post-Cold War Sino-US Rivalry and the Quad

Fundamentally, the Quad's arrival was an anticipated contest about ideas and interests. The Quad's development explains a gradual evolution of the post-Cold War economic model and growth story rivalries that the two competing models of the "Washington consensus" and the "Beijing consensus" offer to world politics (Symoniak, 2010-11).8 The disintegration of the Soviet system in the 1990s and the Persian Gulf War offered a new context for the United States to construct a "new world order." For China, it was the beginning of a "new international system"

⁸ John Williamson in 1989 prescribed a few economic reforms guidelines targeting the developing countries for policymakers in Washington, which came to be popularly known as "Washington Consensus". Williamson's three main prescriptions were: (a) macroeconomic discipline, (b) promoting a market economy, and (c) openness and transparency to the world. See Williamson; also see, Symoniak, 2010-11. The "Beijing Consensus" has been seen in contrasting perspective to "Washington Consensus" even though there is very little in common between them. The lead story behind the "Beijing consensus" is the success of the Chinese economy. "Beijing consensus" emphasizes flexibility, innovation and "peaceful rise", citing China's success as a model of growth in international experience. The "Beijing Consensus" is portrayed as an alternative discourse of development in the developing world, opposing the Western-dominated developmental experience and model of growth. See Turin 2010, Kurlantzick 2013.

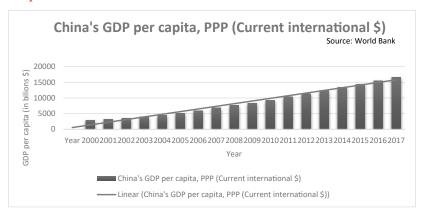
(Gurtov 2010). Deng Xiaoping stated, "I recommend that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which were formulated by us Asians in the 1950s, should serve as the norms for the New International Order for a very long period of time to come" (Gurtov 2010; Hu 2013). Accordingly, Beijing has been trying to establish a systemic order in Asia to keep Western powers out of the region, and India has been seen as a prospective partner despite China's range of growing conflicts with it, including the boundary dispute.

If the Washington consensus was about protecting the liberal political tenets, including rule of law, respect for human rights and enhancing the democratic ideals in the world, the Beijing consensus emerged as an alternative to build a consensus principally on the establishment of an international system "without the West." Importantly, it aimed to do so by avoiding the rule of law and rigid political and economic standards imposed by the Bretton Woods system (Gurtov 2010; Hu 2013). China's advocacy of a Beijing consensus was linked to its "New Security Concept", preparing a foreign policy platform to envision an alternative order (Gurtov 2010; Hu 2013).

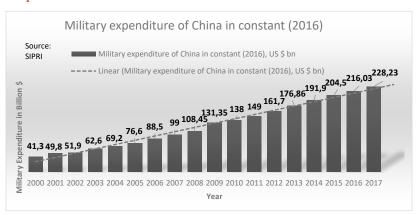
China's emergence as a stronger power was viewed with concern in Washington and hence, the United States has tried different approaches over the years to curb China's influence and rise. The Quad is a reflection of this evolving post-Cold War contest between the US and China. Japan, as a strategic ally of the US, has contributed a great deal to enhancing the formulation of the Quad through Abe's FOIP strategy. Australia and India have further enhanced it by participating in this proposition. This comes as a virtual acknowledgement of the Washington consensus and the essence of the Quad's can be said to protect the democratic ideas and interests of likeminded countries in the Indo-Pacific. This is particularly the case in the maritime domain, where the unilateral adventures of China appear to precipitously challenge the systemic configuration in the region.

The Quad's growth trajectory from 1.0 to 2.0 corresponds to China's rapid rise as a military and economic power. The beginning of this century witnessed China not only maintaining a stable economic growth but equally increasing its military expenditure (see Graphs 2 and 3), causing concern in India and elsewhere. The course of China's rise has not only posed serious consequences for Asia's structure of relations but also the overall economic and political landscape (Doug 2009, Hernandez 2009). China's impressive economic growth and simultaneous rise in military budget was a key factor behind the Indian perception of the Quad vis-àvis China. In particular, China's assertive claim over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh has intensified, complicating the India-China boundary dispute.

Graph 2



Graph 3



The American debate on China has also undergone some changes in the current century. The United States' official *National Security Strategy (NSS)* offers a synopsis of the US's trajectory of concerns over China in the last one and a half decade. For example, in September 2002, the *NSS* under President George W. Bush welcomed the "emergence of a strong China" while expressing concern over its systemic transformation and internal development (The White House 2002). The United States' security concern regarding China was clearly visible during 2002-2006 when the second *NSS*, released on March 16, 2006, expressed its concern about China's expansion of its military in a "non-transparent way" (The White House 2006). This is the period when Quad 1.0 was discussed but rapidly dismissed. The May 2010 *NSS*, released under President Barack Obama, welcomed China's leadership role in global affairs, yet again expressed concern about China's military, stating that it would monitor its military modernization programme closely (The White House 2010). The February 2015 *NSS* also raised

concerns over China's military modernization and insisted that China uphold international rules and norms on maritime issues, trade and human rights (The White House 2015). The current *NSS*, released under President Donald Trump, explicitly mentions China as a strategic threat to the American global interest, terming it as a "revisionist" power (The White House 2017).

Debate continues, both in the United States and elsewhere as to whether China is a revisionist power or not. But a broader consensus exists that China is certainly not a traditional status-quo power. The shades of Chinese revisionism in establishing new institutions and its flagship BRI have encouraged the United States to apply different mechanisms to check China's rising influence. The United States backing of the Quad 2.0 is a direct reflection of this.

On the other hand, Beijing has projected itself as a more confident power over the last decade. The Chinese leadership has successfully envisioned positioning China as one of the centres of power in the global political and economic structure. For example, the implementation of the "going-out" strategy in the late 1990s was a major development in China's foreign policy strategy where the main objective was to encourage the Chinese enterprises to invest abroad (Hongying Wang & XueYing Hu 2017). Over the next ten years, China intensively pursued its "going-out" strategy, primarily aiming to expand its maritime outreach in the IOR. Indeed, even though the Chinese narrative tells of how the liberal order, led by the United States and averse to its rise, has attempted to thwart the growth of Chinese power over the last two decades, China continues to exercise caution in not discounting key Asian powers like Japan and India as "Asian partners." It does so even though Beijing is aware that both these powers are strongly affiliated with the United States and will generally endorse the liberal values of the Washington consensus.

With Hu Jintao's arrival to power in 2003, China started countering the "China threat" scheme through its "peaceful rise of China" theory, which China later revised to "peaceful development of China." As a proponent of the "peaceful rise of China" theory, Zheng Bijian's speech at the Boáo Forum for Asia in 2003 highlighted how China planned to progress internationally while focusing on Asia.

⁹ Unlike the United States, India does not strictly see China as a revisionist power. Some of China's initiatives and strategic tendencies might indicate shades of revisionism. Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli of the JNU suggests that the CICA conference in May 2014 indicates the revisionist attitude that China holds since its ambition is to emerge as a leader of Asia. This assertion from China holds utmost strategic importance for India. Based on the author's interview with Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli of the JNU. A similar line of confirmation is also offered by Prof. Alka Acharya when she states that "China is not a revisionist power in the strict sense of the term – it has no intention to bring about a wholesale transformation of the current world order. However it is under no illusions that the contemporary international political and financial architecture is governed by the rules laid down by the Western powers and has therefore begun to take a proactive approach in shaping alternative approaches to security and economic frameworks". Author's interview with Prof. Alka Acharya of JNU.

He argued, "In today's world, how can Asian countries – China included – follow a path that serves nobody's interest? China's only choice is to strive to rise and, more importantly, to strive for a peaceful rise" (Zheng 2003). A hallmark of this theory was to deepen China's bilateral relationship with the Asia-Pacific countries, including India (Okuda 2016, p. 125). Hu Jintao's first term witnessed China advocating its "major developing country" foreign policy proposition, which attempted to avoid a confrontation any Asian power or with the United States (Masuda 2018, pp. 6-7). China also preferred to maintain a "low profile" during Hu Jintao's first tenure with a modest focus on Asia.

Hu Jintao's second term, starting from 2008-09, witnessed China emerging as a more confident power in world politics. It did so by successfully hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics and demonstrating a new assertiveness towards the United State, particularly after the global financial crisis. As Hu's decade in power came to a close, a number of factors, to include China's rising military posture over Taiwan, China-US military rivalry in the South China Sea, China's double-digit economic growth and simultaneous growth in military budgets, encouraged the Quad countries to again discuss China's rise among themselves. The "anti-China" notion emerged as a stronger stance even though the initial Quad consultative forum was meant to mainly address non-traditional security issues in the maritime domain.

India-China Relations vis-à-vis the Quad

Often viewed as a "quintessentially political process" to preserve the CPC's legitimacy (Ming Xia 2009), China's rise has been intensely debated across the Asia-Pacific/Indo-Pacific region, both in its domestic and international context. As such, New Delhi's participation in the Quad should be viewed in this light and understood as a phenomenon of the growing strategic inequity that India faces at present with a dominant China as a neighbour. The Indian outlook towards the Quad is to position itself more with a liberal US-led structure to gain strategic importance in China's alternative vision of frameworks and also, most plausibly, vice versa. Taken together, the concerns of the US, Japan and India have established a strategic confluence in the region where Australia is seen as a potential partner in the Quad formulation. The Quad's prospects are, however, heavily dependent upon how India-China relations will evolve in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, a parallel track of engagement was noticed in India's relationship architecture with China vis-à-vis the Quad members since 2004.

In 2004-05, India adopted a new strategic discourse to its relationship with China through the "Strategic and Cooperative Partnership of Peace and Prosperity". Increased political exchanges, better economic cooperation, and the forging of stronger connectivity were the main objectives; the intent between the two coun-

tries was to promote an "all-round and comprehensive development" in their bilateral relations (MEA 2005). If the India-China relations have become institutionalized today, much of the credit should go to this 2005 official undertaking. A range of bilateral dialogue mechanisms – such as the Financial Dialogue, Defence and Security Dialogues, Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), Working Mechanism for Consultation on India-China Border Affairs and Special Representatives (SRs) dialogue – made it a comprehensive bilateral relation. Importantly, India even have a Maritime Affairs dialogue with China today.

President Hu Jintao's visit to India in 2006 witnessed stability and willingness in their relationship to keep the "irritants aside and move forward". Hu Jintao's visit saw China proposing a "five points" proposal – increase political trust, business cooperation, cultural and social exchanges, multilateral cooperation, and address the boundary dispute – to prepare a comprehensive trajectory for India-China relations in the years to come (Luan 2006). This was the phase when discussions over Quad 1.0 were increasing. So, with Hu Jintao's visit to India, the rumours of India-China relations turning sour due to increasing India-US bonhomie were temporarily put to the rest (Panda 2006), even though the perception of China as a 'suspect' power continued in the Indian strategic outlook – primarily as a legacy of the 1962 War.

In 2008, India and China framed an understanding to build a "Shared Vision for the 21st Century" to globalize their relationship architecture. The emphasis was on democratization of international relations, factoring the significance of multilateral engagement, promoting economic globalization and to advocate an "open, fair, equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral system" for India-China cooperation (MEA 2008). With its establishment, their relations have become significantly institutionalized. In addition, as developing countries and as emerging economies, both India and China have started influencing the global economic structure through their multilateral chain of contacts and alignments. Growing India-China multilateral contacts are noticed today in forums such as the BRICS¹⁰, the BASIC climate grouping¹¹, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB), and also the Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral framework. These are the results of this "Shared Vision," all of which can be said to relatively enfeeble the Quad proposition (Panda 2018). Indeed, India's continued association with the RIC and BRICS aptly demonstrates how New Delhi has not really distanced itself from China and Russia multilaterally, while managing its continued participation in Quad 2.0.

¹⁰ An association of five major emerging national economies composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

A bloc of four large newly industrialized countries composed of Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

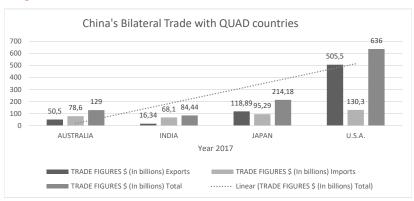
The recent informal meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated strengthening of India-Russia relations by developing a "new security architecture" based on non-alignment and non-bloc principles (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2018). The current political jingle of the "post-American" world states that the RIC is vital to regional politics and remains a balancing trilateral framework to downplay the overriding India-China strife (Panda 2012). The RIC framework is a much more stable trilateral framework than the other two trilaterals - India-Japan-Australia and India-Japan-US - which exemplify the Quad. Though the India-China border dispute and the growing discord in areas such as water and maritime security often make the two countries appear as Asian rivals, it should not be overlooked that India-China multilateral contacts are much stronger today, making them interdependent both bilaterally and globally. Above all, China's foreign policy does factor India as an important partner, though mostly as a conditional partner, both for economic diplomacy and for other global objectives. For instance, Xi's 2035 and 2049 vision of a "new era" foreign policy is one where improving relations with all countries is a priority for China. It is difficult to assume that Beijing would not like to improve relations with India in a period when it would prefer a stable neighbourhood to promote and ease its own rise.

Beijing's global foreign policy objective is to sideline American supremacy in Asia and further abroad. For this, China requires India's partnership. As former foreign policy practitioner Jayant Prasad noted, "As a rising power, China wishes to find its place in the world commensurate with its growing comprehensive national power. If it does not see its own rise in Asia and the world in zero-sum terms, this could be an opportunity for India. If not, it will be an obstacle". 12 Nevertheless, Beijing still needs India's partnership in addressing global governance issues in favour of the emerging economies, such as climate change and reforming global financial institutions. Beijing also expects India to promote the chemistry of RIC trilateralism better in Asia-Pacific, or what it hesitates to call as "Indo-Pacific," both within and outside the architecture of the SCO and BRICS. This Chinese expectation from India is not far-fetched. India has not been clubbed as an enemy country in the Chinese formulation thus far. Rather, Beijing sees this as an opportune moment to work on India-China relations, particularly when India-US relations have not perceptibly improved under Narendra Modi and Donald Trump. This encourages China to take India on board as a possible partner. India is also a part of the AIIB and BRICS's New Development Bank (NDB). This multilateral set of engagements will seriously check Quad 2.0's progress in emerging as an anti-China proposition.

¹² Author's interview with Shri Jayant Prasad, Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.

Summing Up: The Quad Disorder

The essence of Quad 2.0 is an outcome of the strategic concerns and contingencies that Australia, India, Japan and the United States collectively share in regards to China and its unilateral measures. But having strategic congruity on China's rise does not necessarily guarantee the Quad's endurance as a credible strategic proposition. The differing perspectives on China's rise and differing foreign policy strategies of each of the Quad participants enfeeble it. Every one of them shares strong trade contacts with China (see Graph 4). Therefore, promoting Quad 2.0 as an anti-China scheme will not be easy. Besides, the American perspective of Quad 2.0 is fairly different from that of Australia, Japan and India, even though all of the four countries anticipate China's rise as the single most uniting factor in Quad 2.0, as well as in Indo-Pacific formulation.



Graph 4: China's Bilateral Trade with QUAD Countries

SOURCES: China ministry of Commerce at http://english.mofcom.gov.cn, United States Census Bureau at https://www.census.gov/, World Bank website atwww.wits.worldbank.org, Sipri website at www.sipri.org and Australian Bureau of Statistics at www.abs.gov.au

American concern over China's rise is primarily linked to the structural advantage that Beijing currently enjoys as a developing economy in global financial institutions, while possessing the capability of a developed economy to challenge US supremacy in the global political and economic structure. Beijing's capability to establish new institutions without withdrawing from participation in existing Bretton Woods institutions has severely threatened American interests as a superpower, encouraging the US to establish strategic coalitions to contain Chinese influence (Zheng 2015). The Quad concept fits aptly into this American formulation. As such, China's rise has not only challenged the hegemonic status of the United States in the global power structure, but also the "ideological incompatibility" that China today is celebrating with the CPC's lead to emerge as

a "revolutionary power" intent on offering systemic revisionism and challenging the Western democratic value system (Ming Xia 2009). The US-China contest is more about power and authority, apart from the opposing leadership vision (Kagan 2009, p. 2). For the United States, it is about upholding its leadership; while for China it is ascendancy to leadership.

Japan shares strategic congruity with the United States in the Quad more than Australia and India. If China's rise in Asia has been a success story over the last two decades, it has arguably been at the expense of Japan's influence as a power. This has affected Tokyo's regional and global economic outreach (Iokibe and Kubo 2017).¹³ What has essentially encouraged Tokyo to openly endorse and perhaps promote the Quad 2.0 is the emergence of a stronger "military China" threatening Japanese security and maritime interests - despite a (somewhat) guaranteed US-Japan alliance (Chanlett-Avery 2018). Japan imports almost 80 per cent of its oil through the Malacca Strait and is heavily dependent on free passage in the seas for its energy imports. Japan's economy is also somewhat dependent on sea-based trade, where Tokyo trades in major raw materials, including food items. Japan's target is to protect those limited but vital chokepoints that separate Japan from key sea lines of communication (SLOCs) - at the Sea of China and near the Strait of Okhotsk, and potentially control them in a possible conflict with China. Tokyo sees the emergence of China's blue-water navy and the Chinese naval force as detrimental to its maritime strategic interests. Therefore, it seeks to overcome this challenge by revising its pacifist constitution, particularly Article 9, which restricts its choice to use force. It also hopes to strengthen and extend the US-Japan alliance network through trilateral and quadrilateral forums. India is progressively being seen as a prospective partner in Tokyo's worldview, across the bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral format.

Australia's perspective on the Quad should be understood as a measure of its shared security understanding with the United States and with Japan rather than as a security alliance against China. More than the other Quad countries, Australia has maintained strong economic ties with China and has acknowledged Beijing's strategic presence openly. Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper acknowledged the US pre-eminence in the region and in upholding a rule-based order in the region (Australian Government 2016). Australia sees the effort to revive the Quad as a part of its ongoing economic and strategic engagement with all

¹³ Experts argue that China's rise has been the main factor why Japanese interests have been challenged, both regionally and globally. But there are additional factors that have also contributed to Japan's declining influence. Among several other factors, Japan's indecisive foreign policy and lack of a resolute Japanese policy to address the territorial disputes are equally strong factors that have allowed countries like Russia and South Korea to take advantage to some extent in Northeast Asia. For instance, Japan's territorial claims were challenged by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to the disputed Northern Territories in November 2010 and South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak's visit to Takeshima in August 2012. See Iokine and Kubo, 2017, pp.235-256.

the Quad countries, including India (Lee 2017). Australia sees the Indo-Pacific as a strategic proposition that not only enhances Canberra's outlook towards the region, but also as a proposition that endorses the legitimacy of the US-led liberal order ahead of a Chinese-led order (Australian Government 2017).

India's perspective on the Quad needs to be understood in the light of four aspects, as follows. First, India's envisages the Quad more as a strategic proposition at present which could possibly become a platform to address the rising power asymmetry in Asia (Panda 2018). India has long sought for a power equilibrium with China. Participating in the Quad assists India to put forward a demand that China endorses a multipolar Asian structure. For example, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's speech at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing in January 2008 endorsed China's rise and stated that "India cannot remain untouched by China's rise which is a momentous process" (MEA 2008). Stressing further that "there is enough space for both India and China to grow and prosper", he stated that economic interdependence should be the basis of India-China cooperation both within and outside the Asian structure, including an "open inclusive economic architecture from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific" (MEA 2008) where India sees China as a partner in the larger Asia-Pacific/Indo-Pacific construct.

These perspectives have, however, been overshadowed by China's growing profile as a military and economic power and its increasing assertiveness on a range of issues in Asia and the world. China has surpassed India and other powers on many accounts to improve its "comprehensive national power", compelling India to rethink China's vision of an Asian structure with India. Besides, Beijing is pursuing a "new era" foreign policy which is more US-centric, aimed at sharing an international platform with the United States as an equivalent power rather than taking Asian countries' concerns and interests on-board (Panda 2018). Establishing a strategic consonance with the Quad countries allows India to maintain a balancing position to draw more attention from China in the Asian and global spheres.

Second, China's emergence more as a revisionist power through its Silk Road strategy has influenced India's strategic interests in the immediate and extended neighbourhood, particularly around the Indo-Pacific region. Xi Jinping's flagship BRI is a unilateral proposition of China with the aim of enhancing infrastructure investment abroad, improve road and railway connectivity, and people-to-people contacts between China and the world. At the CPC's 19th National Congress, Beijing inserted the BRI in the CPC Charter, thus giving it more policy weightage and making it a national political project. This insertion formally implies that Beijing is serious about the international community joining the BRI, and signing mutually acceptable agreements. Importantly, the BRI restricts India's investment and economic engagement choices in the immediate neighbourhood and fur-

ther abroad. In particular, Beijing's MSR poses a challenge to India's maritime superiority, as it focuses on infrastructure along "alternative" routes in the Indian Ocean. Beijing's militarization approach in the South China Sea, its provocative approach to Japan in the East China Sea dispute, and its rising assertiveness vis-à-vis the India-China boundary dispute have further compelled New Delhi to find strategic consonance with the Quad members. Indeed, given these valid concerns, India is the only major economy that is yet to formally endorse or support China's BRI.

Third, the Quad does not necessarily guarantee India's security against China against the backdrop of any anticipated border conflict or eventuality. Neither will India's security interests be protected under the Quad mechanisms as none of the Quad countries has taken an open stand on the boundary dispute and supported India's case against China. The recent Doklam border stand-off may be taken as an example. While the United States urged both India and China to resolve the 73 days-long stand-off through "bilateral dialogue" (Financial Express 2017), Australia expressed interest that peace must be restored and tensions should not be escalated (Baghchi 2017). Japan too, though somewhat bold and eloquent, stated that the border stand-off should not change the status quo of the boundary dispute and must be resolved peacefully (Panda 2017). These perspectives sufficiently indicate that none of the Quad countries is currently willing to take a position which might infuriate China.

Fourth, India's approach to the Indo-Pacific finds strategic consonance with the liberal-order framework led by the United States against a unilateral global discourse propelled by China. Emphasizing a consultative nature of growth environment in the Indo-Pacific, India enhances the spirit of inclusivity in the region. This is designed to maintain a balance with both the power structures led by the United States and China. For instance, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) that is being envisioned by India and Japan is based more on the consultative nature of cooperation focusing on infrastructure building, enhancing connectivity and aiming to promote the universal character of growth based on people-to-people contacts. This is meant as a balance to China's BRI, which is a country-specific proposition based on Beijing's unilateralism. India's advocacy of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR), which calls for universalism and inclusivity, is also a testimony to this. There is no caveat in this inclusivity and universalism that excludes China. Rather, the whole Indian approach is to position its security interests - maritime and otherwise - front and centre in India's relations with Beijing while at the same time further establishing consonance and compatibility with the US, Japan and Australia.

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Bio

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Article

The "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Strategy and Japan's Emerging Security Posture

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Abstract

This article explicates the aims and objectives of the Abe administration's central policy initiative towards the Indo-Pacific region: its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) strategy, which was officially unveiled in 2016. It argues that whilst the FOIP is talked of as one of the most important organizing ideas in Japan's contemporary foreign policy, there is actually little consensus as to what the FOIP really entails and what it may mean for the country's emerging national security posture. Using a novel analytical framework to test for potential points of contact between the FOIP and three critical strands of Japan's national security (key alliances, the role of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces outside of territorial defense, and security cooperation with ASEAN nations) the article shows why extant constitutional constraints on the use of the force combined with limited resources given over to defense make it unlikely that Japan will play a more robust role in pursuit of the FOIP's main goal: the maintenance of open seas.

