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JAPAN'S SECURITY STRATEGY FORMATION TOWARDS CHINA:
PROACTIVE DEFENSE POSTURE

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Japan's Security Strategy Formation Towards China: Proactive Defense
Posture

Japonya'nın Çin'e Yönelik Güvenlik Stratejisi Oluşumu: Proaktif Savunma
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FOREWORD

This thesis attempt to evaluate the post-war national security defense framework that Japan is attempting to form in response to the rise of China. I am particularly grateful to my supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Ozan Kuyumcuođlu for his valuable time and guidance, even though I spent most of my time writing my thesis in different countries.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| A2/AD | : Anti Area Access Denial |
| ADIZ | : Air Defense Identification Zone |
| AGI | : Auxiliary General Intelligence |
| ASEAN | : Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| ATLA | : Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency |
| CSIS | : Center for Strategic and International Studies |
| DDG | : Guided-missile destroyer |
| DDH | : Destroyer with Hangar |
| DPJ | : Democratic Party of Japan |
| EAC | : East Asia Community |
| ECS | : East China Sea |
| EEZ | : Exclusive Economic Zone |
| FFG | : Guided-missile frigate |
| FOIP | : Free and Open Indo-Pacific |
| FPE | : Foreign Policy Executive |
| GDP | : Gross domestic product |
| HVGP | : Hyper-Velocity Gliding Projectile |
| IAEA | : International Atomic Energy Agency |
| IISS | : International Institute for Strategic Studies |
| ISR | : Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance |
| JASDF | : Japan Air Self Defense Force |
| JGSDF | : Japan Ground Self Defense Force |
| JMSDF | : Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force |
| JSDF | : Japan Self-Defense Force |
| JSG | : Japanese Coast Guard |
| LDP | : Liberal Democratic Party |
| MMD | : Multi-Member District |
| MOD | : Ministry of Defense of Japan |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| MOFA | : Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan |
| MRO&U | : Maintenance Repair Overhaul and Upgrade |
| MTDP | : Mid-Term Defense Program |
| NATO | : North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NDPG | : National Defense Program Guideline |
| NDPO | : National Defense Program Outline |
| NPT | : Non-Proliferation Treaty |
| NSC | : National Security Council |
| NSS | : National Security Strategy |
| ODA | : Official Development Assistance |
| PLA | : People's Liberation Army |
| PLAAF | : People's Liberation Army Air Force |
| PLAN | : People's Liberation Army Navy |
| PRC | : People's Republic of China |
| QUAD | : Quadrilateral Security Dialogue |
| R&D | : Research and development |
| RAN | : Royal Australian Navy |
| RMA | : Revolution in Military Affairs |
| SCC | : Security Consultative Committee |
| SCS | : South China Sea |
| SDF | : Self Defense Force |
| SDI | : Strategic Defense Initiative |
| SDS | : Specially Designated Secrets |
| SIPRI | : Stockholm International Peace Research Institute |
| SM-3 | : Standard Missile 3 |
| SNTV | : Single non-transferable vote |
| SSBN | : Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarines |
| SSK | : Attack Submarine |
| SSN | : Nuclear-Powered Attack Submarines |
| STOVL | : Short Take-off and Vertical Landing |
| TD1 | : Taepo Dong 1 |

TMD : Theater Missile Defense
TMG : Tokyo Metropolitan Government
UAV : Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNCLOS : United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US : United States
USFJ : United States Forces Japan
USN : United States Navy
WWII : World War II

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to illustrate the evolution of Japan's defense policies, which were devoid of post-war global security issues due to constitutional restrictions, in reaction to China's growing influence in the region. The prevalent International Relations literature is mostly in consensus that Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is responsible for the evolution of Japan's security strategy during the previous decade. Nonetheless, there are several divergent assessments surrounding the origin of Japan's strategic direction. In this context, numerous recent studies have re-linked Japan's security strategies to keywords such as re-militarization, balancing, hedging, containment, and accommodation. This thesis examines the periods of evolution of defense policies towards Japan's security structure faced with the rise of China by analyzing regional crises and domestic political dynamics.

In this context, the thesis will first investigate the Yoshida Doctrine's stance against the regional security structure, which was a cornerstone of Japan's post-war security plan. The second chapter will analyze the beginnings of Japan's engagement in international activities and the government's checkbook diplomacy. The third chapter will explore the responses to the consequences of regional tensions with China by comparing the changes in the security policies of the new Democratic Party of Japan administrations that defeated the Liberal Democratic Party government in 2009, which had nearly never been defeated since 1955. The fourth chapter discusses why and how Japan, under the new leadership of Shinzo Abe, attached a strong security concern to its perception of China. The last part of the thesis analyzes how Shinzo Abe's new National Security Strategy strengthened Japan's military capabilities, alliances with the United States, and regional alliance structure against China. Overall, the thesis explores how Liberal Democratic Party political actors, particularly Shinzo Abe, have attempted to prudently and moderately prepare Japan's internal security policies over the past few decades to provide a balancing strategy toward China.

ÖZET

Bu tez, anayasal kısıtlamalar nedeniyle savaş sonrası küresel güvenlik sorunlarından yoksun olan Japonya'nın savunma politikalarının, Çin'in bölgedeki artan etkisine tepki olarak evrimini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ağırlıklı Uluslararası İlişkiler literatürü, Japonya'nın eski Başbakanı Shinzo Abe'nin, Japonya'nın güvenlik stratejisinin önceki on yıldaki evriminden sorumlu olduğu konusunda çoğunlukla fikir birliği içindedir. Yine de Japonya'nın stratejik yönünün kökeni hakkında çeşitli farklı değerlendirmeler mevcuttur. Bu bağlamda Japonya'nın güvenlik stratejileri, ilgili pek çok araştırmada yeniden askerileşme, dengeleme, zarardan korunma, çevreleme ve yatıştırma gibi terimlerle bağdaştırılmıştır. Bu tez, bölgesel krizler ve iç siyasi dinamikleri analiz ederek Japonya'nın Çin'in yükselişiyle karşı karşıya kaldığı güvenlik yapısına yönelik savunma politikalarının evriminin dönemlerini incelemektedir.

Bu bağlamda, araştırma ilk olarak Yoshida Doktrini'nin Japonya'nın savaş sonrası güvenlik planının temel taşı olan bölgesel güvenlik yapısına karşı tutumunu incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde Japonya'nın uluslararası faaliyetlere artan katılımı ve hükümetin “çek defteri diplomasisi” analiz edilmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde, 1955 yılından beri neredeyse hiç yenilmemiş olan Liberal Demokrat Parti hükümetini 2009 yılında mağlup eden yeni Japonya Demokratik Partisi idarelerinin güvenlik politikalarındaki değişiklikleri karşılaştırarak Çin ile yaşanan bölgesel gerginliğin sonuçlarına verilen yanıtlar incelenmektedir. Dördüncü bölümde, Shinzo Abe'nin yeni liderliği altında Japonya'nın Çin algısına yönelik güçlü bir güvenlik endişesinin neden ve nasıl oluşturduğunu açıklamaktadır. Tezin son bölümü, Shinzo Abe'nin yeni Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi'nin Japonya'nın askeri yeteneklerini, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile mütteflik yapısını ve Çin'e karşı bölgesel ittifak oluşumunun nasıl güçlendirdiğini incelemektedir. Genel olarak, tez, Liberal Demokrat Parti siyasi aktörlerinin, özellikle Shinzo Abe'nin, Çin'e karşı dengeleyici bir strateji sağlamak için Japonya'nın iç güvenlik politikalarını son birkaç on yılda nasıl ihtiyatlı ve ılımlı bir şekilde hazırlamaya çalıştıklarını araştırmaktadır.

INTRODUCTION

Asia-Pacific is one of the regions where uncertainty, expansion, and instability are most prominent in current international relations. Due to the geopolitical interests of its actors, Asia-Pacific is host to numerous questions with different interpretations and explanations. Moreover, questions such as how the structure of the balance of power will be shaped as a result of China's unstoppable economic growth and improvement in its military capability, the role of the United States in the region, and the extent of North Korea's nuclear employment behind its restricted structure are continually growing. Japan's strategic position and role in the region, as well as its impact on the regional balance of power, are underestimated in contemporary international relations studies. In fact, Japan's national security strategy, which is positioned between two of the world's major superpowers (the United States and China), has a direct impact on regional and international security mechanisms. In past years, it has never been more essential to examine Japan in order to comprehend the economic and security dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region. So much so that, as tensions between the United States and China continue to escalate, Japan is viewed as taking the initiative rather than occupying a position of neutrality.

Since the 2012 return of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the triangle between the United States, China, and Japan has been more intense. Moreover, the Asia-Pacific security architecture can be readily understood by analyzing how this triangle structure has grown through decades. Furthermore, the imposition of constitutional prohibitions on Japan after the Second World War resulted in the country having identified with terms such as economy-focused, anti-militaristic, and pacifist nation.

Japan sought a security assurance for its people and nation from the United States while focusing on diplomatic and economic recovery after the Second World War until the mid-1970s. Japan later began to rethink its national interests as a result of its efforts to recover from an extraordinary level of war devastation and a strong

economic recovery. Nonetheless, the notion that a state should be armed to the fullest extent permitted by its financial resources, as would be expected from a typical realist perspective, has been an exception for Japan for many years.

In recent years, however, Japan's revisionist and pragmatic leaders have initiated a thorough transformation of the country's internal political structure and security mindset. Therefore, the narrowing of the gap between Japan's growing economic and military capabilities after the mid-1970s was not attributable to Japan's strong economy, but rather to the rise of state and bureaucratic power in internal politics throughout time. In order to define Japan's security strategy in the Asia-Pacific region, it is necessary to evaluate Japan's domestic policy in addition to the international system.

Until the end of the Cold War, the Yoshida Doctrine was Japan's most prominent national and security planning framework. The Yoshida Doctrine was created by Shigeru Yoshida, who served as Japan's prime minister from 1948 to 1954, in response to the country's disastrous defeat in 1945. While the doctrine helped to the productivity expansion of Japan, it placed the country's defense in direct reliance on the United States. In addition, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which was in office for all but one year between 1993 and 1994, primarily followed Yoshida's doctrine.

Due to its geopolitical interests and its fear of abandonment, Japan became cautiously worried about the region after 1989. This pushed Japan to seek a stronger role in its relationship with the United States at the turn of the 21st century. In addition, the formidable state bureaucracy that former Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi created to persuade Tokyo to implement security framework modifications was slow, cautious, and modest.

Under the leadership of Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe (2006-2007, 2012-2020), Japan has been more conscious than ever before of the need for national and security strategy in response to China's expansion. During Abe's leadership, LDP members and Tokyo has taken crucial steps in revising its defense capabilities, especially in recent years. Under the Abe administration, for instance, Japan adopted the first constitutional change allowing Japan to use its right to use

collective self-defense, signed new agreements with the United States on increased security cooperation, and built stronger security alliances with nations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Accordingly, the purpose of the thesis is to analyze the impact and differences of the revisionist beliefs of Japanese prime ministers on the policy toward China in light of external pressures and domestic political agendas from multiple viewpoints. In addition, the thesis aims at contributing by drawing on previous studies on the scope and pace of Japan's evolving superior attitude toward the Yoshida Doctrine since the end of the war to become a "normal" country (e.g., Oros, 2008; Hughes, 2009; Garcia, 2019). In addition, the thesis demonstrates how Japan's foreign policy has become more decisive due to changes in its domestic policy structure. The thesis seeks to answer, probably most importantly, what type of security policy Japan deployed in reaction to China's growing military and economic dominance in the region. On the other hand, this thesis seeks to explore, Japan's evolution of newly legal structures, altering military organizations, and more binding military partnerships with other states have all contributed to the country's status as a dynamic nation. In addition, this research focuses on how Japan reinforced the constitutional framework for its transition into a proactive country structure and the stage of Japan's transformation into a "normal" country.

The formulation of an official National Security Strategy by the government of Shinzo Abe is the most significant factor in simplifying the examination. Previously, Japanese sources viewed China as a source of attention, but in recent years, Japanese authorities have portrayed China's rise as "a matter of great concern" (MOD, 2020: 58, p.70). Instead of using the 2010 Senkaku Islands incident or Abe's election as a starting point, which is one of the most important beginnings of real tensions between Japan and China, I think that different even prior Japanese governments have been yearning for revision. Moreover, even though the revisions to Japan's defense strategy face difficulties such as the potential of a global reaction, the prospect of abandonment from the United States, and public opposition, Japanese decision-makers have been conducted out

with perseverance and modesty. However, the thesis also investigates occasions in which Japan sought to distinguish itself from the United States or to build an equitable balance alongside Washington.

In summary, the point of the study is to contribute to the literature and the existing knowledge with an analysis aimed at influencing the perception that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-Komeito government coalition, led by Abe, has unexpectedly formulated new defense strategies and policies toward China. The major research question of this thesis is “How does Japan's security strategy turn into a more proactive structure in the face of China's rising power in the region?”

The thesis also explores how the foundations were laid to modernize Japan's security and how Shinzo Abe's new policies were shaped even before his reelection in 2012. For instance, when discouraging China's policies and collaboration, I focus on transformed alliances and agreements between the United States and Japan. I also analyze the breadth and evolution of all National Defense Program Guidelines, the influence of the new electoral system in Japan, the new internal political atmosphere formed by the Koizumi administration, and the DPJ's crisis management with China. Complementarily, I explore the process from the commencement of the Yoshida doctrine to the constitutional and doctrinal revisions of Shinzo Abe.

Theoretical Background

Japan has been the subject of a case of studies for different theories of international relations. For example, for decades constructivist studies have examined Japan's defense structure using the uniquely pacifist form of Japan's post-World War II security framework. These studies are generally based on the perspective that Japanese defense policies have followed a stable and pacifist course for many years under the Japanese constitution. Moreover, these studies provide a more in-depth investigation of Tokyo's interaction with foreign policy, concentrating on Japan's peaceful identity discourses (e.g, Berger, 1998;

Katzenstein, 1996; Katzenstein, 2009). These studies focused on national culture and identity, which Alexander Wendt describes as a framework that is stored in the collective memory and determines the identities and interests of the nations concerned (Wendt, 1995). However, it falls short in analyzing the revision of Japan's defense policies in that it ignores the importance of the material capabilities and military activities of China and Japan.

Berger and Katzenstein, in particular, have argued, within the context of Japanese security studies, that the key to analyzing Japanese security policy is to approach both Japan's cultures to examine profoundly institutionalized anti-militarist norms and national identity (Berger, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996). In this way, Japan's posture and defense policy were not just a reflection of Tokyo's anti-militarism, but also of its national culture of not seeking to use force. However, it falls short of comprehensive analysis for constructivists to explain how laws and guidelines in Japan's security policy have changed and to investigate the domestic policies' underlying structure during the reforms.

Liberal thoughts, which seek to explain Japan's security policies from a different point of view, have focused on two key aspects: the economic dimension and economic interdependence. According to this concept, Japan, which has an internationally and regionally influential commercial power, prioritizes commercial measures and collaboration over military organization and force. (Rosecrance, 1987). In this scenario, the financial burdens and limitations that Japan's use of conventional forces may cause will result in Japan becoming rather inefficient. However, Japan's focus on long-term economic expansion, which had resulted in an already prospering economy, will enhance the country's welfare and make it much easier for Tokyo to collaborate with other neighbouring nations. In this way, studies have concluded that a positive atmosphere of sustainable growth brought on by trading activities will strengthen the base of stability and peace, and Japan's economic interests would be under the body of pacifism or anti-militarism (Maull, 1990). The liberal point of view discusses how China and Japan's economies depend on each other. However, even though bilateral economic

cooperation is high, it is not enough to figure out the effects and consequences of tensions in the Asia Pacific as the Senkaku Islands incident in 2010.

The thesis investigates the external and internal determinants of Japan's national security and state power in response to China's regional pressure and ascent from a realist perspective. By using a neoclassical theory framework, this study explains the post-war security policy variations of the Japanese government's desire to maintain strong national security and state power without provoking regional competition in the security domain. In this thesis, Neoclassical realism takes into account the complicated relationship that exists at both the system level and the level of domestic circumstances, and acknowledges the participation of policymakers in Japan at the level of being able to utilize state power. Thus, formulation and explanation of the milestones in the process of implementing any foreign policy are more suited at the internal level. In this context, the impact of domestic policy and the deployment of state power, which developed in accordance with the government's intentions, on the formation of Japan's security strategy were separately evaluated at distinct periods. The main motivation here is that Japan's decision makers perceives Japan as facing a serious power imbalance with China regarding territorial security during the past two decades.

Furthermore, the Neo-Classical Realist study should concentrate on the political decisions of prime ministers or other political actors, the implications of domestic policy initiatives on foreign affairs, the dynamics of regional and bilateral agreements, the analysis of regional conflicts, and international collaboration. This thesis seeks to explain the evolution of Japanese security strategy in response to China's perspectives within this framework. As stated above, several studies have attempted to explain Japan's security policies by explaining or critiquing the connection between identity, economic interdependence, and mostly external variables. This study, additionally, seeks to explain the formation of the pillars of Japan's security strategy within the context of neoclassical realism, with an emphasis on conceptual inclusivity. In addition to analyzing material capability, collective identity, and economic cooperation, explaining the variation in policymakers' use of state power is essential for the understanding of Japan's

proactive security approach. Thus, the creation of new institutions and modifications to the constitution, which has been the crowning achievement of Japan's security policies in recent years, can be better comprehended. Although it appears adequate on the surface to describe Japan without addressing the diversity of policymakers' use of state power, a deeper investigation is required. Significantly, under Abe's leadership, Japan's new national security strategy and legislative revisions prepared the ground for collective self-defense and brought about a far more extensive collaboration with other nations toward China.

The Neoclassical realism approach is an international relations theory that evaluates national security and foreign policy using systems and units. Based on the variables of states in connection to the global system (see e.g., Waltz, 1979, p. 71), this theory also takes Waltz's exclusion of unit-level variables into account, prompting a deeper investigation. In addition, Neoclassical theory provides an analytical level analysis of the roles of state actors and leaders at the national and international levels. Moreover, according to research by Lobell et al. (2009, p. 21), the Neoclassical realism is not merely a development of Waltz's balance of power theory or an attempt to integrate unit-level factors, but rather seeks to explain differences in the foreign policy of the same state in due course or between states facing equivalent outer restrictions. In another chapter from the same source, Lobell emphasizes the significance of Neoclassical theory in analyzing the distinctive characteristics of regional and small powers, emerging countries, or split, fighting, or failing states. Moreover, by establishing the notion of foreign policy executive (FPE), the neoclassical approach does not disregard the reality that state leaders might behave internationally under national objectives and compliance with global purposes (Lobell, 2009, p. 44-45).

According to Rose's definition, the neoclassical theory begins at a systematic level and exposes how power is transferred into the conduct of state actors in actual situations (Rose, 1998, p. 166). By asserting that the objective and scope of a nation's foreign policy operations cannot restrict to a single type, for instance, Rose argues that not only material tendencies but also how political decision-makers subjectively interpret them drive foreign policy activities (Rose, 1998, p.

167). Moreover, according to neoclassical realist studies, the intentions and objectives of policymakers in their use of state power constitute an additional essential ground for analysis. Furthermore, neoclassical realists question how state leaders can mobilize power by asking questions about it. For instance, neoclassical realists emphasize material power factors commonly acknowledged by realists, such as military capabilities, technology, geography, and the use of natural resources. In addition to this, they also consider individual leadership, the quality of government, and the efficiency of their leaders. (Lobell & Ripsman & Taliaferro, 2009, p. 297). In other words, to understand power, one must look beyond mere characteristics. Furthermore, according to a valuable research by Fareed Zakaria, in which he distinguishes between state power and national power, the impression of a relative growth in state power by central decision makers is the most crucial determinant for nations to promote their political objectives abroad. (Zakaria, 1988, p. 97).

In the light of this theoretical framework, Japan's post-war strategic cultural structure established by the Yoshida Doctrine severely limited the use of force as a state power. In other words, article nine of the Japanese constitution, legal and budgetary limitations, and the absence of security agencies have institutionalized the contraction of state power in Japan. Moreover, as Japan's security framework was primarily dependent on the United States, anti-militarist and pacifist sentiments regarding Japan became widespread for research. Due to the growth of China in the area and the modifications of Japan's new security plans, anti-militarist and pacifist themes have been replaced with remilitarization and normalization words in recent years. In fact, leaders such as Koizumi and Abe were able to pave the way for the deployment of new power instruments to be used by implementing several new policies (sending the SDF overseas, collective self-defense, arms export, etc.) and carrying it further.