Keywords

Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Japan, Strategy, The Quad, Self-Defense Forces

An Amorphous Concept?

Japan's turn towards a more robust defense posture and proactive approach to regional and global security affairs has received considerable scholarly attention (Green, 2013; Smith 2014; Oros 2017; and Liff 2018). From a significant loosening of a decades-old ban on arms exports to a landmark Cabinet decision allowing for the limited exercise of collective self-defense, the change in Japan's strategic posture, especially under the current administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has captured international attention and has been a source of intense debate within the country. Whilst considerable ink has been spilt on this major – though some say evolutionary (Liff 2015) – reorientation, less attention has been given over to a more recent policy initiative launched by Abe in August 2016: the so-

called "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP). Arguably, the FOIP has emerged as one of the most important organizing ideas in Japan's contemporary foreign policy. Yet, as it stands, there is little consensus as to what the FOIP actually entails – let alone the ways by which it may influence future Japanese policy. As one well-connected Japanese journalist has recently commented, "even people working in the government cannot clearly explain its objectives and content" (Okada 2018).

As its name implies, the FOIP is married to the geographical concept of the "Indo-Pacific," a nomenclature increasingly used by diplomats, policy-makers and scholars across many parts of the world to denote a spatially coherent zone that combines the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Publicly, the government led by Prime Minister Abe has presented the FOIP primarily as a set of initiatives designed to promote Japan's economic prosperity through maintaining a rules-based order and improving connectivity across this vast expanse of water, islands and rim countries. Whilst the government has detailed some elements of the FOIP's agenda – including, in the overseas development realm, specific initiatives for large-scale infrastructure projects in various locations stretching from the Pacific to East Africa – for many commentators it remains a rather amorphous concept. Beyond the broad ideas that underpin the FOIP, very little has been elucidated about its potential practical implications for Japanese policy in this strategically important maritime area.

The term senryaku (strategy in English) typically accompanies the FOIP in official pronouncements as well as in unofficial commentary. But it is not self-evident that this term's use is justifiable. Notwithstanding the dilution of the meaning of the word, a consequence of its overuse and misuse (Freedman 2013, pp. x-xi), a strategy is nothing if it is not a plan with concomitant policy actions. National strategy – and this speaks to the core meaning of senryaku – is ultimately about the choices states make to secure their future in an uncertain world where war is possible. The extent to which the FOIP can be viewed in this way, as guiding Japan's strategic approach to the Indo-Pacific, remains hidden for most analysts. As one Japanese academic has recently noted: "The reality remains that many people have only a vague idea about what the [FOIP] strategy actually means" (Tsuruoka 2018). In one recent in-depth study of Japan's emerging national security policy, for example, the FOIP strategy is mentioned but once, and only to say that it was formulated in response to China's growing assertiveness (Liff 2018, p. 18). If the FOIP is in fact a move to counter Beijing, then it is surely a crucial facet of Japanese national security policy. Such an aim behind the FOIP would make it analogous to Washington's own Indo-Pacific strategy, which is more overtly a containment policy towards China (Matsuda 2018).

Although placing the FOIP in the context of Japan's evolving national security posture is largely absent in scholarly discussions, commentary in Japanese elite

media, routinely frames the strategy in terms of two issues that are central to nearly all debates about Japan's security: China's rising power and the U.S. security commitment. Yet the FOIP is never presented officially in this way, and certainly not as an attempt to counter China's growing influence and power in the region. When it comes to the FOIP and China, the opposite message is given. Recent pronouncements, including a speech delivered by Prime Minister Abe on 22 January 2018 to the Japanese parliament, describe the FOIP as complimentary to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Indeed, Abe spoke of the necessity of cooperating with China in the implementation of the FOIP's initiatives (Abe 2018).

Blurriness about the FOIP, and as a corollary a poor appreciation of the potential implications resulting from its implementation, is a major weak spot in attempts to anticipate the future strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific. Possessing the world's third largest economy and one of the region's most capable militaries, the policies Japan adopts have a major bearing on the most populous and economically dynamic part of the world. Furthermore, Japan's emerging strategic posture considerably influences how the U.S. thinks about its own role in the Indo-Pacific. Domestically, a more activist security role in region brought about by the FOIP could also have significant implications for Japanese political scene, where critics vehemently oppose any departure from Japan's post-war "pacifism".

So how then can we move beyond opacity towards a firmer appreciation of how the FOIP fits into Japan's evolving foreign and defense policies? This article uses a novel analytical framework to test for potential points of contact between the FOIP and three critical strands of Japan's overseas national security posture: key alliances; the role of the Japan Self-Defense Forces or *Jietai* (hereafter the SDF) outside of territorial defense; and security cooperation with ASEAN nations. By approaching the FOIP in this way, the article starts from the premise that for trading nations like Japan, the economic agenda of a maritime strategy cannot be decoupled from security concerns. It is on such matters as free movement across international seas where the economic health and national security interests for a country like Japan intersect. Seen from Japan, the Indo-Pacific region is essentially a maritime domain where economic and security interests collide. In making this argument, the article adds to previous work on Tokyo's changing defense posture and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War (Green 2001; Lind 2004; Samuels 2007; and Oros 2008). Before detailing the national security-related aspects of the FOIP, the article begins by charting the evolution of the concept.

¹ Initial findings from author's forthcoming research paper that employs text-mining methods to establish co-occurrence networks in Japanese-language elite media commentary between the term FOIP and other key security-related terms.

The FOIP's Genesis and Evolution

From its conceptual origins to the place it holds today in Japanese policy, the FOIP has followed a non-linear trajectory. Its genesis can be traced primarily to one individual – Shinzo Abe; its progression from idea to government policy has been indelibly linked to the up-and-down fortunes of his political career. Though it was not until the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Nairobi in August 2016 that Abe delivered his first major speech on the FOIP, the origins of the strategy can be traced much further back, as can the conceptualization in Japanese thinking of the Indo-Pacific as a geographically coherent area.

Following on from the Japan-India strategic dialogue initiated in 2006, Abe, in his first, short-lived tenure as prime minister, unveiled the term Indo-Pacific in a speech delivered at the Indian Parliament in August 2007. Entitled "Confluence of the Two Seas," the speech introduced Japan's vision for the Indo-Pacific as a region built on common values, such as democracy, freedom, and respect for human rights. Links can be made between this value-orientated proclamation about the region and the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" concept, which was first laid out in a speech by Abe's foreign minister, Taro Aso, in 2006 and was subsequently clarified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as centered on "expanding the ring of freedom along the Eurasian continent to form a rich and stable region based on universal values" (Aso 2006; MOFA n.d.). Elaborating on these ideas further, Abe spoke in the New Delhi speech of an "immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the US and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely" (Abe 2007). Evoking the term "broader Asia (kakudai Asia)," Abe's speech reflected a perception that economic and strategic linkages between Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean had increased to such a level that Japan's security and prosperity were now influenced by events in both places (Matsuda 2018). Though Abe's vision for Japan's role in promoting and maintaining this vision of a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific was not, at this stage, clearly articulated, the conceptual foundations of what was to come later were visible. When Abe's short stint as prime minister came to an end in September 2007, the drive for Japan to develop a holistic policy agenda towards the Indo-Pacific fizzled out. The idea of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic zone, however, continued to gather momentum among Japanese policymakers.²

On returning to power in 2012, and after the successful passage of landmark security legislation in 2015, Abe revived his nascent Indo-Pacific concept. Providing an opportunity to explain to a number of potential African recipient countries

² Author interview with former MSDF senior officer who had worked on FOIP in MOFA, Tokyo, July 2018.

how they could benefit from Tokyo's plans, TICAD seemed the perfect venue to unveil a new regional strategy for Japan that was seemingly built around the promotion of free trade, infrastructure investment and economic development. Though the FOIP continued earlier talk of spreading values in the Indo-Pacific, many of the normative elements present in Abe's early statements about Japan's priorities towards the region, such as in his speech to the Indian Parliament in 2007, were either relegated in importance or eradicated altogether (Brown 2018). The FOIP strategy was launched at a time when Japanese government policy was shifting towards protecting the country's material and security interests and away from propagating norms and values. Much of the substance of the FOIP, as expressed in the TICAD speech and other statements since, retains a focus on Japan's role in promoting economic connectivity between Asia, the Middle East and Africa through the expansion of trade ties and by investing in major infrastructure projects, but it is now accompanied by a growing emphasis on the need for an open and secure maritime environment and regional stability more generally. This is natural; Japan, as a trading nation, relies on open sea lanes. But recent events, not least Chinese attempts to dominate the South China Sea, have led decision-makers in Tokyo to reach the conclusion that these necessary conditions for economic prosperity are being corroded.

Given this trend, there is little surprise that Japan's foreign policy is orientated towards maritime issues, including upholding fundamental principles such as freedom of navigation as well as countering specific threats to Japanese shipping. (Japan's counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia can be understood in this context.) Security of the sea-lines-of-communications have been critical to the success of Japan's export-led model of development and there is nothing to suggest that this will change in the future. That Japanese policy-makers view the intertwining of economic and security interests as being at the heart of any approach to the Indo-Pacific was made clear at the Japan-U.S. Summit in November 2017. The Japanese delegation explained to their American counterparts that the FOIP's goals were (and remain so): the establishment and maintenance of the rule of law and the freedom of navigation; the promotion of economic prosperity; and a commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region, especially through capacity-building and security assistance (MOFA 2017b). Because the FOIP calls so strongly for the maintenance of open seas, it cannot thus be disentangled from security challenges that threaten Japan's economic prosperity.

Since 2016, the FOIP has transitioned from a largely personal initiative of Prime Minister Abe to becoming integrated into actual foreign policy. Indeed, the FOIP now features in the agenda and budget of the MOFA for the coming financial year. Moreover, the new MOFA strategy, for example, includes a new chapter

specifically for the FOIP. As the FOIP moves from concept to a more substantive policy, with specific objectives and deliverables, it will become increasingly important to understand its relationship with Japan's emerging security posture.

Points of Contact

Under Abe, Japan's national security posture has gone through its most significant transformation since the end of the Second World War. At the center of this change is the passage of ambitious "peace and security legislation" that included revisions to ten existing laws as well as a new International Peace Support bill (Ministry of Defense, 2016). Among other things, it provides the legal foundation for the controversial 2014 Cabinet decision to reinterpret the Article 9 "peace clause," allowing Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense under specific conditions.

In pursuing ambitious and controversial reforms, Abe claimed to be responding to Japan's deteriorating security landscape, including an increasingly powerful and assertive China and the growing North Korean nuclear threat (Smith 2015). In January 2018, Abe summarized his view of regional affairs by stating that "the security environment surrounding Japan is its most severe since World War II" (Shusho Kantei 2018). Given this pessimistic outlook, it stands to reason that the FOIP would become increasingly linked to national security priorities. This is not to make the claim, however, that the FOIP has developed wholesale into a national security initiative dressed up as something else; it remains primarily driven by an economic agenda. In order to unpack the growing connection between the FOIP and Japan's emerging strategic posture, the following sections explore three critical dimensions of Japan's defense and security policy.

Key Alliances

Although statements about the FOIP do not explicitly make mention of Japan's military partnerships, it is possible, given the focus of the concept on open seas, especially the freedom of navigation, to draw discernable links between the strategy and Japan's efforts to promote a maritime-based security network. Strengthening naval ties with India, Australia and the U.S. – members of the Quadrilateral Dialogue (the so-called "Quad") set up in 2007 but disbanded soon thereafter – is a central plank in this agenda (Okada 2018). To be sure, Abe's desire for this quartet to safeguard existing rules and norms of behavior in the maritime commons was embedded in Abe's thinking before the FOIP was launched in Kenya at TICAD in 2016. It is clearly expressed, for example, in his essay titled "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," which was uploaded to the international NPO Project Syndicate website the day after the launch of his second administration on 27 December 2012 (Abe 2012). And before this, a grand maritime alliance of this quartet of democracies was the core of Abe's thinking in his first term. Be-

cause of divergent national interests and the geographical distance between each member, attempts to get the Quad off the ground failed in 2007 (Madan 2017). Though the grouping has been reconstituted with official meetings in November 2017 and April 2018, it is unlikely that will progress beyond military exercises and coordination into a fully fledged maritime security alliance any time soon. The Quad is far from moving towards a kind of Indo-Pacific NATO (Burgess & Beilstein 2018). Japan, Australia, and India, for example, are unwilling to join the U.S. in conducting freedom of navigation (FoN) operations through the South China Sea (NIDS 2018). It is thus difficult to see how a critical part of the FOIP – to maintain open seas – can be fully realized without greater willingness of all the Quad members, including Japan, to commit to a more robust position on freedom of navigation.

In parallel with the evolution of its strategy towards the Indo-Pacific, Japan has sought to fortify and expand its bilateral partnership with India for some time. The relationship with New Delhi has been further elevated in importance under Abe. Arguably the prime minister sees a tightening of the strategic partnership with New Delhi as the essential pillar of the Indo-Pacific strategy (as opposed to Japan's overall national security strategy, which is still underpinned by the alliance with the U.S.). The seminal address to the Indian parliament in August 2007 and his December 2012 "democratic security diamond" article make Abe's commitment to the idea of an alliance with India abundantly clear. Japan and India – for reasons related to Chinese territorial and maritime policies in the region – both emphasize issues such as freedom of navigation, respect for and compliance with international law and maritime security. These are critical aspects of the FOIP. It is hard to imagine how the strategy can be implemented without India as a partner.

There has been a significant uptick in Japan-India strategic ties, including Japan's participation in the annual naval exercise "Malabar", which used to be an India-US bilateral framework. According to Japanese government sources, the first military exercise involving Indian and Japanese ground forces could even take place before the end of this year (Gady 2018). India, however, appears to be more hesitant since 2017 in deepening its alliance with Japan and has become lukewarm about the idea of the Quad. This is probably linked to a more general improvement in relations between New Delhi and Beijing in 2018 after bilateral relations reached their nadir in 2017 over the Doklam dispute. To be sure India will remain wary of China into the future but it is unlikely that it will fully side with Japan or become intricately involved in the execution of Japan's FOIP vision (Okada 2018).

In terms of its allies, Japan is most anxious about the U.S. Indeed, Washington's future willingness and capability to command the maritime global commons is

especially pertinent to the aims of the FOIP. Abe has gone out of his way to convince the U.S. how the FOIP contributes to American strategic priorities in the region. Japan's increasing propensity to take greater initiative in the security sphere is in part a response to deep concern over the U.S.'s long-term commitment to Japan's defense and the role it plays in freedom of navigation of the seas. Although in 2017 the first major Abe-Trump alliance joint statement included a U.S. "commitment to the security of Japan through the full range of capabilities, including U.S. nuclear forces" (MOFA 2017a), Tokyo is nonetheless concerned about American willingness to defend the very maritime system that underpins Japan's national prosperity. Japan has recently expending considerable diplomatic capital in attempting to buttress U.S.-Japan ties. In the past, Japan has resisted U.S. calls for it to perform a more proactive role in regional security. It is telling that soon after his election victory at the end of 2012, Abe declared his administration's intention to make Japan a "first-tier" power again (Liff 2015). This was in great part motivated by the need to demonstrate to its chief strategic ally, as he told a Washington DC think tank audience, that "Japan is back" (Abe 2013).

While bolstering the defense relationship with the U.S. predates Abe, it has become an even greater priority since 2012. In practical terms, the U.S.-Japan military alliance was upgraded with the issuance of the 2015 U.S.-Japan Guidelines, last promulgated in 1997 (Department of Defense 2015; Jimbo 2015). The Abe government has since doubled-down, deepening bilateral defense cooperation even further. Japan's latest defense white paper, published in 2017, devotes more than 50 pages to the topic of "strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance." Yet these documents say little about how the allies will actually cooperate in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, the strict, self-imposed prohibitions on the conditions under which the "use of force" (*buryoku koshi*) is permitted, as well as restrictions on the acquisition of offensive platforms that exceed the "minimum necessary" threshold for territorial defense (e.g. aircraft carriers and strategic bombers), limits the extent to which Japan can be a reciprocal partner to the U.S. beyond Japan's immediate environs. It is unlikely these constraints will loosen on account of the FOIP strategy.

The perceived weakening of Washington's interest in Asia-Pacific security has encouraged Tokyo to show its ally that it is willing to do more itself (Brown 2018). This in some respects is analogous to efforts by Australia after 1951 to play the reliable, burden-sharing ally.³ In this context, there are signs that the FOIP is being used as an alliance-enhancing mechanism. By taking a more active role in the region, in part by pushing out the FOIP strategy, the Abe administration hopes to keep Washington engaged. As one analyst observes: "Abe has been selling the

³ I am very grateful to Professor Tsutomu Kikuchi of Aoyama Gakuin University for sharing this analogy.

strategic idea [the FOIP] to Washington since the early days of the Trump administration. To Abe's pleasure, Trump called Vietnam the "heart of the Indo-Pacific" when he arrived in Danang last November for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, seeming to embrace an Asia strategy that Abe conceptualized" (Akimoto, 2018). The Prime Minister's office has dispatched envoys with close ties to the U.S. military establishment to America to explain Japan's FOIP concept in the context of U.S.-Japan strategic partnership.⁴ At a time when the U.S. is berating allies for not shouldering enough of the security responsibility, Japan may see an opportunity to show, through the FOIP, that it is shouldering more of the regional security burden. In this way, the FOIP strategy is as much about keeping the U.S. engaged in Japan's security environment as it is a plan of action for Japan to work more closely militarily with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific.

Role of the SDF

Decisions taken by previous governments from both Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) expanded the SDF's regional and global tasks (Samuels 2007). In the early 1990s, Japan dispatched minesweepers to the Persian Gulf – albeit after hostilities ended – and passed legislation in 1992 allowing for involvement in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO). The roles performed by the SDF broadened further after 9/11: Japan deployed a small contingent to conduct post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq and contributed the Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) to refueling operations for coalition forces in the Indian Ocean. In 2009, the SDF joined a multinational anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden, constructing a naval facility in Djibouti, stationing frigates, and flying surveillance aircraft from an installation at Djibouti airport (Japan reportedly still provides approximately two-thirds of the maritime domain awareness for the multinational anti-piracy forces).

The ongoing transformation of the role and activities of the SDF, however, gained momentum during Abe's second term (Liff 2015, pp. 81-83). In the past few years, the Abe administration has made modest increases to the defense budget and undertaken significant adjustments to SDF force structure and posture (Heginbotham & Samuels 2018, p. 136). As previously mentioned, the major push to transform Japan's security policy and the roles and missions of its defense forces culminated in the passage of the ambitious "peace and security legislation" in 2015 that formally took effect in March 2016 (Liff, 2018, p. 13). These legislative reforms removed some, though far from all, of the historic, self-imposed limits on how Japan's military forces could be used (Hughes 2015).

On the surface, the FOIP's broad agenda seems to imply an even more active

⁴ Author interview with retired MSDF admiral and former professor of national security strategy, Tokyo, July 2018.

role for the SDF, especially naval forces (including the Japan Coast Guard), outside of Japanese territory. However, it is hard to see how the FOIP strategy will lead to an expansion of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) role in the maintenance of open seas and a rules-based order, as called for by the strategy. Although the MSDF has been deployed in recent years near the Korean Peninsula to forestall attempts by North Korea to bypass international sanctions ('In new role' 2018), it is highly unlikely Japan will allow its naval forces to participate in provocative FoN operations. For one thing, FoN operations hold out the potential for breaching constitutional constraints on the use of kinetic force by the SDF against threats not directly risking Japan's survival (kuni no sonritsu). The SDF is still prohibited from using military force outside very narrow conditions of self-defense and cannot, strictly speaking, possess or project offensive power. There remain strong domestic headwinds against the SDF performing more tasks outside of the defense of Japan. Despite a shift to more a realist orientation, Japan is still bounded by highly normative ideas about the use of military force (Katzenstein & Okawara 1993). A 2015 poll revealed that less than a quarter of Japanese feel the SDF should be more active "helping to maintain peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region" ('Poll' 2015). Conditions for using the military have been loosened somewhat under Abe but remain constitutional very rigid compared to other nations.

Although the 2015 security legislation did not lift many of the limits placed on what the SDF can do outside of territorial defense, it did allow the SDF to play a greater role in peace support operations and peacetime activities. The recent contribution to the U.N. mission in South Sudan being a good example of the expansion in tasks and activities the SDF can perform (Gady 2016).⁵ Djibouti has also been viewed as a successful precedent for the SDF's new role, especially in terms of facilitating non-hostile measures in Eastern Africa where it hopes to have an expanded economic and diplomatic footprint.⁶ However, it is unlikely that Japan will increase the overseas presence of the SDF in the Indo-Pacific on account of the FOIP. If SDF units are deployed on rotational basis as part of some FOIP-related initiative - in say Vietnam, perhaps - their activities would, as a matter of course, need to be shown to have a non-military function. One area of participation where the SDF could play a more significant role in the region as a result of the FOIP is in humanitarian assistance / disaster relief (HA/DR). For one thing, HA/DR missions are short, visible, and safe (politically and in terms of safety of personnel).

⁵ Here Japanese peacekeepers were allowed to come to the rescue and support fellow UN troops of other peacekeeping contingents and could henceforth engage in military security operations including patrolling and vehicle inspections at checkpoints.

⁶ During the Ebola outbreak in 2014, Japan used Djibouti to get 20,000 protective suits quickly into Ghana (Kameda 2014). Djibouti also gives Japan a freedom of action for non-combatant evacuation in the Western Indian Ocean, and the SDF was on standby after violence erupted in Juba, South Sudan in 2016.

Also, there is a large question mark against what Tokyo can possibly commit to the Indo-Pacific in terms of security assets and resources. It is not clear whether the MSDF has sufficient vessels in the coming years to increase its presence in Indian Ocean joint naval exercises or contribute to more maritime security operations. Indicative of these constraints, Japanese participation in the Malabar and other exercises has to date been very modest. An expanded contribution to maritime security brought about by the FOIP would require a greater share of the defense budget going to the MSDF. Senior Japanese naval officers have already pressed home the point that, in light of the FOIP strategy, they need greater funds to meet new requirements.⁷

On the face of it, recent procurement decisions point to Japan acquiring a greater range of military capabilities allowing it make a larger contribution to regional security. These include the acquisition of 52 amphibious assault vehicles, the launching in August 2015 of the country's second helicopter carrier (JS Kaga), the building of two advanced destroyers, and the creation of an amphibious rapid deployment brigade (Aibara 2017).8 There are reasons to be cautious about concluding from this that the SDF will play a significantly more robust role in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, many analysts in Japan, particularly those working on security and defense, are skeptical about the prospect of the SDF expanding its activities beyond territorial defense as a consequence of the FOIP strategy. Driven by the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), published under the left-of-center DPJ government, the SDF is focused on the defense of Japan's southwest island chain (Ministry of Defense 2010). Revised guidelines released in December 2013 under Abe place even greater emphasis on the ability to deter and, if deterrence failed, repel and islands invasion (Ministry of Defense 2013). Due to the fact that the security situation in the immediate vicinity of Japan is deteriorating - on account of the twin issues of China's increasing revanchist behavior and the North Korean ballistic missile threat - it is almost certain that the SDF will concentrate more, not less, on territorial defense in the future.

Security Cooperation with ASEAN Nations

Perhaps the area where there is greatest prospect for the FOIP's agenda translating into actual security-related measures is Japanese capacity-building with, and military assistance to, ASEAN states, especially those fearful of China's assertiveness but also those pursuing a hedging strategy of maintaining close relations with both Beijing and Tokyo. Security assistance and defense diplomacy measures among ASEAN nations dovetail with a major focus of the FOIP and Japan's national security strategy more broadly under Abe, which has been to build on

⁷ Comments made by retired high-ranking MSDF officer and current think tank expert on Japan's naval policy. Author Interview, Tokyo, July 2018.

⁸ This is in addition to 42 F-35s, 17 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, 20 maritime surveillance aircraft and 22 diesel submarines.

the outreach of previous administrations and significantly expand Japan's security ties with these countries.

This activity fits neatly with changes to Japan's defense posture and foreign policy. For instance, one of the main aims of the security legislation passed under Abe was to allow Japan to better contribute to peace and stability. As Liff notes (2015, p. 84), the first-ever National Security Strategy issued by the newly established National Security Council (NSC) set out Japan's intention to make "Proactive Contributions to Peace" (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*). Maritime engagement in Southeast Asia in particular is emblematic of a key objective of the FOIP strategy which calls for Japan to play a role in promoting peace and stability in the region (MOFA 2017b). Efforts in security assistance linked to the FOIP would clearly chime with these broader changes in Japan's approach to its role in regional security affairs.

Given their geopolitical and economic centrality in the Indo-Pacific, the FOIP is unworkable without the participation of ASEAN states. For this reason, many of the planned Japanese economic and security initiatives in Southeast Asia are coordinated efforts to connect ASEAN nations with the wider concepts that underpin the FOIP. As an indication of the importance the current government places in relations with ASEAN nations, Abe visited all ten member countries in his first year in office in his second term (Lee 2016, p. 31). Moreover, in 2015, Tokyo signed strategic partnerships with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Before the launch of the FOIP strategy, Japan's ability to assist ASEAN nations had been strengthened by the 2014 National Defense Program Guidelines which tasked the SDF with providing human capacity development and technical assistance to the defense sector of friendly nations. The November 2016 Japan-ASEAN Vientiane Vision represented a further declaration of intent to intensify defense relations with Southeast Asian states as well as ASEAN as a whole. Following on from these changes, Japan has recently sold six maritime patrol vessels to Vietnam, three to Indonesia and loaned Manila the money to purchase ten. Military-to-military assistance, however, is still firmly anchored to established institutional patterns that tilt towards non-military approaches to security (Nankivell 2018). The issuance of the Development Cooperation Charter (DCC) in February 2015, an important revision of the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Charter, provided the framework for Japan to provide assistance to foreign militaries, but only for nontraditional security missions, such as disaster relief and anti-piracy measures (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).

It is important to remember that these defense diplomacy measures and security assistance to ASEAN nations are nothing new for Japan (Jimbo 2016; Kikuchi

2014). For decades ASEAN military personnel have attended extensive training and career courses at Japanese military schools. Yet there is evidence that Japan has stepped up its defense diplomacy efforts among the ASEAN states and has reportedly been looking at how other countries have been orchestrating defense diplomacy activities.⁹

Though security assistance efforts in Southeast Asia have not been without some fallout (China was reportedly furious with Japan for selling maritime vessels to some ASEAN partners), these activities also have the potential to produce diplomatic dividends. For example, the training by Japanese instructors of Vietnamese submarine crews in emergency recovery has been particularly welcomed by Hanoi. Japan has also provided satellite coverage of the disputed islands to those ASEAN states involved. These measures are perhaps ideal for Japan as they are on the whole uncontroversial – at least in principle. On the home front, capacity-building and technical assistance can be packaged as "development". It can even be de-securitized in the budget by placing it under development and not defense. Furthermore, assisting ASEAN allies to better police and surveil their own territorial waters and exclusive economic zones (EEZ) is politically easier than say conducting FoN operations, but it still advances the fundamental goals of the FOIP.

Among this intensified security engagement with ASEAN nations, it appears that Vietnam is acquiring a special place in Tokyo's thinking. In May 2018, the ageing Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko unusually attended a Tokyo reception for the Vietnamese president, Tran Dai Quang ('Emperor Akihito welcomes' 2018). This focus on Vietnam is partly driven by other dimensions of Japan's relationship with Hanoi. A number of Japanese companies have already relocated their operations from China to Vietnam. Although the Vietnamese are deeply suspicious of China, they are unlikely to adopt an openly hostile stance towards Beijing. Hanoi is unlikely to jump into bed with the U.S., Japan's key partner in the Indo-Pacific. Nonetheless, its inclusion, for the first time, in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise over the month of July, the world's largest international maritime exercise, is not trivial (Parameswaran 2018). It is difficult to see at this stage how Vietnam and the ASEAN states will play a more active role in upholding a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific given the overwhelming power differential between them and Beijing. Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia will try to walk a fine line between retaining an uncompromising stance on protecting core interests when it comes to China but also not adopting a position of direct confrontation.

⁹ Author interview with Japanese think tank expert on Japan's defense diplomacy measures, Tokyo, July 2018.

Conclusion

The National Security Council (NSC) was stood up early in Abe's second term to coordinate strategic, defense and foreign affairs under the prime minister's office's direction (Shusho Kantei 2013a). As the centralizing national security decisionmaking body, it has emerged as an important mechanism for advancing the prime minister's national security agenda across different parts of government. 10 Given that the NSC "control tower" is "centered on the prime minister" (Shusho Kantei 2013b), the expectation would be to see security-related elements of the FOIP influencing the policy agenda for defense and foreign affairs. However, as this paper shows, there are few observable substantive details about the instruments of national power and statecraft that will be employed in pursuit of the strategy. As Aizawa (2018) points out: "We cannot see what the Japanese cabinet (or MOFA) is actually doing for the "Indo-Pacific strategy ... the "overall picture" of Indo-pacific is still under veil." Echoing this sentiment, Tsuruoka (2018) states that, "there does not seem to be a consensus on the extent to which Japan needs to allocate additional security assets and resources to the Indian Ocean." Statements about the FOIP related to maintaining "freedom of navigation" or of "promoting peace and stability" do not reveal specific initiatives or measures Japan will undertake. In short, although the FOIP is attracting more and more attention from analysts, the practical implications remain lost in all the noise.

At the conceptual level, the FOIP strategy cannot be decoupled from Japan's wider national security posture, which has been evolving for some years. Yet the Japanese government has sought to play down any suggestions that the FOIP is a strategic gambit to counter China's growing influence and power in the region. This is understandable given the rifts in the domestic political scene over the country's policy towards Beijing. Instead the strategy is most often depicted publically as a set of initiatives designed to improve economic prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. But this has not stopped many analysts from viewing the FOIP as Tokyo's attempt to play a more active foreign policy role in the region, especially in terms of securing the maritime environment on which and through which Japan's prosperity rests. The debate about what the FOIP is and what its potential consequences might be is inescapably caught up in these much larger issues.

The analysis above indicates that there are few signs that the FOIP will result in a major change in Japan's overall strategic posture. For one thing, many of the strategy's key elements already reflect policies that Japan has been pursuing for some time, such as security assistance to select ASEAN countries and an increasing proclivity towards using the SDF for non-military tasks. Secondly, the

At the NSC's heart is a bi-weekly "Four Minister Meeting" bringing together the prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, and chief cabinet secretary for regular consultations on security affairs.

constitutional constraints on what the military can and cannot do, combined with limited resources given over to defense, place severe restrictions on the ability of the SDF (as well as the coastguard) to play a more extensive role in maintaining a rules-based maritime order in the region. What is more, divergent interests among Japan's key allies make it unlikely that they will collectively undergird the FOIP strategy.

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Bio

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Article

How Indo-Pacific Geopolitics Affects Foreign Policy: The Case of the Philippines, 2010-2017

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Abstract

This article examines how two Philippine presidents took into account the ongoing geo-strategic competition between the U.S. and China. At the start of his sixyear term, President Benigno Aquino III became concerned that China's maritime expansion threatened the Philippines' territorial rights over its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea. He then pursued a balancing policy towards China's maritime expansion into this area. Aquino pursued this policy as a reaction to China's naval expansion but also considered the Obama Administration's strategic rebalancing to Asia. President Rodrigo Duterte, however, is unraveling his predecessor's geopolitical agenda in the South China Sea. Duterte has pursued an appeasement policy on China to take advantage of Beijing's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. Strategically, President Duterte has shown a sensitivity to Chinese security interests. In conclusion, both Filipino presidents, in crafting their respective foreign policies, have taken into account the geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific region in terms of the prospect of losing either territorial rights or economic gains.

Keywords

Philippine Foreign Policy, Appeasement, Balancing, Prospect Theory, Foreign Policy of Small Powers, One Belt, One Road

Introduction

At the early part of his term in 2011, former President Benigno Aquino III pursued a balancing policy on China's expansive claim in the South China Sea. He challenged Chinese maritime expansion by shifting the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) focus away from domestic security to territorial defense, bolstering closer Philippine-U.S. security relations; acquiring American military equipment; seeking from Washington an explicit security guarantee under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT); and promoting a strategic partnership with Japan. In

late April 2014, the Philippines signed the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with its strategic ally – the U.S. Designed to constrain Chinese maritime expansion in the South China Sea, the agreement allowed American forces a strategic footprint in Southeast Asia through a rotational presence in Philippine territory. By strengthening the country's security relations with the U.S. and Japan, the Philippines got involved again in a traditional geo-political game among the great powers in East Asia.

Despite having the weakest military in Southeast Asia, then President Aquino challenged China's expansion in the South China Sea. This was because he took into account his country's alliance with the U.S. in the light of the Obama Administration's strategic rebalancing to Asia, which was announced in mid-November 2011. The policy entailed a gradual shift from the U.S. military counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan to a deeper strategic involvement in the Asia-Pacific region. It was prompted by the fact that the Asia-Pacific had become "a key driver of global politics" and "the rebalancing [was] a means for a sustained and coherent U.S. long-term strategy toward the region" (Smith, Brattberg, & Rizzo 2016, p. 2.). The rebalancing to Asia was a forceful rhetoric that signified the reassertion of America's leadership in Asia and determination to counter-balance China's pervasive regional influence (Indyk, Lieberthal, & O'Hanlon 2012, p. 33). The rebalancing strategy also reflected the Obama Administration's decision to follow the middle road between containment and appearement after the "constrainment" policy on China via the diplomatic route failed. It signaled as well a shift from the policy of constructive engagement with China to an outright commitment to strategically constrain this emergent power (Friedberg 2012, p. 2).

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is undoing former President Aquino's geo-political agenda in the South China Sea. Less than three months in office and after the 12 July 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) landmark award to the Philippines in its territorial row with China in the South China Sea, President Duterte launched a charm offensive to earn Chinese goodwill. He downplayed the South China Sea dispute in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit meeting in Laos. He also declared that he wanted to distance the Philippines from the United States, a move that will not only alter the region's strategic balance but mark a dramatic departure from his country's long-standing policy of maintaining close security ties with its only strategic ally. After this trip to Laos, he announced that the Philippine Navy (PN) would stop joining the U.S. Navy in patrolling the South China Sea to avoid upsetting Beijing. He also said that he wanted American Special Forces supporting the AFP in counter-terrorism operations in Mindanao to withdraw from the island.

President Duterte's goal is to foster closer economic and diplomatic relations with

China while strategically distancing the Philippines from the U.S. He has sought Chinese assistance for the construction of drug rehabilitation centers for Filipino drug dependents, soft loans for the constructions of railways in Mindanao, and even the acquisition of Chinese-made weapons for the Philippine military and police. He has also transformed the Philippines' approach in the South China Sea dispute from challenging Chinese expansion to an outright appeasement of this emergent regional power. His departure from the Philippines' long-standing policy of maintaining close security ties with its traditional and only strategic ally – the U.S. – has also effectively altered the regional balance of power in favor of China. President Duterte's foreign policy is based on his belief that the U.S. would not go war against China because of the Philippines; and because of this, the only option for his country is to foster economic interdependence with China. This move would likely reduce the chances of an armed confrontation between these two claimant states in the South China Sea dispute.

Several academics have examined the dramatic change in Philippine foreign policy effected by President Duterte. Baviera (2016, pp. 204-205) predicted that Duterte would revert to a "hedging strategy against China in contrast to his predecessor who had edged too close to a balancing/containment policy." Tehankee and Thompson (2016, p. 131) reached a similar conclusion arguing that Duterte's election would usher to change in the Philippines's confrontational policy toward China. They also observed (Ibid, p. 132) that Duterte reacted cautiously to the 12 July 2016 PCA ruling on the South China Sea and had expressed doubts about the Philippines' reliance on the U.S., questioning its willingness to defend the Philippines in any armed engagement over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Elsewhere, Thompson (2016, pp. 224-225) has also raised the prospect of change in Philippine foreign policy under the Duterte Administration. He noted that President Duterte stated that he wants to alter the Philippines' confrontational policy toward Beijing as he doubts American willingness to back the Philippine militarily in any future confrontation with China and given his neo-authoritarian tendencies. Cook (2017, p. 272) examined and discussed the pattern of Philippines-China relations characterized by cooperative measures, presidential enthusiasm, and push back from the AFP against President Duterte's efforts to effect a rapprochement with China.

These studies provide descriptive analyses of the changes in Philippines foreign policy without providing any theoretical explanation for this phenomenon. Using "Prospect Theory," this article, however, offers a theoretical explanation for the changes in Philippines foreign policy between the Aquino and Duterte administrations. It goes on to argue that key Philippine decision-makers examined geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region in terms of anxiety or fear over possible loss in either territorial rights or economic gains as they formulate their

respective foreign policies. In doing so, it tackles the main problem: How do Filipino presidents take into account key geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific in crafting their respective foreign policies? It also addresses the following corollary questions: (1) what are the key geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific region since 2010? And (2) how important are these external developments in the formulation of Philippine foreign policy?

Responding to Geopolitical Developments

How do decision-makers take into account geopolitical developments in formulating their country's foreign policy? And in the face of challenges emanating from the external environment, how do they choose their course of actions? These are conundrums of interest not just to foreign policy analysts but to all social scientists (Brihi and Hill, 2012). These problems confront key decision-makers on a daily basis as they scan the world beyond their national borders and project (and protect) their country's interests and power abroad. This is made all the more difficult because the external environment is a complex system made up of diverse actors, both state and non-state actors, each with their own set of vested interests, objectives, priorities, and capabilities - often or not, they are in competition, or sometimes, in conflict with one another. Moreover, decision-makers are often aware that they are bound to encounter resistance as they pursue their state's interests. They also accept the reality that their state will face more powerful state actors that can manipulate the environment and, consequently, will be confronted by a disadvantageous asymmetric situation vis-à-vis its more powerful competitors in the international system.

This is true for a small power since the range of opportunities for independent, dynamic and self-interested behavior is more limited than that of the more powerful states. Consequently, the capabilities of a small power to pursue its goals are contingent on the opportunities present in the international system, and the willingness of their key decision-makers to take advantage of these opportunities (Neack 2013, p. 158). A small power is boxed by the virtue of its relative weakness vis-à-vis other powerful states. Thus, key decision-makers in a small state make decision not based primarily on rationality, but on calculations about the relative utility of gains versus losses (Beach 2012, p. 121). Described as "Prospect Theory," this theory argues that in evaluating the utility of gains and losses, leaders tend to give more weight to losses than comparable gains, measured relative to some reference point (Barberis 2013, p. 175). Often, it is the loss itself that is more important than the actual magnitude of the loss (Beach, p. 121). Originally a theory in economics, it emphasizes the idea of loss aversion, the notion that people are much more focused on losses, even small losses than to gains in the same magnitude (Barberis 2013, p. 175). This theory has been used to examine decision-making in a diverse set of foreign policy dilemmas, ranging from the

Iranian hostage crisis (McDermott 1998), to North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship (Kim and Choy 2011, pp. 461-489), through to Germany's limited participation in the 1999 Kosovo War (Brummer 2012, pp. 272-291). Related to foreign policy, the theory can be summarized into three main points:

- In evaluating the utility of gains and losses, decision-makers tend to be more risk-averse with respect to gains, whereas they are more risk-acceptant with respect to losses;
- b. Once gains are made, they are accepted as a new status quo very quickly, creating what is termed as endowment effect; and
- c. Losses are not accepted as quickly, and actors will often cling to the old status quo (prior to loss) as the reference point.

In formulating their respective foreign policies, the Aquino and the Duterte Administrations came from different reference points. On the one hand, confronted by China's maritime expansion and encouraged by the Obama Administration's strategic rebalancing to Asia, the Aquino Administration adopted a balancing policy on China as it became apprehensive about Chinese intrusion into the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the risks this generated as to the country's strategic advantages as a maritime state. On the other hand, aware of the Obama Administration's ambiguous position on the South China Sea dispute and enticed by China's OBOR initiative, the Duterte Administration pursued an appeasement policy to prevent possible losses in terms of economic gains because of a strained relation with China. However, while the two Filipino presidents pursued different foreign policy approaches, both gave greater weight to possible losses than comparable gains as they assessed the Sino-U.S. competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

From China's Naval Expansion to U.S. Strategic Rebalancing

The emergence of China as the manufacturing hub of the global economy and as a major power in world politics is perhaps the most significant strategic development in the second decade of the 21st century. China's phenomenal economic prosperity during the first decade of the 21st century has transformed it into an engine of growth in East Asia and, indeed, the wider world. With its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassing Japan in 2010, it has become the second largest economy in the world next only to the U.S. Its rapid economic progress has not only made the country more confident and assertive in foreign affairs but also heightened its military prowess (National Institute for Defense Studies 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, China has had an annual double-digit increase in defense spending since 2006. At the start of the twenty-first century, the Chinese government increased its defense budget by 13 per cent to boost the People's Liberation

Army Navy's (PLAN) capability to accomplish a wide range of military functions including winning local wars under information-age conditions. Since the early years of the new millennium, the PLAN has acquired a fleet of Russian-made diesel-electric Kilo-class submarines and *Sovremenny*-class destroyers, along with several types of indigenously built destroyers, frigates, and nuclear-powered attack submarines. Regular naval exercises feature modern surface combatants and even submarines (National Institute for Defense Studies 2011, pp. 14-21).

Arguably, China's aggressive pursuit of its territorial claim over the South China Sea has increased in tandem with the expansion of its navy (Dutton 2011, p. 6). Its actions concretize China's intention to unilaterally and militarily resolve the maritime issue, flaunt its naval capabilities, and impress upon the other claimant states its "de facto" ownership of the disputed territories (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2011, p. 196). In the long run, China's naval capabilities will be directed not only to expand its maritime domain but to deny foreign navies – especially that of the U.S. – access to the South China and East China Seas. In time, it will be capable of depriving the U.S. Seventh Fleet's access to the Western Pacific inside of the so-called "first island chain" (Kato 2010, p. 19). Hence, China's aspiration to project its naval power not only to the near seas but to the far seas – the sea adjacent to the outer rim of the first island chain and those of the north Pacific – is no longer a remote possibility (Sharman 2015, p. 6).

In 2015, China fortified its expansive maritime claim in the South China Sea by constructing artificial islands over the eight reefs it occupied in the Spratlys. Based on the satellite images provided by the *IHS Janes Defense Weekly*, China has seemingly created new artificial islands at Hughes, Johnson, Gaven, Fiery Cross, and Mischief Reefs (Glasser and Vitello 2015, p. 5). On 9 April 2015, the Chinese foreign ministry acknowledged China's massive artificial island constructions in the Spratlys. It justified this effort as a means of "satisfying necessary military defense requirements" while at the same time saying it provided "civilian facilities such as typhoon shelters, fishing services, and civil administration offices" for China, its neighbors, and international vessels sailing in the South China Sea" (Glasser and Vitello 2015, p. 7). Despite President Xi Jinping's statement to then President Barack Obama that China "does not intend to pursue militarization" of the Spratly Islands, China has continued its construction of airstrips and other facilities for military requirements on these disputed land features.

In November and December 2015, the PLAN conducted two massive naval exercises in the South China Sea involving guided missile destroyers, frigates, submarines, early warning aircraft and fighter jets (Sutter and Chin-hao 2016, p. 4). These exercises demonstrated China's ability to have the strategic advantage in conflicts over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South and East China Sea. What is more, the PLAN is expected to develop naval

capabilities needed to gain control of both sea and air in wartime, while strengthening its presence in peacetime (National Institute for Defense Studies 2016, p. 16). Clearly, with its rapid economic development and consequent increase in defense spending particularly in the domains that the U.S. is most concerned about – air, sea, and space – China has become an unprecedented and present security challenge for the U.S (Cohen 2016, p. 102).

On November 11, 2016, speaking before the Australian Parliament in Canberra apropos American presence in Asia, then President Barack Obama declared: "Reduction in U.S. spending will not – I repeat, will not – come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific. We will preserve our unique ability to project power and preserve peace [in East Asia]" (Simon 2012, p. 1). He affirmed that maintaining U.S. forward deployed forces in the Asia-Pacific remained his top priority despite cuts in U.S. defense spending. The rebalancing strategy which sought to rectify the high cost and wanton use of U.S. resources and troops in Iraq and Afghanistan gave some leeway for the Obama Administration to end its military commitments in these countries (Pempel 2013, p. 170). It also acknowledged that the previous Bush Administration wasted enormous resources, attention, and precious time on the War on Terror in the Middle East. In effect, the rebalancing allowed the Obama Administration to formulate a comprehensive strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Without pressing commitments in other parts of the world, the U.S. could reposition additional naval and air forces in East Asia and fortify its alliance system to confront the China challenge, preserve the freedom of navigation, and ensure American primacy in the Western Pacific. This was a significant change in American strategic priority in the 21st century as the U.S. reduces its focus on continental (low-intensity) conflicts to level up its air and naval power in East Asia while simultaneously helping small and militarily weak countries to secure their maritime and air spaces (Simon 2012, pp. 7-8).

Fundamentally, the rebalancing required reinforcing the Seventh Fleet to expand the American strategic footprint from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and to build-up the capacities of the small states around China to protect their maritime and air spaces. The first component involved shifting 60 per cent of the U.S. Navy's ships to the Asia-Pacific, primarily its six aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. As part of this effort, the Pentagon replaced the U.S.S. George Washington with the newer U.S.S. Ronald Reagan. It would also position its most modern air-operations-oriented amphibious assault ship to the region by 2020; deploy two additional Aegis-capable destroyers to Japan; and home-port all three of its newest class of stealth destroyers, the DDG-1000, with the Pacific Fleet (Department of Defense 2015, p. 20). The Pentagon also plans to station the latest F-35 aircraft and two additional Virginia class attack submarines in the Pacific (Department of Defense 2015, p. 20). Likewise, it will utilize the F-22, P-8A

Poseidon maritime reconnaissance planes, V-22 Ospreys, B-2 bombers, advanced undersea drones, the new B-21 long-range strike bomber, and state-of-the-art tools for cyberspace, electronic warfare, and space (Carter 2016, p. 68).

Interestingly, the Pentagon has allowed the U.S. Third Fleet greater latitude to operate west of the International Date Line. This enables the San Diego-based Third Fleet to send more ships to East Asia which is outside its normal theater of operations and to sail alongside the Japan-based Seventh Fleet (Ali and Brunnstrom 2016, p. 1). In April 2016, the Third Fleet deployed three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers to operate in the West Pacific as a surface-action group under the Third Fleet Forward Initiative (Olson 2016, pp. 1-2). In the future, more Third Fleet ships will be deployed in East Asia to conduct various maritime operations (Ali and Brunnstro 2016, p. 1). This massive deployment of air and naval assets in the Western Pacific will allow the U.S. forces to "offset advanced A2/AD weapon systems proliferating in maritime Asia" (Department of Defense 2015, p. 22). It will also ensure U.S. military primacy in the Western Pacific by reducing the effectiveness of Chinese A2/AD capabilities. This thrust clearly pursues the deterrent/defensive role of U.S. forward deployed forces in East Asia since the beginning of the 20th century – to prevent the rise of a hegemon that could constrain America's political, economic, and security interests in the Pacific (Simon 2015, p. 772).