Numerous studies have examined Japan's response to China's emergence in terms of its security policies. In recent years, approaches to Japan's antimilitarist framework have significantly diminished. In contrast, some researchers even connected Japan's defense policies to remilitarization (Hughes, 2009; Smith,

2019). According to these 'Revisionist' approaches, Japan seeks to foster the collaboration of allied countries surrounding China to limit the potential for China's actual policy to extend beyond. So, Japan is therefore on the route to a military evolution of its domestic legal order, while actively supporting its allies in the Asia-Pacific. In addition, some experts contend that Japan's actions to balance China's priorities, particularly during and after the Abe administration, are more significant than ever (Hornung, 2014; Koga 2016).

Furthermore, other researchers believe that only limited adjustment is feasible since security-related improvement cannot occur outside of the constitution's pacifist structure and the home context. According to these studies, a minimal change in what Japan needs to develop influences how its security strategy changes into its foreign policy (Samuels 2007a; Berger 2014; Liff 2015; Lind 2016; Oros 2017; Envall 2018). Other studies highlighted the positive aspects of Japanese security's peaceful foreign policy as well as minimal change and its relations with countries, emphasizing that this continued after the Cold War (Berger 1998; Oros 2015).

According to a number of assessments, Japan's hedging strategy against China has been one of the most discussed and investigated issues in recent years. Japan has therefore not been a pioneer in the regional security system. In short, Japan's behavior toward China is consistent with the status of a "middle state." Accordingly, Japan hesitates to be aggressive in a manner that would provoke China and has caught between its desire not soft and accommodating toward China, which would diminish the relevance of the US-led security structure in the Asia-Pacific (Ikenberry, 2015). Secondary state analyses, which agree with this approach in one regard, claim that Japan does not balance against China; rather, it employs a Hedging strategy by adopting a trajectory that is compatible with its domestic policies (López I Vidal & Pelegrín, 2018). In contrast other scholars also claim that Japanese hedging strategies has been shaped by a hard balancing against China (Grønning 2014, Hughes 2015, Dobson, 2017). Some analyses that, Japan has reemerged as a military power, as seen by the emergence of autonomous and

reformed security organizations in response to the escalating threats from China and also North Korea (Green 2001; Pyle 2018; Hughes 2016).

In addition, studies assert that Japan adheres to an international order based on norms implemented through both the balance of power method and forging diplomatic consensus to engage Beijing, although Japan rejects the Washington as a hegemonic state (Tamaki, 2020). On the other hand, according to some analyses, the fact that Japan is adopting a more independent and resolute security strategy does not imply that Tokyo would abandon its alliance with the United States (Fatton, 2018).

Numerous studies explain the shift in Japan's security domain or the point at which it began to relinquish its prior security role by analyzing various time periods. According to some studies, the change in Japanese security policies began with the 1955 LDP government taking power again in 1993. In this context, Japan strengthens its partnership with the United States and internationally rather than aiming to become a great power (Soeya, 2005). Studies also claim that, the breakthroughs started in the period when Prime Minister Abe first came to power (Pugliese, 2016). According to several research, it pertains to the period of Shinzo Abe's second rise to power, that is, the period that began with the Senkaku Island incident (Liff, 2015).

Most importantly, based on empirics through the mid-2010s studies do not attract much attention address the same issue in the pre-Abe period. In fact, the scenario of Japan-China security policies and vulnerability has already been addressed a long time ago (see e.g., Roy, 1994). However, in many studies evaluating Japanese defense policies, those who argue that Japan has never changed the significant subjects ignore the reality in this regard. This thesis concurs that Japan's dramatic political transformation is now immediately evident. Reforms in Japan's security strategy are frequently gradual and imperceptible. Thus, locating the beginning of the revision can be rather variable; nevertheless, to further clarify this, it is significant to investigate the causes and effects of each step in detail. The thesis analyzes Japan's security strategies in conjunction with the contribution of

the international system, regional structure, bilateral relations, and domestic policy developments, considering all the preceding into account.

For instance, many studies do not fully address strategic factors as some Japanese prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni Shrine increase regional tensions. This situation makes the studies inadequate to analyze the security perspective of Japan. Questions about replacement in defense policies are incomplete when examining social awareness or the changing importance of regional actors. Hence, the research perceives the events of regional crises as a cause and aims to investigate the decision-makers' roles. In this context, the following major question arises: what strategic approach is Japan pursuing in response to China's escalating military activities and advancing military capabilities?

In addition, data from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Defense (MOD), and Prime Minister's Office was hugely beneficial. Using source materials, such as regulations and guidelines, annual defense white papers, press releases, databases of national leaders' press conference statements, and ministry documents detailing intricacies of treaties, has greatly aided my investigation.

Using qualitative research methodologies, this study seeks to provide insight into evolving circumstances. The case study method has utilized to comprehend and explicate the causal relationships between Japan's new policy initiatives and new security strategy phases. Moreover, this study use qualitative research methods to answer the research topic by posing "why" and "how" questions as opposed to using numerical or statistical data. Consequently, the qualitative method has been used to examine and explain the cause-and-effect links between the variables. By giving access to primary sources, the ministry of foreign affairs and affiliated ministries got the case-relevant information from the prime minister's sources in this instance. During the preparation and execution of the case study for the thesis, the primary phases of research are emphasized. Initially, Japan's unique demilitarization framework assisted in identifying the case, followed by considerable data collecting and analysis. Following the interpretation of the data and findings, the relevant information was reported.

The thesis also seeks to unify disparate information by collecting data from multiple primary sources and examining development of Japan's security strategies as a case study. The study has benefited from studies published in various political science and international relations journals, books, news websites, and scientific journals on the regional policies of Japan, China, and the United States in particular. In addition, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) databases, the International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) research findings, the National Institute for Defense Studies' (NIDS) annual strategic reviews, the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) analyses, and The Diplomat's reports have provided as extraordinarily valuable resources for monitoring Asia-Pacific developments. In order to conduct the examination, reports, official documents, and international studies were correlated to cases that fit the requirements of the study. In this way, it is crucial that the part of the thesis that deals with data collecting be completely trustworthy.

1. JAPAN'S SECURITY POSTURE IN POST WAR ERA

1.1. REGIONAL SECURITY DILEMMAS UNDER YOSHIDA DOCTRINE AND FIRST SIGNS OF DIVERGENCE

Former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru was successful in regaining Japan's independence seven years after the United States occupation. As a "democratized" and "demilitarized" nation, Japan rapidly adopted a fundamentally new identity structure. Yoshida Shigeru, who achieved successful domination, is the actual pioneer of this revision. According to Yoshida Shigeru's doctrine, in order for Japan to become a peaceful nation, it had to cultivate excellent ties with its neighbors and the United States. Thus, Yoshida's perspective strengthened Japan's diplomatic view for a long time. Over time, standardization and mutual commercial gain initiatives in China-Japan relations have developed accordingly. In addition, Yoshida Shigeru's successors, such as former Japanese prime

ministers Tanaka Kakuei and Fukuda Takeo, have generally prioritized economic recovery programs and commercial cooperation with other governments during the Cold War era. Thus, Japanese prime ministers took countermeasures against conventional security concerns, disregarding economic growth barriers while remaining under the US security umbrella. Despite its proximity to the Soviet danger and the communist threat, Japan remained tension-free during the Cold War by utilizing its geographical advantage and the deterrent effects of its alliance with the United States. Japan's economic development was aided by its contributions to the free economic system. Moreover, Japan swiftly became one of the largest economy nations in the region.

After 1972, bilateral relations between Japan and China went through a process of normalization toward a trade-focused cooperation. During the post-war era, Japan and China did not face the challenge of a prolonged security rivalry. In fact, Japan felt certain that China would become a more compassionate country. So much so that safety and stability in the Asia-Pacific area were also crucial for both countries. As a result, Sino-Japanese relations have established a mechanism for mutually beneficial commercial cooperation.

However, Tokyo and Beijing did not threaten each other extensively because of the domestic political structures. There has been a compromised atmosphere regarding historical events between Japan and China. Japan especially expressed its apology for war crimes and showed moderate behavior towards China. For instance, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to China in 1972 is an important development in this context. During the visit, Chairman Mao Zedong met with Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka on September 27 and aimed to establish a serious and friendly relationship between the two countries. In fact, Prime Minister Tanaka offered an apology, acknowledging that Japan was aware of its responsibility for the harsh harm done to the Chinese people through battle in the past (MOFA, 1972). Thus, the normalization process that will cause the tension in Asia to ease has become official.

Furthermore, China and Japan's relations in the 1990s deserves a more comprehensive analysis. During this time, when conventional mutual security

measures were relegated to the background and the concept of mutual danger did not surpass its historical meaning, however, China's regional economic domination was already acknowledged as a highly feasible prospect. Regionally and internationally, China's economic potential growth began to be noticed during this period. The possible impact of China's economic expansion on future regional stability was thereafter the subject of great concern.

According to Roy's analysis, two interpretations were particularly prominent in the scenarios (Roy, 1994, p. 150). The first interpretation suggests that rapid economic development will provide China the ground to increase its material capacity. Rising power that will stifle liberal democracy had the potential to disrupt regional peace and stability. Regional disputes could arise because of the decline in cooperation between Asia-Pacific countries. A great example of this situation stems from the fact that China gives less importance to the status quo and human rights, as had witnessed in Taiwan and Tiananmen incidents. On the other hand, the second perspective indicates that, on the other hand, China would finally recognize the necessity of free trade and reciprocal economic interdependence among nations. As a result, regional development in Asia would continue, and peace would be maintained (Roy, 1994, p. 150).

However, mutual commercial gain and investment have faced situations where they were insufficient to be the source of the relationship between the two countries. At first, regional and domestic problems in the 1990s increased the tension between the two countries, albeit partially. Although economic cooperation has kept bilateral relations warm, Japan has been reminded of China's power attempts by the importance of traditional security issues that have long remained on the shelf. Japan became more cautious as a result of the Chinese response to the Tiananmen Square incident and China's subsequent efforts to alter the status quo in the South China Sea. Later, China and North Korea's nuclear testing caused an issue to which Japan was very susceptible. Thus, the approach of states, bureaucracies, and Japanese peoples to the security dilemma in Japan became more vital than ever after the Second World War.

1.1.1. Chinese Political Turmoil

In general, the tumultuous relations between Japan and China took a different structure in the mid-90s. In the Tiananmen incident of 1989, the Tokyo did not view China as a threatening country that was worrying. Japan did not respond aggressively to any environmental incidents, particularly in China, to retain regional stability and shared economic interests. For instance, the suspension of foreign aid has remained symbolic. By comparison, Japan's approach to nuclear armament and military maneuvers was more than any nation could offer. In the early 1990s, the normalization process between China and Japan encountered its first challenge. Saari Katada examined the relationship between China and Japan, addressing the motivation of Japanese foreign economic aid (Katada, 2001). Moreover, the Chinese government's attitude towards the Tiananmen Incident and China's nuclear tests did not have the same meanings in Japan. The two events contain key arguments that disrupt similar and different bilateral relations in Japan. The main purpose of the Japanese government and Japanese private sector investors to bring foreign aid to a country was to create a sustainable economic and political environment. In addition, Japan's foreign aid policies were not only related to financial or resource transfer but also to guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms (ODA, 1994). As Long stated, Japan has provided foreign economic aid to control or prevent nuclear proliferation (Long, 2001).

Initially, the United States responded to China's disregard for civil rights during the Tiananmen Square incident. After the political unrest in China, for instance, the United States promptly issued a statement condemning the Chinese administration (Richelson & Evans, 1999). Japan has faced a difficult decision on how to respond to China for the sake of both economic and security interests. Furthermore, Japan's direct investment in Asia (\$ 6.5 billion) in 1995 was larger than in North America (\$ 4.2 billion), demonstrating how Japan was stuck in a dilemma (MOFA, 1996a).

Japan's economic assistance to China has been essential in stimulating regional and global economies. In other words, the political and economic benefits of

foreign aid have enhanced Japan's stability. But when the United States assumed responsibility for Japan's defense, the nation was secure, and the Japanese people could live in peace. Japan suspended economic aid to China out of worry over its isolation from the US and other allied nations, even though Japanese government was initially unaware of the events at Tiananmen Square.

Japan's immediate response was a cautious statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, which pointed out the tragic circumstances and urged China to resolve its internal conflicts without the use of lethal force (Johnson, 2019). Thus, Japan demonstrated that it was part of the Western side in response to the Tiananmen Square events. On the other hand, human rights and the rule of law have not been tied to economic cooperation by the Japanese government. In reality, Japan used to declare at every chance that private enterprises should continue to contribute directly to foreign assistance projects. Japan's main approach was to implement regional sustainability choices that are less stringent.

For instance, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu stated on June 26, 1990, that bilateral aid relations would continue and 5.4 billion yen loan aid package would be activated. Unilateral aid started after the 9-11 July Houston summit. (Katada, 2001, p. 45). Moreover, Emperor Akhito's first Japanese imperial visit to China on 23 October 1992 shows that bilateral ties have not been affected by political turmoil in the People's Republic of China (Sun, 1992). In sum, Japan's political response to the harm done to human rights and democracy, which did not directly impact Japan, has not been catastrophic. However, bilateral ties have been negatively impacted when security problems impacting Japan, such as China's nuclear exercises, have emerged.

1.1.2. Chinese Nuclear Exercises

Beijing's nuclear tests in 1995 were among the most fundamental reasons for Japan's adjustment in policy toward China. As a result, China's nuclear exercises have weakened bilateral ties and the majority of Japan's foreign aid. First, in 1995,

China launched a nuclear test at its Lop Nor site (“China sets off second underground nuclear”, 1995). Due to Japan's extreme sensitivity against nuclear weapons, it was not a circumstance in which the country Tokyo would remain silent. The fact that Japan had been the only country subjected to nuclear attack was still vividly remembered by Japanese bureaucrats and the general population who had just lived through that time. However, Beijing conducted nuclear testing despite the sensitivities of the Japanese and close trade relations.

Undoubtedly, the nuclear test maneuvers conducted near the island had an impact on Japanese domestic politics. At the time, members of the Shinhinto Party, the strongest opposition party with strong nationalist rhetoric, and party head Ozawa Ichiro preached strong rhetoric concerning nuclear weapons (“Japan can be nuclear power: Ozawa”, 2002). The continuation of Japanese economic aid and investments in China even after the 1989 incidents was the most significant outcome of this time. Both the executive branch and the top bureaucracy have posed the question of whether Yen loans would continue. Even though Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama has strong connections with China, this reality has not changed. The conservative LDP adopted a more reactive stance.

Moreover, China's nuclear tests in August and September of the same year drove domestic politics into an even more complicated situation. Following the Chinese nuclear test in August, Japan has officially announced that it will suspend foreign aid to Beijing - except humanitarian and grassroots - to protest China's repeated nuclear tests (MOFA, 1996b). Unlike the Tiananmen incident, neither western countries nor the United States proposed the decision to cease aid to Japan. Japan insisted on enforcing this decision despite the detrimental effects on economic interests, but Tokyo and Beijing soon sought rapprochement. China gave the green light to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996, which resulted in postponing the discussions on all yen loans (Green, 2001, p. 81). However, the most significant development has resulted in a rearrangement of China's mutual economic dependence.

While a definitive long-term political crisis did not generate this shock, cracks in Japan changed political views. With the subsequent changes, the beginning of

anti-Chinese speeches spread from the bureaucracy to the public. According to polls conducted by the Prime Ministry, the percentage of Japanese who held negative opinions about China in 1996 surpassed those who had positive views. The striking aspect is that this is the first negative result since the Tokyo government started undertaking such yearly polls in 1978 (Mochizuki, 2007 p. 749).

1.1.3. Senkaku or Diaoyu ?

The issue of Senkakus has had historical significance since the Meiji era in Japan. After Japan's victory in the Sino-Japan War in 1895, the Japanese government gained rights over the Senkaku Islands. For a long time, these islands were not considered strategic territories. Additionally, instead of using the name "Senkaku" on the other hand, China defines the islands with the word "Diaoyu" in the Chinese language.

Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty of belonging throughout these periods, the islands had little impact on the tension between the two countries. The Japanese executive branch and top officials did not favor heightened political strife. However, China's territorial waters law from the early 1990s was the initial source of tension. The first real shift occurred with the rights to exploit natural resources imposed by articles 55 and 56 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which was ratified on December 10, 1982 and came into effect in November 1994. (United Nations General Assembly, 1982). As a result of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, China has assessed significance of its claims to the islands and made a more ambitious claim.

In essence, the nation that had the ultimate word in any political dispute may also be the region's legitimate leader. There are two distinct explanations for becoming the legitimate leader of the Asia Pacific. These are geographical and historical reasons. The Territorial Seas Law of 1992 is the most significant case for geographical reasons. The security danger assessment was prompted by tense ties

between Japan and China. Moreover, Territorial Seas Law of 1992 provided for the use of force to bolster China's claim to the Senkaku Islands. In essence, the National People's Congress Standing Committee sought to implement Territorial Sea Law (officially titled The Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China) in order to consolidate the People's Republic of China's maritime desires and domestic security, as well as to exercise sovereign rights and control over its coastal jurisdiction. (Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China, 1998).

Furthermore, the likelihood of fast deployment of Chinese commercial and military boats near the Senkaku/Dioyu islands diminished. This decision, which occurred practically with Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), had one of the most spark of regional instability that would last for years.

1.1.4. Japan's Stance Against North Korea's Nuclear Initiatives

In this period, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) suspected that North Korea had pieces of plutonium at Yongbyon that could be used as nuclear weapons. Indeed, a precise analysis of North Korea's plutonium processing situation could not be possible. (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2009). As a result of the IAEA's failure to gain access to North Korea's nuclear program, global worries regarding nuclear weapons have escalated dramatically. A few years later, in 1994, North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) heightened regional concerns, particularly for Japan. In addition, permanent Security Council members, notably France, US, and the UK, have considered several scenarios, such as the use of force, to avert this decision. Significantly, China has rejected each of these approaches (Bunn ad Rhineland, 2005).

Such an increase in tension in the Korean peninsula was detrimental to South Korea and to the long-term defense benefits of the US in the region. Although the regional tension decreased with the 'Agreed Framework' signed between the US

and North Korea, which committed to freeze North Korea's plutonium weapons schedule in exchange for aid (Davenport, 2020) in 1994, it gave rise to the suspicion that North Korea would last for years.

North Korea's nuclear capacity might pose a danger to Japan's security on a wide scale. Japan may be concerned about the lack of precise information on North Korea's nuclear missile material production (Tosaki, 2017). Tokyo was quite incapable of political and security issues against the nuclear armament of North Korea or any neighboring countries. Japan has described the potential domination of the Korean peninsula by North Korea as a threat to itself. The primary reason for this security danger stemmed from the Sato-Nixon statement of 1969, which declared that the stability of the South Korea was critical to Tokyo's national safety (Nixon, 1969).

Another important point was that Japan held talks with China on North Korea just before China's nuclear tests in 1995. According to the Japanese government, China could play an active calming role as North Korea's last ally (United Press International, 1994). Following a visit to China, Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa maintained Japanese foreign policy through North Korea, in close communication with both China and the USA (Hughes, 2008, p. 86).

However, as China has also carried out nuclear tests over time, Japan has had to realize all its dissuasion with the United States. Later, this anxiety-level perception of threat turned into a threat from hostile external power following North Korea's nuclear tests (Kamiya, 2003). An indication of a hostile foreign power threat was the launch of Taepo Dong 1 (TD1) by North Korea on August 31, 1998. Since the second phase of North Korea's launch was carried out in an area 930 miles from the island of Japan (Chandler, 2017). As noted above, Japan was insufficient to deal directly with the crisis or to play a deterrent role.

Since the commencement of the nuclear crisis, Japan has also operated consistently with the US Security Policy Approach. The United States and Japan began collaborating on Theater Missile Defensive (TMD) to develop a deterrent defense system. In other words, the TMD has been investigated intensively as a missile deterrent by American and Japanese defense experts in response to the

North Korean threat. Since the early 1990s, US and Japanese industries have collaborated on the development of SDI-related technologies as part of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Furthermore, TMD was the outcome of these initiatives. The planning of surveillance satellites was a significant element of this initiative, which consisted of four primary elements. As Namatame notes, the TMD initiative occurred even though observation satellites were not designed for military espionage in that period (Namatame, 2012, p. 13). However, Japan was willing to act as a deterrence against the nuclear operations of North Korea. In reality, the mutual new technology initiatives between Japan and the United States at that time demonstrated that the defense mechanisms of the two nations would coordinate in the region. China and Russia, on the other hand, condemned the TMD effort for destabilizing regional security (Arms Control Association, 1999).