The Aquino Administration: Fear over the Loss of Territorial Rights

Initially, President Aquino tried to curry favor with an affluent and confident China. In late 2010, the Philippines joined a 19-state coalition led by China that did not send any representative to the awarding ceremony for Chinese dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo, which was held in Oslo, Norway. In February 2011, the Philippines figured in a serious diplomatic row with Taiwan after it extradited 14 Taiwanese citizens to China where they were accused by Beijing of committing electronic fraud against Chinese nationals.

On March 2, 2011, however, two Chinese patrol boats harassed a survey ship commissioned by the Philippine Department of Energy (DOE) to conduct natural gas exploration in the Reed Bank (also called Recto Bank). The Reed Bank lies 150 kilometers east of the Spratly Islands and 250 kilometers west of the Philippine island of Palawan. Stunned by this maritime encounter which happened within the Philippines' EEZ, the Aquino Administration filed a protest with the Chinese embassy in Manila. Brushing aside the Philippine complaint, a Chinese embassy official insisted that China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha (Spratlys) Islands and their adjacent territory. Beijing then went on to demand that Manila first seek Chinese permission before it could conduct oil exploration activities even within the Philippines' EEZ. Furthermore, China badgered the

Philippines and other claimant states into recognizing China's sovereign claim over the South China Sea.

With these incidents, the Aquino Administration hastened to develop the AFP's territorial defense capabilities. The Philippines' territorial defense goal is to establish a modest but "comprehensive border protection program." This task is anchored on the surveillance, deterrence, and border patrol capabilities of the Philippine Army (PA), the Philippine Navy (PN), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PSG) that extend from the country's territorial waters to its contiguous and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (National Security Council 2011, p. 39). This objective requires enhancing the AFP's capabilities, prioritizing its needs, and gradually restructuring its forces for territorial defense. The long-term goal, according to the 2011 AFP's Strategic Intent, is to maintain a "credible deterrent posture against foreign intrusion or external aggression, and other illegal activities while allowing free navigation to prosper (Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff 2011, p. 27)." In building up the country's territorial defense capabilities, the Aquino administration sunk its teeth into challenging China's expansive claims in the South China Sea as the latter directly encroaches into the country's EEZ. The Philippines' territorial defense goal is very modest: it aspires to build a credible and sizeable force capable of defending the country's interests and the land features it occupies in the South China Sea (Secretary of National Defense 2013, p. 4). The Philippines' aspire to build a credible and sizeable force capable of defending the country's interests and the land features it occupies in the South China Sea (Secretary of National Defense 2013, p. 4).

Because of the AFP is militarily weak and underfunded, Manila has persistently asked for unequivocal U.S. commitment to Philippine defense and security as provided for in the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). Since June 2011 and thereafter, the Philippines has sought American naval/air support in the Spratlys. Philippine officials contend that an armed attack on Philippine metropolitan territory and forces anywhere in the Pacific, including the South China Sea, should trigger a U.S. armed response. However, the 1951 MDT does not entail any automatic response from either the Philippines or the U.S. It merely obligates the allies to consult each other and determine what military action, if any, both would take. Fortunately for the Philippines, however, an increasing number of U.S. policy-makers have begun to share the Philippines' view that the archipelago is a strategic bellwether of China's maritime expansion in the West Pacific and, at the same time, the natural barrier to check China's expansionism (Greitens 2014, p. 144). Hence, it is logical and strategic for the U.S. to help the Philippines develop its military naval capabilities to counter China's efforts at power-projection in the Asia-Pacific (Greitens 2014, p. 144). In reality, the U.S.'s ability to guarantee the Philippines' external defense depends on whether American forces are physically prepositioned to provide immediate response. The U.S. can defend its ally only if it has access to facilities near the South China Sea from where it can quickly react during an armed confrontation.

In January 2012, the Philippine-U.S. Bilateral Security Dialogue was held in Washington D.C. where Philippine foreign and defense officials discussed the expanded U.S. military presence in the country (Whaley 2012, p. 1 and 2.). This need was proposed particularly in conjunction with China's increased naval activities in East Asia, and the new defense policy announced by the Obama Administration. The 2012 Defense Strategy Guidance or DSG provides for a rebalancing of the U.S. force structure and investments to meet persistent and potential threats in the Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, and to advance capabilities for maintaining access and projecting power globally (Pellerin 2012, p. 2). Dubbed the "U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific," it also calls for stronger U.S. military presence in the region that is "geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable" (Saunders 2013, p. 7). In contrast to prevailing practices during the Cold War era, the Pentagon, this time, does not want any permanent bases in relocating its air and naval assets to the Asia-Pacific region. Rather, it proffers access arrangements and rotational deployments enabling American forces to conduct military exercises and operations demonstrative of U.S. commitment to assist its allies and security partners (Saunders 2013, p. 9).

On 28 April 2014, former Defense Secretary Gazmin and U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) a few hours before then President Barack Obama arrived in Manila for his first state visit to the Philippines. Actually, EDCA is not a new security pact; it is merely an updated version of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (Philippine News Agency 2014, p. 1). This executive agreement serves as a framework by which the Philippines and the U.S. can develop their individual and collective defense capabilities. This goal would be accomplished through the rotational deployment of American forces in Philippine bases (Garamone 2014, p. 1). Although EDCA allows American forces to utilize AFP-owned-and-controlled facilities, the Philippine base commander has unhampered access to these locations. Likewise, American-built or -improved infrastructure inside these installations can be used by the AFP. Furthermore, any construction and other activities within in the Philippine bases requires the consent of the host country. More importantly, EDCA is designed to minimize domestic opposition to U.S. military presence in the country by explicitly affirming Philippine sovereignty and providing a legal framework for increased American rotational presence rather than the maintenance of permanent bases (Greitens 2014, p. 134). In the process, EDCA facilitated the deployment of American troops and equipment on a rotational basis while skirting the sensitive issue of re-establishing U.S. bases in the country. Interestingly, the EDCA proved advantageous to the AFP. With its small and obsolete naval force and an almost non-existent air force, the Philippine military benefited from the regular, and short-term visits of U.S. forces conducting military training as well as humanitarian and disaster response operations. Logistically the U.S. construction of vital military facilities, infrastructure upgrades (such as hangars, air defense surveillance radar system, ground based air defense system, and naval operating bases), and the storage and prepositioning of defense equipment in agreed locations lowered the cost of the modernization program since these buildings and equipment were earmarked to be shared and utilized jointly by American and Philippine armed forces (Nepomuceno 2014, p. 2). More significantly, the Philippines hedged on the notion that an effective yet rotational U.S. deterrent force in its territory can minimize the potential for armed confrontation in the South China Sea. All this was only be made possible through the EDCA.

Thwarting the Strategic Rebalancing through the OBOR

The deployment of more American forward-deployed forces so far has not deterred China from its expansionist moves. From China's perspective, this course of action is worth pursuing since the U.S. is not willing to risk war despite the growing Chinese strategic challenge faced by the U.S. Seventh Fleet and American allies. For China, territorial expansion is vital to its interests even to the extent of using force. For the U.S., the credibility of its defense commitments to its allies is important but not necessarily crucial since Chinese aggression does not directly threaten American interests. Though building up its forces in East Asia, however, the U.S. has not convinced China that it is serious in waging a war with the determined Chinese who seem bent on pursuing their strategic goal of maritime expansion. China's assertiveness in the South China Sea is based on its assessment of its growing military capacity, along with a strong conviction among its key decision-makers that the U.S. will not use its hard power to counter Chinese actions (Forum Staff 2016, p. 55). This stems from the fact that China is one of America's most important trading partners. In the past two decades, the U.S. and China have established deeply rooted economic interdependence because of trade and investment. Applying an outright deterrence strategy to China became extremely difficult for the Obama Administration. As one American academic commented:

The high level of bilateral economic interdependence will complicate the decision-making calculus in Washington in the event that the People's Liberation Army threatens the security or sovereignty of an American ally or strategic partner in East Asia. Washington's motivation to come to the defense of a threatened ally or partner will be attenuated to the degree that the prospective intervention places the health of the U.S. economy in serious jeopardy (Resnik 2015, p. 8).

More significantly, as the world's traditional and leading practitioner of economic statecraft or geo-economics, China uses its massive wealth to advance its geopolitical goal of blunting the Obama Administration rebalancing strategy to Asia (Blackwell and Harris 2016, p. 128). China's rapid economic growth and massive foreign exchange reserve have enabled it to reshape regional trade and investment patterns, and to influence geo-strategic developments in East Asia. China has relied on its economic power as an assurance measure and inducement to neighboring states to cooperate with it, but also used coercive economic measures like trade sanctions to punish countries opposing its policies (Blackwell and Harris 2016, pp. 129-151). Confronted by the growing American naval presence in the Western Pacific, China subsequently pursued its maritime expansion by outflanking and blunting the U.S. rebalancing policy in the Asia-Pacific region through its huge foreign aid disbursements and several infrastructure projects under the umbrella of OBOR.

The OBOR involved the building of comprehensive connectivity with countries and regions through infrastructure such as roads, railways, and ports as well as communications and energy projects (The National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 79). It plans to connect the following regions and countries: (1) a route stretching from Central Asia west through Russia to the Baltic; (2) a historical route starting from Central Asia turning towards Western Asia, passing through the Persian Gulf on its way to the Mediterranean Ocean; and (3) a route that passes through Southern China into Southeast Asia then leads through South Asia into the Indian Ocean (National Institute for Defense Studies 2016, pp. 119-129). To realize OBOR's goal of greater connectivity, President Xi made the following proposals (The National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 77): (1) China will provide more international public goods through connectivity development to its Asian neighbors; (2) economic cooperation would be provided to both land and maritime projects; (3) cooperation would be promoted regarding infrastructure development; and (4) China would commit US\$40 billion to establish a Silk Road Fund.

The OBOR is a two-edge geo-political sword. On the one hand, it expands China's influence into Eurasian sub-continent away from the Pacific. On the other hand, it also projects Chinese influence into to the east becoming China's 21st century Marshall Plan to blunt the U.S. strategic rebalancing to the Western Pacific (The National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 18). This is because it provides China with an effective tool to drive a wedge between countries and within countries that it sees as having an impact on its core interests, such as Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea. Or against any coalition of states that is challenging its expansionist agenda in East Asia. Furthermore, the OBOR also strengthens China's hand in undermining existing military alliances and the cur-

rent regional order while empowering it to create new power relationships and arrangements that exclude the U.S. Relevant to the South China Sea dispute, the OBOR has enabled China to foster greater stability in its bilateral relations with the disputant countries. This became evident as China was able to influence Philippine domestic politics in 2016, to sway the country away from its main strategic ally, the U.S., and to alter its balancing policy on China's expansionist agenda in the South China Sea.

The Duterte Administration: Fear over the Loss of Chinese Economic Largesse

Duterte won the 2016 presidential election largely because of the Aquino Administration's failings. Despite Aquino's promise to improve infrastructure, public-private partnership projects languished, public transportation was neglected, and the traffic in the urban centers worsened (Thompson 2016, p. 22). During his term, it was observed that the seaport in Manila got congested, brownouts occurred in the rural areas, and internet service was poor. Consequently, in his last year in office, former President Aquino found it necessary to increase the budget for infrastructure to five percent of the GDP for building projects that would facilitate the inflow of foreign direct investment to the country (Asia News Monitor 2016, p. 2).

In the face of the Aquino Administration's failure to implement a substantial reform agenda, presidential candidate Duterte called for "Tunay na Pagbabago" (a real change). His economic policy stressed the neo-liberal agenda of macroeconomic stability, fiscal restraint, market-oriented reforms, easing restriction on foreign investments and most importantly, massive infrastructure development to promote agricultural productivity and industrialization. Investments in several infrastructure projects all over the Philippines would come from China if he could improve the country's diplomatic relations with this economic powerhouse. The Duterte Administration declared it wanted to transform the Philippines' confrontational foreign policy on China. Key administration officials observed that China has already helped build infrastructure in the poor regions of Southeast Asia, committing US\$6 billion railway in Laos and to Cambodia's first oil refinery. They were also aware that the Philippines struggled against its more prosperous Southeast Asian neighbors to compete for foreign investments primarily because of the country's lack of infrastructure. President Duterte and his economic advisers saw how Chinese investments boosted infrastructure development in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia (Asia News Monitor 2016, p. 2). They also observed that the OBOR plans for increased connectivity among Southeast Asian countries through roads, railways, sea routes, airways, and the internet to promote unimpeded trade, policy-coordination, and financial integration (Delizo 2016, p. 2). Indeed, President Duterte noted:

[...] developing countries like the Philippines need connectivity with other nations in the region to develop a healthy economy and inclusive growth. I understand that the Belt and Road initiative is primarily an economic undertaking that will build these connections among countries, and result in mutual benefits that includes trade and market access (Valente 2017, p. 1).

The Duterte Administration's plan to effect a rapprochement with China became apparent during its handling of the July 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling on the South China Sea dispute. In January 2013, the Philippines directly confronted Chinese expansive claim in the South China Sea by filing a statement of claim against China in the Arbitral Tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In its Notification and Statement of Claim, the Philippines asked the arbitral tribunal to determine the country's legal entitlements under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (USCLOS) to the Spratly Islands, Scarborough Shoal, Mischief Reef, and other land features within its 200-mile EEZ. These entitlements are based on the provisions of the UNCLOS specifically to its rights to a Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone under Part II, to an Exclusive Economic Zone under Part V, and to a Continental Shelf under Part VI (Department of Affairs 2013, pp. 12-14). After a three-year wait, the PCA at The Hague in the Netherlands decided on the maritime dispute between the Philippines and China on 12 July 2016. The five-judge PCA unanimously ruled in favor of the Philippines on almost all of its claims against China. It determined that China's claim to historic rights through its nine-dash line in the South China Sea is contrary to international law (Permanent Court of Arbitration 2016, p. 1). The court noted that none of the Spratlys are legally islands because they cannot sustain a stable human community or independent economic life (Permanent Court of Arbitration July 2016, p.1). Finally, it found China guilty of damaging the marine environment by building artificial islands, and of illegally preventing Filipinos from fishing and conducting oil explorations in the Philippines' EEZ (Permanent Court of Arbitration July 2016, p.1).

Consequently, despite the Philippines' overwhelming legal triumph over China, the Duterte Administration met the eagerly anticipated decision with a sober, cautious, and even muted reaction. Its response was ultra-low key as it neither flaunted the victory nor taunted China with the favorable ruling. Although the domestic reaction was overwhelmingly positive and jubilant, then Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay merely said that he welcomed the ruling and called on the Filipinos to exercise restraint and sobriety. During the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Laos, former Secretary Yasay withdrew the country's motion to include the PCA decision in the ASEAN Joint Communique after Cambodia objected to its inclusion. Designated as the country's special envoy to China, former President Fidel Ramos, suggested that the PCA award be set aside whilst the

Duterte Administration pursues bilateral negotiations with China. Clearly, the government is adopting an appearement policy towards China despite the PCA award favorable to the Philippines.

In September 2016, President Duterte effected his rebalancing of Philippine foreign policy away from the country's traditional ally, the U.S., to China in an effort to generate a windfall of Chinese economic assistance for the development of the country's infrastructure. On 12 September 2016, President Duterte suddenly announced that U.S. Special Operations Forces in Mindanao must leave the country. He argued that there could be no peace in this southern Philippine island as long as American troops were operating there (Cagahastian 2016, p. 3). The following day, he announced that the Philippine Navy (PN) would terminate joint patrols with the U.S. Navy in the Philippines' EEZ to avoid upsetting China (Moss 2016, p. 1). Former Foreign Secretary Yasay explained that "the inadequately armed Philippine military cannot fight China in any battle, thus, President Duterte ordered the Navy not to conduct joint patrols in the South China Sea with the U.S. Navy" (Katigbak 2016, p. 1). He commented that Philippine-U.S. patrols in the South China Sea could be perceived by China as a provocative act, making it more difficult to peacefully resolve the two countries' territorial dispute (Katigbak 2016, p.1).

While creating a wide diplomatic and strategic cleavage between the Philippines and the U.S., President Duterte conducts a calibrated foreign policy characterized by gravitating to China. He declared that he is open to direct bilateral negotiations with China. In contrast, former President Aquino brought the South China Sea dispute for international arbitration at the PCA. To earn China's confidence, President Duterte declared that the PCA award to the Philippines was purely a bilateral issue between the Philippines and China, and is not a concern of the ASEAN, echoing the Chinese position on this matter (Oxford Daily Briefing Service 2016, p. 2). Then Foreign Secretary Yasay even declared "that the relationship between the two countries (China and the Philippines) was not limited to the maritime dispute. There were other areas of concern in such fields as investment, trade, and tourism and discussing them could open the doors for talks on the maritime issues" (Morales and Lema 2016, p. 1).

Accompanied by 250 Filipino businessmen, President Duterte visited China on 20-21 October 2016 to seek a new partnership at a time when tension between the Philippines and the U.S. were mounting (Morales and Lema 2016, p. 1). His foreign policy agenda has involved developing and maintaining an independent and pro-active posture so he can adroitly balance the major powers in East Asia. This is aimed at creating a more positive and conducive atmosphere in Philippine-China bilateral relations that can allow both sides to embark on major infrastructure and investment projects, as well as other forms of cooperation to restore

mutual trust and confidence (Baviera 2016, p. 205). During their first meeting, President Xi advised President Duterte about the need to promote practical bilateral cooperation between the two disputing countries. He advised his Filipino counterpart that the Philippines and China must thoroughly coordinate their development strategies and cooperate with each other within the framework of the OBOR (National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 87).

After their meeting, President Duterte and President Xi issued a joint communique that laid down areas for comprehensive cooperation and signed memorandums of cooperation in 13 areas including economics and trade, investment, financing, and construction of infrastructure (National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 88). Accordingly, the total amount of money committed by China to boost economic cooperation between the two countries amounted to US\$13.5 billion, of which US\$9 billion was allocated for infrastructure development in the Philippines (National Institute for Defense Studies 2017, p. 88). Consequently, instead of rectifying the perceived imbalance in the Philippines' relations with the two major powers, President Duterte began replacing the U.S. with China as the Philippines' most important bilateral partner. Not surprisingly, President Duterte is alarmingly resigned to heightened Chinese island-building activities in the South China Sea. Clearly, he has been lured by the Chinese promise of trade concessions, grants, loans, and investment. Consequently, his administration has adopted Beijing's official line "that after several years of disruption caused mainly by non-regional countries (Japan and the U.S.), the South China Sea has calmed with China and Southeast Asian countries agreeing to peacefully resolve [their] disputes" (Sutter and Chin-Hao 2017, p. 43).

By early 2017, President Duterte's efforts to appease China began to bear fruit. In February 2017, the vice-governor of the state-owned China Development Bank visited one of Manila's main terminal facilities to look at the prospect of investing in Manila, Cebu, and Davao. The visit aimed to look into new port infrastructure investments in the Philippines as China seeks to advance its OBOR initiative in the light of positive signals from Manila that it will not challenge moves to expand Chinese influence in the South China Sea (Mooney 2017, p. 1). Manila has been trying to interest the China National Technical Import and Export Corporation to expand the Manila Harbor Center Port Terminal that involved the construction of an additional 20 hectares (49 acres) of handling, and storage space and 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) of new berthing space (Mooney 2017, p. 2). On the one hand, from China's perspective, proximity to the South China Sea makes Philippine ports attractive to Chinese capital. On the other hand, the Philippines urgently needs investments and expertise to improve the economy's seaborne trade network (Mooney 2017, p. 2).

In mid-May 2017, Duterte and his cabinet went to China for the second time

in less than a year to attend the OBOR Forum for International Cooperation. They all recited the mantra "that the OBOR initiative complements the administration's Build-Build-Build Infrastructure Plan" (Asia News Monitor 2017, pp. 1-2). The plan provides for the building of nationwide infrastructure network that will connect the Philippines' seven thousand, one hundred islands into one cohesive and dynamic national economy that will become one of Asia's tiger economies (MENA Report 2017, p.1). High-ranking Philippine officials believed that OBOR could provide the necessary capital for the Philippines to improve its infrastructure and connectivity, and thus provide the international context for the infrastructure plans of the Duterte Administration (Xinhua News Agency 2017, p. 1). They accepted without question Beijing's official line that China has surplus capital, and has rich experience in infrastructure construction. This means that it has the resources (financial and engineering) to assist developing countries, like the Philippines, in their infrastructure development. They also deemed that the OBOR is more than just an infrastructure connectivity scheme as it will also expand the regional market, diversify financing scheme, and reinforce people-topeople connectivity.

The Duterte Administration believes the chief reason the Philippines has fallen behind its neighbors in Southeast Asia is because of the country's poor infrastructure (MENA Report 2017, p. 1). Infrastructure development is seen as everything since "it will create employment, vitalize the regions, and reduce inequality, and poverty" (MENA Report 2017, p. 2). From its perspective, the Philippines will therefore benefit from the OBOR initiative particularly in the revival of the maritime silk route, as it dovetails with the Philippine government's massive infrastructure build-up scheme (MENA Report 2017, p. 1). Accordingly, the Duterte Administration's current economic strategy of sustained economic and inclusive economic growth is anchored on an unprecedented infrastructure program that will require Php 8.4 trillion (estimated US\$17 billion) over the next five years. For President Duterte, China through its OBOR initiative would be the primary source of financing for his administration's expensive and massive infrastructure building program.

Conclusion: The Power of Fear

From 2011 to 2016, the Aquino Administration pursued a balancing policy towards China as it promoted closer security cooperation with the U.S. This policy could be traced back to 2011 when President Aquino stood up to China's expansive claim and heavy-handed behavior in the South China Sea. He redirected the AFP's focus from domestic security to territorial defense, fostered deeper Philippine-U.S. security arrangements; acquired American military equipment; and sought from Washington an unequivocal security guarantee under the 1951 MDT. The most salient component of this foreign policy is the signing of the

EDCA, which provides American forward-deployed forces strategic rotational presence in Philippine territory, as well as extensive access to Philippine military facilities. The agreement has been forged to strategically constrain China, which has stepped up its territorial foothold in the South China Sea. The Aquino Administration also filed a claim against China on the PCA.

President Duterte has been undoing President Aquino's geopolitical agenda of balancing China's expansive claim in the South China Sea. He has distanced his country from its long-standing treaty ally, while moving closer to a regional power bent on effecting a territorial revision in the East Asia. He has also set aside the 2016 UNCLOS decision on the South China Sea dispute. His maritime security policy is aimed at appeasing China, in contrast to then President Aquino's balancing strategy. The Duterte Administration believes that its appearement policy on China is worth pursuing because its makes the country a beneficiary of the latter's emergence as a global economic power.

The difference between these two administrations' foreign policies stems from how President Aquino and President Duterte examined the major geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific region. The two presidents started from two different reference points. On the one hand, then President Aquino was concerned about the Chinese threat to the country's EEZ and strategic leverage as a maritime nation in the light of China's naval expansion. The Obama Administration's strategic rebalancing to Asia encouraged him to pursue a balancing policy on China based on the build-up of the Philippine military's territorial defense capabilities and enhanced security relations with the U.S. On the other hand, President Duterte took note that despite the strategic rebalancing to Asia, the Obama Administration maintained an ambiguous position in the South China Sea dispute in particular, and China's emergence as a major power in general. He took into account China's launching of the OBOR initiative. He was afraid that if the Philippines continued to pursue a balancing policy towards China, the country would be unable to avail itself of Chinese investment and aid from the OBOR. This drove him to pursue an appeasement policy characterized by strategically distancing the Philippines from the U.S. and gravitating closer to China.

The Duterte Administration is convinced that its appeasement policy towards China is worth pursuing because its makes the country a beneficiary of Beijing's emergence as a global economic power By appeasing an expansionist power, however, the Duterte Administration is becoming complicit to China's long-term strategy of maritime expansion aimed to push the U.S. out of East Asia. This will upset the current balance of power in the region. Furthermore, by facilitating China's efforts to project its maritime power in the Western Pacific, the current administration is oblivious to the fact that if China gains control of the regional maritime power in the Western Pacific, this will adversely affect the Philippines'

territorial, strategic, and economic interests as an archipelagic state in the Indo-Pacific region.

Bio

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Professor De Castro has conducted several courses on International Relations and Security Studies in the National Defense College and Foreign Service Institute. He has written over 90 articles on international relations and security that have been published in a number of scholarly journals and edited works in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Malaysia, France, Singapore, Taiwan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States.

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Article

Navigating Dangerous Waters: Australia and the Indo Pacific

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Abstract

For the last four decades, Asia-Pacific has been the dominant concept defining the wider Pacific region. However, in the last decade a new construct has emerged illustrating the new balance of power – the Indo-Pacific. This new idea has been championed by Australia with the aim of responding to changes to the regional status quo resulting from the growth of China's power. The possible consequences of this shifting security landscape are a major concern for Australia, as the new Defence and Foreign Policy White Papers demonstrate. Thus, Australia is now seeking a secure and stable neighbourhood in which adherence to a rules-based order delivers lasting peace between all states, and where prosperity reigns. Nevertheless, navigating the decade ahead might prove very hard given the uncertainties of an increasingly challenging world. This article aims to explore the potential ramifications of the idea of the Indo-Pacific and how Australia can take advantage of this new construct in order to provide meaningful responses to address threats to the region and to its own interests.

Keywords

Australia, Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Foreign Policy, Defense

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, the political landscape of the world has undergone a considerable transformation. Among these fundamental changes, the rise of China has emerged as one of the most challenging issues for the status quo given the implications of the country's new role as a power with global reach, which – naturally – has been mostly felt in its immediate neighbourhood. As a consequence, the region known as Asia-Pacific is being reshaped by the shifting balance of power, and this restructuring is not only material but also ideational. This means that the idea of the region is being altered, even to the point of being called by the relatively novel name of Indo-Pacific. Given that the potential con-

sequences of the fluctuating security environment are a matter of grave concern for Australia, this country has been one of the most relevant actors involved in the process of constructing a new idea of the region and, as such, it has developed new and comprehensive defence and foreign policies to support it. Nevertheless, it will undoubtedly prove very difficult to navigate this uncertain future.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the nature of the seeming ontological change taking place in the Pacific Rim and its ramifications; Australia's place, role, and interests in this imagined community; and how can Australia take advantage of this new construct in order to provide meaningful responses to the serious threats and buoyant opportunities that these transformations may bring.

(Re-)Constructing the Region: from "Asia-Pacific" to the "Indo-Pacific"

The demise of the bipolar system after the end of the Cold War altered the world and the ways we see it. Thus, as Katzenstein (2002, p. 104) argues, "power politics is now occurring in complex regional contexts that undercut the stark assumption of the international system as unmitigated anarchy." We therefore live now in a world of regions, shaped by a varied assortment of economic and social processes. But, "regions are, among other things, social constructions created through politics" (Katzenstein 2002, p. 105), that is, regions are not determined solely by geographical or material issues, but mostly by ideas.

Consequently, the understanding of how ideational forces work is vital to "trace the ways in which interests and identities change over time and new forms of cooperation and community can emerge" (Hettne & Söderbaum 2002, p. 36). According to this constructivist approach, since there are no given regions and no given regional interests either, identities and interests must be "shaped in the process of interaction and intersubjective understanding" (Hettne & Söderbaum 2002, p. 36). The question here is how the idea of the Pacific has been built.

According to Arturo Santa-Cruz (2005, p. 3), the ideas of the "Pacific Rim" and "Asia-Pacific" have floated around for a long time, turning the so-called "Century of the Pacific" into a sort of zeitgeist. But their plasticity and lack of clarity about which countries should be included in these classifications have led to geographers' reticence to use them as standard concepts to identify the region. Nonetheless, in the fields of journalism and social sciences, as well as in political discourse, they have gained wide currency. But, as he notes, the assumption that a discourse is capable enough to create a region is questionable, such as the utility of these concepts as regional constructs. This matter becomes even more evident with the fact that regional identity depends on the basis of shared norms and values (Acharya 2002, p. 27) and, given the presence of multiple actors with very diverse identities that champion both Western and Asian values, it might seem

that the idea of the region is shallow and useless and that, therefore, as Manuel Castells (cited in Santa-Cruz, 2005, p. 16) has noted, "there does not exist a region in the Pacific as a distinct or integrated entity and, consequently there will not be a Pacific century".

Nevertheless, the idea of the Pacific as a community has prospered, and there are good reasons for it – identities and interests are built in an intersubjective process, yet no interaction is possible without some shared interests to start with, and countries in both sides of the Ocean have found that much-needed starting point in economic integration. For that reason, since the late 1970s, the arguably imprecise definition of Asia-Pacific has been the dominant concept that delineates the wider Pacific region in terms of commerce and international politics, giving way to an Asian-Pacific identity that is not based on a strong sense of collectiveness and is open to multiple interpretations. This, of course, has been extensively motivated by countries such as Japan and Australia in order not just to promote the idea of a community of interests especially based on economic integration, but also to justify indispensable continued U.S. involvement in the region, controversial as it may be. However, the last decade has seen the emergence of a new construct that is aiming not just to illustrate the increasingly changing balance of power in the Pacific Rim, but also to reshape the ways in which actors behave and interact: the Indo-Pacific.

Although the origins of the term are still uncertain, it has been argued that Australian scholars and politicians were the first to use it. In the 1950s the concept was used to discuss the decolonisation of dominions surrounding Australia and was used again in the following decade at two seminars held by the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) and the Australian National University (ANU) discussing nuclear proliferation and Commonwealth responsibilities within the region and in the 1970s as part of the Australian security discourse (Bhatia & Sakhuja 2014, p. 42). Yet for around 30 years the term was not prominent until its re-emergence in 2005 in Michael Richardson's paper *Australia-Southeast Asia relations and the East Asian Summit*.

Nevertheless, a more concise definition of the Indo-Pacific was formally introduced for the first time in 2007 by Capt. Dr. Gurpreet S. Khurana, an Indian Navy maritime strategist, in his paper *Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India–Japan Cooperation*, as "the maritime space comprising the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific. Littoral to it are the states of Asia (including West Asia/Middle East) and eastern Africa" (Khurana 2007, p. 150). Moreover, that same year, the concept was endorsed and used for the first time in political discourse by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his speech to the Indian Parliament, in which he highlighted how a "new 'broader Asia' takes shape at the confluence of the two seas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2007,

para. 52), "an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia", allowing "people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2007, para. 30).

Furthermore, India, Japan, Australia, and the United States held their first joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean and initiated the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an informal strategic forum ostensibly taking the concept to a next level, although the nascent initiative did not prosper as the then recently elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd decided to withdraw from it to avoid the wrath of China. However, the idea "has gained increasing prevalence in the geopolitical and strategic discourse since then and is now being used increasingly by policy-makers, analysts and academics in Asia and beyond" (Khurana 2017a, p. 1).

Both Khurana and Abe originally conceived the idea of the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical amalgamation capable of bringing about freedom and prosperity as well as coexistence between different peoples with the ultimate goal of achieving global and regional stability. Nonetheless, Khurana has argued, the meaning has drifted away from its original proposition and has evolved into "a new configuration in which India and America, along with the other major democratic nations in Asia - Japan and Australia especially - join to contain China's growing influence in an updated version of the Cold War" (Khurana 2017b, p. 1), "thereby dividing the region into opposing camps" (Khurana 2017c, p. 1). This assessment, however, has been rebuked by Abhijit Singh, senior fellow and head of maritime policy at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi; he states that "Indo-Pacific has always been about balancing the rise of China" and avoiding Chinese expansionism in the form of a permanent presence in both the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, implying thus that using "the term to describe an emerging India-Japan-US-Australia alliance as a balance against Beijing is not a distortion of the term's original meaning; it is the fulfilment of it" (Singh 2017, p. 1). Khurana's retort to Singh is that even when the Indo-Pacific has always been about China there is a nuanced difference between both views (Khurana 2017c, p. 2).

This of course is not seen favourably by China, and that is why Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, dismissed all the versions of the concept as 'headline-grabbing ideas' that are 'like the sea foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean: they may get some attention, but soon will dissipate' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018, para. 60). This need to criticise the mere use of the words Indo-Pacific, when there are many other tangible things to worry about, might be a signal of China's preoccupation about something more substantial that might come as a consequence of the use of this new construct by policymakers, journalists, and scholars alike. As Rory Medcalf (2018) states, the emerging Indo-Pacific debate is in large part about China:

In short, the Indo-Pacific is emerging as the chief conceptual challenge to the idea of One Belt and One Road – a China-centric vision of the extended region. It is also reducing the salience of the late 20th century idea of the Asia-Pacific, essentially an East Asia-centric order that had come to suit China because it tended to exclude China's emerging rival, India. (Medcalf 2018, p. 2)

Whatever the interpretation of the term could be, the truth is that the core idea of the region has been championed in the last ten years by the leaders of several countries not just in terms of political discourse, but also of policy, putting flesh on its bones. In the case of Australia, the most poignant examples of this are the Defence White Papers of 2013 and 2016, and the Foreign Policy White Paper of 2017, in which the Government of the Commonwealth's outlook on the idea of the Indo-Pacific has been well established.

The first official mention of the concept appeared in the 2013 Defence White Paper. It stated that Australia was going through an "economic strategic and military shift to the Indo-Pacific" (Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. ix). Here it was defined as the logical extension of the concept of the Asia-Pacific region, a strategic arc which was "beginning to emerge, connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through Southeast Asia" (Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. 7) as a response to the United States' continued commitment to the region, China's sustained rise as a global power, and the emergence of India as an important strategic, diplomatic and economic actor. This was reflected in the most recent Foreign Policy White Paper's crystal-clear definition of the Indo-Pacific 'as the region ranging from the eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean connected by Southeast Asia, including India, North Asia and the United States' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p. 1). In sum, Australia's understanding of the concept is that of

[...] an emerging Asian strategic system that encompasses both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, defined in part by the geographically expanding interests and reach of China and India, and the continued strategic role and presence of the United States in both. (Medcalf, Heinrichs & Jones, 2011, p. 56)

Regions, as political creations not fixed by geography, are subject to reconstruction attempts that 'can tell us a great deal about the shape and shaping of international politics' (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002, p. 575). The attempt to reconstruct Asia-Pacific as the Indo-Pacific by Australia and others is a clear example of this. It could thus be argued that the Indo-Pacific idea is nothing else than an effort to create a common vision about the threats to peace and prosperity in the region, and therefore build an agenda around shared interests. Amongst these, the determination to contain a rising China, at a time in which the United States keeps pivoting to the Pacific, is perhaps the most important of them all. But the question of whether this new idea of the region could be embraced or not as a useful

construct will be addressed later for, as Barry Buzan (1998, p. 69) has warned, "if we are to consider this huge expanse as a region, then we must identify what ties it together sufficiently to justify differentiating it from the rest of the international system".

The spectre of a not-so-peaceful rising China – Australia's main trading partner – and an unpredictable U.S. – Australia's most important strategic ally – under the Trump administration are a dangerous combination that might result in a perfect storm. Australia may find itself between the devil and the deep blue sea. Hence, the new Foreign Policy White Paper seems to be a sensible approach to the shifts currently taking place in the international politics of the region. But, before discussing the strategy that serves to help Australia navigate these tempestuous waters, it is important to understand its place in the imagined community of the Indo-Pacific that could arguably be on the making, as well as the role it can play in order to avoid making waves and be able to steer the ship to the safe port of a stable region.

Australia in the Indo-Pacific: Position, Identity, Role, and Interests

Constructivism in International Relations claims that the identity of a state shapes its interests and therefore its actions and behaviours in the international stage. Nevertheless, this should not be understood as if ideas were the only relevant factors to understand international phenomena. As Alexander Wendt (1995) argues, even when international politics is socially constructed these structures include material resources. Therefore, Australia's need to advocate for the Indo-Pacific as the new regional construct resides in both its material and ideational realities.

In terms of material capabilities, Australia's place in the regional –and arguably in the international- hierarchy is immediately below the established and emerging great powers. Australia is the sixth-largest country in the world with a land area of 7,692,024 km2, a marine area of 410,977 km2, a claim of Antarctica amounting to 5,896,500 km2, and an extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 8,148,250 km2 off its landmass and its remote offshore territories, and 2,000,000 km2 off the Australian Antarctic Territory (Australian Government, 2018). Although this vastness is sparsely populated, with only 24,598,933 inhabitants, the country's GDP amounts to US\$1.32 trillion, placing it thirteenth in the world (World Bank, 2018). Added to this, according to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2018), Australia ranks 7th in the region and 13th in the world – in terms of military expenditure, below the United States, China, India, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Furthermore, with 57,800 active military personnel and 21,100 estimated reservists, Australia possesses capable, well-trained and well-equipped armed forces, with strong doctrine, logistic support, and the capacity for deployment over long distances (International Institute

for Strategic Studies, 2017, pp. 270-271). The possession and projection of such capabilities place Australia near to the top of the international structure, making of it a serious strategic actor.

But, what is in a number? Given that these quantifiable elements only reveal the material nature of Australia, and 'material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded' (Wendt 1995, p. 73), it is necessary to have a glimpse at the other side of the coin which is Australia's identity and role in the region.

Since the end of the Second World War 'Australian foreign policy practitioners and policy-makers [...] have framed most diplomatic activity within the broad rubric of Australia's middle power status and role in international affairs' (Ungerer 2007, p. 539). It was actually in the San Francisco Conference that would lead to the creation of the United Nations Charter in which the then Foreign Minister, Herbert V. Evatt, used the term to advance Australia's interests and advocate for a more prominent role in the new order that was being built, given the important contributions made by the country to the allied victory. This approach established 'three defining characteristics of the middle power tradition in Australian foreign policy from there on: nationalism, internationalism, and activism' (Ungerer 2007, p. 542). But, what does being a middle power mean?

Different conceptualisations of middle powers have emerged from different theoretical perspectives of International Relations. As Manicom and Reeves (2014, p. 28) suggest, realist and liberalist traditions fail to treat middle powers as independent actors in the international system and rather define them in comparison to great powers and by their role in international politics. On the other hand, constructivism offers a different assessment. By virtue of their agency to affect change at both the international and regional levels, middle powers have effectively created a precise identity that serves as the basis to explain their behaviour, which, traditionally defined, includes: a tendency toward multilateralism; the embrace of mediation or peace-building activities; the pursuit of niche diplomacy; and a predisposition to good international citizenship often reflected in building norms and institutions and following and protecting these rules, healthily informed by their own self-interest. Of course, these goals cannot be established without enough resources to pursue them, thus the archetypical middle power "possesses three characteristics: the material capability, the behavioural element, and the ideational component" (Manicom & Reeves 2014, p. 33).

Australia, being the archetype of a traditional middle power, has conceived its long-standing identity as such that it has shaped a specific set of interests that aims for a secure and resilient Australia; a secure nearer region; a stable, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region; and a rules-based global order (Com-

monwealth of Australia 2016). These interests, in turn, are shaping Australia's behaviour as a power that advocates and seeks 'to protect an international order in which relations between states are governed by international law and other rules and norms' (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 11), an order that seems to be challenged by the sustained rise of China.

Hence, understanding Australia's position, identity, role, and interests in the region is crucial, especially because

as influential agents in international politics, middle powers have the potential to reshape and redirect the way in which China's ascent evolves [...] More able because of their material power capabilities to take issue with China's preferences, but less able than great powers to balance China's influence unilaterally, middle powers rely on adept diplomatic means, with an emphasis on building coalitions with like-minded powers. (Gilley & O'Neil 2014, p. 3)

This ability of influencing the ways in which these structural changes take shape and direction confers Australia a significant role in constructing —or rather reconstructing— the regional landscape. For that reason, Australia has strategically exploited its condition to further the idea of the Indo-Pacific as a way to maintain the rules-based order that has served so well to its interests —even when that could mean hedging against a rising China. However, is there any possibility for this idea to be something more than just a strategy of contention?

Australia's Strategy towards the Indo-Pacific

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper published on late 2017 is a definite response to the events that have been transforming international politics in the last few years. It is indeed a robust document that aims to chart a course for the country at a time of rapid change in a more interconnected, interdependent, competitive, and contested world.

Perhaps the most poignant thing about the white paper is the tacit recognition of the need of having a more independent foreign policy, less uncritical and reliant on the United States and actively engaged with other powers in the region from China to Vietnam, from India to Japan, from South Korea to Indonesia, thus building on the idea of the Indo-Pacific. As a matter of fact, the first mention of this concept is a stark recognition of how globalisation has brought economic growth to the region, which has changed, in turn, the balance of power, placing China as the main competitor of the United States and challenging its position as the dominant power in the Pacific Rim. And, for Australia, that is the main cause to advance further the new concept, not because it fears the abandonment of its main strategic ally, but because an active, determined and innovative foreign policy is required in order to guarantee a strong, secure, stable, and prosperous

environment in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Yet, as the shadow of the apparent power struggle between China and the United States looms over the whole document, Australia's relations with both powers are given deep thought.

The alliance with the U.S. remains central to Australia's security and to its strategic and defence planning. As a result, the Commonwealth Government has vowed to broaden and deepen the alliance cooperation by increasing defence expenditure to two per cent of GDP and contributing to coalition operations that aim to maintain global and regional security. Given that the U.S. "will, for the foreseeable future, retain its significant global lead in military and soft power" (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 26), its long-term interests and stabilising influence will anchor Australia's economic and security engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Nevertheless, without making a clear mention of it, the white paper also recognises the shifts taking place in US Foreign Policy due to President Trump's America First agenda and warns that US retrenchment will only create more fertile soil for conflict, making the entire region a more unpredictable and dangerous place. By making this statement, Australia aims for a change of mind in US leadership and thus continued US presence in the Indo-Pacific:

Australia will continue strongly to support US global leadership. The Government recognises there is greater debate and uncertainty in the United States about the costs and benefits of its leadership in parts of the international system. We believe that the United States' engagement to support a rules-based order is in its own interests and in the interests of wider international stability and prosperity. Without sustained US support, the effectiveness and liberal character of the rules-based order will decline. (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 7)

However, the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and the currently reigning rules-based order depends not just on the United States, but on its actions towards and relations with China, the other most important partner for Australia.

For the last 26 years – and counting – Australia has experienced continuous economic growth, and this bonanza has been mostly fuelled by the unrelenting rise of China and other Asian economies and their demands for Australian commodities. But economic power is also being used for strategic ends, and China's growing power and influence are starting to cause geo-economic and geopolitical competition. China is by now the most important trading partner not just for Australia but for most of the economies in both sides of the Pacific Ocean and is also a major investor in infrastructure projects, a large aid donor, and a leader in many economic integration schemes. Adding to that, China's ongoing military modernisation is rapidly improving its material capabilities with the aim of

projecting a stronger influence in the region and possibly to reshape it to suit its own interests.

But, as interests are partially the result of identities, Australia is growing anxious about China's role as a major geopolitical player with a strong capacity of influence. Australia's identity as a liberal middle-power clashes with that of China as an authoritarian great power whose intentions are to reshape the region in its own image and likeness, an assumption that can be drawn from recent declarations by President Xi Jinping at the 2018 National People's Congress about the exemplarity of the Chinese political party system and its potential contributions to the world. That is why Australia recognises that the more it engages with China the more frictions may arise from their different identities, interests, values, and political and legal systems.

Notwithstanding, this narrative of fear and greed – as Australia's policy towards China was described to the German Chancellor Angela Merkel by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott (Patience, 2018, p. 183) – cannot lead completely the bilateral relationship and thus a closer, positive, and active engagement is needed. Therefore, strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China is paramount for the Commonwealth Government's strategy to encourage China 'to exercise its power in a way that enhances stability, reinforces international law and respects the interests of smaller countries and their right to pursue them peacefully' (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 39).

Naturally, as Wilkins (2014, p. 163) argues, the rise of China has profoundly affected Australia's economic, security, and diplomatic environment due to its geographic proximity to China and its traditional close alliance with the United States. But at the same time, by virtue of this proximity, Australia has retained a strong global significance that might well live longer if Australia takes the right steps. Up to the present time, Australia has directly shaped China's foreign policy by contributing to Beijing's acceptance of the inevitability of the U.S. presence in the region, as well as indirectly through its efforts in leading multilateral initiatives in different fora, and it can continue to do so through a complex blend of traditional middle power diplomacy and peacebuilding initiatives and a more realist exercise of power balancing.

Nonetheless, the Foreign Policy White Paper is not only about China and the United States. Beyond these two important relationships, "cooperation with likeminded partners is also increasingly important to collective efforts to limit the exercise of coercive power and support an open global economy and a rules-based international order" (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 7) given that Australia's ability to shape events outside its borders is limited. This is where the importance of the Indo-Pacific idea lies: as the United States is deepening its at-

tention shift to the Pacific, and China is seemingly defying the established order, Indo-Pacific democracies need to unite in order to cope with the challenges that are emerging from the competition between two major powers.

Given that shared identities build shared interests and in turn shared actions, the document places priority on positive and active bilateral and multilateral engagement with four major democracies able to influence the shape of the regional order –Japan, India, Indonesia, and South Korea–, as well as with South East Asia and New Zealand. But the highlight is especially on Japan and India.

As many indicators show, India and Japan are only second in terms of power to the United States and China, giving them a strong position in the regional structure and, hence, strong agency. That –along with the values that they share— is the reason for which both countries sit in the front rank of Australia's international partnerships, for only through extensive and deep engagement and cooperation can maritime security be assured and thus a stable present and a prosperous future for the all countries in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. That is why the white paper insists that Australia shall remain strongly committed to the trilateral dialogues with the United States and Japan and, separately, with India and Japan, and, 'with that in mind, it appears that the paper's drafters sought to emphasise the Quad' (Blaxland 2018).

Just a few days before the release of the Foreign Policy White Paper in November 2017, after a decade waiting in the wings, the United States, Japan, India, and Australia decided to meet again to re-establish the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue - famously known as Quad. The promise of the meeting was welcomed with excitement on the Australian side given the failed attempts by Australian governments to recover Indian trust after Australia's withdrawal from the dialogue back in 2007. The likelihood of a revival of the Quad seemed even more possible due to the alignment of the stars with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, one of the most ardent proponents of the Indo-Pacific idea, in office; China being labelled as a strategic rival by the Trump administration; a more pro-United States stance in the current Indian government of Narendra Modi; and an Australia at odds with China due to recent scandals that have revealed the scope of Chinese influence in Australian politics. Yet the ambitions fell short. As Barker Gale and Shearer (2018) argue:

While the official meeting included key issues like freedom of navigation, maritime security, and respect for international law, official readouts of the meeting differed, suggesting that strategic geography, threat perceptions, and dynamics vis-à-vis China vary among the parties. Notwithstanding these challenges, the interests of the Quad countries are converging, and this underlying structural dynamic provides a strong foundation on which the member countries can build

an agenda for regional cooperation. (Barker Gale & Shearer 2018, p. 30)

Even so, as Australia aims to reinforce an open global economy and to integrate the major economies of the Indo-Pacific – whether it is through the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), or China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – in order to serve both its economic and strategic interests, the Quad may prove a very useful tool to achieve these objectives and limit China's assertiveness, especially in regards to some of the fault lines pointed out by the white paper, such as the maritime and land border disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and continental Asia.