1.1.5. Taiwan Strait Crisis

The visit of Taiwan Prime Minister Lee Teng Hui to the US in June 1995 signified the beginning of Taiwan's regional conflict with the PRC. Simply expressed, the source of the regional conflict was a disagreement about Taiwan's international position. Transition phase of Taiwan's democratization and localization policies demonstrated China's potential to use its military force in any political conflict. Thus, at that time, the Taiwan Strait became an area where regional tensions were crucial due to China's military power testing and the high potential for ambivalence. In 1995, total of six DF-15 missiles, which is a short-range solid propellant ballistic missile (Missile Defense Project, 2017), had fired from Chinese soil for testing within three days.

In addition, during July 21-28 of the same year, the People's Liberation Army conducted missile exercises in a region 80 miles northeast of Taiwan, quite near to air and sea zones between Japan and Taiwan (Whiting, 2001, p. 121). China's testing of missiles in the surrounding countries of the Taiwan Strait was essentially increasing concerns in the region. On the other side, the US's active

involvement in the Asia-Pacific region was also concerning. Following this, following the former Taiwan leader Lee Teng Hui's statement that he will run for reelection in the Taiwanese elections in November 1995, China's announcement that it would commence a new military exercise is another essential development. Against this development, China staged thorough military exercises encompassing 10 days in the same month. This exercise, which China carried out with more than 160,000 military personnel, was in a manner conveyed a message to Taiwan's potential political power with the support of the United States (Whiting, 2001, p. 121).

The propensity of China to employ force has imperiled peace in the region. The Taiwan Strait Crisis, that has a direct effect on the triangular relationship between the Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo, had undoubtedly led to a further tightening of the US-Japan relationship. As a result, close economic cooperation between Japan and China has made a new distinction between the functioning of Chinese civil-military institutions. Furthermore, these military exercises, which would have carried out with approximately thousands of military personnel, undoubtedly raised major concerns on the Japanese side.

Tokyo was quite unprepared for a security problem involving Japan. Japan's compromising sea and airspace routes in the SCS have been a quite worrying situation for the Tokyo government. Japan could not have been expecting to remain unresponsive in dealing with oil transport on the sea route and the controversial situation in the Senkaku Islands. So, Japan could not risk the regional risk of harm that would threaten Japan's economy. Moreover, Japan has not given up its desire to adhere to the Peaceful Constitution, as well as its efforts to establish warm relations with the US. However, during the era of normalization following 1972, Japanese politics remained quite indifferent to Taiwan's independence because of the relationship with China. In the 1990s, the improvement of Japan's economic relations and investment connections with Taiwan and the sharing of cultural collaborations with Taiwan's former leader Lee Teng-hui led to close ties between Taiwan and Japan. It is particularly striking

that the liberal economic initiatives of Taiwan have combined common discourses on democracy.

Under the leadership of Lee Teng Hui, Taiwan maintained its diplomatic distance from China while growing closer to Japan under shared values (Peng-Er, 2004). Lee Teng-hui's knowledge of Japanese fluently because of his education and service in Japan and the fact that he was a political figure dominating Japanese culture had an impact on the Japanese government and opposition party politicians. Thus, with the influence of Japanese bureaucrats, Diet political actors, and the media, bilateral relations have become much closer. Consequently, Taiwan's shared optimism had a major impact on Japanese politics.

Moreover, one of the primary reasons for this interconnectedness is the two nations' governments' shared emphasis on the rule of law and human rights in democracy. While the relationship between Taiwan and Japanese politicians was positive, Japan's full diplomatic support remained limited. Since any armed conflict in the region could have directly damage the order established by Japan in the form of a guideline. Japan thus avoided Taiwan's official relationship, which further confused China and heightened regional tensions. On the other hand, Japan did not want the PRC to control Taiwan entirely. That was the case when Tokyo was in a foreign policy dilemma. The political priority for Japan has been to maintain peace and preserve trade cooperation. In short, Japan's primary concern was that any change in the status quo would further exacerbate regional tensions.

Shortly after the crisis, Bill Clinton and Ryutaro Hashimoto accepted that the security and prosperity of Japan government and the US depended on the future of Asia-Pacific. The Joint Declaration has issued on 17 April 1996 in an attempt by Japan to play a more active role in achieving stability in the Asia-Pacific (MOFA, 1996c). It is striking from the scheduling point of view that the Japan-US Joint Declaration occurred only one month after the Taiwan Strait Crisis. But, The Taiwan Crisis, however, was not specifically set out in the Joint Declaration. In the event, according to Clinton, Japan should have played a further active role in a possible future conflict involving the SCS, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan.

Moreover, to comply with the Guidelines, Japan has been tasked with assisting US activities in areas such as the use of US facilities, logistical support of the Self-Defense Forces, intelligence sharing, and security (MOD, 1997).

According to Wang, the Guidelines' description of "Areas Surrounding Japan" is a very controversial issue (Wang, 2000, p. 367). According to the Guidelines, the potential hostility of Japan's surrounding areas had a direct impact on the peace and security of the nation. Importantly, this phrase has a situational rather than a geographical sense (MOD, 1997). As a result, the Japan guidelines reference tasks did not define Taiwan or which geographical regions they covered. The research conducted by Midford demonstrates that Beijing's response to the guidelines was driven by apprehension that the reformed Japanese may increase its tactical autonomy. Likewise, PRC has attempted to prevent the strengthening of Japan's armed independence. According to study, Beijing, furthermore, supported the alliance's continued existence to keep Tokyo from becoming a military power (Midford, 2004, p. 132).

2. JAPAN'S SIGN OF ENGAGEMENT

2.1. FROM MODEST WAY TO RELUCTANCY

Japanese national defense and security dynamics, which were modestly implemented between 1951 and 1989, started transforming because of internal and external reasons. The developments of nuclear armament by China and North Korea had resulted in the expansion of Japan's modest defense-oriented pacific policies by strengthening its alliance with the US. Furthermore, Japan's hesitancy in its international defense role demonstrated that modest defense-oriented policies would be even more dynamic in 2001. Indeed, Tokyo's changes in defense mechanisms reverberated on the international stage immediately following the 9/11 attacks. Crucially, the international system, domestic political

structure, and even national identity have led to the Japanese defense mechanism's policy interventions.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 caught Tokyo by surprise. Diplomatically, Tokyo has been put to the test by an international crisis. In addition, first since the Cold War came to an end, a global crisis highlighted Tokyo's diplomatic inadequacies (Hiroshi, 2011). The fact that Japan purchased 90% of its oil procurement from the Middle East as well as the effect of the Japanese pacifist constitution on the international security role, were undoubtedly concerning. Tokyo's options for military assistance were limited. The JSDF had never been involved in any missions or operations outside the country. Furthermore, the operations were not supported by the necessary political and constitutional structures. So, when the Gulf War broke out, the US' encouraged Japan to take a more active role in proactive defense, however this incentive did not outstrip the JSDF's capabilities.

Japan's commitment to the US for national defense and natural resource access did not affect Japan's military support in 1990-1991. Japan, on the other hand, was so dependent on the US that it could not jeopardize its access to oil resources and have a meaning influence in Pacific. Instead of sending in military support, Tokyo's government, headed by Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, acted quickly. Before the UN-backed embargo, Kaifu pursued a campaign of sanctions against Iraq (Hook 1996, p. 84).

Japan's strategy was the "Checkbook Diplomacy", in which a \$13 billion aid package was provided. Nevertheless, the United States, which sent hundreds of thousands of troops, was dissatisfied with the JSDF's lack of cooperation. Tokyo's unwillingness to send SDF personnel contributed to the international reputation as a commercially driven country. This image of Japan stressed the importance of the US exerting pressure on Japan to intervene in prospective international crises (Hiroshi, 2011).

According to Arase, Japan encountered with increasing US pressure after declaring its checkbook diplomacy (Arase, 2007, p. 566). As the potential for China and North Korea to provoke regional crises emerged, Japanese

policymakers understood that the 1978 Guidelines needed to be replaced. Developing dynamic regional security structures subsequently caused the implementation of the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) in 1995. It should not be overlooked that in order to retain its hegemony and power in the Asia Pacific region, the United States required Japan's assistance significantly. Japan, on the other hand, was eager to contribute to the preservation of US supremacy in the region due to shared values and interests.

2.2. SELF DEFENSE FORCE'S FIRST OVERSEAS TRIAL

As a result of the September 11 attacks on the US, Japan has reexamined its security strategies for the twenty-first century. In essence, it is quite important to what extent its allies stand by Washington in the attack on the US. So much so that the US called on its allies to act together in the "fight against terrorism".

The scope and structure of Japan's contribution have several implications that merit investigation. Despite close alliances, postwar Japan lacked direct security and military support for the United States. In other words, any potential offensive mobilization of Japanese troops had already experienced constitutional restrictions. Considering this circumstance, Japanese policymakers had only provided financial support to its closest ally that facing international crises outside Japan.

Over time, however, Japan realized the importance of regional alliances and security considering Beijing and Pyongyang's significant nuclear expansion in the region. Japan was incapable of resolving any potential regional confrontation without the Washington. On the other hand, US would not be satisfied with the bilateral alliance's economic assistance alone, therefore Japan was prepared to exert more pressure out of fear of abandonment. Japan has decided to aid the US in the Iraq crisis to the extent permitted by its constitution. Under Koizumi Junichiro's administration, Japan attempted to stretch the legislation to its boundaries. In this context, the victory of Koizumi as Japan's next head of state in

2001 was a turning point in the US-Japan alliance. In addition, unlike the First Gulf War in 1991, Tokyo was compelled to maintain its crucial oil supplies. Moreover, a more major impact of the Iraq War on Japan is the likelihood of "normalization" measures in Japan's security establishment, which would be backed by the US.

Furthermore, international actors believed that the US should not take a unilateral decision to launch a military operation against Iraq before investigations of the weapon inspectors reach a meaningful conclusion. Another point of debate was about the possibility of any unilateral military action of the US without being authorized by the UN. For example, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien refused to take part in a war against Iraq without a UN resolution (Catalinac, 2007, p. 65). Despite widespread international opposition against the invasion, the Japanese government insisted on siding with the US. For instance, Prime Minister Koizumi on March 2003 stated that Tokyo would support the US despite lack of international support.

“I believe that disarmament, requirement to give freedom to the people of Iraq and effecting the departure of President Saddam Hussein all roughly hold the same significance. It is from that perspective that I support the position of the United States.” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2003a).

Despite US pressure in 1990, Tokyo pursued a checkbook diplomacy that fell far short of the international support that the US had hoped for. As a result of significant worldwide disapproval of the US in 2003, Tokyo was planning to make it clear that it supported the Washington openly. The Japanese government concluded that the peace and stability of Iraq and its environs have a direct impact on Japan and therefore it is prepared to take active policies in accordance with this situation (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2003b).

Regardless of the lack of UN peacekeeping activities, SDF's deployment by the Koizumi administration was essential. The Koizumi government lacked a solid foundation and legal justification in domestic politics. After a thorough assessment of the changes to the constitution, the Koizumi administration swiftly proposed new laws to the National Diet of Japan. Moreover, the Japanese cabinet

under the Koudzumi leadership adopted the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law as a reaction. Under this new law, Japan sought to increase its support for its partners' military activities in Afghanistan and other places to combat terrorism. Under this law, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) vessels could, for instance, provide fuel and transportation assistance to US and UK vessels in the region (MOFA, 2002).

In addition, in 2003, Koudzumi and his cabinet introduced Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq to Diet, and the law was passed within a month with the support of the LDP, New Komeito, and the Liberal Party. The task description and time information for SDF were provided in accordance with this law. Furthermore, the deployment of SDF troops in the Iraqi city of Samawah was permitted under this law. The main three tasks of troops, such as health services, personnel safety, and transportation operations, are all defined separately for the Maritime, Air, and Ground Self Defense Forces (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2003c).

2.3. THE POWER OF DOMESTIC POLITICS

Further reasons behind Japan's strengthening of its domestic political bureaucracy fall short when presented as a response to foreign policy. Revision of the domestic Japanese bureaucracy structure had a greater impact on foreign policy. Considering the disruptions in decision-making processes due to the insufficient autonomous powers of bureaucrats in Japan's internal affairs, a thorough investigation of political changes within the country is essential.

In addition, until the end of the 20th century, the Japanese electoral system formed as multi-member regions (MMDs) with non-transferable votes (SNTVs). In briefly, SNTV is a voting system in which voters in a multimember district cast a single candidate-centered vote. The candidates with the most votes are elected (Clark, 2017, p. 560). Japan's single non-transferable vote system of multi-member districts has replaced with a mixed electoral system of single-member

districts (SMD) with plurality voting and a party-list system with proportional representation in 1994.

In essence, one of the primary motivations for modifying the election system was to diminish intra-party conflicts and the influence of the older generation, who had dominated Japanese politics. Thus, the new system, in which party approval became progressively crucial in political decision-making processes but faction authority diminished, had been implemented. (Arase, 2007, p. 569). Young bureaucrats who believe Japan ought to play more active role in the international system, thus they wish to see Japan return to normalcy have increased over time. Thus, the indecisive and gloomy structure of the bureaucrats who observed the War Years was progressively replaced by bureaucrats who were proactive.

Furthermore, domestic reforms had enabled Japan to assume a more policy-oriented role as it entered the twenty-first century. As the need for bureaucracy grew, a new Cabinet Office was established with bureaucratic agenda-setting powers. To reinforce the bureaucratic structure, domestic reforms, such as the Law Amending the Cabinet Law and the Law on the Establishment of the Cabinet Office, went into effect just before Koizumi Junichiro became prime minister.

Rikki Kersten examined the new policy-making procedure implemented during Koizumi's administration. According to Kersten, during Koizumi's government in 2001, domestic politics within the LDP started changing. Significantly, Koizumi has succeeded in transforming Tokyo's external challenges into an "advantage" (Kersten, 2011, p. 10).

In fact, Kouzumi, senior bureaucracy at the MOFA, and the Cabinet Office supported the SDF's overseas deployments to boost its cooperation with the United States on the frontline. They advocated for the immediate deployment of the SDF. However, the UN's first response would have cost Japan an opportunity (Miyagi, 2009, p. 354). Although the Koizumi administration supported the deployment of SDF troops, there was no use of force in the region to spark a conflict. The troops would help the international community by assisting with reconstruction efforts away from the battlefield. However, for the first time since

the war, Japanese forces assumed on crucial step by taking responsibility for operations outside of Japan.

Moreover, the question of constitutional change rapidly rose to the top of the national agenda. Basu highlighted, for instance, that in December 2004 Koizumi drafted an LDP action plan to pass a constitutional amendment (Basu, 2016, p. 33). The Koizumi government has made little headway in rewriting Constitutional provisions due to the absence of a national consensus. But former Prime Minister Koizumi has encouraged the formation of a more engaged Japan.

3. POLITICAL CLEAVAGES AND NATIONAL SECURITY BETWEEN LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN FOR CHINA

3.1. LDP UNDER KOIZUMI LEADERSHIP AND VISIT TO YASUKUNI SHRINE

Yasukuni Shrine, located near Tokyo's Imperial Palace, has a lengthy history as a historic memorial founded in 1869 to honor and memorialize the spirits of soldiers who died in the battle of their nation. Yasukuni Shrine was originally constructed in Kyoto to memorialize the warriors who died in the battle during the Tokugawa period, but it was later relocated to Tokyo and transferred to the state administration during the Meiji period. For many years, the shrine has been symbolizing Japanese patriotism and spirits and memories of warriors who died on the battlefield blossom in the temple garden, and the flowers keep the souls and memories alive. As a result, Japanese citizens and also officials visit the shrine every year to demonstrate their devotion and gratitude with the experience of profound nationalistic sentiments.

Moreover, diplomacy and strategic policies are influenced by the Yasukuni Shrine in addition to its symbolic importance in the country. Assessing the region's nationalist and populist movements is an essential criteria for identifying and

analyzing its symbolic significance. Essentially, the Temple is a modern portrayal of a past that goes beyond a religious center or a memorial to those who died in battle. The transfer of the revisionist evolution of Japanese history to the present has had a serious influence on neighboring nations' sensitivity to Japanese nationalism. Thus, official visits to Yasukuni Shrine have diplomatic weight for the PRC and provoke anger and concern among Chinese political actors toward Japan. Because, beginning in 1978, troops and commanders of World War II Class A War Criminals were honored at Yasukuni Shrine (Yoshinobu, 2020).

China views the shrine as a resurgence of imperialist and nationalist tendencies in Japan. The primary source of anxiety on the Chinese side is that Japan perceives it as an indicator that it intends to re-subjugate China. Furthermore, for Chinese officials, the issue of Japanese prime ministers visiting Yasukuni is a critical litmus test of Japan's sincerity and willingness to build good ties with the PRC (Deans, 2007, p. 270).

Specifically, official visits to Yasukuni Shrine incited anti-Japanese feelings that may have surpassed what the Chinese authorities deemed acceptable. Considering all of these reasons, China's view of Japan deteriorated under Koizumi's administration. For instance, as Zakowski stipulated that, the proportion of Chinese expressing hostility towards Japan has risen from 34% in 1997 to 53% in 2002 to 64% in 2005 (Zakowski, 2012, p. 51). In addition to the public's antipathy towards Japan, anti-Japanese statements from the elites occasionally arose.

The structure of prime ministerial visits before Koizumi's tenure is less remarkable. Because the visits were not completely conducted as diplomatic missions. Miki Takeo, who served as Prime Minister of Japan between 1974 and 1976, emphasized the fundamental principles of visiting Yasukuni "privately." According to Takeo, the use of official transportation, direct contributions from public funds, and the title of head of state were unacceptable (Zakowski, 2012, p. 48).

Until the 1980s, a considerable number of postwar Japanese prime ministers, regardless of political beliefs, paid yearly homage to the shrine. For example, Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi's covert visit to Yasukuni Shrine in November

1992 was eventually revealed. In another case, Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro conducted a brief visit to shrine in the summer of 1996. However, when Ryutaro acquired reactions from his previous visit, the Prime Minister decided against making another (Shibuichi, 2005, p. 211).

However, Koizumi's stance on visits differs substantially from that of previous prime ministers. While preparing for the 2001 Japanese prime ministerial elections, Koizumi also highlighted the Yasukuni Shrine as the basis of an electoral pledge. In order to fulfill his pledge after being elected Prime Minister, Koizumi scheduled a visit for August 15 -the 56th anniversary of the ceasefire that ended WWII- which elicited reactions both domestically and abroad (Yoshida, 2001). Koizumi, who had gone to the temple earlier due to the reactions, stated in his speech on August 13, the day of his visit, that he had gone another day to avoid extra reactions that stated as:

“Taking seriously such situations both in and outside of Japan, I have made my own decision not to visit Yasukuni Shrine on that day, and I would like to choose another day for a visit” (MOFA, 2001).

Moreover, in his remarks in 2002, Koizumi, who visited the Yasukuni Shrine six times during his primiership, stated that his regular visits to shrine should not be dramatized:

“I consider it to be natural for me to pay homage at the Yasukuni Shrine, which has become over the course of many years, a central institution for many people of Japan to mourn those who sacrificed their lives for the country” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2002).

Although Koizumi made a diplomatic gesture by postponing his planned travel to China and North Korea on August 15, criticism and pressure continued. The sanctification of the spirit of former Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who was executed for war crimes such as launching wars of aggression and ordering the torture and abuse of prisoners of war, was main cause for Beijing's severe criticisms. In addition, for China, the reconstructed historical background constituted an additional significant indication of modern Japanese patriotism. In light of this, the Yasukuni Shrine signified Japan's efforts to change its historical

context. Significantly, as Deans notes that, the ultimate objective of Japanese patriots is a reevaluation of the Japanese constitution drafted by the United States in 1947 (Deans, 2007, p. 282). At this point, Japanese nationalists coming from different fractions are agreed on supporting the idea of rewriting of the constitution and the continuation of the Yasukuni Shrine pilgrimage.

China's main anxiety has been that Japan's capacity to take aggressive diplomatic measures will become even more relevant. For example, the most critical issue to avoid for China is Japan's leadership role in the region (Calder, 2006, p. 134). Whatever Koizumi's domestic political motivation or intention, his visits sparked regional skepticism. Thus, the handling of bilateral security relations by both the Japanese and Chinese authorities has become problematic, and bilateral ties have essentially frozen. In this sense, any resemblance to Japan's imperial past, which shunned aggressive duties particularly in the postwar period, was unacceptable to China.

The unprecedented growth in Chinese military capability during this period of stress is also a source of concern for Japan's regional security. Importantly, China has strengthened its military capabilities by increasing government spending and dedicating a portion of its budget to military modernization. For example, regionally, military spending in East Asia grew by 5% in 2002. According to SIPRI yearbook, this expansion was mostly driven by China. Only China outpaced East Asia's 4.8 billion dollar increase, which amounted to a total of 6 billion dollars (Skons, & Perdomo, & Perlo-Freeman, & Stålenheim, 2004, p. 331).