But the strength of the document lies in the fact that besides recognising the challenges ahead it also acknowledges the positive prospects that may arise from the idea of the Indo-Pacific such as an open, inclusive and prosperous region in which the rights of all states are respected, and more opportunities for business are created in order to increase the dynamism of the region, maximising the complementarity between economies in the digital era. In this sense, the Trump administration's new Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy might be useful to reignite the idea of an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, already proposed by the United States, because, as Secretary of State Michael Pompeo put it, this vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific in the 21st Century aspires "to a regional order, independent nations that can defend their people and compete fairly in the international marketplace" in which the United States stands ready to enhance the security of its partners, "to assist them in developing their economies and societies in ways that ensure human dignity", and to "help them keep their people free from coercion or great power domination" (U.S. Department of State, 2018).

How achievable an Indo-Pacific free from great power intimidation and open to attractive economic opportunities is depends mostly on how the idea of the region is constructed and this in turn can construct the identities, interests, and behaviours of all the powers in the region. In this regard, both the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and a potential economic corridor might be a positive start.

Conclusions

The multiple transformations that the world has experienced in recent years are being reflected in the increasingly changing balance of power, and the Pacific Rim may be the clearest example, as the rise of China to the first rank of international politics has altered not just the material structure of its immediate neighbourhood, but also its ideational nature, going from "Asia Pacific" to "the Indo-Pacific".

This ideational restructuring, of course, has been mostly motivated by those

countries that can take advantage of this shared idea by bringing as many powers — with different amounts of material capabilities and influence — as possible on board, some of them, countries that are not powerful enough to dictate the shape of the region but powerful enough to influence the course that this shaping process may take, countries like Australia. In that sense, this article aimed to explore first the nature of this apparent ontological change and its potential consequences; Australia's place, role, and interests in this imagined community; and how Australian foreign policy can use this new construct as a tool to advance its interests and those of the region as a whole. As the Foreign Policy White Paper points out, Australia is pursuing an opportunity, security and strength agenda that promotes cooperation on strategic, political and economic issues, reinforces peace and international law, encourages the full and active engagement of the United States in regional affairs, commits to strong and constructive ties with China, and ensures that all regional countries, large and small, have a voice on regional issues.

If Australia wants a stable region, where peace can help to sustain the growth that has brought it to the centre of the global economy and in which all countries can freely prosecute their interests without fearing the exercise of coercive power, and maximise the opportunities brought by an increasingly globalised and interdependent world, then working with partners on a shared agenda for security and prosperity is not only necessary but vital. But collective action and a shared agenda cannot come from nowhere. They must be built on the basis of shared interests that in turn have to be constructed on the basis of like-mindedness, that is, of shared values, shared identities. And that can be motivated by the idea of a region to which most of its constituent parts can feel related to, an idea like that of the Indo-Pacific. In the last decade many attempts to conceptualise the Indo-Pacific have been raised. Whether this idea has its origins in a clear effort to contain China and limit its power projection in the Pacific or not, there is a spirit that is common to all the different interpretations of the concept: the idea of the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical amalgamation capable of bringing about freedom and prosperity as well as coexistence between different peoples with the ultimate goal of achieving global and regional stability. As Rory Medcalf (2018) states:

The debate about how to define a region may seem largely about words, maps and history. But words, maps and history can have material potency when it comes to the decisions, behaviour and interests of states in international relations. The maps in the minds of political leaders have real-world consequences for matters of diplomacy, economics, strategic competition, peace and war. (Medcalf 2018, p.3)

This means ideas can turn into policy, and once they do they have the ability to shape reality. It is in that core message that the usefulness and importance of the idea of a region such as the Indo-Pacific lies. If the majority of powers – whether great, middle or small – commit to these shared values and interests then, using

Winston Churchill's (1946, para. 27) appraisal of the Anglosphere in his *Sinews of Peace* speech, "there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure. On the contrary, there will be an overwhelming assurance of security". By constructing and socialising this idea of the region, actors might feel restraint from abusing power and committed to achieve shared goals. Paraphrasing Churchill, we shape our regions; thereafter they shape us.

But the strategic rivalry between the United States, the dominant power, and China, the rising power, is creating a very complex environment that is making enough waves to rock the boat of prosperity. That is why, countries such as Australia need to batten down the hatches, learn the ropes, and get as many countries on board as possible by promoting this new idea of the region in order to avoid being left between the devil and the deep blue sea. In this sense, the Foreign Policy White Paper seems to be a sensible approach to this progressively contested world.

Australia's interests are clear as the distribution of power in the Indo-Pacific changes, states the document. But in order to reach those goals, collaboration with other strategic actors is crucial. As David Scott (2013, p. 443) argues, ultimately and quite simply, in the longer term, and whatever the domestic political pressures, Australia will be unable to escape the dictates of this new strategic geography that make the "Indo-Pacific concept an increasingly influential framework, a compelling strategic logic for Australia to shape its military strategy and strategic partnerships", whether they are bilateral - such as those with the U.S., Japan, China, India, Indonesia, or South Korea - or multilateral - networks and alliances such as the trilateral security dialogues with Japan and India or, most importantly, the Quad. Cooperation with these key regional powers within this conceptual framework should then remain the bedrock of Australia's foreign policy strategy for years to come and serve as an effective compass that can help its leaders to set a right and independent course, successfully sail through these dangerous waters of the Indo-Pacific, and finally reach the safe port of a stable, open, inclusive, and prosperous region.

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Article

The Gulf between the Indo-Pacific and the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

The Indo-Pacific has become more prominent internationally since President Trump's administration began using it instead of the Asia-Pacific – a term more commonly used by his predecessors. This change in terminology largely appears to be a response to China's growing influence across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean, as its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expands. The Trump administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific indicates an attempt to limit Chinese gains, a contrast to previous U.S. administrations' efforts to integrate China into the liberal order. This could potentially lead to balancing behavior across Eurasia, with competition increasing in multiple Asian regions. The Gulf, deeply embedded in the American-led liberal order while increasingly engaged with China, is a region that could be affected by Sino-American competition, as economic and strategic interests of external powers come into play at a time when the regional order is undergoing change. This confluence of tensions – at both the international and regional levels – will influence the Gulf's political, economic, and security environment.

Keywords

Indo-Pacific, Gulf, Regionalism, Belt and Road Initiative, Middle East

Setting the Scene

In order to understand how geostrategic competition in the Indo-Pacific will influence the Gulf region's political, economic, and security environment, it is necessary to layout the most critical drivers of change. First and foremost, the rise of China has inspired a series of American strategic re-imaginings of Asian order, from the "Pivot to Asia," and then "Rebalance to Asia," to that currently in use, the "Indo-Pacific". Not a new concept, it has gained wider traction in President Donald Trump's administration. With the change in name from the U.S. Pacific Command to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, it now represents the official United States' (U.S.) approach to Asia.

At the heart of the U.S. Indo-Pacific concept is the "Quad". Made up of the U.S., India, Japan and Australia, the Quad is a loose grouping of states with a stated goal of establishing a rules-based Indo-Pacific economic and security order. While the Quad has yet to establish a formal framework for cooperation, it has generated no small amount of diplomatic energy and media coverage. While ostensibly a nascent community of shared interests, Washington's application of the Quad in the Indo-Pacific appears to be a geopolitical tool for balancing against China, especially in the context of its greater geopolitical influence as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expands China's sphere of influence beyond its traditional foreign policy focus of its immediate periphery. This 'China threat' approach to the Indo-Pacific is evident in statements from U.S. officials in the Trump administration, as well as the December 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), both discussed below. This risk of this is twofold. First, it reinforces a perception in Beijing of a China containment strategy, a perception made all the more relevant as the Trump administration wages a trade war with China. Second, leaders in Asian states that rely on Chinese trade or that are vulnerable to coercive Chinese economic statecraft - as India, Japan, and Australia all are - must balance the need to placate China against their willingness to cooperate with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific theatre.

If the U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific continues to take shape as a means of balancing against China, states and regions across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean can expect a new set of international political challenges as divergent visions of Asian order result in great power competition, and the Gulf region is likely to feature in this competition. In short, China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific and the U.S. response to this challenge is making waves that will be felt as far as the Gulf region. Long simmering regional tensions are intensifying, and the concern of a softening U.S. commitment to maintaining the status quo threatens the Gulf's fragile order. While each is deeply embedded in Pax Americana, the Gulf monarchies – namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – are increasingly engaging with a wide range of extra-regional powers, including China, across a range of economic and strategic issues. Iran, as a dissatisfied power in the existing Gulf order, has also pursued denser ties to China and is a key state in the BRI, while also working more closely with India. Beijing has given no indication of an ambition to challenge American military power in the Gulf, but its growing regional interests combined with its BRI ambitions underscore the fact that Middle East stability, and the Gulf in particular, has become a strategic concern for China. As Chinese influence in the Gulf intensifies, there is an increasing possibility that Indo-Pacific-BRI competition will play out in the region.

Using the case of the Gulf, this article asks how the Trump administration's ap-

proach to the Indo-Pacific affects specific regional security complexes. It explores how such security complexes are influenced at the regional level by competing visions of order and also at the international level by global perceptions of an international order in transition. The article thus begins with an analysis the U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. response to a rising and increasingly assertive China, most clearly represented in the idea of the Quad, represents a divergence from the Obama administration's "Rebalance to Asia" in which strengthened multilateral institutions would stabilize a rules-based order that could integrate China through economic and diplomatic incentives. The article then analyzes the repercussions of this approach to the Indo-Pacific in the Gulf, where regional order has been maintained by U.S. military preponderance since the end of the Cold War. The Gulf monarchies have used this U.S. security umbrella to develop trade relations with several extra-regional powers, including China and India, both of which have much to gain or lose if Indo-Pacific competition escalates to conflict.

Divergent Visions of the Indo-Pacific

As currently promoted in the U.S., the Indo-Pacific strategy is a means of countering Chinese influence, especially as it is projected through its massive BRI plans. A central feature of this strategy is the Quad. However, the four states have thought about the Indo-Pacific in different ways. Indian naval strategist Khurana claims to have first developed the Indo-Pacific as a strategic concept in his 2007 essay "Security of the Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation." Since then other Indian strategic thinkers and practitioners have adopted it as well. In Japan the concept has roots in current Prime Minister Abe's short-lived first administration in 2006-2007; he addressed India's Parliament in 2007 and discussed a strategic partnership in a broader Asia which would "evolve into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the USA and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, good, capital, and knowledge to flow freely" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2007). Australia's 2013 Defence White Paper marked the first time that an Asian government officially defined the region as the Indo-Pacific (Medcalf 2013, p. 471), adjusting Australia's "priority strategic focus to the arc extending from India through Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia, including the sea lines of communication in which the region depends" (Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. 8).

A unifying element among the Quad states is ostensibly normative, in that all four are democracies. Japan has been especially active in promoting the democratic nature of the Quad. Prime Minister Abe referred to it as "Asia's democratic security diamond" (Abe 2012) and his former Foreign Minister Taro Aso introduced the concept of "value-oriented diplomacy" in a 2006 speech that appears to have laid the foundation for Japan's Indo-Pacific vision, in which Japanese diplomacy emphasizes "the 'universal values' such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the

rule of law, and the market economy" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2006). While the normative aspect of the Quad is important, it is overstated; several Asian democracies are not involved. Instead, the guiding principle seems to be a mutual concern of a rising China with a different vision of Asian order. Even if this is a shared concern, the group's cohesion is weak when it comes to how to respond; leaders in India are especially wary of overtly provoking China. In the absence of a shared strategic vision, the Quad is unlikely to achieve its stated ambition of establishing a rules-based Indo-Pacific order. Instead, an increasingly assertive China is likely to attempt to counter the Quad in states and regions where commitment to the so-called liberal order is soft.

Central to Beijing's vision of the Indo-Pacific is the BRI, which has been described as "the most significant and far-reaching initiative that China has ever put forward" (in Swain 2015, p. 3). Consisting of an overland route, the Silk Road Economic Belt, and a maritime route, the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), it is essentially an infrastructure development plan designed to increase connectivity across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. A 2009 report from the Asian Development Bank stated that between 2010 and 2020 there was a need for \$8 trillion in infrastructure projects throughout Asia (The Economist, 2015). Existing international institutions do not have the capital or capacity to address this shortage, and in 2013 China announced the BRI as a response. It created international institutions - the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Silk Road Fund – to finance BRI projects. Chinese leaders have been careful to emphasize that the initiative is meant to complement the existing international structure rather than challenge it with a so-called China model. Foreign Minister Wang Yi addressed this directly, stating: "China is not building a rival system. On the contrary, we are seeking to play a bigger role in the existing international order and system" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016). Nevertheless, the BRI is extending Chinese influence substantially, and BRI-related projects are perceived as a means of economic statecraft that provide political leverage for Beijing. How this vision - and the Quad's counter vision - will affect the Gulf region is discussed below. Before looking at the way these competing visions for the Indo-Pacific among the major powers will impact the Gulf, the analysis first considers the wider question of whether the balance of power is shifting among them and what this may mean for the region.

Shifting Balance of Power in the Indo-Pacific

An important strategic outcome of the BRI's economic and development projects has been an increased Chinese capacity for power projection. Whereas American power is based on an extensive network of alliances, China has a long-standing aversion to formal alliances, perceived as "an archaic and entangling system that only increases the chances of costly military conflict" (Liu and Liu 2017, p. 153).

It likewise has avoided a physical overseas presence, with no overseas military presence until 2015 when it opened its first and thus far only foreign base in Djibouti. Even without a blue water navy capable of projecting power across the Indian Ocean or a collection of overseas bases, China's development of the MSRI has made it an Indian Ocean power. Initially described by Western analysts as a "string of pearls" strategy, the announcement of the MSRI in 2013 gave greater clarity as to what China had been doing: it built or funded expansion of ports and facilities across the Indian Ocean in a "places' as opposed to bases" strategy in which China secured access to partner states' ports and naval facilities (Kostecka 2011). This has evolved under a series of projects under the BRI/MSRI umbrella, with the development of service ports used to service local markets, hub ports used as regional transshipment hubs, and gateway ports used to connect to the Indian Ocean overland (Brewster 2017, pp. 276-277).

A cursory look at some of these projects underscores the scope of China's MSRI. In Myanmar, China's CITIC has a 70 percent stake in a \$7.2 billion deep sea port in its western Rakhine state (Lee and Aung 2017). A Chinese firm runs a shipping container facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh, and plans are underway to develop ports there and the southern Bangladeshi island of Sonadia. China's state-owned China Merchants Port Holdings has assumed a 99-year lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port as part of a deal to relieve more than \$8billion in debt to Chinese state-owned enterprises (Schultz, 2017). The Maldives have also taken on a significant level of Chinese debt through infrastructure projects; amounting to 70 percent of its state debt, 10 percent of its national budget is allotted to payments to China (Manning and Gopalaswamy, 2018). In Pakistan, the port city of Gwadar is the end point to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), providing China with access to an Arabian Sea port, and there are discussions about a naval base and airfield being developed in Jiwani, 60 kilometers west of Gwadar (Brewster, 2018). In Oman, a Chinese consortium has invested over \$3billion in developing a port city in Duqm, with commitments set to total nearly \$11billion by the project's completion (Jabarkhyl, 2017). Taken together, these MSRI projects amount to a substantial Chinese presence across the Indian Ocean and provide context for the increased diplomatic energy behind the Indo-Pacific in response.

What has been the U.S. reaction to this recent intensification of Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean and Asia more generally? Washington's renewed emphasis on the Indo-Pacific became apparent in the fall of 2017, as a series of speeches and public events signaled a different regional approach from the Trump administration. Secretary of State Tillerson delivered a speech in October 2017 entitled "Defining our Relationship with India for the Next Century," in which he described a rules-based international order that has benefited rising states,

specifically India and China, but one that is under threat from a provocative and revisionist China. Doubling down on the strategic relationship with New Delhi, Tillerson said, "the world, and the Indo-Pacific in particular, needs the United States and India to have a strong relationship," and then elaborated with a vision of U.S.-India cooperation countering illiberal threats, presumably in the form of China:

We need to collaborate with India to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is increasingly a place of peace, stability and growing prosperity so that it does not become a region of disorder, conflict, and predatory economics. The world's center of gravity is shifting to the heart of the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. and India, with our shared goals of peace, security, freedom of navigation, and a free and open architecture, must serve as the Eastern and Western beacons of the Indo-Pacific, as the port and starboard lights between which the region can reach its greatest and best potential (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017).

Firstly, the speech marked a departure from the usual use of the term Asia-Pacific from previous U.S. Secretaries of State. But the focus on U.S.-India relations could be interpreted as a matter of adjusting the message to accommodate one's audience.

The next month, President Trump made his first official trip to Asia, visiting Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines. Throughout the trip he made repeated references to the Indo-Pacific, a noted contrast from his predecessors' use of the Asia-Pacific. At the APEC summit in Vietnam he said he was honored to be in "the heart of the Indo-Pacific" and told delegates that "We have been friends, partners, and allies in the Indo-Pacific for a long, long time, and we will be friends, partners and allies for a long time" (Sevastopulo 2017). His emphasis on U.S.-Asian alliances and partnerships seemed an about-face from a president who pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) within his first week in office, having described it in a Republican primary debate as a "deal that was designed for China to come in, as they always do, through the back door and totally take advantage of everyone" (Blackwill and Rappleye 2017). Trump's approach to the Indo-Pacific became clearer when the White House released its National Security Strategy (NSS) in December 2017. Its section on the Indo-Pacific begins, "A geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region" (United States and Trump 2017, p. 45). Adopting hawkish language in describing China as a threat to regional stability, the NSS describes China's infrastructure investments as a means of achieving geopolitical ambitions, referring to the BRI, and then claims: "Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of many states in the Indo-Pacific. States throughout the region are calling for sustained U.S. leadership in a collective response that upholds a regional order respectful of sovereignty and

independence" (United States and Trump 2017, p. 46). Cooperation with key allies remains the foundation upon which the U.S. seeks to constrain China's growing influence and power,

The NSS represents a divergence of how the Indo-Pacific was previously articulated by the U.S. government. The Obama administration, in making it a central feature of the "Rebalance to Asia," adopted a liberal approach to the Indo-Pacific, linking the concept to the TPP and the expansion of existing U.S. multilateral relationships in Asia. Obama's Indo-Pacific was a means of managing China's rise by strengthening the structure of regional order with the expectation that a robust order based on trade would induce China to play by the rules. The Trump administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific, in contrast, is a containment strategy, trying to limit the expansion of Chinese influence rather than managing its integration into the liberal order. Despite deep levels of economic interdependence in the U.S.-China relationship, the Trump vision of the Indo-Pacific is overtly antagonistic and redolent of a Cold War bipolar order (Swain 2018).

This approach creates problems for the Quad. Each of the members has a complex relationship with China. For one thing, there are good reasons to be concerned about the nature of a China-led Asian order, yet at the same time there are economic imperatives to maintaining good relations. The former U.S. approach of trying to deepen Chinese integration into the existing international order is still the preference of many Asian leaders, reflected in a statement from Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop: "We want to work with China to ensure that their infrastructure investment is commercially sustainable, is transparent and adds to the economic growth that is so needed in our part of the world" (quoted in Pant 2018). There is a reluctance among Quad states to be perceived as overtly trying to contain China, and the view of the Indo-Pacific from Beijing is hostile. An editorial in China's Global Times responded to the U.S. renaming its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command by describing the Indo-Pacific as a two-pronged strategy: "first to instigate China and India into long-term infighting; second, to cope with the inevitable rise of India and strengthen Washington's control of the Indian Ocean" (Global Times, 2018). The need to consider Chinese perceptions of the Indo-Pacific could therefore create a wedge in the Quad. The only existing multilateral cooperative endeavor among Quad states - the annual Malabar naval exercises - has yet to invite Australia to participate. Despite Canberra's request for observer status in 2017, India refused Australian participation in the 2018 round, a rejection that occurred one week before Indian Prime Minister Modi made a state visit to Wuhan, China, where the focus was on a "reset" in the India-China relationship (Bachhawat 2018). Tokyo has also made overtures to better relations with China, with the Japanese government-backed banks providing funds for private Japanese firms to participate in BRI energy and

logistic projects (Sano 2018). Australia has likewise tried to maintain friendly relations with China, with former Prime Minister Turnbull responding to recent reports of a chill between them and claiming that Australia rejects the U.S. approach as an "out-of-date Cold War prism" and insisting that "we do not see any hostile intent from China. We do not describe China as a threat" (Karp 2018).

Reliance on allies – manifested in the idea of the Quad – as a pillar of the Indo-Pacific is therefore not especially sound. Washington's approach under the Trump administration runs the risk of creating a more competitive political atmosphere across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. This concern was articulated by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong when asked about joining the Quad: "We do not want to end up with rival blocs forming or countries having to take one side or another" (Wroe 2018). This is a likely outcome if leaders in Washington are not able to convince their counterparts in other Asian capitals to coordinate their Indo-Pacific policies; rather than the U.S.-led liberal order that has shaped events in Asia, a competitive multi-polar order emerges in which interests are pursued across Eurasia with a balance of power logic. Whether Lee's fears will prove well-founded is perhaps one of the most important questions in International Relations (IR) scholarship today.

A large body IR literature in recent years has provided theoretical frameworks to analyze a transition from the U.S.-led unipolar order toward a less-centered multipolar one (e.g. Buzan and Lawson 2015; Acharya 2014; Kupchan 2012; Stuenkel 2016). These theories offer important insights into the shape that international order may take, with a common assumption that non-Western powers are gaining in influence, and among them China is poised to become a global rather than regional power. Realist assumptions about rising powers in international order anticipate systemic change. Gilpin's classic *War and Change in World Politics* (1981, p. 9) began with the premise that:

[T]hose actors who benefit most from a change in the social system and who gain the power to affect such change will seek to alter the system in ways that favor their interests. The resulting changed system will reflect the new distribution of power and the interests of its new dominant members.

Other realist scholars writing about U.S.-China relations anticipate a competitive relationship, with a high probability for conflict as the U.S. tries to maintain its privileged position within the international system and China tries to carve out a larger role for itself (see Friedberg 2011; Mearsheimer 2015; Allison 2015). An Indo-Pacific strategy that is perceived by Chinese leaders as a means of preventing China's rise to great power status will provoke an assertive response, making Allison's (2015) Thucydides Trap a self-fulfilling prophecy. This interpretation of the future direction of international politics has profound implications for the Gulf region.

Indo-Pacific Competition: The Gulf States Recalibrate

As the international order transitions, fragile regional orders are under stain, and nowhere is this more evident than the Middle East. Fragile states throughout the region were exposed in the wake of the Arab uprisings, and wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya have threatened to spill over into neighboring states. While the Gulf – Iraq excluded – has managed to keep a lid on political instability, its regional order is vulnerable to pressure from the level of the international order. An Indo-Pacific featuring U.S.-China competition or hostility could disrupt a very delicate regional order.