Occasionally, given the conditions, hostilities between Beijing and Tokyo have grown. For example, the People's Liberation Army Navy increased its presence near Japanese territory during the start of the twenty-first century. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese navy vessels have been spotted close and in some instances within Japanese territorial waters. After two hours in Japanese maritime boundary on November 10, 2004, a Han-class Chinese nuclear attack submarine returned back. In addition, Defense Agency Director-General

Yoshinori Ono has ordered the JMSDF to be on extremely high alert for the second time since World War II (Dutton, 2009, p. 4).

Additionally, five Chinese Navy units, including a Sovereign-class destroyer, were discovered in the ECS in September 2005 in the Tianwaitian/Kashi zone (Shojii, 2006, p. 152). Consequently, Beijing's expanding claim in the ECS has intended to strengthen its capacity to block hostile activities, prevent Taiwan's independence, and preserve natural resources as well as key sea routes.

3.2. 2004 NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) represent Japan's main defense instruction documents, outlining Japan's defense pathways and determining the role and capabilities of the SDF. On December 10, 2004, the Security Council with the Cabinet of the Japanese Government adopted the NDPG to safeguard Japan's security progress and to transmit its stability to the long term by assessing the present security situation. While highlighting the capability and significance of the nation's military capabilities, the NDPG also establishes fundamental principles for assessing future defense capacity (MOD, 2019). According to the NDPG, Japan is totally safe from military invasion, but it explicitly targets Japan's security concerns, potential threats, and changing security environment in the region.

The 2004 NDPG program has two main modifications from prior ones. In the first paragraph, a summary of PRC's activities in the region is described. As cabinet stated:

“China, which has a major impact on regional security, continues to modernize its nuclear forces and missile capabilities as well as its naval and air forces. China is also expanding its area of operation at sea. We will have to remain attentive to its future actions” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2004).

However, the first NDPG (1976-FY1977 and thereafter) primarily provides guidance on how to sharpen and improve Japan's military capability. Moreover,

SDF operations in the post-Cold War global and regional security environment were agreed upon in the 1995 NDPG.

In short, when discussing regional security concerns, neither the NDPG for FY1977 nor the NDPG for FY1996 addressed any emphasis on China's potential threat. In some ways, the Japanese government's assessment of the threat to North Korean nuclear activity has now shifted to the military buildup of PLAN and PLAAF. At this point, newly NDPG emphasizes that China's modernization is accelerating, and Japan must take prudence in order to protect its regional and national interests.

The second key distinction between the 2004 NDPG and its predecessor is that the NDPG's role and structure are described in terms of revision timelines as a consequence of regional defense adjustments. In fact, the new NDPG aims to achieve the agreed-upon security structures and goals within ten years. Previous NDPG resolutions were not no mentioning about timeframe. As officially stated that:

“However, five years from now or in case there is a significant change in the international situation, we will review and, if necessary, revise the guidelines in light of the security environment, technological progress, and other relevant factors at the time” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2004).

3.3. SHINZO ABE’S FIRST ERA

Early 2000s rifts between Tokyo and Beijing were largely caused by disagreements over historical issues. Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, as well as the discussions over history books, were enough to the content of divergence between the two countries' viewpoints. Furthermore, by 2006, Koizumi's resignation, which left no successor in office, had reshaped Japanese domestic and foreign politics. Japan's primary foreign policy issues were Pyongyang's intensifying nuclear activities, deteriorating bilateral ties with PRC and ROK, and

further strengthening relations with the US, particularly in the national security domain.

Shinzo Abe rose to prominence in Japanese politics during Koizumi's time in government. Abe, who had served as the LDP's deputy chief cabinet secretary, was part of Koizumi's first government after the party's victory in the 2001 election. Abe became the LDP's general secretary just two years later. While Abe was general secretary, he quickly won Koizumi's respect for his views on foreign and government policies. As a result, Abe was appointed as chief cabinet secretary in 2005, his first ministerial office, and he quickly became one of the prominent actors in the government. Shinzo Abe's governmental and international policy evaluations, as well as his leadership qualities, became popular prior to his election as Prime Minister in 2006.

For instance, Abe gave a speech on how Japan could progress globally at the Brookings Institution Center conference in 2005. Furthermore, Abe underlined Japan's approach to issues on free trade and globalization, and he openly expressed his views on the international security system. Abe made an unusual claim for constitutional change in light of national security concerns:

“In addition, the Japanese government has the right of collective self-defense under international law, but has interpreted the Japanese constitution as prohibiting that right from being exercised. This kind of narrow interpretation that Japan is not able to exercise the right of collective self-defense is not applicable in today's international world” (Abe, 2005).

Abe's history must be thoroughly comprehended in order to comprehend his stance on foreign affairs. Kishi Nobusuke, whom Abe describes as a major source of inspiration, was premier in Japan from 1957 to 1960. Additionally, Nobusuke was Abe's grandfather. During Nobusuke's time as prime minister, however, he focused on renewing the 1951 security agreement signed with the United States. The 1960 revision agreement aimed to increase Japan's independence and parity with the US, as well as to restore Japan's reputation.

Furthermore, Kishi Nobusuke sought to reform the post-war structure that had led to an unequal agreement between the US and Japan under Shigeru Yoshida's direction. Nonetheless, after the agreement was brought to the Diet authorities,

massive opposition demonstrations from around the nation, particularly from socialist and left-leaning parties, rushed into the Diet building. This actually was nearly one of the most dramatic mass protests of the postwar Japanese period. In essence, US former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's visit to Japan was canceled due to such mass demonstrations (National Diet Library, nd).

In addition, Shinzo Abe became Japan's first postwar born prime minister on September 26, 2006, after winning an election on September 20. In his inauguration speech as Prime Minister, he stressed the need to restore relations between China and South Korea. Abe stated that:

“I am certain that China's development will bring remarkable benefit to Japan as well. I will also make efforts to develop Japan-China relations even further” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2006a).

In essence, newly prime minister kept his pledge, and after his election victory, he illustrated the cleavages in Sino-Japanese ties with his first foreign visit to China. His main aim was melting the frost left behind by the Kouzimu era. Even though newly prime minister had been expected to make his first official foreign trip to the US as customary for previous leaders, he made his first official visit to Beijing. Abe's visit has taken to be part of a diplomatic strategy. Another notable moment during Abe's official visit to Beijing occurred when a journalist questioned him about the Yasukuni Shrine and how Japan's future relations with China would be formed. It's worth noting that Abe just gave a cursory answer to the question.

“Whether I have visited or will visit Yasukuni Shrine is not something I shall make clear since this is a matter that has been turned into a diplomatic and political issue. I shall not elaborate on it” (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2006b).

Based on his statements prior to becoming Prime Minister, the assumption that Abe would deteriorate bilateral relations with his conservative nationalist framework did not come to fruition. Shinzo Abe wrote in his Japanese-language book “*Towards a Beautiful Country*” that historical considerations cannot come before common economic and security policy interests, and that traditional

politics and economic interests must be kept apart from sustainable bilateral partnerships (Abe, 2006, p. 152).

Abe's meetings with Chinese and South Korean leaders revealed a pragmatic approach. The Sino-Japanese relations, which had virtually hit rock bottom during the Koizumi period, demonstrated that both nations intended to tread carefully in this approach. Former PRC Premier Wen Jiabao's return visit in April 2007, less than a year later, confirmed the increasing trajectory of Sino-Japan bilateral relations. However, as McCurry stated that, during the visits while China voiced worry over Japan's strengthened defense policy, Abe stated Beijing should be more transparent about its military spending with the public (McCurry, 2007).

Throughout his almost year-long tenure as prime minister, it is hard to conclude that Abe followed a straight political route. In essence, Abe did not visit Yasukuni Shrine, although he supported Koizumi's tenure due to his close relationship with the prime minister. However, Abe achieved substantial improvement in relations with Beijing in a short time of period. In such a political environment, arguably the most significant feature of Abe's quick resignation as Prime Minister is his domestic political breakthroughs rather than his foreign policy approach. The return to the LDP of dissident politicians who opposed Koizumi's postal privatization proposal, in particular, has been a sensitive issue that has resulted in a substantial loss of support inside the party. Abe's decision received criticism from party activists and members (Edström, 2007, p. 69).

3.4. DPJ AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON NATIONAL SECURITY

The LDP's nearly ongoing rule since 1955 came to an end when it lost the elections in 2007 and 2009 to the opposition party Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), and the DPJ finally seized control of the Diet. The end of the long-lasting single-party rule marked the beginning of the two-party system in Japan. However, it was later understood that the DPJ only went so far as to bring about minor political changes, rather than a revolution (Lipsy & Scheiner, 2012, Howe

& Campbell, 2013). The LDP was able to preserve its dominance by focusing on economic growth and emphasizing US assistance in security policy in the bipolar world that existed following the Cold War period. In fact, throughout the that time, the LDP expanded its strategy of responding to changes in the international security framework by forging a deep relationship with the US.

Undoubtedly, the DPJ built the fundamental foundation of party policy by challenging ties with the US as well as the internal political crises. It was alleged by DPJ opponents throughout the campaign that LDP had provided too much help to the US in its war in Iraq. In addition, DPJ officials have declared that they would only and totally support a peaceful intervention headed by the United Nations. The DPJ also criticized Koizumi's successors for their lack of public engagement. In general, the DPJ has blamed Koizumi's predecessors for historical issues, corruption scandals, and the doomed healthcare system (Easley & Kotani & Mori, 2010, p. 49).

3.4.1. Withdrawal of Self Defense Forces From Iraq

Considering the post-Cold War international security system, Japan has taken great care to act on global security in collaboration with the US. Despite Tokyo's inability to provide active support in the Gulf War, a broadly diplomatic alliance was created in the Iraq War. This alliance has ranging from economic aid (checkbook diplomacy) to the easing of constitutional barriers to Japanese forces landing in the region. As a result, the limits on sending military troops to the overseas zone under the Japanese constitution drafted by the United States were expanded.

The DPJ's position on global partnership with the US differs substantially from that of the LDP. So much so that, under Ozawa's leadership, the party issued a manifesto in 2007 strongly condemning Japan's participation in the Iraq war. As DPJ's official manifesto stated:

“The use of force in Iraq by the multinational forces lacks justification, and the concept of “non-combat area” that defines the scope of the activities of the Self-Defense Forces is a fiction” (The Democratic Party of Japan’s Platform for Government, 2007).

As a result, the party has stipulated in its early papers and subsequently that it opposes the extension of the constitution to allow the SDF to join in multinational military operations overseas Japanese self-defense. Indeed, the DPJ promoted and disseminated the notion that cooperation with the "unilateral" US strategy to the Iraq War was detrimental to Japan's national interests (Easley & Kotani & Mori, 2010, p. 51).

In 2003, Kouzumi demonstrated his complete support for the US position in Afghanistan by passing legislation under Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq authorizing the comprehensive cooperation (MOFA, 2003). Furthermore, in accordance with Replenishment Support Special Measures Law, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) conducted non-combat operations refueling coalition ships participating in Maritime Interdiction Operations of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Indian Ocean (MOFA, n.d.a). The DPJ was certain that the fuel given by the JMASDF was used by the US in the Iraq war (Yoshida, 2007). For this reason, the question of whether or not the operation would end on November 1, 2007, has become the most divisive issue on the LDP and DPJ wings. Given that the UN Security Council did not officially approve of this operation, the DPJ openly opposed its involvement in the OEF and blocked the legislation with the power it obtained from the Upper House in November 2007 (Konishi, 2009, p. 6).

3.4.2. More Equal Relations with United States

In DPJ’s 2009 election programme, the DPJ alluded to a protracted era of upheaval in domestic politics. Furthermore, the most critical consideration in the DPJ manifesto is the first issue in Article 7 under the foreign policy title. According to this article, Japan's position on the global sphere should be more autonomous, importantly, it emphasizes the necessity of thoroughly analyzing the

regulation of US military personnel' locations and capacity in Japan, as well as their function (The Democratic Party of Japan's Platform for Government, 2009, p. 28). Essentially, the article on managing US bases was previously contained in the manifesto in context. For example, the DPJ's 2003 party platform emphasized the need of expanding Japanese law's jurisdiction to encompass US military sites, condemning the lack of a fair justice system for any crime involving US servicemen (The Democratic Party of Japan's Platform for Government, 2003, p. 62).

Yukio Hatoyama, the first prime minister from the DPJ, remained in office for almost a year after gaining office in September 2009. Significantly, during his tenure, Hatoyama urged that Japan-US relations ought to be kept on a more equal basis. Thus, he pushed to reorganize US forces in Japan for a more balanced bilateral alliance structure. Hatoyama's approach to the relocation of the Okinawa Futenma Naval Base, for instance, was crucial since it contrasts with the United States.

Hatoyama stated that he will carefully evaluate the rearrangement and function determination of the US bases, giving priority to the opinions of the Okinawa residents (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2009). Moreover, as O'Shea states that, the major cause for Prime Minister Hatoyama's departure was the effort to move the Okinawa base in his paper, in which he examines the critical role of the US in blocking DPJ foreign policy shift (O'Shea, 2014, p. 446).

In Japanese politics, the presence of US military bases in Okinawa has consistently become a contentious issue. The public's discontent with US military outposts has been mostly due to the noise and air pollutants caused by the bases. Another significant cause of local dissatisfaction has a lengthy background. For instance, In 1995, two American marines and a sailor were convicted of kidnapping and raping a 12-year-old Okinawa girl, even though such crimes are extremely rare on the island. As Mitchell also remarked, Okinawan residents' sentiments against American soldiers in the island began to worsen as a result of crimes committed against locals (Mitchell, 2009, p. 2).

Due to its location in the middle of the island, several sources have suggested that the Okinawa base has a substantial danger of plane accidents. In addition, in 2003, the US Secretary of Defense identified the Marine Corps Air Facility in Okinawa as the most hazardous base in the world (Lummis, 2018). According to research published in the Asia Pacific Journal, bases prevent development focused on more local requirements and lead to people's poverty (McCormack, 2009, p. 7).

In the light of these one of the most remarkable assertions of the DPJ was that it prioritized public demands on foreign and internal problems over the LDP. In particular, Hatoyama announced at the session of the Diet that he will respond politically to local sentiments, bearing in mind the pain and anguish of the people of Okinawa. (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2009). Although Hatoyama believed that relations with the United States were viable in the Asia-Pacific area, he desired that partnership would progress in an unique manner. In actuality, Hatoyama's public image suffered when he failed to display the tough stance he promised in the face of US pressure.

3.4.3. Japan's Membership of Asian Region

As stated in earlier parts, economic development was Japan's top priority as it concentrated on reconstructing its postwar political and security framework dependent on the US. The LDP's policies, which adhered to and molded its foreign policy for a long time, prompted it to have opposing views to the DPJ. Moreover, especially after the Kousumi period's visits to Yasukuni Shrine strained bilateral relations, Japan's harsh relations with China eased with the Abe period's effort to break the ice between two countries. This, however, did not promote close relationship. While striving for Japan's foreign policy, namely a trust-based relationship with its surrounding countries, the DPJ aimed to re-establish the value of regional integration in energy and trade matters. Indeed, DPJ party platforms have addressed Japan's wartime aggression, arguing that

Japan should strengthen diplomatic and economic connections with neighboring nations as a "member of Asia".

Before the title on ties with the US in the document, DPJ stated in its 2005 manifesto that positive relations with PRC and its neighbors in the region should be maintained. Thus, the DPJ's emphasis on strengthening regional relations is striking in the 2005 manifesto. In summary, the restoration of Japan-China relations is mentioned as the priority of Japanese diplomacy in this text (DPJ, 2005). Sneider's 2011 analysis of the DPJ government's role as a new Asian member is enlightening. According to Sneider, the DPJ feels that Japan would benefit from taking the lead in Asia for the time being. Thus, in terms of Japan's vision of being a regional leader, the DPJ has a different approach to Asia than the LDP (Sneider, 2011, p. 111).

Moreover, DPJ has made it clear with Hatayoma that it is prepared to focus on the East Asia Community (EAC) in terms of institutionalizing East Asian regionalism and developing good relations with its neighbors (Fukukawa, 2009). The DPJ supported for the formation of the EAC for a peaceful Asia, with the contribution of both economic and non-traditional security domains in the Sino-Japan relations. Hughes emphasizes, once more, that enhancing the DPJ's regional links is crucial to preventing PRC from assuming regional leadership. Nonetheless, the DPJ demonstrated that it differed from the LDP's nationalism on historical topics such as Yakusuni Shrine visits. As a result, the DPJ had a more stable foundation than the LDP towards obtaining regional leadership in conjunction with its neighbors (Hughes, 2012, p. 128).

3.4.4. China Question

The DPJ administration was caught off guard by a significant regional conflict with China in 2010 and 2012. First, in September 2010, a fishing boat with Chinese flag collided with two Japanese Coast Guard vessels near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the ECS. Following this key event, the contrasts in the

two states' responses foreshadowed the beginning of a serious crisis that would last for many years. Second, despite the fact that the March 2011 natural disasters signified attempts at collaboration between the two governments, Tokyo Governor Ishihara's plan to acquire the Senkaku Islands in 2012 immediately exacerbated bilateral relations. Essentially, until the Senkaku Islands dispute, the DPJ leadership aimed to keep new Asianism and relations with China as strong as possible in order to build a sustainable East Asian infrastructure. However, an unforeseen islands dispute challenged the DPJ's sympathy for China in the early days of its accession to power. Substantially, the DPJ's handling of the crisis process with China in East Asia Sea was critical for Japan's national security and future. Hatoyama's neighborhood stabilization plans had no choice but to be set aside as DPJ confronted the security threat faced by Japan's maritime trade and energy routes. In this situation, Tokyo had to cope with Beijing's assertions in the zone while maintaining the backing of its strong ally, US (Shoji, 2014, p. 132-133).

The Senkaku Islands, also known as the Diaoyudo/Diaoyutai Islands in Chinese, are an uninhabited and lifeless island group in the ECS. These districts of the island are controlled by Japan and have historically been associated with phrases like "regional crisis" or "claim." However, since the early 1970s, the Chinese and Taiwanese governments have maintained their claims to the islands. Despite the fact that the islands are devoid of human settlement, governments cannot share land since they include valuable fishing grounds. More importantly, islands are of tremendous economic and geopolitical significance due of their potential oil and gas reserves and ship lines (Masahiro, 2013, p. 5).

Controlling such significant islands was a controversial subject for China and Taiwan. Japan, on the other hand, did not even consider the islands to be under question (Scoville, 2014). However, Japan also considers its claim to the Senkaku Islands to be based on historically solidified sources. Historiographically, Japan held complete control of the islands from the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 until its surrender in World War II. In addition, US acquired control of the islands after Japan's defeat. Later, as part of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty, which

terminated Japan's standing as an imperial power, some islands were returned to Japan. Although the Senkaku Islands are not specifically named in these agreements, the Ryukuku Islands, which includes Senkaku Island, are explicitly mentioned in Article 3 (Treaty of Peace With Japan, 1951, p. 52). Thus, the Senkaku islands' status remained quite unclear. The 1972 Okinawa Reversion Agreement explicitly stated Japanese authority of the Senkaku Islands (Okinawa Reversion Treaty, 1971, p. 7). As a result, the legal foundation for Japan has been formed, which will be specified for many years.

Furthermore, according to Beijing, Japanese imperialism stole the islands with excessive force and "illegal" occupation as a result of PRC's crushing loss in the First Sino-Japanese War. More recently, Chinese government has made claims to the islands results and outcomes of the Cairo Declaration in 1943 and the Postdam Declaration in 1945 (Ikeda, 2013). While the islands dispute with the DPJ continues in 2012, the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has explicitly confirmed the source of the claim on the islands. According to Beijing, the Diaoyu Islands are located inside Formosa's (now Taiwan's) maritime borders, and as a result of the declaration, Formosa was returned to China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2012). So, Beijing claims that the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands were already returned as "Taiwanese islands" at that time.

Japan, on the other hand, does not recognize any historical basis as justification to support China's and Taiwan's claims on the islands. Japan's counter-claim was based on the fact that China and Taiwan never claimed the islands until 1971. Furthermore, the signatory countries, including PRC, did not include the Senkaku Islands in the definition of 'Islands Belonging to Formosa' in the Cairo Declaration and the Postdam Declaration. Japan admits to having given up the Formosa and Pescadores Islands as a result of the Cairo Declaration, but the primary point of contention is the definition of the Senkaku Islands. The most significant of Japan's claims are based on the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The US returned the Nansei Shoto Islands, which contain the Senkaku Islands, to Japan under this agreement. According Japan's official statement, 1971 Okinawa

Reversion Agreement, neither China nor Taiwan objected to or questioned its extent (MOFA, 2013a, p. 4).

However, the event that sparked the conflict occurred on the Senkaku Islands on September 7, 2010, less than a year after the DPJ assumed the government. On September 7, SDF personnel spotted a Chinese-flagged fishing vessel near the contested Senkaku Islands. The Chinese vessel was then warned by Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) officers to leave Japanese territorial waters. However, the Chinese-flagged fishing vessel collided with two JCG vessels after heavy radio traffic. The Chinese captain of the ship, Zhan Qixiong, and his crew were detained on suspicion of unlawful fishing and interfering with the operations of Japanese coast guard personnel (Ito, 2010). The fact that the fishing vessel's captain was convicted under Japanese domestic law while holding a Chinese passport provoked a severe diplomatic response from Beijing (Nishikawa & Blanchard, 2010).

Furthermore, a same circumstance occurred while Koizumi was prime minister, albeit with slight changes. Japanese authorities apprehended Chinese activists who had landed on Senkaku Islands' Uotsurishima Island in 2004 (Drifte, 2014). However, the Chinese activists were released after around 48 hours in custody. In contrast to the 2004 incident, the Japanese government held the Chinese boat's captain for ten days and then added ten more days to his detention during the 2010 Senkaku Crisis. The decision by Japanese local units to imprison the Chinese fishing ship captain for further ten days was met with heated declarations from China that it would react in the face of this crisis. Moreover, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated that the captain's imprisonment was completely illegal (Johnson I., 2010). In response to China's demand for compensation, the Japanese minister at the time, Naoto Kan, stated that the Senkaku Islands belonged to Japan and that an apology or compensation were out of the question (McCurry & Branigan, 2010).

Significantly, Ishihara Shintaro, the former Governor of Tokyo, made an announcement in 2012, that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was in negotiations to purchase three Senkaku islands, Uotsurijima, Kita Kojima, and

Minami Kojima, by the end of the year. This announcement was made in the context of the sensitive environment that existed at the time. One of the Richard Samuels' research produced an image of how heads of state or political actors see the objectives of Japanese security strategy in individual way. According to this study, various political actors encourage the breakdown of the alliance with the US and the formation of Tokyo's armament ambition. Shintaro Ishihara is the most prominent example of this criteria (Samuels, 2007b, p.128). Ishihara, who had essentially a Japanese nationalist ideology, resorted to purchasing the islands from their owners in order to "defend" them. In reality, public opinion had a crucial influence on the issue. There were some notable differences in the 2012 Crisis's narrative compared to past crises due of public engagement.

With the participation of the younger generation in politics in the 2010s, the perspective of nationalism (as in Ishihara) was substantially higher than in the early postwar period. Simultaneously, there has been a considerable increase in the desire for a more diplomatically and militarily effective state, or a more "normal" country. Furthermore, Japanese nationalists wished for more autonomous Japan that could protect its territories. As the anti-Chinese sentiment of the Japanese populace grew, Tokyo Governor Ishihara most likely purposely politicized the Senkaku Islands conflict and skillfully mobilized public opinion to his advantage (Horiuchi, 2014, p. 36). In brief, Tokyo Governor Ishihara's engagement in the territorial dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands drew widespread public attention.

For instance, Yahoo Japan which is the one of Japan's most popular online portal, conducted an Internet survey on April 17, 2012. In a survey of 250,000 participants, more than 90% of Japanese respondents backed Ishihara's plans to purchase the islands ("Do you agree with the purchase of", 2012). However, Noda administration began to seriously and openly consider "nationalizing" the islands to counteract Ishihara's popular role in the islands' purchase. Prime Minister Noda secretly summoned senior Foreign Ministry officials around a month following Ishihara's announcement. Following the meeting, the Noda directed the nationalization of the privately owned islands (Takenaka, 2012a).

Beijing's response to the acquisition of the three islands by the Tokyo was far more severe than in past crises. The Chinese government was especially irritated by Japan's efforts to acquire de facto control over the islands and its denial of a territorial dispute. Consequently, China's Fisheries Law Enforcement Command and Maritime Safety Administration ships patrolled the area surrounding the Senkaku Islands more extensively (Drifte, 2014, p. 28).

As a result of the Japanese government's inability to maintain a rapid emergency response mechanism, Tokyo was unable to address the issue quickly and effectively. Remarkably, a similar circumstance in 2004 and 2010 allowed for a comparison of how the LDP and DPJ handled the crisis. However, there was no comparison to the LDP in the past because of the LDP's nearly 50-year uninterrupted tenure in office. Following the DPJ's victory, the attitudes of two parties to similar circumstances became a source of discussion (Krauss, 2013 and Hafeez, 2015).

In addition, Krauss argued that, like the LDP, the DPJ administration's crisis management strategy toward China was insufficient (Krauss, 2013, p. 188). For instance, DPJ officials attempted to diminish the conflict with China both domestically and internationally by misrepresenting the content of the collision (Krauss, 2013, p. 188). In response to the misrepresentation of management by the Japanese government, the a Japanese officer leaked a video of the collision on YouTube (Al Jazeera English, 2010).

Despite assurances by the DPJ that it will not affect bilateral relations, diplomatic ties have been severely impacted. As a result of the island disputes, for instance, several talks between the two governments were canceled, and high-level discussions were suddenly terminated. Despite China's rejection of any notion of a retaliatory response, four employees of the Japanese Fujita Corporation were detained (China Frees Last Fujita Employee, 2010). Importantly, according to Hafeez, Japan's rare earth element supply was suspended (Hafeez, 2015). As also Bradsher's study stated that, due to the suspension of imports, Japan, a country with limited natural resources had heightened concern (Bradsher, 2010).

3.3.5. The DPJ's New National Defense Program Guidelines

The DPJ administration issued the "National Defense Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2011 and Beyond" in 2010 in response to Japan's varying security environment and the recognition that Japanese policymakers needed to be more cautious. In general, the new NDPG set up a new vision and mission for Japan's security strategy and the defense forces' future. Moreover, new NDPG has described Japan's security strategy and purpose in 3 broad stages: (1) to prevent and minimize external threats to preserve the safety of the Japanese people, (2) in order to maintain a sustainable peace in the region, (3) to ensure the continuation of regional stability through promoting global peace (MOD, 2010, p. 2).

Although the NDPG stated that no direct invasion or large-scale combat was feasible, it noted that Japan was faced with components that would substantially endanger its territory, sovereignty, and economic interests (MOD, 2010, p. 3). However, Tokyo worries that the impact and risk of unforeseen security breakdowns may result in a catastrophic disaster. In light of all of this, the concept of the "gray zone" emerged, which had been absent from previous NDPGs. In a nutshell, the gray zone term refers to situations that do not escalate to war yet threaten nations security. The new NDPG demonstrated Japan's ability to deal with the "gray zone" scenario, which reflects tension and a surveillance confront in the region's unstable security structure as a result of growing pressure from both, notably, China and North Korea.

Japan has also focused on China's pressure in the terms of "gray zone" concept. Essentially, Beijing's actions in Japanese-controlled territories of the ECS, particularly the Senkaku Islands, prompted the Japanese government to carefully evaluate upgrading its defense capabilities and equipment. The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, as well as regional events surrounding them, are prime examples of possible "gray zone" scenarios for natural resource access and territorial claims (Fouse, 2011a, p. 7). Also, Tokyo is concerned about PRC's dramatic increase in military spending, as well as initiatives to modernize the navy and air forces. This predicament has explicitly stated in the document as:

“Insufficient transparency over China’s military forces and its security policy, are of concern for the regional and global community” (MOD, 2010: 4).

In other words, China's non-transparent military modernization has caused contingencies to be destabilizing and complex in the region. However Japan has primarily aimed to respond these “various contingencies” quickly, smoothly, and appropriately.

At this point, the Tokyo government has redefined the functions of Self Defense Forces on a new level. Moreover, the requirement for each Japanese Self Defense Forces units to execute comprehensive intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations was a major component in determining the defense forces' new function. Thus, equipments and pace of operations were increased to empower the defense forces to carry out their duties more effectively and comprehensively. As a result, the designment of the Dynamic Defense Force has emerged in Tokyo. Moreover, the official definion of Dynamic Defense Force has described by Ministry of Defense of Japan as:

“Japan will develop a Dynamic Defense Force that possesses readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility. These characteristics will be reinforced by advanced technology based on the trends of levels of military technology and intelligence capabilities” (MOD, 2010, p. 7).

Therefore, the Basic Military Force concept, which has regarded Japan's defense strategy since 1976 NDPO and provides a minimum defensive capability to the region's changing security aspects, has been abandoned. As a consequence, the Dynamic Defense Force concept was simplified, and it now responds dynamically to perceived security requirements (Fouse, 2011b, p. 490).

This prospect strengthened the effectiveness of expanding, enhancing, and sustaining the SDFs' equipment and operating levels. In addition, the key purpose of the NDPG was to increase the variety of equipment and its service life in order to produce effective results from a well-prepared defense force. So Japan has carried out the development and modernization of high-skilled equipment by gradually distinguishing domains.

As a result, the Japanese government was careful not to spend more than the self-imposed limit on national military spending. For instance, the GSDF's tanks and howitzers have been reduced for this reason by the Ministry of Defense (MOD, 2010, p. 2). Moreover, Japan has calculated the proportionate decline in its might and dangerousness. The primary purpose is to create effective equipment that will safeguard the security of Japan's air and sea space, which forms the gray zone, and to have it ready for action in any circumstance. So, the Tokyo government aimed to broaden the equipment, efficiency, and operational capabilities of the JMSDF and JASDF forces.

The "Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP) for FY2011-FY2015, which covers the thorough restructuring of the Japanese defense forces, is published alongside the NDPG and explains the changes made to this element in detail and with ambition. For instance, according to the MTDP, the JMSDF deployed destroyers equipped with helicopters (DDH), P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, submarines, and destroyers to protect Japan's surrounding areas and ensure public safety. Moreover, efforts to expand the number of Aegis-class destroyers and powered aircraft equipped with SM-3 anti-missile interceptors demonstrate Japan's commitment to safeguarding the security of its air and maritime territory against Beijing (MOFA, 2010, p. 9).

Remarkably, the Japanese government's endeavor to maintain stability in the region in the face of Beijing's sprawling pressure has been counter-oriented. Strategic planning, in addition to building and modernizing military material structures, have been a new effective political reaction of Japan. The Tokyo administration has made moves to consolidate Japan's defense forces and equipment in the country's southern area in order to keep pace with regional and strategic shifts.

However, because of the tense situation with China, JGSDF forces were required to be deployed in Japan's south and southwest regions. Japan spent a great deal of time and energy during the Cold War focusing on the USSR, which is largely located in the north. However, there is evidence that Japan's military forces have been moved to the south of its mainland in recent years due to changes in threat

perceptions. For instance, Japan intended to station JGSDF forces in southern Japan's island territories and to relocate ASDF's fighter squadron to Naha Airbase in Okinawa as a second squadron (MOFA, 2010, p. 2). Crucially, Tokyo intended to send 1,000 troops to Yonaguni, Japan's westernmost island, which is notable for being 108 kilometers from Taiwan and 150 kilometers from the Senkaku Islands (Berkofsky, 2011, p. 37).

In addition, this issue arose as a result of the PLAN's vessels passing through the disputed territories between 2008 and 2010 that prompting the government to take serious action and measures. Furthermore, according to the official website of Japan's foreign ministry, Chinese government vessels entered Japanese territorial waters four times between 2008 and 2012. However, as a result of the expropriation of the three Senkaku Islands which outlined in the preceding section, Chinese vessels traveled passed the Japanese maritime territory without authorisation 68 times between September 2012 and the end of the same year (MOFA, 2010, p. 2). Likewise, Chinese aircraft violated Japan's airspace over the Senkaku Islands for the first time in December 2012 (Ueono, 2013, p. 12). China's attempt to intrude on Japanese sovereignty and alter the status quo has been described as obvious proof of this challenge (Flaver, 2012). It is intolerable to Japanese political actors, and the 2010 measures and attempts at balance have foreshadowed what is to come in the years ahead. Last but not least, the 2010 NDPG is noteworthy since it is the first official statement on the ESC assertion.

4. JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY AGAINST CHINA

4.1. PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND BEGINNING OF ABE'S SECOND ERA

By 2012, the DPJ administration was undergoing significant public discontent over several domestic and international policy issues. Widespread dissatisfaction stems from intense intra-party rivalry, political scandals, governance problems caused by natural disasters, and the poor administration of the Senkaku islands

dispute with China. The DPJ was also unable to hold onto power in the 2012 prime ministerial election due to the inability of the prime ministers in the power of the nation's administration sustainability. Shinzo Abe, who served as Prime Minister for a brief period in 2006, initially defeated intra-party opponent Ishiba Shigeru before leading the LDP to victory in the 2012 lower house elections. As a result of having a strengthened political framework, Abe was ready to commence his unfulfilled mission as Prime Minister.

During the election campaign, Abe downplayed the leadership's anti-Chinese and hawkish foreign policy stance, emphasizing the significance of economic expansion and the government's long-term sustainability. Japanese citizens, who had been suffering from deflation for more than two decades, overwhelmingly supported Abe's pledge of economic restructuring. In reality, Abe did not rely on China or national security issues in his first address as Prime Minister, and he prioritized financial adjustments above diplomatic challenges. Abe has stated clearly and passionately that he will respond to demands for a significant market restoration (Abe, 2012). Furthermore, Shinzo Abe has introduced "Abenomics," a three-pronged economic agenda that seeks to combine fiscal expansion, monetary easing, and structural reform (McBride & Xu, 2018).

Consequently, the Abe administration has tended to avoid repeating the DPJ's policy of unconsolidated internal sustainability and has prioritized economic progress while keeping the public's needs into account. These political maneuvers would serve to cement a long-term dominant LDP capable of engaging in foreign policy while enjoying large and enthusiastic domestic support.

4.2. SHINZO ABE'S PROACTIVE CONTRIBUTION

Japan was primarily a passive contributor to peace until the Shinzo Abe government assumed office in 2012. The new Tokyo administration, led by Prime Minister Abe, concluded that the ultimate objective of Japanese national and international security strategy should be to take in charge a more proactive role in

the global arena, particularly in comparison to past Japanese governments. However, Abe sought to concretely question the passive participation of security structure and idealist position through several policy initiatives. So, Abe and his followers intended to strengthen defense capabilities through key structural reforms based on a more proactive Japan with the new policy foundations. These foundations were based on Abe's realistic vision rather than an idealist response to the transformation in the international security framework (Kitaoka, 2014: 16). To begin with, Tokyo's new security blueprint, titled "Proactive Contribution to Peace" is mainly based on Abe and his administration's release of the National Security Strategy on December 17, 2013. Accordingly, Abe declared that a new political configuration will make an active contribution to the peace of the world community and the region's robust stability. In fact, Shinzo Abe's new concept had repercussions throughout his brief first term in office. For instance, the Japan Defense Agency was replaced by the Ministry of Defense on January 9, 2007, signaling that Shinzo Abe and his supporters recognized that Japan has made and will continue to make substantial progress in national defense strategy for potential crisis immediate management (Lies, 2007).

The formation of the New National Security Council in December 2013 was also the first substantial move toward the new Abe administration's main overall aim. As a result of this development, the Tokyo administration can discuss strategic challenges with strong political leadership in a forum setting (MOFA, 2016a). On December 17, 2013, Japan's NSC and Cabinet adopted the country's first-ever NSS. Through its Proactive Contribution to Peace, the NSS has recently recognized Japan's role as the ultimate guarantor of national defense and appreciated its critical role in safeguarding regional security and stability (MOD, 2013). Likewise, on December 13, 2013, the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets was also implemented by the Abe administration to reinforce Japan's national security by increasing data protection, information sharing with allies, and intelligence activity (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, 2013a, p. 1)

Furthermore, the NSC and Cabinet authorised the Defense Program for FY2014 to FY2018 in conjunction with the NDPG for FY2014 and Beyond, as well as the

Medium Term Defense Program document developed under the NSS and based on Proactive Contribution to Peace once again (MOD, 2013a). As a result, the structure of proactive and engaged defensive features has improved significantly, such as the emergence of the Dynamic Joint Defense Force. The emergence of China and the United States' regional balancing activities, in particular, have been taken seriously, emphasizing Japan's seamless and immediate response to regional changes.

Essentially, Shinzo Abe has questioned the procedural principles imposed by previous administrations to develop a somewhat more proactive Japan. For instance, during the Eisaku Sato and subsequent Takeo Miki administrations in 1967 and 1976 respectively, the policies of the Three Principles on Arms Exports and Their Related Policy Guidelines severely constrained and impeded Japan's defense equipment and technology transfer initiatives. In comparison, the Abe administration implemented the Three Principles of Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in April 2014, in line with proactive approach to national security and once again under the direction of the NSS. Japan's guidelines and limitations on the transfer of defense equipment and technology to other states had been detailed in this manner, based on three principles (MOFA, 2014a).

Abe's ambitions to revise the constitution had connected to a range of other policy initiatives. Furthermore, Japan's unique stance on foreign affairs is further shown by Article 9, which prohibits the use of force in conflicts around the globe. Indeed, Abe's main revisionist ambition was to reinterpret the 1946 Constitution, which imposed by outsiders during the wartime occupation and seen as incompatible with Japanese society (Hughes, 2015, p. 12). Also he has been also described as a chief revisionist since his return to the office in 2012 (Hughes, 2016, p. 25). In addition, Abe was the first Japanese prime minister since Junichiro Koizumi to pay a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. As previously stated, the Yasukuni Shrine has been criticized by China as a symbol of Japan's past military aggressiveness. For instance, after this visit, China spoke out against Japan's military aggression and the way it celebrated colonial rule (McCurry, 2017).

Furthermore, a deliberate attempt to such a substantial constitutional revision following Abe's re-election, on the other hand, was a difficult move. Many factors contributed to this, including the difficulties of gaining a two-thirds majority of seats on its own, a lack of public support, and being trapped in a US-led war (Liff & Maeada, 2018). However, such elements were not essential for the formation of modernized SDF or the maintenance of joint exercises and collective action with the Allies. Eventually, in 2014, the Abe government announced The Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People, which is a partial redefinition of constitutional prohibitions. A year later, in September 2015, the Legislation for Peace and Security was adopted, which legitimizes the right to collective self-defense in the event of a military strike on Japan or a foreign state with substantial ties to Tokyo (MOFA, 2015a).

In addition, the extent to which Japan contributed to 'peace' in terms of terminology and practice is highly subject to discussion. For instance, Galtung's concept of positive and negative aspects of peace was linked by Akinoto's study to Japan's basic security approach as a proactive contribution to peace (Akinoto, 2018). Accordingly, the lack of physical assault like as war and terrorism is defined by Galtung as "negative peace," whereas the presence of structural violence such as hunger, income disparity, inequality, and prejudice is referred to as "positive peace" (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). However, Galtung himself criticized Abe's "proactive peace" term during his 2015 visit to Okinawa (Johan galtung the father of peace, 2015). According to Akinoto, Abe's proactive contribution to peace encompasses peace's two concepts, namely nonviolence and international collaboration, as well as negative and positive pacifism. However, there is a conceptual inconsistency here because Tokyo's security policies are intimately related to its justification for using force (Akinoto, 2018, p. 27).

4.3. FROM ATTENTION TO STRONG SECURITY CONCERN

One of the most critical factors of China's rise is the question as to how the region countries, particularly Japan, would respond to the shifting balance of power with suitable strategy and development. As the US's close ally in the Asia-Pacific region, shifting in balance of power by PRC is seen by Tokyo as a challenge to its security both domestically and internationally. In addition, Japan was Asia's leading economy from the end of the 1960s until 2010. However, in terms of global and regional economic standings, the PRC surpassed Tokyo in 2011 as the world's second-largest economy.

In contrast to the warm economic cooperation, Tokyo and Beijing, the region's two powerful adversaries, continued cold and unstable bilateral relations after 2012. The shifting balance of power and the growth of security strategies, particularly in the SCS and ECS, were the primary causes of this diplomatic standoff and instability. Territorial conflicts and "reunification" challenges became more routine as military technology and operational capacity advanced. In this context, Japan and China's longstanding territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands has taken on new urgency in light of the current political climate.

When the region's security issues and destabilizing factors have considered, the increase in military expenditures of neighboring countries is noteworthy. Indeed, Asia's recent increase in military expenditures has reached incredible amounts. According to a new SIPRI report, military spending in Asia and Oceania would reach \$528 billion by 2020, taking it the world's second-highest (following the US) spending region (Silva & Lopes & Tian & Marksteiner, 2020, p. 7). Furthermore, this latest study shows a rise contrary to previous years, with military expenditures in Asia and Oceania being 2.5 percent higher in 2020 than in 2019 and 47 percent higher than in 2011 (Silva & Lopes & Tian & Marksteiner, 2020, p. 4).