At first glance, the Gulf does not seem to logically feature significantly in the Indo-Pacific. The Gulf states have maritime heritages that have historically linked them to other Indian Ocean societies, but they are not typically oriented towards points east; during their modern states period they have traditionally been focused on the wider Arab world and the West in their foreign policies. Geopolitically, however, the Gulf occupies a crucial chokepoint with the Hormuz Strait linking the region to Indian Ocean trade routes.

It is at the nexus of regional order and international order where a competitive Gulf order becomes apparent. The regional level has long been turbulent, with three major wars since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It has in recent decades largely functioned as a tripolar system where Iran, Iraq, and the six monarchies have balanced against each other. While the monarchies have generally acted as a bloc since forming the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, tensions between them have never been far from the surface, as the ongoing dispute between Qatar and the Anti-Terror Quartet (ATQ) of Saudi, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt has laid bare. Given the volatility of the Gulf political environment, it is best understood as a regional security complex, which Buzan defines as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another" (Buzan 1983, p. 106). Adopting the regional security complex framework for his analysis of Gulf international relations, Gause began with the premise that the Gulf states "focus intensely on each other and devote the bulk of their security resources to relations with each other and have done so for decades" (Gause 2010, p. 4).

This regional instability has largely been contained because of external pressures at the international level. The geostrategic importance of the Gulf as a hub linking several Eurasian and Indian Ocean regions has always made it important to major external powers, and this has intensified with the centrality of Gulf states in global energy markets. As such, extra-regional powers have long played outsized roles in managing regional political order. Until the end of the Cold War,

the larger systemic competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union largely drove regional political events, but in the post-Cold War period the region has operated – often very uneasily – within the unipolar *Pax Americana*. In this order, the GCC, with their defense cooperation agreements with the U.S. and dense participation in international institutions, benefits from a status quo maintained by approximately 35,000 U.S. troops stationed in bases in Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, and Oman.

Given their importance in global energy markets, the continued stability of the Gulf monarchies has contributed to the intensity of GCC-U.S. relations, despite few shared values or norms that are often attributed to this type of alliance. It is largely a set of relations built upon shared security concerns for the region and the need for Gulf energy to fuel the U.S.-led international order. The security architecture that the U.S. has developed on the Arab side of the Gulf since the end of the Cold War has ensured that neither Iran nor Iraq would act upon hegemonic ambitions, and also created an environment where other non-regional states have been able to develop stronger relations with each of the Gulf states without a corresponding role in contributing to regional security. Consistent with a strategic hedging approach, these extra-regional powers have increased their Gulf presence largely by economic means while not antagonizing the U.S. or other regional states (Tessman 2012). As a result, states like China, India, and Japan are becoming important Gulf actors in their own right, with substantial economic and strategic interests in the region (Fulton and Sim 2018).

While this is happening, the continued role of the U.S. in maintaining the Gulf regional order is increasingly coming under question, a perception especially prevalent in Saudi Arabia where leaders have viewed U.S. regional policy as divergent from their preferences. Much of this can be attributed to structural issues; the U.S.-Saudi Arabia relationship can largely be understood as an elite-level one in response to Cold War pressures, with little in the way of shared interests or values. The end of the Cold War exposed the limitations of such a relationship, making it difficult to maintain the same level of intensity:

Without a shared vision of the threats and the means to protect against them, oil interests alone could not return the relationship to its former closeness. Saudi leaders lost confidence in America's regional policy and tight US-Saudi relations were becoming increasingly unpopular at home. (Aarts 2007, pp. 390-391)

In this view, the U.S.-Saudi alliance was largely a response to the Soviet threat for both sides and was essentially an "elite bargain" (Aarts 2007, p. 403). Fissures in these alliances have become more visible in recent years. Gulf leaders were especially troubled by Obama's interpretation of U.S. interests in the region, and this put significant strain on U.S.-GCC relations. His response to the 2010-11

Arab Uprisings was considered especially troubling. The downfall of Egyptian President Mubarak, a U.S. ally of over thirty years, was a sign for GCC leaders that their relationships with Washington were not as ironclad as presumed. This is a common feature in asymmetrical alliances; if alliance commitments from the stronger party are vague or uncertain, the weaker ally will fear abandonment (Snyder 1984, p. 475). For Kuwaiti political scientist Al Shayji (2014, p. 62), the U.S.-GCC relationship is a "textbook example" of the alliance security dilemma, stating "tensions between Washington and its Gulf allies are not the product of particular individuals on either side, but are built into the very nature of the relationship itself." Several major regional events, including the 9/11 attacks, the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, Washington's response to the Arab Uprisings, and negotiations with Iran in the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA), have contributed to the perception within the GCC that their longstanding reliance on the U.S. as a security guarantor should diminish, made evident when the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said: "In this current international system, it is no longer 'write a cheque and someone is going to come and secure the stability in the region.'You have to do some of the burdensharing" (James, 2018).

The transition from Obama to Trump provided initial relief for leaders in the Gulf monarchies, with the UAE's Gulf News proclaiming in a headline, "US Policy Back on Track in the Region" (Gulf News 2017). Trump has certainly aligned the U.S. closer to the GCC side of the Gulf and even further from Iran. In his visit to Riyadh, his first overseas destination as president, he promised closer cooperation with the GCC, and described the Iranian government as one that "speaks openly of mass murder, vowing the destruction of Israel, death to America, and ruin for many leaders and nations in this very room" (Hubbard and Erdbrink 2017). His May 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA and announcement that the U.S. would "be instituting the highest level of economic sanction" against Iran further aligns Washington with the preferred foreign policy orientation of the UAE and Saudi Arabia (The White House 2018). At the same time, his administration's approach to the Qatar-ATQ dispute demonstrated a lack of leadership in the Gulf, as the Departments of State and Defense tried to mediate while the White House, through the president's Twitter account, supported the ATQ and accused Qatar of sponsoring terrorism, tweeting, "During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology. Leaders pointed to Qatar - look!" Within months, however, Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani was invited for a White House visit, where President Trump described him as a "great friend" and thanked him for Qatar's role in combatting terrorism (Baker 2018). Washington's inconsistent approach to the crisis has reinforced the perception of a less reliable and engaged U.S. in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, China and India have been pursuing denser ties with states throughout the Gulf. Their hedging strategies are meant to maximize benefits while not disturbing other important regional states; a stable Gulf is in the interests of both Beijing and New Delhi. The Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZAD) provides one example where their interests converge. Being developed by a consortium of Chinese companies with Chinese funding, SEZAD is situated along Oman's 3,100km Arabian Sea coastline, providing an access point for Gulf energy that bypasses the Hormuz Strait, designed to "redirect traffic away from the Gulf and alter the configuration of the current maritime routes of the Indian Ocean" (Staples 2017, p. 362). It projects to be an important energy port, with a refinery and crude storage facility. Given the significance of Gulf energy to India - in 2016, nearly 64 per cent of its oil imports were supplied by Gulf states (CIA Factbook 2016) – SEZAD is an important project for leaders in New Delhi. When Prime Minister Modi visited Oman in early 2018, he signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Military Cooperation with Oman that secured Indian access to Duqm for military use and logistical support, as well as the use of its dry docks for maintenance and repair of Indian ships (Roy 2018). Infrastructure development and connectivity is therefore a public good that has the potential to benefit multiple states, demonstrating how Indian and Chinese interests can align in the Gulf, and reinforcing the point that Indian leaders must maintain a balance between cooperating with Washington while not antagonizing Beijing.

At the same time, China's BRI projects bump against Indian interests in South Asia, and here is where it becomes apparent that tensions in one region have the potential to spill over into another. The depth of Chinese BRI engagement in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan are perceived as unwelcome intrusion into a region that has always been an Indian sphere of influence. Chinese support for Pakistan, exemplified by Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is the most significant problem. CPEC cuts through contested territories, creating sovereignty issues for India in Gilgit-Baltistan while empowering New Delhi's most significant security concern. China has been described as "the cornerstone of Pakistan's strategic foreign policy" (Small 2015, p. 118) and its investments into CPEC are substantial, with contracts worth over \$46 billion were signed when President Xi Jinping visited Islamabad in 2015 (Houreld 2015).

In response to CPEC, specifically the development of Gwadar port, India has engaged more deeply with Iran. The most significant bilateral project has been the Chabahar port project, with investments pledged totaling \$500 million and a leasing agreement that gives India operational control (Dawn 2018). Chabahar, 90 kilometers from Gwadar, is Iran's only non-Gulf port and has existing transportation infrastructure that links it to Afghanistan and Central Asia, providing

India with overland access routes that do not cross Pakistani or Chinese territory. Given the depth of Iranian ties to China in BRI-related projects, this could appear to be, like SEZAD, an area where China and India could adopt a more cooperative approach to developing a public good. However, the strategic importance of Chabahar to India is as significant as the economic benefits; the potential for Gwadar to become a de facto Chinese naval base indicates that a balancing logic is at play. India's response to CPEC therefore has the potential to play out in Iran, which in turn would concern the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula.

The view from the GCC is an important consideration for New Delhi, as its engagement with the GCC states has intensified in both economic and strategic spheres. India-GCC relations were long relegated to the economic side, with energy trade and remittances from the 8-million-strong non-resident Indian diaspora in the Gulf being the bulk of the relations. In recent years, however, large-scale Indian investment in the GCC infrastructure and development projects has taken a larger role in economic relations, and maritime security issues have become more prominent as New Delhi seeks to protect its energy and investment interests. The strategic nature of this recalibration has been evident in a defense cooperation agreement Prime Minister Singh signed during a 2014 state visit to Saudi Arabia and a joint communique from Prime Minister Modi's state visit to the UAE in 2015 describing the "boundless potential for a natural strategic partnership between India and the UAE" (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2015). India's "Look West" policy indicates a continued growth in its strategic relations with the GCC.

On the southern side of the Gulf, China has also been especially active, with economic relations with each of the Gulf monarchies intensifying tremendously in recent years. The total volume of China-GCC trade was valued at approximately US\$10 billion in 2000; by 2016 it was worth US\$144 billion. Trade and financial integration are both major focuses of BRI cooperation, and the GCC states are well established in both with China. The growth in trade is projected to continue and should a long-negotiated China-GCC free trade agreement come to completion, will be a significant driver in economic relations (Qian and Fulton 2017, pp. 16-17). All GCC states are members of the AIIB, and the UAE and Qatar have established joint BRI investment funds with China, while Saudi Arabia has signed a memorandum of understanding with China to create a \$20 billion joint BRI investment fund. Chinese firms are actively participating in Gulf infrastructure and construction projects, and with this has come a sizable expatriate community on the Arabian Peninsula.

Given this substantial economic presence, with assets and citizens concentrated in a geopolitically significant yet volatile region, it is not surprising that there is a nascent security element to the China-GCC relationship. Limited thus far

to naval visits, joint training exercises and arms sales, both sides have expressed an interest in deeper security coordination (Fulton 2018). With the Djibouti base and Gwadar port a potential naval facility, Chinese forces could soon be positioned to participate in Gulf security affairs. While the US has by far the most powerful military capabilities in the Gulf, and no other state or coalition of states could presume to challenge it, Beijing can easily make a logical case for an increased military capability of its own. The 2015 evacuation of 629 Chinese nationals and 279 other foreign nationals from Yemen was the first time China's navy conducted a solo non-combatant evacuation operation and emphasized the importance of building a stronger naval presence in unstable regions. With such a large footprint in the Gulf, it will likely not be long before the People's Liberation Army Navy plays a larger role in protecting energy shipping lanes and Chinese interests in the region. As such, the end of China's hedging strategy in the Gulf could transition into a more active political and security role, and with an Indo-Pacific order characterized by U.S.-China competition, the Gulf could become a theatre for great power competition.

Conclusion

Regional tensions in the Gulf are not a new phenomenon but combined with uncertainty at the level of the international order the regional order is increasingly strained. Gulf states have adopted more assertive foreign policies since the Arab Uprisings, and the U.S. military preponderance has not translated into political leadership. It has provided a relatively stable and low-cost entry for extra-regional powers to develop stronger relations in the Gulf; however, and as Gulf leaders' dissatisfaction with U.S. policies has intensified, the door has opened for these other powers to build upon their economic presences. In the case of China, its Belt and Road development and connectivity is an attractive vision of Asian order for Gulf leaders who see potential to align BRI projects with their own domestic infrastructure programs.

At the same time, China's success has consequences for other Asian powers, and inspires different responses. India, Japan, and Australia are clearly concerned about the shape a China-led Asia would take but are also concerned about alienating Beijing with the perception of an Indo-Pacific as a containment policy. Their vision of the Indo-Pacific remains a means of maintaining a rules-based liberal order that would socialize China. For their part, Chinese leaders emphasize that they do not see the BRI as a competing order, but an initiative that reinforces the existing one. All concerned seem to favor the status quo, for the time being at least.

The U.S. reframing of the Indo-Pacific, as a means of containing China, however, runs the risk of disrupting regional orders throughout Asia. In treating a rising

China as a revisionist power, Washington's current Indo-Pacific policy could well lead to more aggressive response from Beijing, which could impact its strategy in regions where it has wanted to develop stronger economic and diplomatic relations while not establishing a military footprint. In order to protect its economic interests, China will have to pursue a more active approach to counter U.S. balancing against it in the Indo-Pacific. This will have consequences in the Gulf, as this competition at the level of international order strains an already fragile Gulf regional order.

Bio

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Article

Grand Strategies in Contested Zones: Japan's Indo-Pacific, China's BRI and Eastern Africa

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Abstract

Japan's intention of creating a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy will potentially combine the strategic interests of four countries (Japan, India, the US and Australia), the political and economic potential of two continents (Asia and Africa), and two oceans (Indian and Pacific). This vision seeks to improve connectivity, promote stability and foster prosperity in the wider region while also attempting to counter the hegemony of any particular state. Should this nascent strategy be suitably defined and implemented by Japan and its lynchpin partners, it may prove revolutionary in reinforcing the current balance of power across much of the globe. This article looks at Japan's relationship with eastern Africa and attempts to define its policy alternatives vis-à-vis the region by locating them contextually. It argues that states of eastern Africa possess complex foreign policies and a web of connections to rising powers that are often ignored or misunderstood, thus making strategies pursued by large powers such as China, India or Japan potentially fraught with difficulty as they may become enmeshed in regional power squabbles.

Keywords

Indo-Pacific, Japan, Horn of Africa, Geopolitics, East Africa, Belt and Road Initiative

Generating an Indo-Pacific Strategy

The term Indo-Pacific is at least a decade old and has been frequently used by Japan since at least 2009. The term reflects a value-laden, normative approach to foreign policy that takes key commonalities between the major partners as a starting point and foundation. For example, according to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, "Both India and Japan place importance on the universal values and strategic interests that we commonly share. Both countries are major Asian democracies and global powers. ... and I'm determined that Japan and India will

lead the way towards peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the world" (Bhattacherjee 2017).

While Japan's and India's interest in each other strategically may be relatively new, the Indo-Pacific idea simply expands the current conceptualization of the Asia-Pacific region to one that includes India and states bordering the Indian Ocean, to include those in eastern Africa and the Middle East. This may be a modest extension of logic given Asia's breadth as a continent and the importance individual states place on access to maritime shipping lanes. As such, geopolitics throughout the Indo-Pacific can be said to be defined by bays, islands, rivers and oceans and the movement - impeded or unimpeded - of goods and services therefrom (Kaura 2016; Karim 2017). This, then, is at the heart of any Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy as demonstrated by the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) in Manila in November 2017 by Japan, the United States, Australia and India - even though the geographical reach of the Indo-Pacific theater may be understood differently by each state. The QSD was meant to begin translating a new and shared geopolitical understanding of the Indo-Pacific into concrete policy options that envisage "the two oceans as a single security space, which includes India and Japan, is bridged by Australia, and is undergirded by U.S. maritime dominance. The impetus for such a reconceptualization is simple: Japan and India, isolated as they are in their own oceans, want to balance against the Western Pacific's rising power, China, by uniting under a single geopolitical sphere" (Stratfor 2017).

The repercussions of using the term Indo-Pacific are twofold: it emphasizes two interconnected oceans and demonstrates a primarily maritime focus that necessarily includes India and, to a lesser extent, Africa. As importantly, it links up with Japan and its strong ties with the United State and the West, thus emphasizing a shared, near-global focus as defined by Japan and its vision for the future (SCMP, 2017). An important third implication is that any Indo-Pacific Strategy should not be blithely dismissed. For as much as India, Japan, the United States and Australia differ in their approaches to China, they are certainly united in their concerns over China's economic and political development strategy for the region. In other words, "Behind the Indo-Pacific you have Japan's economic support, India's development speed and Australia's fears of China, these are all strategic realities." (Shepherd & Miglani 2017). As such, the Indo-Pacific narrative will inevitably cause discomfort in China; Chinese officials and policymakers tend to bristle at any perceived attempt to contain a rising China (Malik 2014). According to Jia Wenshan at the Beijing-based Center for China and Globalization, "China needs to as soon as possible deal with the Indo-Pacific alliance, as it is absolutely in conflict with Belt and Road [Initiative]," a reference to China's strategy to establish political, trade and infrastructure ties stretching from China through Central and Southeast Asia to Africa (Shepherd & Miglani 2017).

Eastern Africa's Place in the Indo-Pacific Realm

Eastern Africa and the western Indian Ocean should arguably form a key part of any strategy developed by Japan, India or others given its strategic geography as the western bookend of this nascent regional construct. While the lengthy coastline of eastern Africa - including the Horn of Africa- may be shown on maps produced by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA Japan 2017) and be an integral part of New Delhi's overall efforts to counter the rise of China in what it views as its "own" Indian Ocean, the importance of the continent to the others Quad members remains imprecise (Yang 2018). For example, Canberra understandably seems concerned about its relationship with China, Japan and other Pacific states to the north even though it also possesses a lengthy Indian Ocean coastline. Eastern African almost certainly does not figure in Washington's nascent strategy, which clearly delineates its Indo-Pacific realm as stretching from San Francisco westward to Mumbai on the west coast of India (Lal, 2018). However, this may simply be a way for Washington to delineate the newly-named Indo-Pacific Command's area of operation versus that of US Africa Command (AFRICOM), which is responsible for military operations and military relations with 53 African states and US Central Command (CENTCOM), with its bailiwick stretching across the Middle East to Pakistan's border with India.

Seven States, Competing Interests and Multiple External Actors

Complications of at least four partners (and likely more) attempting to craft a coherent strategy will certainly be fraught with difficulty. Additionally, the task will not be made any easier in the Quad members' potential engagement with eastern Africa given the sheer geographic size and scale of the region as well its vastly different topographies, political situations, economies and the interests of at least seven sovereign states (Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique) and two de-facto independent or largely autonomous states (Somaliland and Puntland). In addition, eastern Africa, particularly the Horn of Africa, is a contested space and one that is increasingly so. In Somalia alone, Turkey, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK), the US, China, the United Nations (UN), Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) all have a stake in the political and economic direction Somalia takes. The fact that Somalia is ruled by a weak Somali Federal Government (SFG) whose writ of power barely extends throughout the capital city means influence and attempts to control the outcome of elections or relations with largely autonomous regions are that much more enticing and potentially lucrative to outside states (Cannon forthcoming). In addition, efforts at keeping the peace, security sector reform (SSR) and capacity building - watchwords of the international community and sacred to multilateralists – often become instruments in the hands of state and non-state actors attempting to further influence political outcomes or extend influence and earn money in a part of the word that is written about often but rarely understood and even less visited, thus allowing for graft and corruption to flourish *ala* Afghanistan, Iraq and other stabilization zones (Fartaag 2014; Fartaag 2016; Cannon 2016a).

Natural Resources and the Political Economy of Ports

Eastern Africa, like much of the continent, contains a variety of natural resources, to include critically important carbon resources such as oil and natural gas (Purcell, 2014). While these resources are plentiful, if rather difficult to extract and export, natural deep-water ports and navigable rivers are in short supply. As such, critical infrastructure nodes such as ports are of increased value given the role they play as both entry and exit points to the continent.

Suakin **East Africa** Eritrea Asmara Sudan 600 miles Berbera omaliland Addis Ababa Hobyo Ethiopia Somalia Baledogle Mogadishu Kenya Kampala Rwanda airobi Lamu Mombasa Burundi Tanzania Bagomoyo Dar es Salaam Zambia Comoros adagascar

Map 1: Eastern Africa with capital cities and important ports.

Source: Wikimedia commons; Peter Fitzgerald, amendments by Burmesedays, East Africa regions map, Names of cities by authorship of the accompanying article, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Mombasa in Kenya is by far the largest and most critically important port in eastern Africa. It is also the only natural deep-water port of significant size along the entire length of the eastern Africa coast until one reaches Djibouti, at the southern entrance of the Red Sea. Other ports, of course, do exist but these are generally much smaller and cannot accept the largest container vessels and other cargo ships (Gidado 2015).

Ports and port politics are an interesting field of research and offer a window on the interests and domestic political dynamics of host countries as well as those of external states (de Langen, 2007; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; 1018). For example, Mogadishu in Somalia is operated by a Turkish company, Albayrak, as part of a 20-year concession (Omar & Sheikh 2014). Berbera port in the de-facto independent but internationally unrecognized Republic of Somaliland is in the process of being refurbished and expanded by DP World of Dubai under a 30-year concessionary agreement signed between DP World, Somaliland and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Cannon & Rossiter, 2017). To the south, Chinese Harbour Engineering Company was contracted by the World Bank and the government of Tanzania to expand the port of Dar es Salaam, the closest rival to Kenya's Mombasa ("Tanzania announces \$421m project" 2017). Bagomoyo, a brown water port on the coast of Tanzania is now owned by China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI) after the Tanzanian government forfeited its share in the port project (Tairo 2017).

Djibouti offers the best example of states attempting to jockey for influence and real estate in the region (Stevis-Gridneff 2018). Strategically located, Djibouti sits astride major sea lanes and offers control to one of the world's major maritime choke holds. It hosts French, US, Chinese, Japanese and Italian military bases with German and Spanish troops hosted at the French base and may soon host a Saudi Arabian base (Mason, 2017; Aglionby & Kerr 2017).¹

The various port infrastructure that forms the port of Djibouti is currently contested. DP World possessed a 30-year concession to operate Djibouti's most critical port infrastructure, the Doraleh Container Terminal (DCT), but was forcibly removed by the Djiboutian government in February 2018 (Reuters Staff 2018). Djibouti promptly signed a deal with Singapore-based Pacific International Lines (PIL) reportedly to boost traffic to the port (Fick 2018). Yet the previous August (2017), PIL had signed a memorandum of understanding with China Merchants Port Holdings which it described as a "strategic alliance" and "another result" of

¹ Djibouti is reportedly one of the major connection points on Huawei's Pakistan East Africa Cable Express (PEACE) submarine cable, which aims to connect South Asia (and China) with Eastern Africa. Huawei began Desk Study and Marine Survey works in 2017 and the project linking the Chinese-built, Pakistani port of Gwadar with Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya is slated for completion in 2019 (Wamathai 2018)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Bloomberg Staff 2018). As various states such as the US and France expressed concern, Djibouti announced that it would give DCT to the Chinese outright. At the time of writing, DCT reportedly remained in Djiboutian government hands, possibly on account of concerns raised by Washington and significant investment on the part of France and Saudi Arabia (Africa Intelligence 2018; Fick 2018). However, perhaps a formal handover to a Chinese company was unnecessary given the reported stake already held by the Chinese state-owned China Merchants in the DCT through Port de Djibouti, a holding company that owns a two-thirds stake in the container terminal (Bloomberg Staff 2017).