Furthermore, the Japanese security strategy is likely has motivated by an overly unfavorable view of China's rise. Indeed, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorizes China's rise as a national challenge into two major categories in its

“Security Environment Surrounding Japan and Challenges” report, which evaluates the challenges confronting Tokyo. According to the report, China's non-transparent military modernization and military involvement in maritime and airspace are two of Tokyo's most significant national challenges (MOFA, 2016b). Japanese several Defense White Papers released annually differ in their definitions of national challenges. Understanding Japanese threat perception and national security developments necessitate a detailed evaluation of the terminology differences utilized by Japanese authorities to identify its counterparts. Moreover, the latest Japanese Defense White Paper refers to these two national concerns by connecting to China's recent rise as "a grave matter of concern" (MOD, 2020, p. 70). Furthermore, The Diplomat published an eye-catching article that has investigated terminology used against China in Japan's annual Defense White Papers. The analysis explains as; "Japanese authorities have characterized China's rise and military modernization as follows: strong security concerns in 2018, great concerns in years between 2014 and 2017, concern in 2013, a matter of concern in 2010 and 2012, concern in 2007-2009, and a matter for attention in 2006 respectively" (Oren & Brummer: 2020).

4.3.1. China's Strategy and Military Modernization

As a beginning, it is critical to provide a broad overview of China's military strategy, rather than how Japan perceives and evaluates Chinese doctrine. Thus, Chinese military strategies to direct China's increasing dominance and its military modernization will serve as a basis for analysis of the region's militarization components and security structure. Also, and perhaps most significantly, it can help us comprehend how China's military strategy in achieving its primary objective in the territory is related to shifts in balance of power.

In addition, White Papers presented by the Ministry of Defense and The Science of Military Policy publications released by the PLA National Defense University in 1987, 2001, and 2013 clearly outlined the major purpose of China's military

strategy. According to M. Taylor's study, which details how China's approach to military strategy has changed, China separated the definition of strategy from the line of "planning and guiding the overall situation of war", but as of 2013, it shifted to the description of "overall planning and guidance for the development and employment of armed forces, which take war as the core." (Fravel, 2016, p. 7). In addition, the transformation in China's military strategy is attributable to the constant shifts in the conduct of warfare. For instance, official releases recently stated that the PRC government is dealing with several challenges, including maintaining unification and territorial integrity in the face of complex security threats (The State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2017). In fact, under Xi Jinping's administration, the PRC's military modernization strategy is to build strong, combat-effective, and modern military forces capable of dominating, especially in the SCS and throughout region (Maizland, 2020).

The first component of the implementation of the PRC military modernization process was the reorganization of doctrines and strategic actions. Furthermore, these strategic elements, which would be considered the essential roadmap of Chinese military modernization, have sought to solidify the PLA's direct expansion in terms of tactical, capacity, and capabilities. Also, strategies have been structured around three widely accepted doctrines (Cordesman & Hess & Yarosh, 2013, p. 53).

The first strategy is "Active Defense". Active Defense strategy is an operational concept that has been part of PRC military doctrine since 1949 and covers all PLA units (Fravel, 2019, p. 191). The foundation of Active Defense is the most profoundly established Chinese military doctrine to date, based on Mao Zedong's 1939 principle that "If we are attacked, we will certainly counterattack" (Fravel, 2019, p. 191). The strategy essentially implies that the Chinese army has a defensive function and will only strike forcefully if the nation is under attack (Cordesman & Colley, 2016, p. 103). In short, this ingrained military strategy has developed through time with new principles, and it has now been characterized as taking proactive offensive actions to defend against an attacking opponent.

Crucially, the possibility that the cause of China's counterattack is offensive political and strategic actions rather than a direct attack may have the consequence of justifying China's retaliation (Cordesman & Colley, 2016, p. 103). In other words, identifying whether the attack on China is a direct attack or a broad-based economic or political attack is critical to China's offensive counterattack's legitimacy. Because of that, the source of China's counter-offensive remains unclear.

Further, military modernization initiatives that have followed China's economic growth, particularly in recent years, have raised serious questions concerning the definition and extent of active defense strategy. Indeed, at the start of the twenty-first century, the PRC formally announced that it will continue to implement an active defense strategy. According to the China White Paper of 2002, China has adopted the Active Defense strategy guideline in the new period in response to the world's dramatic transformations in warfare and militarization (Blasko, 2014, p. 88). China also showed signs of interpreting the active defense strategy as well as its recent military modernization by the 2004 White Paper. According to a 2004 paper:

"Changes both in the international strategic situation and the national security environment and rise to the challenges presented by the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) worldwide, China adheres to the military strategy of active defense and works to speed up the RMA with Chinese characteristics" (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 2004).

RMA with Chinese characteristics entails more than simply modernizing and equipping PLA units. Further, PLA characteristics and organization have developed in conjunction with the Active Defense strategy, including improvements in the command structure, personnel policies, equipment, and military training (Blasko, 2014, p. 91). According to its information office 2015 White Paper on China's military policy, the PRC's military strategy planning in the changing security environment is based on the principle of Active Defense. In addition, according to the Ministry of National Defense, China has declared that it would strive to seize the new global military strategy, prepare for armed

confrontation in all dimensions and areas, and accelerate military construction, reformation, and enlargement (The Information Office of the State Council of PRC, 2015). In other words, China has emphasized that it will be ready to engage actively and in its way in any conflict process that may emerge in the region or around the globe.

The second strategy is "People's War". This strategy stems back to China's civil war military strategy and is related to Mao Zedong's military thinking. (Fravel, 2019, p. 194). In definition, it implies the precision or legitimacy of the goal pursued on behalf of the "people" by armed conflict. Furthermore, the People's War is a politico-military strategy based on its role in mobilizing and organizing "masses" to generate broader political support for the Armed Forces by providing manpower and material assistance. (Fravel, 2019, p. 194).

The People's War has evolved several times to adapt to new circumstances as China's actual and potential adversaries have changed and its technological core has modernized. Although People's War conceptually includes militia forces and guerrilla tactics in the past, its main objective is to demonstrate unambiguous mass support for military actions. However, these definitions have changed, and the People's War strategy has differentiated from guerrilla conceptions. According to Finkelstein and Gunnes, the fundamental difference in the definition is that guerrilla warfare is no longer included within the militia features; instead, the People's emphasis has shifted to supplying logistical and transportation for conventional forces (Finkelstein & Gunness, 2007, p. 277).

During times of conflict, the People's War strategy encourages the public to aid the military by providing financial and material assistance. Additionally, logistical, political, and operational support are all included in this type of proactive help. Likewise, the PLA depends solely on the civilian population for both logistical and tactical support at the moment of mobilization. (Cordesman & Colley, 2016, p. 116). The major breakthrough here is that Beijing's wartime mobilization is not limited to human resources alone. Consequently, the new approach has shifted the focus of civil assistance towards the origins of science and technology. Thus, the PRC has been attempting to simultaneously enhance

both the strategic tactic and the people's resources (The Information Office of the State Council of PRC, 2015).

The third strategy is the Local Warfare in Information Conditions doctrine. It serves as the strategic element in the PLA's operational basis. Significantly, this strategy emphasizes that if a war breaks out soon, it will have a higher impact on a particular area on China's frontiers. Furthermore, China anticipates that "local wars" would be short-lived. Since these short local wars will be limited in scope, duration, and method, China emphasizes the need for advanced technology in successfully implementing participation in the upcoming conflicts (Cordesman & Hess & Yarosh, 2013, p. 54).

Further, the Chinese leadership addressed the lack of readiness for a potential Taiwan conflict by relating the RMA to Washington's next-generation precision strike capabilities. Following this, the Former President of the PRC Jiang Zemin's administration made a strategic shift in 1993 with "Local Wars Under Modern, High-Tech Conditions" (Burke & Gunness & Cooper & Cozad, 2020, p. 4). Later in 2004, the Hu Jintao administration declared the principles of "Local Wars under Informed Conditions," stressing the concepts and capabilities of operational response to technologically superior rivals. (Burke & Gunness & Cooper & Cozad, 2020, p. 5). Recently, Xi Jinping emphasized the "Informatized Local Wars" and believed that the Chinese government would be ready for information-based systems-of-systems as the domain in which war occurs (Burke & Gunness & Cooper & Cozad, 2020, p. 5).

According to the 2015 China's Military Strategy paper, China's territorial sovereignty is challenged by provocative actions by its neighbors in the region, whereas maritime rights and interests have especially been highlighted. From this point of view, crucially, China portrayed the region's heightened aggressive actions as "reinforce their military presence on China's reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied" (The Information Office of the State Council, 2015). Beijing has made it abundantly apparent in the same text that the PLA's operational organization would be based on winning informationized local wars while stressing naval engagement (The Information Office of the State Council of

PRC, 2015). In addition, this point of view is related to the Anti Area Access Denial (A2/AD) strategic capabilities, which aims to prevent, restrict, or deter competitor movements in the territory. In other words, with A2/AD, China outlines the emergency operational situation that it will implement to minimize or completely prevent the potential US and Japanese engagements on the seas, particularly in disputed areas such as Senkaku/Dioyu Islands.

Furthermore, Abe administration believes that, especially after 2012, China is attempting to strengthen the capabilities of its asymmetrical military forces by preventing foreign nations from accessing and deploying in the surrounding areas, particularly in order to prevent its neighbors from engaging in military activities (MOD, 2018, p. 47). As discussed in the preceding section, this strategic approach outlined by Japan is directly related to China's rapid implementation of the A2/AD strategy. Furthermore, Beijing implemented large-scale military strategy reforms aimed at constructing a joint operations organization with actual conflict in an account. Indeed, Japan's main concern is that, with the Chinese A2/AD approach and military-strategic reforms, China continues to take aggressive actions on potential conflict zones in the ECS's maritime domain and has a propensity to demonstrate its material capabilities to attain its unilateral claims without making any compromises.

Strategic supremacy in modern domains such as air, sea, space, electromagnetics, and "local" information conditions is a prime objective of Chinese military modernization. China's concentration on technology advancements, information conditions, and maintaining dominance in these new areas is connected to minimizing the capabilities of its neighboring diplomatic rivals. Furthermore, A2/AD capabilities of PRC are intended at restricting the ability of other state forces to access a territory, as well as limit the free maneuvering in proclaimed zones. As a result of previous territorial disputes, this condition has the potential to determine the future activities of SDF and Tokyo's strategic interests in the territory. However, because China's A2/AD capabilities include the upgrading of cruise and ballistic missiles, long-range precision strike systems, and anti-ship weapons, it pushes Japan and the US to take diplomatic and political measures.

Additionally, in the year 2018, the government of the US published a comprehensive report entitled Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China. According to this report, China is upgrading military capabilities to conduct A2/AD operations, as well as nuclear deterrence and power projection operations, as part of a comprehensive military modernization program, and China is also strengthening the PLA "until 2049." aims at building a "world-class" army (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 59). China's People's War strategy, on the other hand, was addressed by Japan, which declared that China aggressively pursues a civil-military unification policy in the domains of national security, innovation, and manufacturing (MOD, 2020, p. 478).

The main point of concern for Japan is the regional consequence of China's intention to build supremacy in new areas. In actuality, the PLA's naval and air military activities in the region mirrored China's new strategic reforms, which included military modernization. In the late 1990s, China made upgrading the PLAN a key goal, allocating more funds to military modernization. Especially in the early 2000s, all Chinese vessels were virtually operating in the same regular mission field. In fact, PLAN lacked a well-equipped fleet except for its homeland defense mission, in spite of this, Japan was unconcerned regarding China's naval capabilities. However, in its 2004 defense report, China emphasized the necessity of PLANs in developing strategic capabilities as the need to modernize fleet supremacy (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 2004). Following that, Beijing thereafter deployed modernized naval vessels and expanded its combat tasks to encompass long-distance deployments and operations at sea.

According to China's Defense White Paper, published in 2013, PLAN focuses on improving blue water capabilities and counterattack capacities in order to conduct mobile operations and counter security threats (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 2013). In the sequel, Beijing's latest substantial investment in maritime power, the Sino-Japanese maritime imbalance has now reached a changeover point. For instance, the Pentagon reported in 2019 that China's military PLAN has the largest naval force in the region, with over 300 surface fighters, submarines, amphibious ships, patrol ships, and special types (Office of

the Secretary of Defense, 2019, p. 24). Alternatively, other notable countries' fleet sizes, such as the US Navy (296), the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom (75), and the Royal Australian Navy (45), are comparatively smaller. (China Power Team, 2018). This indicates how China's maritime modernization has become a priority in its military modernization efforts.

PRC's increasing military presence and actions in the area have also sparked unrest in several of its neighboring countries. In particular, Japan is one of the countries concerned about Chinese maritime activity. From that point of view, comparing the naval forces of Japan and China will help analyze the region's growing military activities as well as the overseeing of disputed territories. According to a 2019 statement by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Japan's JMSDF operates 20 submarines, 49 principal surface combatants, and 6 patrol and coastal combatants (IISS, 2019, p. 278). China's PLAN, on the other hand, possesses 59 submarines, 87 principal surface combatants, and 205 patrol and coastal combatants (IISS, 2019, p. 259). China is putting out significant effort to build technological advantage in maritime powers, despite the fact that it already has a significant numerical superiority. Beijing is committed to constructing the most effective naval force in the area with its new guided-missile destroyers (DDG) and guided-missile frigates (FFG), which serve as the basis for a considerable overhaul of the PLAN's air and marine strike capabilities (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019, p. 24).

Moreover, the PLAN ships being built presently are substantially greater in size and quantity when compared to the old vessel types. For instance, the overall tonnage of Chinese ships launched between 2014 and 2018 is nearly equal to the total tonnage of Japan's entire fleet (Childs & Waldywn, 2018). In short, China's new generation of large ships has achieved tremendous advances in multi-directional engineering, including modern weapon systems, electronics, and other technologies.

These next generation large ships are respectively; Renhai class Type-055 guided-missile destroyers (weighing more than 10,000 tons), Luyang III Type-052D Destroyer, Jiangkai II Type-054A Frigate, and Jingdao Type-056 Corvette which

are some of China's premier operational and technological maritime units (O'Rourke, 2020, p. 14-16). Furthermore, China's naval capabilities modernization also includes next-generation operational submarine units and high-capability large surface combatants. Especially, while Japan's 20 submarine units are all Attack Submarines (SSK), China's submarine units are made up of 4 Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBN), 6 Nuclear-Powered Attack Submarines (SSN), and 48 Attack Submarine (SSK) variants (IISS, 2019, p. 259). In addition, following the deployment of China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning Type-001, in 2012, China's first entirely nationally manufactured aircraft carrier, the Shandong Type-001A, has deployed in 2019 (O'Rourke, 2020, p. 9).

In addition, it is critical to examine the connection between China's military strength and military expenditures to comprehend Japan's concern and skepticism about China's military modernization efforts. Every year, the Chinese government releases a report on its military expenditures. In contrast, Japan openly complains that China is not transparent in expanding military resources. Tokyo even claims that China's weapons acquisition, procurement aims and progress, structure and positioning of units, official enrollment in military arrangements, and security decision-making procedures are not transparent enough, as reported in Japan's official 2018 Defense Paper (Defense of Japan, 2018, p. 92).

PRC official sources have claimed that the country's military spending has progressed at a modest rate. According to the source: "... defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen from a peak of 5.43% in 1979 to 1.26% in 2017. It has remained below 2% for the past three decades" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019). External sources, such as SIPRI, estimate China's military spending to be far larger. The fact that the data from the sources vary makes the allocation of China's military expenditure even more questionable. According to the same year's SIPRI report, China's military expenditure is approximately 1.9 percent of GDP (Fleurant & Kuimova & P. Wezeman & S. Wezeman & Tian, 2018 p. 3).

Such divergent analyses cast suspicion on China's real military expenditures. Furthermore, several studies have questioned and detailed the range of Chinese

military expenditures, indicating that official Chinese spending does not include all Chinese military activities. According to extensive research by Adam P. Liff and Andrew S. Erickson, for example, there are misgivings regarding various spending categories and official military budgets such as China's domestic purchasing and R&D expenditures, offshore purchases of armaments, systems and funds from a variety of PLA's commercial entities (Liff & Erickson, 2013, p. 811).

Furthermore, maritime safety risks are central to Japan's national security and peace concerns for its people. As an energy-dependent country, Japan, in particular, fulfills its oil demands directly from the Middle East via maritime, and it also contributes a significant amount of its commerce network via the route that runs along the SCS and ECS. In addition, the SCS route is critical for Tokyo's strategic interests, particularly in terms of meeting the state's energy demands. So much so that at least 80% of Japan's crude oil imports are being carried to Southeast Asia via maritime (Son, 2013, p. 2015). The East China Sea, on the other hand, has direct coasts to China and Japan and is strategically valuable for the region's neighboring countries due to its strategic location and the existence of massive resources. Thus, both the Chinese and Japanese governments are exploring strategic maneuvers to the East China Sea in search of possible natural gas and oil to improve their economies and minimize dependency on more expensive imports from other countries (Husseini, 2018). Moreover, the 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) determined from the baselines of the two nations' shores overlap over a large expanse of water. China asserts that its EEZ stretches from its continental shelves to Japan's coast.

Since the late 19th century, territorial conflicts over the Senkaku/Dioyu Islands have been at the forefront of the disputed maritime zone in the ECS. In recent years, China's rise in the global balance of power, its military expansion, and its direct discussions of its strategic intentions in both the ECS and the SCS have been worthwhile issues of Japanese security concerns. Indeed, the status-quo discussions that occurred consequence of the fishing boat incident (described in the previous sections) between Tokyo and Beijing on Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in

2010 created an unsolved political crisis for years. In addition, diplomatic tensions in the region have lately escalated, with the Japanese government had recently purchased three of the Senkaku Islands from a private Japanese citizen in 2012. Furthermore, Adam Liff has argued that the Senkaku Islands securitization issue is critical in three ways. These are Japan's strategic objectives as a benchmark for its position and shift in the balance of power, an indicator of China's growing influence in the area, and the United States' posture toward Japan's alliance (Liff, 2019a, p. 3).

China's security posture toward Japan is a critical indicator for evaluating Beijing's expanding power and influence in international relations. So much so that China's enhanced reconnaissance and patrol activities in the region against Japan following 2012 is a clear example of this security posture. Also, the Japanese government has officially announced in recent years that Tokyo is concerned with the reality that Chinese military units have increased their activities in the surrounding waters and airspace (MOD, 2020, p. 17).

Further, Rineheart and Elias argue that China's military efforts in the region extend far beyond simple reconnaissance and patrol missions (Rinehart & Elias, 2015, p. 25). Chinese military activities are rapidly becoming Japan's strategic concern in terms of maintaining strategic supremacy and gaining tactical and technological capabilities on the open seas. The coast guard boats, naval warships, and airplanes of China have been designed to strengthen and test direct intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) functions.

According to Kraska's article, China is even training its military units in the region for a war mission with a militia fishing fleet akin to the People's War at Sea (Kraska, 2020). With such enlarged military deployments and patrol activities, China's ambition of expanding the ISR functions has continuously pushed the region's securitization concerns to the top of the agenda. Furthermore, the fact that the PLAN's new generation modernized capabilities have the potential to benefit from Japan's limitations and exert pressure raises status quo discussions beyond the region's securitization problem. China, for example, has transformed many navy warships into coast guard vessels to participate in patrolling the area of the

Senkaku Islands. Beijing's strategic decision to build the coast guard provides China a considerable advantage in conflicts with other law enforcement vessels. Indeed, the number of modern coast guard ships are equipped with heavy weapon systems as well as anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles (CSIS, 2016). According to Japan's government ministries, PRC's escalating military efforts, particularly in the Senkaku Islands and the surrounding gray zone, destabilize the disputed territories and are linked to a unilateral effort to change the regional status quo (MOD, 2020, p. 17).

There have been multiple incidents of diplomatic crises precipitated by PLA Naval vessels, including attack and intelligence ships, participating in military activities in the territorial seas surrounding the Japan. In contrast to a coast guard ship, a Chinese Navy Type 054 (Jiangkai I) class warship entered Japan's contiguous zone nearby Senkaku Islands for the first time in June 2016 (Mie, 2016). Japanese authorities described the situation as extremely concerning, claiming that China has unilaterally escalated tensions (Stashwick, 2016). The Japanese official authorities reported in January 2018 that it had spotted a Shang-class submarine and a Jiangkai II-class frigate in the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands' territorial waters. According to government reports, this was the first time a Chinese submarine operated in the region on this date (MOD, 2018, p. 104). Further, according to a document titled China's Activities in the East China Sea issued by Japan's Defense Ministry, China's PLAN Dongdiao-class intelligence-gathering vessels (AGIs) have also been conducted military operations around Senkaku islands many times (MOD, 2021a, p. 5).

Previous Sino-Japanese conflicts are also likely to resurface, creating tensions in the currently disputed territories. Many factors, particularly in the ECS region, have the potential to explode into an uncontrollable crisis, such as a misinterpreted signal, a shipwreck, or collision scenarios. The rapid expansion of opposing vessels in disputed waters significantly increases the chance of an accident. Furthermore, it is unclear how the management system will work in the event of a Japanese-Chinese "duel" in the ECS. For instance, aside from Chinese vessels entering Japanese territorial waters, reports of military interactions have

worsened relationship between the two nations. For instance, the claim in 2013 that a Chinese Jiangwei-II class navy frigate directed fire controls to an MSDF destroyer heightened tensions in the region, and the two states blamed each other with contradictory statements (Smith, 2013).

Furthermore, the explosive growth of PRC's Air Force units' activities to cover areas surrounding Japan, such as the ECS, the Pacific Ocean, and the Sea of Japan, emphasizes Japan's security concerns. Furthermore, Tokyo's security worries are highlighted by the rapid expansion of PLAAF activities to cover territories surrounding Japan. According to Japan's annual white paper, the ongoing military actions of PLA planes in recent years, such as surveillance or warning missions and combat air patrols, are intimately connected to Beijing's intention to establish an Air Defense Identification Zone over the East China Sea (Defense of Japan, 2020, p. 58). In essence, China announced the formation of the ADIZ in November 2013 which covers the disputed Senkaku Islands and extends into the ECS without previous official consultation with neighboring countries (Rinehart & Elias, 2015, p. 7). Tokyo issued a statement immediately following PRC's declaration of its ADIZ stating the government will respond to Beijing's unilateral attempt to alter the status quo in a firm but calm manner (MOFA, 2013b).

Recent years, the Japanese Air Force conducted high levels of scrambling to prevent PLAAF units from entering its airspace. For example, in 2012, there were a maximum of 156 scramblings, which increased dramatically to 851 in 2016 (MOD, 2021a, p. 5). In many respects, the interaction between Japanese and Chinese military aircraft represents a growing geopolitical competition over the Senkaku Islands. For instance, PLAAF jets heading south towards to the Senkaku Islands recorded the first flyover of a Chinese aircraft in the Sea of Japan in June 2016 (MOD, 2021a, p. 5). As an example, according to Japanese sources, the Chinese BZK-005 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was discovered over the East China Sea where is where is closer to Japan's Southwestern Islands in 2018 (Defense of Japan, 2020, p. 71).

The growth of Chinese military actions in the SCS is also a source of concern for the stability of the area and the US-Japan alliance. In addition, according to a recent assessment by the Japanese Ministry of Defense that reviewed PRC's military activity in the SCS, the Spratly and Paracel Islands were the scene of a territorial sovereignty dispute between China and ASEAN nations (MOD, 2021a, p. 6). Likewise, China had increased its ISR capacity and military operational level by exploiting power vacuums in that territory (MOD, 2021a, p. 6). Moreover, PRC's expansion of reclamation efforts involving these two islands, which may be utilized for military purposes, is causing Japan's regional peace and stability to be concerned. Indeed, China's new ports, runways, and support infrastructure have taken on new strategic dimensions in the region. According to Japan, with these formations, China has sought to increase the number of PLAN forces in the SCS, strengthen its A2/AD capabilities against the USA's presence in the region, and proclaim a new range of ADIZ (MOD, 2021a, p. 24).

The PLAN and PLAAF forces' mission and influence extend beyond the traditional active defense strategy of denial and operational preparation, causing the region's states to increase their vigilance and deterrence. Moreover, Japanese officials are experiencing a variety of tactical and strategic components prompting PRC's growing military activities in the maritime domains on a regular basis. Increasing military activities in the region, crucially, lead both sides' operational levels to be redefined, as well as crucial strategic ramifications in the Sino-Japanese rivalry. Crucially, the increase in Chinese military activities since 2012, particularly around the Senkaku Islands, indicates that the Chinese government has challenged Japan's administrative authority over the islands (Burke & Heath & Hornung & Ma & Morris & Chase, 2018, p. 15). The fact that China is pointing to a new status quo and attempting to create the absolute authority of its military presence raises concerns that the two nations' tensions and conflicts of interest will persist following years.

5. ABE'S SECURITY STRATEGY EVOLVEMENT OVER CONCERNS

5.1. INCREASING JAPAN'S CAPABILITIES

China's military activities against the region and directly related to Japan's safety for its people have prompted Tokyo to make remarkable modifications in its internal structure, defense, and deterrence. Moreover, the Abe administration has changed its priority to analyzing the situation in the southwest to implement revisions and enhancements to the military infrastructure to improve rapid and flexible response capabilities. Furthermore, the doctrinal and legal changes that allow for rapid and flexible implementation to overcome conventional and "grey zone" challenges, notably in the disputed Senkaku Islands, show that the Abe government seeks to combine security concerns with internal structures. Significantly, the common thread running through all of Tokyo's security measures and strategies is that they contain countermeasures taken in response to a potential emergency arising from China.

The Abe administration initiated the execution of revisionist measures by taking more deterrent measures both inside and outside of Japan's concerns over China's rise. Furthermore, Japan's policymakers' intention to seek revisionist development in many areas has been an indication of the country's newfound capacity for balancing behavior in the area. Additionally, the Japanese administration aimed to strengthen the national strategic plan, crisis management decision-making mechanism, intelligence and information gathering network, and new security legislation in response to the region's changing structure of power and new alarming threats. Thus, Abe, who was successful in making a critical breakthrough that paved the way for internal changes, aimed to quickly and effectively solve the crisis issues that might arise in the upcoming years, while also making a significant contribution to the formation of a more effective and 'normal' Japan.

The only issue Japanese revisionist policymakers have thought about in recent years is what strategy Japan would take in the face of a rapidly developing country like China. However, the Abe government and LDP officials accomplished "milestones" in Japanese history in a short period, placing present Japan in a substantially different security and strategic structure. This structuring can be interpreted as Japan activating a more robust hard balancing alternative, both internally and externally. Although many studies limit the balancing option by focusing on the surface of developments rather than their substance, it is clear that balancing discussions will be brought to the frontline over time. Because the details that Tokyo contains have the potential to open the door to a wide range of political consequences. Japan, for example, was able to not only strengthen its defenses but also broaden constitutional constraints on the use of weapons to preserve the security of other nations in the cooperating region. In reality, under Abe's leadership, this step is even more difficult than its enlargement.

Of course, a one-of-a-kind country like Japan cannot be expected to change its constitution without repercussions. Internal and external pressures may have been overwhelming for Abe and his followers. The structural changes that will emerge as a result of the situational examination, on the other hand, can be seen as a method for Abe and his followers to achieve the comprehensive revision they desire. Although the Abe administration did not explicitly use such a broad scope to offer continuity to significant political changes that might have broadened consequences, it demonstrated that Japan is embarked on a dramatic transformation trajectory in the traditional security domain.

5.1.1 Japan's First Formal National Security Strategy

The Basic Policy on National Defense, issued in 1957 by the National Defense Council and Cabinet, served as the basis for Japan's defense initiatives until the Abe administration developed the National Security Strategy (NSS). On December 17, 2013, newly National Security Council and the Cabinet adopted

Japan's first-ever NSS (MOD, n.d). In particular, the new NSS symbolizes the security adjustment implemented by the Abe government immediately after assuming office. It has been envisaged that this upgrade would improve operating processes by increasing military capability potential to new levels.

The National Security Strategy also aimed to enhance Tokyo's position as a more robust actor in the international affairs. On the other hand, the Abe administration with the NSS is primarily concerned with maintaining regional stability and promoting a more cooperative Japan. Thus, Abe's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" policy directly contributes to determining the nation's security target as well as considering strategic interests. Notably, the NSS intends to conduct a thorough evaluation of the security environment surrounding Japan. Japan planned to achieve this goal by implementing a strategy of utilizing its military resources more efficiently and comprehensively than ever before. (The Government of Japan, 2013, p. 16). Overall, Abe's administration demonstrates a stronger Japan in the region and globe by constructing solid foundations for national defense.

In the NSS official document, it is critical to examine China's rise and military action under a distinct title. With the NSS, the Abe administration highlighted "concern" over PRC's military activity in the SCS and ECS, as well as its hidden military functions and uncertainty in security policies (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2013, p. 12). Moreover, the NSS stressed that it would act with prudence and attention in response to China's efforts to establish an unstable system. Significantly, the NSS also asserts that China intends to unilaterally alter the status quo, particularly on the disputed islands, and that Japan would enhance its forces' tactical capabilities and maritime surveillance capacity in order to protect maritime sovereignty (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2013, p. 16).

The NSS highlights how Japan's attention has switched to maritime stability, with strategy within a broad framework being one of the most significant components. This broad framework is required to expand in three different stages. The Abe administration emphasizes that it will fulfill its resolute stance in security strategy

(1) by strengthening the effectiveness of national defense units, (2) by expanding cooperation with the United States, and (3) by engaging with other nations that share common values. (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2013, p. 14). The Abe government, which aims to address Beijing's concerns more forcefully than previous administrations, is critical in terms of maintaining its blueprint of Proactive Contribution of Peace with the NSS. As Cornealis points out, NSS is noteworthy because it highlights the necessity of Japan adopting a proactive approach to security rather than changes in the security environment (Atanassova-Cornealis, 2014, p. 4).

Crucially, China's reaction was immediate when Abe released the NSS. An editorial in the Chinese newspaper Daily People said that Abe's security policy in Japan marked a turning point in how Tokyo thought about security and showed the dangerous "Abe-military." (Wuyong, 2013). According to a strong statement in the same article, the underlying factor of Japan's alliance with the US was Tokyo's justification for the elimination of restrictions within the realm of its own national security (Wuyong, 2013). In other words, Japan has been condemned for losing its pacifist posture and even for making it a cliché. In another China-based source from the same year, it was indicated that Abe would once again subject Japan to the influence of militarism and that he would certainly destabilize the peace in the region. (Yaodong & Huibo, 2013). However, according to Tokyo, the new military strategy is a very rational response to China's worrisome behavior. From this point of view, an in-depth look at the three main parts of the new NSS, which have already been described, shows the conceptual ideas behind Japan.

5.1.2. Creation of National Security Council

Along with constitutional legislation and the Yoshida Doctrine, Japan defined a non-threatening military presence as its ultimate aim for many years after World War II. Hence, the development of effective military strategies and surveillance systems by Japan during the Cold War fell behind those of other economically

powerful nations. To the degree that Japan's economic prosperity obscured comprehension of the nation's security needs until the late 1990s.

Nevertheless, Tokyo has been criticized for its lack of own defense capabilities and the sustainability of burden-sharing as a consequence of its efforts to develop military policies that are mostly based on those of the United States. As the Armitage and Nye report demonstrates in the 2000s, the time has come for Japan's burden-sharing to evolve into power-sharing (Armitage & Nye, 2000, p. 3). Indeed, beginning with the Koizumi administration, Japan has begun to reform its defense system deliberately. For example, for the first time, Koizumi dispatched the SDF overseas. What is significant here is that beginning in 2001, Japan began to examine the internal changes in its national security structure and crisis management mechanism more thoroughly. But it wasn't until the Abe administration that Japan's military strategy changed in terms of domestic politics, institutional structures, and legislation.

Even before Abe took office, China's aggressive claims of military activity over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and other gray zone issues around Japan were already a big worry (Liff, 2018). Under Abe's administration, a second event of grave concern to national security occurred. For instance, ten Japanese employees were killed in Algeria during a hostage crisis in January 2013. As a result of the attack on the Sahara Gas Power Plant, Japan has sustained the most losses as a result of the attack. This was a disastrous situation for Tokyo. Because Japan lacked the requisite intelligence and was unable to safeguard its own citizens. However, in order to protect its people, Abe's administration was forced to address the constraints and realities of diplomatic and security challenges (Miller, 2014). As a response, Japan accelerated the institutional reform process in response to the need for more centralized and expedient national security assessments. Tokyo's need to respond to several crises within and outside of Japan necessitated the development of a more efficient organization to build proactive, comprehensive, and well-planned security measures.

National Security Council (NSC) creation was one of Abe's first actions as prime minister. Prior to recognizing national challenges, Abe underlined the significance

of establishing the NSC, a foreign and security policy control tower, in his first address as head of state following his 2012 reelection (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2012). In addition, the NSC's Advisory Council met in February 2013, barely two months after Shinzo Abe's election, and the NSC was formally constituted in December of the same year. The expedited formation of this organization indicates Abe's ambition for strategic defense initiatives. Also, the NSC is called a "control tower" in the official outline of the NSS of the Abe administration. According to this statement, the NSC strived for strong political leadership and emphasized the need for more strategic management of national security policy within an integrated bureaucracy (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, 2013b, p. 17).

Thereby, The National Security Council was founded as a new body to help smooth the major disagreements that have arisen between ministries/organizations and to expedite the evaluation of crisis response security plans. In addition, NSC is especially significant as an institution that promotes the formulation and implementation of a long-term strategic perspective in Japan.

However, previous governments hampered Japan's long-term national strategy by having provisional ministers who lacked unification. Because of the presence of such a system, a full government could not make decisions or evaluate security concerns. Consequently, the NSC, which enables the bureaucratic structure to work as a whole across a number of ministries, is vitally important for establishing a solid foundation for Japan's security strategy (Hosoya, 2013, p. 4).

Furthermore, the study by Fukushima and Green highlights that the NSC structure may play a role in medium and long-term planning rather than merely crisis management. For example, National Security Council played a critical role in the formulation and determination of the new NDPG that main ideas of loosening Japan's arms export restrictions have summarized and formed the oversight mechanism in the formation of the National Security Strategy (Fukushima & Green, 2018, p. 15).

5.1.3. Abe's New National Defense Program Guidelines

Prior to Shinzo Abe's administration, The National Defense Program Guidelines, which describe Japan's medium- and long-term defense policy, were last amended in 2010 under the administration of Naoto Kan, before to Shinzo Abe's administration. However, shortly after becoming prime minister, Abe reevaluated the necessity for the NDPG (hence referred to as the guidelines) to function more effectively.

Moreover, the Abe administration decided to build the new guidelines after deciding that security had gotten worse because of rising tensions in the region and threats from China and North Korea. In response to Japan's regional security situation, the revised guidelines specify basic defense policies, equipment capabilities, and roles in military assets. The 2013 NDPG was released at the same time as the Medium-Term Defense Program (MTDP). The MTDP shows how much money will be spent and how much huge equipment will be bought to reach the goals set when the force structure has been made. The 2013 NDPG is an updated version of the 2010 guidelines. Even though this is important in and of itself, it is also important because it is the first time that Japan's defense guidelines have been done using the National Security Strategy as a guide (Hinata-Yamaguchi, 2018, p. 43).

The first key aspect of the 2013 NDPG is that it deals with China separately and in particular. Unlike earlier NDPGs, 2013 guidelines indicate that China's expanded air and marine actions in the region (such as ADIZ) are coercive efforts to alter the status quo (MOD, 2013a, p. 3). In return, the document stated that "Japan will need to pay utmost attention." (MOD, 2013a, p. 4). Moreover, the Abe government has sought to strengthen deterrent and response capabilities, boost ISR efforts, and develop more efficient SDF missions and equipment, especially in the maritime and air domains.

Furthermore, the influence, capabilities, and operational operations of the MSDF have been boosted, particularly in reaction to Beijing's heightened military activities. The MSDF planned a new generation of destroyers that would be

deployed to increase its reaction and operating capabilities in the maritime zones surrounding Japan. For example, destroyer and submarine divisions have been raised from 5 to 6, and destroyer numbers have grown from 47 to 54, and submarine numbers have increased from 16 to 22 (MOD, 2013a, p. 31). The 48 new targets for the equipment outlined in the 2010 NDPG had changed in a short period, and a significantly higher sum had been set as the new objective. This earlier-than-anticipated revision is significant since it occurs considerably more quickly than in the long term. Through the development of capabilities, the MSDF also plans to build a comprehensive naval force for continuous ISR and anti-submarine operations. Since the MSDF aims to operate multipurpose Izumo-class destroyers, the Short Take-off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) capable F-35B is a critical component of this fleet. This is a key part of Japan's plan to strengthen its control over the sea and air domain, especially over the Senkaku Islands (MOD, 2020, p. 486). Furthermore, during the Second World War, the Japanese Imperial Navy's surprise attacks by submarines and air strikes by land-based and carrier-based aircraft were the most notable force projection capabilities of Japanese imperialism (Genda, 1969, p. 46). In this light, the Izumo-class multipurpose destroyers, which were Japan's first fixed-wing ships after the devastation of the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II, are of particular significance and relevance.

The third significant development is the improved evaluation of the Gray Zone concept. In the preceding NDPG, Tokyo used the term "gray zone" as a fundamental idea to explain the issues facing Japan in the face of China's expanding military capability and operations, and established the Dynamic Defense Force. It sought to increase the impact of ISR operations and missions in the region surrounding the Southwest Island chains as part of the 2010 NDPG gray zone challenges. Rather than reinventing it, the 2013 NDPG revised the gray zone definition by adding further structure to this innovation. According to the new rules, the obstacles in the "gray zone" are getting more permanent, and the risks that come with more serious situations are being brought to the forefront

(MOD, 2013a, p. 7). Consequently, the Abe administration has highlighted the gray zone's challenges more explicitly.

As Ishihara remarked, Japan has for the first time conducted a complete assessment of the SDF's capabilities based on joint operations in light of all these advances (Ishihara, 2013, p. 128). Consequently, the 2010 Dynamic Defense Force was replaced by the 2013 Dynamic Joint Defense Force in accordance with the 2013 guidelines. Therefore, the Abe government identifies certain Japanese troops that need to be restructured to make them more mobile so that they can be deployed swiftly during times of conflict. For instance, while cutting the budget for ground components like tanks and artillery, upgrades were made to naval and air elements, including the introduction of multi-role compact warships, the installation of new reconnaissance and early warning fleets, and the deployment of new unmanned aerial vehicles. (Ishihara, 2013, p. 128). As a result, it is intended to finalize the development of the SDF to increase its mobility and resilience in needed to shield Japan's remote islands.

The most current NDPG, entitled "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and Beyond" (2018 NDPG), was established in December 2018 owing to the need for the security environment around Japan to change at exceptionally rapid rates (MOD, 2018, p. 1). This new NDPG, which was formed in addition to the 2013 NDPG, focuses on addressing the significance of rapid development in the use of emerging domains such as space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum by referencing the rebalancing of power. It also reaffirms the belief that China should alter the status quo through unilateral coercive efforts by expanding its territorial claims in the region (MOD, 2018, p. 5).

Specifically, with the most recent NDPG, the Abe administration decided to establish a Multi-Domain Defense Force to strengthen capabilities not only in traditional areas, but also in new areas such as space, and to maintain flexible and strategic activities throughout all phases until something unexpected occurs.

In addition, Japan has made substantial progress in deploying the major JSDF units into new areas. The SDF has established squadrons under the Cyber Defense Unit, Space Domain Mission Units, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Units. (MOD,

2020, p. 219). Furthermore, the Abe administration has established new surface-to-air guided missile units and surface-to-ship guided missile units, as well as directed deterrence in the southwest islands (MOD, 2020, p. 485). For instance, the new NDPG aims to build land-based Hyper-Velocity Gliding Projectile (HVGP) missiles with a minimum range of 300 kilometers (MOD, 2020, p. 485). In addition, Hornung points out that Japan's development of long-range missiles that will allow it to reach beyond its borders is significant in light of the ban on strike capabilities (Hornung, 2020a, p. 67). This has been shown by the fact that Japan is making missiles with longer ranges (Hornung, 2020a, p. 67). Another critical development was that the Abe government increased the capacity of existing warplanes. Following the agreed-upon guidelines, it has been determined to increase the number of F-35 stealth fighter aircraft in Japan from 42 to 147, a 105-plane increase.

As Shelia A. Smith notes, the most recent guidelines demonstrate Japan's commitment to being prepared by emphasizing the country's ability to withstand a strike, as seen by the concentration on its defenses (Smith, 2018). Moreover, Japan is accelerating the modernization of Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) aircraft at an astounding rate while adopting enhanced missile detection and destruction capabilities with overall air defense. As a result, the Abe administration focused on improving naval strength and supremacy in 2013. Further in 2018, the same had done for new domains such as space, air, and cyber.