Ports are often the locus of military bases and the case of eastern Africa is no exception. Somalia now hosts a Turkish base just outside Mogadishu. More of a training facility than a proper base, the Turks plan to train 20,000 Somali officers and soldiers to form a Somali National Army (SNA). This means Somalia will have a truly national army capable of projecting force throughout the length and breadth of Somalia and perhaps outside Somalia (Rossiter & Cannon 2018). This has alarmed regional and international actors and has contributed to a small arms race and "scramble" for territory in the region. In Somaliland, the UAE has an agreement to build a military base and use an airport at Berbera, next to DP World's port concession. The UAE also maintains a naval facility at Assab in Eritrea and there have been rumors in Somaliland that Russia may build a base in Zeyla (Zaylac) on the Somaliland coast, marking a Russian return to the Indian Ocean for the first time since the Cold War.²

Qatar has reportedly agreed to finance a deal signed by Turkey with Sudan to rebuild the port of Suakin on the Red Sea, angering both Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the process (Dorsey 2018). The US maintains a small naval presence at Lamu, in Kenya and is reportedly building a rather large military facility in the interior of Somalia at Baledogle (Goldbaum 2018; O'Connor 2018). In addition to this activity, an Indian naval vessel, INS *Sarkevshak*, visited Dar es Salaam in late 2017, where the ship and crew formed part of a survey mission and participated in joint exercises with the Tanzanian Navy (AT Editor 2017) and Tanzanian naval personnel have also been trained in India at the National Institute of Hydrography (Pruthi 2017). In mid-2017, a Chinese naval fleet comprised of a destroyer, guided-missile frigate and a supply vessel visited Dar es Salaam for a friendly visit including cultural events and sports competitions between the two naval forces (Xinhua 2017). Beyond the ports, military exercises and natural resource exploitation efforts, China is also reportedly interested in constructing a new port on the central Somalia coast at Hobyo (Halbeeg Staff 2018) and is one of a handful of

² Author's interview with a Republic of Somaliland government official. May 12, 2018, Berbera, Somaliland.

countries that maintains an embassy in Mogadishu, thus signaling Somalia is now a target of Chinese investment as part of its BRI strategy.

China and Eastern Africa

China has already built a standard gauge railroad connecting Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, to the port of Djibouti for a reported US\$3.6 billion (Kacungira 2017). Chinese companies are also prospecting for oil and gas in eastern Ethiopia close to the Somali border, the object of past and perhaps future Somali irredentism (Mayall 1978). In late June 2018, Chinese firm Poly-GCL Petroleum Group Holdings Limited (Poly-GCL) and the government of Ethiopia began test production of the first barrel of Ethiopian crude oil - after striking oil in March 2018 (Xinhua Staff 2018). But China is not the only country building big infrastructure and investing in Ethiopia. Italy is constructing what will become Africa's largest dam on the Blue Nile, angering Egypt in the process ("Italy's Salini Impregilo to build" 2016). Ethiopia is also Turkey's biggest investment destination in Africa with over 160 investment projects owned by Turkish companies and US\$2.5 billion invested thus far (Derso 2018).

Further south, China recently completed the first and arguably most critical section of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) running from the port of Mombasa to Kenya's capital, Nairobi. This US\$3.4 billion railroad has reportedly revolutionized travel between Nairobi and the coast, bringing a domestic tourism boom to Kenya's north and south coast beaches (Kacungira 2017). But Kenya is also massively in debt to China – reportedly owing over US\$7 billion - thus raising concerns of possible meddling in internal Kenyan affairs (Kaiman 2017).

In Tanzania railroads are being built by China, Turkey and others. Tanzania will also host an oil pipeline stretching from Uganda's oil fields to the port of Tanga on the Indian Ocean. This route will bypass Kenya entirely and contradicts a previous feasibility study by Toyota Tsusho that advocated a northern route across Kenya to the new port that was supposed to be built by Japanese and Chinese companies and loans at Lamu (Musisi & Muhumuza 2016). France's Total, which has major stakes in Uganda's oil fields and also throughout the Rift Valley was opposed to the northern route and pushed with Uganda to fund the southern route through Tanga. However, China also has major oil interests in Uganda and was said to be unhappy with a pipeline connection through Kenya (Abdallah 2016).

³ Former Somalia president Mohamed Siad Barre (1969-1991), successfully fielded an invasion of Ethiopia during the Ogaden War (1977-1978). The advance of Somalia National Army (SNA) troops and those of the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) – composed of ethnic Somalis living in the Ogaden in eastern Ethiopia – were only repulsed after the Soviet Union and Cuba intervened on the side of the embattled Marxist regime in Addis Ababa. The memory of this near-defeat has informed Ethiopian foreign policy since then and Ethiopia can be said to have taken advantage of the disintegration of Somalia that has occurred as a result of the Somali Civil War.

Mozambique has massive gas reserves and is a contested zone of both Japan and China along with Portuguese companies and South Africa. But Mozambique, like much of the rest of eastern Africa offers an interesting perspective on Japan's strengths and staying power in the region as well as the complications of operating in such a contested region.

Exchanging Vision for Strategy and Japan's Role

At present, no concrete policy or institutional body has emerged within the Indo-Pacific partnership that would take the lead on defining policy and strategy. While an articulation of such a broad and important strategy by Quad state leaders certainly makes sense, the challenge for Japan as well as its lynchpin partners will lie less in how it makes the case for an Indo-Pacific Strategy than in how it will concretely align this multi-regional vision with broader domestic and wider global considerations in the coming months and years. While there is a distinct possibility that the Indo-Pacific concept will rapidly develop by strengthening existing military and defense cooperation between the US, Australia and Japan, and proceed a bit slower with India, other strategic elements remain uncharted (Lohman et al 2015; Bej 2017; Weinrod 2018; Colby 2018). In essence, if the policies that support such a broad, multi-faceted and value-laden strategy remain uninformed and unguided by a strategic vision that seeks to define the Indo-Pacific world for the next 50-100 years the strategy will be a failure. In other words, a short-term, quick-fix solution is not a strategy.

Understanding what FOIP is to Japan is critical. First it must be understood that Tokyo's FOIP is currently version 2.0. Prime Minister Abe attempted to inaugurate version 1.0 of Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2006-2007 when he addressed the Indian Parliament in August 2007 and famously spoke of the "Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans" (Kuo 2018). However, Abe and his vision failed on two counts. One, the geopolitical climate at the time favored rapprochement with China (Madan 2017). This was the case not only for Japan but also for India and Australia and, to a lesser extent, the US (Cherian 2007; Kandamath 2016; McDonell 2007; Hartcher 2007b; Burns 2007). Two, PM Abe stepped down from power before any significant policies were explicated and put in place (Onishi 2007).

One decade later, a broader, if reinvigorated FOIP Version 2.0 has emerged as a direct answer to China's BRI and shared concerns about China's "inconsiderate" actions as a great power. Madan (2017) presciently noted some of the many

⁴ The origins of an Indo-Pacific Strategy emerged in 2006 when Japanese prime ministerial candidate Shinzo Abe argued for a values-based foreign policy that was limited as well as focused, and for closer ties with Australia and India. After Abe was elected Prime Minister, Taro Aso, his foreign minister renewed the call and acted as a driving force behind Japan's FOIP version 1.0.

⁵ Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating famously noted in 2007 response that China would be a 202

concerns: "In Australia, there's the subject of Chinese influence in politics and universities. For India, there are face-offs at the border, the effect of One Belt, One Road and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on its strategic landscape, and China blocking its Nuclear Suppliers' Group membership. For Japan, there is the dispute over the Senkaku Islands and the targeting of Japanese companies. In the United States, there is economic espionage, allegedly sponsored by Chinese government. If Beijing is wondering why the countries feel a [FOIP] might be necessary, it might want to look in the mirror."

Given the importance and complexity associated with any negotiations leading to a defined Indo-Pacific Strategy, an attempt to locate policy alternatives for Japan that are vital as well as visionary was attempted. Accordingly, and based on this research⁶ and the growing body of literature surrounding the strategy, the author assesses there are five major policy alternatives that could form the foundation of Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy:

- 1. Energy security: oil and gas
- 2. Economic security: trade relations with the Indo-Pacific region
- 3. Maritime security: free and open oceans
- 4. Strategic partnership: shared responsibility of Indo-Pacific Strategy for Japan, India, the United States and Australia
- 5. Strategic engagement with the Indian Ocean Basin: Japan's relationship with eastern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia

Japan's FOIP strategy, in its nascent incarnation, is reportedly being defined and driven by PM Abe himself, the National Security Council (NSC) – itself a creation of PM Abe during his first tenure in office and reconstituted in 2013 – as well as National Security Advisor Shotaro Yachi and former Prime Minister and current Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Taro Aso. It is reportedly informed by three fundamental points.⁷

1. Any FOIP strategy and supporting policies must expand Japan's relationships and partnerships with emerging powers such as India, not just strengthen Japan's relationship with the US. Additionally, Tokyo must convince Washington as well as New Delhi and Canberra that it is the indispensable partner for peace and prosperity not just in northeast Asia but in the wider Indo-Pacific realm. It may also be wise to convince oth-

[&]quot;considerate" power (Hartcher 2007a)

⁶ The author was a Visiting Research Scholar at Seikei University's Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS) under the aegis of Professor Kei Hakata in mid-2018.

⁷ Author's interview with a Japanese Member of Parliament. June 20, 2018, Tokyo, Japan.

- ers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) of the same (Cabellero-Anthony 2014; Chongkittavorn 2018).
- 2. According to the policymakers currently in power in Tokyo, the time of engagement with China is over for the time being. Indeed, the drivers of the FOIP in Tokyo have concluded that China is naturally an outsider to the international order composed of democratic, liberal market states (Tatlow 2018). The view that China has different political and economic values that make its entry into that order inimical and counterproductive informs Japan's response and its desire to for a robust, multilateral FOIP (Bader 2005; Ryall 2018).
- 3. FOIP has a major domestic component in Japan: a revision of the post-War Japanese spirit with its emphasis on apology for the past. In contradistinction, FOIP seeks to imbue an equally powerful sense of pride and affirmation in Japan's past to complement what has perhaps been an undue emphasis on the culture of the sorry state (Lupton, 2015; Savić, 2013 p. 129; Seybolt 2018).

Of course, underscoring these fundamental points and their development as a bonafide strategy leads to a major question and a second, critical point: Are the FOIP policy options and vision of PM Abe and his ruling party politically feasible in Japan? The normative post-War consensus in Japan has been fundamental to shaping multi-generational views of Japan's role in the world (Smith 2015). Attempts to shift dialogue away from this consensus - let alone operationalize policies and strategies that would energize Japan's political role in the FOIP realm - are fraught with difficulty, considerably weighty and of such a magnitude that they cannot be discussed at any length here. Suffice to say that it is precisely because of these significant hurdles that Japan's FOIP, both version 1.0 and 2.0, emphasize shared values, economic development and commercial ties between the two continents of Asia and Africa. In other words, Japan's strategy, such as it currently is, will continue to rest on the twin pillars of business and development albeit perhaps more strategically. This is not only to avoid egregiously and irreparably antagonizing China but, equally importantly, to avoid antagonizing significant domestic opposition to any perceived attempts to change Japan's foreign policy options to something more proactively political and, indeed, even military (Hirata 2016; Kallender & Hughes 2018). It is also necessary to avoid alienating its own FOIP partners which may value, depending on the situation, a rapprochement with China or maintenance of the status quo (Miyake 2018; Swaine 2018).

Significantly, any attempts by the current Abe administration to further develop a viable FOIP strategy will reportedly be prosecuted in a multilateral setting with as many partners as possible. This is both a strength and weakness. For example, working with ASEAN is arguably crucial if Japan wishes to fully engage Southeast Asia. Japan's view of China's rise and Chinese efforts associated with BRI and other foreign policy strategies are often shared by other members of ASEAN. But the headache associated with pinning Japan's FOIP to ASEAN also means that the strategy may never become a strategy.

Third, Japan reportedly has plans to expand the FOIP "membership" to other strategic partners. Indeed, until flooding in Japan led him to remain in Tokyo, PM Abe was to have invited France to join the FOIP during a planned visit to Paris in July 2018 ('Japan Foreign Minister Kono' 2018). The same invitation will also reportedly be extended to the UK. Both states' territorial holdings, assets and significant interests in the Indian as well as Pacific Oceans indicate that Tokyo's policymakers and politicians are keen to ensure a strategic partnership also coalesces in the region that could potentially act against Chinese aggression (Hutt 2017).

This leads to a prescient question. What would this strategic partnership, perhaps even a more robust defense alignment protect? Or what would it stand for? Certainly, a Chinese attack against Taiwan would likely be answered. But what about an attack on the Senkaku Islands? Obviously, this is of extreme interest to Tokyo. But what about Canberra? Or Washington? The hypothetical scenarios become even less robust as one moves further afield from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. These questions are – or arguably should be – in the minds of FOIP's developers and supporters in Tokyo, Canberra and elsewhere.

Japan and Eastern Africa

In the eastern Africa context, Tokyo's perspective is currently difficult to divine and will reportedly be forthcoming at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) VII in 2019 in Yokohama. ^{10 11} However, the political and economic diplomacy of the Abe administration vis-à-vis eastern Africa already shows some marked differences with those of its predecessors. There are reportedly efforts afoot to target certain countries as investment destinations and engage more fulsomely on the political front. Yes, certain countries figure more prominently in the foreign policies of states than others, and relations with those countries will accordingly be prioritized. In eastern Africa these include Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. Kenya is already the location of major Japanese in-

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Author's interview with Professor Ken Jimbo, June 19, 2018. Canon Institute, Tokyo, Japan.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Professor Sadaharu Kataoka, June 25, 2018. Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan.

¹¹ The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is a conference held regularly with the objective "to promote high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners." Japan is a co-host of these conferences.

vestment and commercial interest.¹² ¹³ Japan Ports Consulting (JPC) is in the midst of a US\$247 million overhaul and expansion of the port of Mombasa (Wahome, 2015). Nippon Koei is reportedly responsible for the larger development and building of special economic zones (SEZs), berths, bridges and bypasses associated with the Dongo Kundu Port Area and maintains offices in Nairobi as well as Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Nippon Koei, 2018). Importantly, JPC and Nippon Koei are not shareholders in the port.¹⁴ Nor do they have concessionary agreements with Kenya as the UAE does in Berbera and Turkey does in Mogadishu (Cannon & Rossiter 2018). In the case of JPC, it has been working in Mombasa since 2006 to this end, and the port expansion has now been extended to five phases, thus leading to work for potentially the next 40 years.

Japanese business delegations regularly accompany PM Abe on foreign trips. Additionally, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has reportedly developed a keen interested in supporting and expanding projects in eastern Africa such as those surrounding the port of Nacala in Mozambique, where Japanese financing and industry are building and expanding what is arguably the best natural harbor in southeastern Africa (JICA, 2012). Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo and Marubeni are Japanese multinationals which have offices and projects in major East African states.

Countering China's Rise and Enhancing International Norms

Much has been written about Japan's historical role in eastern Africa (Morikawa 1997; Sato 2004; Cornelissen 2004; Morikawa 2005; Sato 2007; Lehman 2010; Endo 2013). More recently, scholars have focused on a perceived competition between China and Japan on the continent (Mensah 2015; Pigato & Tang 2015; Zhao 2017). The rise of China certainly does seem to pose obstacles for Japan and, indeed, any other state wishing to engage eastern African states (Ayodele & Sotola 2014; Cornelissen, Cheru & Shaw 2016; Rugumamu 2017). However, in the case of China and Japan, their strategic competition on a global level and sharp disagreements on international values and norms mean that the stakes are that much higher.

Chinese engagement in Africa is driven by the need to acquire resources, secure diplomatic support, access markets, and expand investment to sustain its rapid

¹² Author's interview with a Japanese Member of Parliament, June 20, 2018. Tokyo, Japan.

¹³ Author's interview with Professor Tsutomu Kikuchi, June 27, 2018. Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Tokyo, Japan.

¹⁴ Author's interview with representatives of JPC, July 3, 2018. Tokyo, Japan.

¹⁵ Naturally blessed with a depth of 14 meters, Nacala Port is the best natural harbor in southeastern Africa and has a high potential. Currently, the port serves as a pivotal port for exports and imports in northern Mozambique. It is expected that the port will grow as the gateway to the Nacala Corridor, which has a population of approximately 45 million people.

economic growth and contain or eliminate competition from adversaries operating in the region (Onjala, 2008; Mlambo, Kushamba and Simawu 2016; Baseda & O'Bright, 2016; Mason, 2016). From this perspective, China differs little from Japan, many European Union states or medium powers such as Turkey (Cannon 2016b). Where China stands apart is in its aggressive acquisition of massive development projects (Eom, 2016). In doing so, China is filling a key gap in infrastructure, to include airports, ports, roads and railways that have often been neglected since colonial times (Brautigam, 2009). Additionally, these projects and aid reportedly comes with fewer strings attached than that of traditional Western partners as well as Japan (Zhao, 2014; Hackenesch, 2015). China seems to be little concerned with human rights, promoting transparency and good governance, instead emphasizing non-interference in domestic affairs and the promotion of a culturally relativist notion of human rights (Mlambo, Kushamba and Simawu, 2016; Cornelissen & Taylor, 2000). But Chinese projects also come with significant price tags and the percentage of interest on Chinese loans is often triple those of Japanese projects (Heubl 2017).16

Though the popular discourse may be more hyperbole than a reflection of the reality, China's initiatives and development, including its expanding interests and influence in Africa have reportedly been a priority for the Japanese public and government and attracted much media coverage (Rose 2012; Fukushima 2016; Nihon Keizai Shimbun 2012; Nihon Keizai Shimbun 2017). This has galvanized Japan's attempts to more vigorously engage Africa (Lehman 2010). This leads to a critical seventh point with four accompanying prescriptive suggestions for maintaining and strengthening Japan's relationship with eastern African states. The critical point is this: Japan cannot compete on the same scale as China in eastern Africa or anywhere else. Indeed, no country can compete with China in terms of scale. This means Japanese businesses must focus on critical strengths and exploit the weaknesses inherent in certain Chinese sectors.

Despite competition from China with concomitant reductions in the share of Japan's trade with Africa, there are some opportunities for Japan to turn the tables on China if only to increase its own business and profile there. First, Japan could capitalize on criticisms of Chinese investments and projects, including allegations of Chinese activities resulting in unfair trade and labor practices as well as harming the environment (Zeleza 2008 pp 183; Tan-Mullins 2015; Tan-Mullins, Urban & Mang, 2017). Second, China's growing involvement in Africa is not a zero-sum game. Chinese involvement does not necessarily mean or result in fewer contracts for Japan (Sim 2016), even though China's economic power may give it a diplomatic edge over Japan. Third, Japan could continue to distinguish itself from China by highlighting the quality of its work and products that offer a

¹⁶ Author's interview with representatives of JPC, July 3, 2018. Tokyo, Japan.

foundation for more sustainable and desirable development than China's emphasis on speed and cost (Aglionby 2016; Michira & Omondi 2016). At TICAD VI, Japan sought to emphasize precisely this - and to explain away the generally higher price tags by pointing to lower interest rates (Yu-Wen Chen & Hodzi 2016). Japanese minister Shinsuke Suematsu blatantly argued Japan offered high quality products at higher prices and that, unlike China, Japan was interested in transferring technology to Africans, particularly through the employment of locals. However, Japan will need to win over some East African skeptics and an elite who are attracted to cheap Chinese capital as well as the offer of bribes and laundered money available from the tendering process and construction projects (Michira & Omondi 2016). Fourth, Japan must realize it is jockeying for influence, projects and resources not only with China but a host of non-traditional and increasingly influential states (Stolte 2013; White 2013; Cannon 2016b). As such, it can shift focus from civil works and infrastructure to consulting and equipment supply, where its firms such as Toyota Tsusho, Mitsubishi and others have an edge over their Chinese competitors. Additionally, Japan could adopt a strategy used by China and issue loans in phases for larger projects (Eom, 2016). This, coupled with low interest rates could pave the way for further projects such as the Mombasa port.

Where Japanese firms are at a distinct disadvantage, however, is in the realm of direct business ventures in eastern Africa given the reported disconnect between government and business. Based on the author's research, it appears that Japanese government entities are so vigilant in avoiding even the whiff of favoritism that they tend to lean the opposite direction and fail to support Japanese business ventures in more risk-prone regions such as eastern Africa.

On the political front, the number of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and business deals signed during PM Abe's state visits appear most encouraging. But the reality is that many of these never materialize. This occurs for three reasons. First, funding never becomes available from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), for example. Second, bids are not accepted either by the Japanese government or the host state government. Third, Japanese businesses often refuse to perform direct work for African governments because of the risks involved and fears of lack of payment for goods and services provided.

Conclusion

Japan's FOIP strategy, as it develops, will almost certainly have an overt political component. This means Japan will become a truly political actor for the first time since 1945 - albeit without a traditional military component. As such, Japan's FOIP may prove revolutionary for Japan as well as the Indo-Pacific region. How-

¹⁷ Author's interview with a Japanese academic, June 19, 2018. Tokyo, Japan.

ever, Japan will continue to focus on three main areas of potential cooperation and capacity building in its FOIP engagement with eastern African states, likely downplaying its political role as much as possible. These will be pushed because they do not necessarily contain an overt political component, but do support Japan's overall goals as part of a nascent FOIP strategy. They also are politically feasible in the domestic setting in Japan. The first focus comes under the rubric of enhancing resiliency in the region. This includes putting a stop to illegal fishing and assistance in developing capacity to respond to natural and manmade disasters. A case in point would be Japan's work with the International Peace Support Training Centre in Nairobi where it assists in training as part of the UN Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC) (MOFA Japan, 2016). Second, Japan will likely attempt to enhance connectivity within regions in Africa. This could be done under the rubric of existing regional bodies and agreements such as the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU). However, a note of caution is required. The initiatives and organizations reportedly attuned to fostering African connectivity are legion and yet regional integration in East Africa, for example, remains relatively low. Mistrust, popular stereotypes and post-independence grievances have conspired to limit connectivity. While initiatives and the funds associated therewith may be welcome in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Kampala, there must also be a realization that not much is likely to happen on this front even though it makes economic sense.

Enhancing the normative aspects of the post-WWII liberal/democratic order as part of Japan's FOIP strategy is the final point. Rule of law, access to markets as well as secure and open shipping lanes are cornerstones of this order. Japan not only wishes to protect these, but must do so in order to secure vital materials and maintain its preeminent politico-economic position.

Many of the normative aspects of Japan's FOIP are arguably shared by its strategic and economic partners in this endeavor. They are also, in general, shared by African states simply because the elite tend to benefit from increased competition between external partners. No place is this more apparent than in eastern Africa where Japan and China's rivalry, despite being depicted as a David vs. Goliath encounter in demographic terms is yielding benefits to African countries in general. This contradicts the Swahili saying wapiganapo fabali wawili, ziumiazo ni nyasi (when two bulls fight, the grass suffers). Significantly, certain African elites have taken notice of this rivalry and are capitalizing on it. In the run up to the 2016 TICAD VI summit in Nairobi, Kenyan Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed referring to Japan-China rivalry quipped that "there is competition between everybody. It is a small market place." It is therefore up to African businesspeople and politicians to take advantage of this competition for their

benefit. Japan should engage this contested and complicated region consistently on both bilateral and multilateral fronts with India, Australia, the US and other partners to include China where applicable. It should do so in order to achieve at least some of the nascent aims and vision of what could be a revolutionary FOIP strategy.

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