5.1.4. Strategy for Defense Technology

The Abe administration has stated in its National Security Strategy that it will acquire defense equipment effectively and efficiently in 2013 and will enhance its defense manufacturing and technological base throughout time (Government of Japan, 2013, p. 35).

In addition, the National Defense Program Guidelines emphasize the significance of international joint research and manufacture, which establishes the future

vision for national defence processing and innovation foundations in the Japanese security environment based on the strategy of enhancing deterrence (MOD, 2013d, p. 27). As a result of these developments, the Ministry of Defense, under the guidance of Prime Minister Abe, adopted the Strategy on Defense Production and Technological Bases in June 2014 to strengthen nations defense qualifications and technological superiority.

The core tenet of the approach is that the security environment for defense production and technological platforms has shifted, and the present limits must be modified if Japan is to maintain its competitive advantage. Essentially, the ultimate objective of the Strategy on Defense Production and Technological Bases is to contribute to strong deterrence by bolstering Japan's sovereignty and to contribute to the development of domestic industry with the most advanced technology (MOD, 2014, p. 5). In other words, the Abe administration intends to maintain defense production and technological bases that may serve as operational support units by lowering foreign dependency on the defense equipment. In particular, this development is vital in terms of enhancing negotiating influence and preventing threats by utilizing globally competitive technology advantages. In this manner, Japan's industrial and technical capabilities have expanded accompanying government initiatives.

To meet the new technology policies of the Ministry of Defense in the defense field and to deal with the growing military and technical competition in the region, the Abe administration has set two main strategic goals to improve Japan's technological capabilities. The first strategic objective is Japan's technical superiority, which signifies Tokyo's objections to consolidating its military strength and achieving a leading position in international joint research and development (R&D) (MOD, 2016, p. 5). The second strategy is delivering superior defense equipment through effective and efficient R&D. Crucially, the Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA) was founded in 2015 as part of this strategy to strengthen the structure of the MOD. ATLA's primary mission is to bring together under one umbrella the many departments of the Ministry of Defense involved in defense R&D, procurement, and export.

Moreover, ATLA's primary strategic objective is to develop sophisticated defense equipment that fulfills the operational requirements of the SDF and enables the SDF to respond flexibly and rapidly to emerging threats and changing circumstances (MOD, 2016, p. 6).

In particular, ATLA collaborates with associated ministries, government organizations, private businesses, etc., to promote defense equipment and technology-related initiatives. It aspires to protect Japan's deterrence policy through technical superiority, especially since China wants to declare an ADIZ and increase military activities in the disputed islands. Moreover, ATLA has implemented several new strategic initiatives that are significant. Crucially, Japanese companies' participation in the multinational F-35 Program, radar systems, and new generation naval equipment; and collaboration on defense equipment and technology, which includes collaborative research and development with other countries (Defense of Japan, 2018, p. 416). Furthermore, Japan's technological superiority strategy is as significant as China's. So, in the future, it will be more important to look at how much competition there is between the two countries.

5.1.5. Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology

In 2014, the Abe administration issued new rules with the intent of easing limitations on the transfer of military equipment and technologies. The fundamental elements of the new security ideas included a reassessment of the restrictions on the export of defense equipment and technology established by previous governments. The Three Principles on Arms Exports and Related Policy Guidelines were enacted during a 1967 Diet session under former Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato. According to principles, arms exports to the following factors not be permitted:

"(1) communist countries, (2) countries with embargo under the United Nations Security Council's resolutions, and (3) countries involved in or likely to be involved in conflicts."
(MOFA, n.d.b).

In addition to the new principles set by Takeo Miki's government in 1976, he also enacted further limitations barring the export of Japanese armaments. In other words, it was said that the Japanese government would not back the sale of "arms," no matter where they went. Instead, Japan had to make all of its military equipment. With the government-mandated level of defense spending, the Japanese defense sector was focused on expanding the domestic market, while foreign defense technology and capabilities also couldn't spread. But because of the limits that were put on them, Japanese military businesses lost their market function and influence over time, especially in the early 1990s. They also started to lose their strength and power.

Prior to the start of the 2010s, strict principles prevented Japan and its allies from developing innovative weaponry. The Japanese and American projects to develop Aegis naval air defense systems, for instance, were delayed due to the constraints. To overcome this barrier to Japan's better relationship with its allies, the Abe administration recognized the necessity for reinterpreting policies. ("Japan, U.S. mull joint upgrade", 2014). Thus, Japan was not able to share its defense technology for a critical weapon system that contributes to both ballistic missile defense and air defense combat, which are priorities for Tokyo and Washington's national defense (Hirose, 2014, p. 1).

The Abe administration established the new Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology on April 1, 2014 for the overseas transfer of defense equipment and technology in compliance with NSS (MOFA, 2016c). After the implementation of the new principles, the Abe administration intended to manage defense equipment and technology based on three principles. The first is to specify the circumstances in which transfers are forbidden. According to the official definition of MOFA:

“The transfer violates obligations under treaties and other international agreements that Japan has concluded or... under United Nations Security Council resolutions, or the defense equipment and technology is destined for a country party to a conflict (a country against which the United Nations Security Council is taking measures to maintain or restore international peace and security in conflict)” (MOFA, 2014a).

In short, the ban on arms exports to nations under the old principle of only parties to war changed to the definition of a country sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

The second principle entails the reorganization and expansion of the former principles' exemptions. Under the concept title "Limitation to cases where transfers may be permitted as well as strict examination and information disclosure," two transmission scenario principles are specified. These are "to the active promotion of peace contribution and international cooperation for Japan's security". It says very clearly that international co-development and production transfers should be allowed with countries that work with the U.S. and Japan to keep people safe (Sato, 2015, p. 3). For instance, the Abe administration judged that previous restrictions needlessly constrained Japan's participation in joint armaments manufacturing (such as the development of new aircrafts) and hindered arms transfers meant to promote to global stability. Consequently, under the new approach, Japanese businesses were permitted to assist in the production of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter components and export additional equipment (Chanlett-Avery & Campbell & Williams, 2019, p. 37-38).

The third point relates to misuse prevention. The "ensuring appropriate control regarding extra-purpose use or transfer to third parties" concept states that international transfers will only be permitted when appropriate controls are implemented. Thus, the receiving country's duties are loosened, highlighting the necessity for prior authorization for abuse and transfer to third parties. It is specified that transfers without prior authorization will be permitted if partners are deemed to be a suitable engagement to the active improvement of peace and international relations.

In the early twenty-first century, globalization intensified the relationship between global production and manufacturing and facilitated supply. Increasing technology and accessibility to manufacturing have boosted the options for states to enter the defense industry, as has the rivalry among states in the sector of defense equipment. In a world and power structure that is becoming more globalized, Japanese leaders had to question the usefulness of a closed domestic

military market. Moreover, according to Sato, the traditional formula was revised for two primary reasons. The first reason is that the Japanese domestic market and defense manufacturing bases aren't big enough to meet the SDF's production needs in terms of both quantity and quality. The second reason is that countries with military industries, such as the United States, were not willing to share licenses for making defense equipment (Sato, 2015, p. 5).

According to Sugai, the Japanese defense sector faced a barrier due to the prohibition of maintenance services outside of Japan as a result of Japan's 1976 policy. However, the new strategy permitted the Government of Japan and the Japanese Defense Industry to build a regional Maintenance Repair Overhaul and Upgrade (MRO&U) capability, such as for the F-35 in the zone. Therefore, Japan seeks to deepen regional security partnership with both its close allies and the United States (Suagi, 2016, p. 26).

5.1.6. Increased Military Spending

The Abe administration's willingness to raise the budget is another important part of building up Japan's military capabilities. Shinzo Abe stated in an interview titled "Japan Is Back" that Japan's decision to boost its defense spending for the first time in eleven years was a "sign of Japan's will to fulfill its duties" in reaction to China's dramatic increase in military expenditure (Abe & Tepperman, 2013, p. 7).

Furthermore, the limiting defense expenditure policy to 1 percent of GDP before the Abe administration dates back to Miki Takeo's administration in 1976. Even if the decision was reversed formally in 1986, Tokyo's military spending has remained at or under 1 percent since then. Hence, before to Abe's return to power, Tokyo mostly acquired military capabilities from the United States with a minimal operational budget contribution. Despite Japan's strong economy, political limitations posed a significant obstacle to the military equipment market. However, while South and Southeast Asian countries increased their defense

spending since the end of the Cold War, Japan missed an opportunity to come in an important supplier of military equipment (Wright, 2016, p. 6).

Defense expenditures have increased gradually since Shinzo Abe became prime minister. Even though this increase is usually 1% or less of GDP, the slow rise shows that this limit will be pushed in the near future. Crucially, Abe remarked in a 2017 speech that there was no reason to continue the expenditure cap. Following this, the Security Research Committee of Japan analyzed this issue and recommended Japan use 2% of NATO's GDP as a defense spending point of reference (Pyle, 2018, p. 82). In addition, as Reynolds stated that Japan experienced ever-increasing defense spending in the post-Abe period, such as the highest postwar amounts (Reynolds, 2021). Furthermore, according to Hughes, Japan's desire to increase defense spending is clearly driven by a growing urge to balance China's militarily (Hughes, 2016, p. 37).

5.1.7. Legislation Change for Peace and Security

Due to the evolving security environment, particularly since the turn of the twenty-first century, Japan's legal barriers have remained insufficient to handle strategic issues. In order to address these political and security concerns, Prime Minister Abe's cabinet approved a number of legislative changes related to the 2015 Development of Security Legislation.

The legislative changes date back to Shinzo Abe's first government, which took place in April 2007. Abe requested that the Advisory Panel investigate four key factors in light of the heightened awareness given about the changing security environment. These include, for instance, the protection of US Navy ships on the high seas, the instruction to investigate the legal basis for interception of a possible ballistic missile, the use of force in peacekeeping operations, and logistical support to foreign troops participating in peacekeeping operations (The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, 2008, p. 4). Moreover, this report had submitted to former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo

Fukuda in 2008. In conclusion, the report strongly recommends that Japan use its right to collective self-defense and become more actively in its involvement in United Nations collective security measures. Tokyo, however, did not take any action in response to the report's recommendations at the time.

Abe has reintroduced the security measures of the unfinished advisory panel after a seven-year break in 2013. The Advisory Panel convened again in February 2013 and issued its final report on May 15, 2014. As in the previous four cases, the 2014 panel sought to show concrete examples of the need for a constitutional reinterpretation. The report reaffirmed the necessity to protect Japan's stability and peace and secure its survival in a new and evolving security environment (The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, 2014a, p. 3). Furthermore, new panel aimed to cover broader legislative changes that were not limited to the “four cases” described in the 2008 report. According to the panel, Tokyo's next concrete steps, the logic behind the government's constitutional interpretations, and the procedure for reinterpreting the constitution should have been defined (The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, 2014b, p. 3). Indeed, the recommendations in this report provided the basis for the cabinet decision taken on 1 July 2014.

Shinzo Abe has instructed that negotiations be held between the ruling parties within the government to formulate security legislation. As a result, the Bill for the Development of Legislation for Peace and Security and the International Peace Support Bill was jointly agreed upon as a result of the cabinet decision and submitted to the Diet on May 15. The House of Representatives passed the legislation's ratification by the Diet on September 19, and the legislation finally took effect on March 29, 2016 (Government of Japan, 2016, p. 1). Japan's proactive contribution to peace has paved the path for the strengthening of Japan's national security and collaboration with the international community, including in gray-zone situations. Ultimately, ten laws were amended, including the Self-Defense Forces Act.

It should be underlined that there was no consensus on any of the proposals offered to the cabinet in the report. In actuality, it is impossible to understate the

significance of Abe's coalition partner Komeito Party to the new legislation. Contrary to the panel's report, as a result of the Komeito Party's pacifist and antimilitaristic posture, significantly less restrictive security measures were implemented. Even though Komeito is a minor party, its partnership with the LDP in the 2012 election triumph was crucial in forming the new government. (see e, g. Ashley & Hayat, 2021). In addition, Komeito's support is required for LDP to reach a strong two-thirds majority in the Lower House of the Diet. As further emphasized by Hosoya, the fact that Yusuke Yokobatake, Director-General of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, sought to retain the prior constitutional interpretation as far as possible was also influential (Hosoya, 2015, p. 299).

Even though these two factors impeded the full implementation of the revisions to the security legislation and the panel's recommendations, Japan has enacted one of the most comprehensive security policies in its history. In addition, after the legislative change, tens of thousands of people near Japan's parliament protested the new laws, such as the new conditions for the use of force (Takenaka, 2012b). In fact, Komeito and public pressure, which were Abe's main barriers to a large-scale law or constitutional change, did not prevent Abe from enforcing the law allowing the use of force overseas. According to Atsuhiko Fujishige's analysis of the directives and their impact on the cabinet, remarkably, the cabinet did not agree on the interpretation of the article 9, but a consensus was reached regarding Tokyo's collective self-defense in answer to an act of aggression on a partner state (Fujishige, 2016, p. 5-6).

For the first time, Japan has given the SDF units additional operational tasks as part of the UN Peacekeeping Operations in areas where international collaboration is threatened. In this context, logistics support activities for the armed forces of foreign countries have also been included in SDF's new missions. (Government of Japan, 2016, p. 2). Crucially, Japan has made significant progress in permitting the SDF to use force for protect civilians when they are under attacked. In fact, Japan had previously limited SDF personnel's authority to use weapons in international peace cooperation activities to protect themselves and protect their weapons and equipment (MOFA, 2016d, p. 2). In other words, Article 9

prohibited the use of weapons for purposes other than self-defense. However as Nasu noted, it appears that the Diet has no significant objections to expanding this condition through the legislative process (Nasu, 2016, p. 259).

In fact, before Abe's administration, the Japanese Constitution only authorized the "use of force" in the event of a direct assault. The Abe administration reevaluated the security situation in and around Japan. Consequently, Prime Minister Abe determined that an assault by a country other than Japan may threaten Japan's survival. Obviously, cabinet approval of this initiative is vital. Moreover, with the new legislation, Japan was permitted to use force under the new conditions. According to Hughes, Japan broke the constitutional prohibition on collective self-defense and prepared the way to use of force previously prohibited by the constitution, even when not directly attacked (Hughes, 2017, p. 117). Thus, the Abe administration has cleared the way for remarkable tactical advantages for Japan.

5.2. NEW ERA FOR JAPAN-US RELATIONS

When Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty to put an end to World War II, the United States and Japan partnered up for the first time under the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. The amount and level of US forces in the region are directly tied to Japan's security requirements, which must be met within the scope of this agreement. Furthermore, throughout the Cold War, it was not obvious how Japan would maintain its national security amid the quest for global hegemony. In fact, Japan pursued bilateral relations with the US during the Cold War in order to protect its national security. Thus, by adhering to the Yoshida doctrine, Japan came under the US "nuclear umbrella" and hoped to keep its place in the rising global power rivalry and develop the economy throughout this period. In this context, Japan aimed to create a framework of security cooperation with guidelines while also deepening relations with the US.

As a consequence of the Cold War's security dilemma, the initial guidelines in 1978 were built on an united deterrence of acts that may be implemented in response to an aggression against Japan (MOD, 1978). Following that, in response to evolving security conditions in the region, which happened in the mid-1990s with the first North Korean nuclear issue and the Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1997 Guidelines went into effect. The most distinguishing feature of the 1997 Guidelines in consolidating US-Japanese collaboration is that they move the focus of activities from Japan's defense to stabilizing the regional security environment. Furthermore, the 1997 Guidelines had not been revised before the Abe administration. However, in 2015, three significant factors contributed to the reinterpretation and revision of the guidelines. These are: (1) shifts in the balance of power, particularly in the Asian-Pacific region; (2) Prime Minister Abe's ambition to play a more proactive role; and (3) changes in domestic security policies that provide new security opportunities for US-Japan partnership.

5.2.1. New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation

The 2013 meeting of the US-Japan Security Advisory Committee (SCC) in Tokyo marked the beginning of the process of creating the new principles. The two nations' defense and foreign ministries exchanged views on the best ways to deal with shifting security conditions over the course of the meeting. Security Advisory Committee's official joint statement stated that the United States supports Tokyo's willingness to promote more actively to regional security and stability (MOFA, 2013c, p. 1). Crucially, the revision of the guidelines was supposed to be done by the end of 2014. However, it was completed in April 2015, having Japan's attempts to contribute new security laws taken into consideration (Takahashi, 2016, p. 310).

By the new 2015 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, the Washington and Tokyo have underlined the need for a coordinated response to the region's various security concerns. Importantly, it signifies a substantial shift in Japan's

propensity to prioritize bilateral responses that might directly affect its security (Tatsumi, 2015). The development of China's power and influence in the area has also sparked worries about the US's capacity to maintain its regional supremacy. Specifically, Japan's objective of growing deterrent capabilities in and around the ECS, along with the possibility of a decline in US dominance in the area, has heightened the significance of cooperatively enhancing Japanese defense capabilities and guarantees. Abe enabled Japan to improve the breadth and international efficacy of bilateral collaboration with the United States as a result of assessing Japan's military and security policies in accordance with the concept of Proactive Contribution to Peace (Sakoda, 2015).

According to the official definition, the new guidelines are intended to avert possible disputes and strengthen the peace and security of the two nations, while highlighting the regional and worldwide strategic significance of the Japan-United States Alliance (MOFA, 2015b). In addition, as stated by Takahashi, the Guidelines do not provide any legal rights or obligations for the two countries, as a treaty does (Takahashi, 2016, p. 311). However, the Guidelines are crucial since they are required to represent the outcomes of agreements in a manner compatible with policies or measures.

The guide focuses mostly on three important aspects. The first of these indicates the global dimension of the new guideline's alliance structure. The United States and Japan, according to the statement, take a prominent role in coordinating with other partners to guarantee the security and stability of the area. The most important argument is that the document does not clearly describe the geographical scope as "the Asia-Pacific area and beyond" (MOFA, 2015, p. 18). In addition to expanding geographically, the scope of collaboration has also been broadened in terms of its objectives. The previous guideline rules restricted participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian initiatives during peacetime. In the guidelines, it was made clear for the first time how important to expand trilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation, logistics support activities, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and efforts to build

capacity with the Southeast Asian Nations Association (ASEAN) countries (MOFA, 2015, p. 15).

The second crucial factor relates to the objectives shared by the bilateral alliance in the face of security threats that directly affect Japan. Indeed in unexpected scenarios during war and peace, the two countries agreed on the measures has to be taken to ensure Japan's security (MOFA, 2015, p. 4). SDF and USAF have agreed to offer reciprocal security for one another's assets when necessary. Even the guidelines suggested that Japan would expand the scope of its support activities for the United States to include aiding in the protection of US ships in an any strike and more coordinated missile shield activity (MOFA, 2015, p. 12). Additionally, it has been reported by MOFA that new orders emphasize "cross-domain operations" involving the US and Japan's forces in the scenario of a military assault on Japan (MOFA, 2015, p. 13).

According to Satake, a important milestone has been reached since the US has now tacitly committed to preserving Japan's offshore islands, including the disputed Senkaku Islands (Satake, 2016, p. 33). Even though the new guidelines continue to limit the circumstances in which Japan may engage in military involvement, they reflect a more balanced relationship. Sakamoto noted that, in terms of deterrence, the new guidelines place Japan far ahead of the previous alliance structure (Sakamoto, 2016, p. 12).

Thirdly, Tokyo and Washington underline the necessity to develop an coordination mechanism that not only aims to change the objectives of the military forces but also to strengthen the administrative authorities' obligations. In accordance with the guidelines, Tokyo and Washington have decided to establish a new and permanent Alliance Cooperation Mechanism to enhance operational cooperation and bilateral planning (MOFA: 2015, p. 3). In order to build a stronger coordination structure, the two governments planned to work together on operational and political issues, such as communication systems, training, and exercises.

5.2.2. Japan-US Alliance After the Legislation Change

Shinzo Abe stated at the press conference he held after the Cabinet Decision that any attack that the US might face in the waters near Japan would directly threaten Japan as well, and it would be unreasonable to remain indifferent to this situation (Prime Minister and His Cabinet, 2014). In light of this, the Cabinet decision has significantly strengthened the alliance between the two states. Crucially, a key decision was made by the Cabinet of Japan, which approved the right of the country to collective self-defense and the creation of legislation allowing it to respond in instances when its survival was threatened (Takahashi, 2016, p. 302-303).

Here, Japan's identification of threat perception with the United States demonstrates how far the regional military alliance has progressed. Furthermore, after the cabinet decision, Japan's use of force within the scope of constitutionally permissible self-defense measures have authorized in three cases. Japan only uses force (1) when Tokyo has no other options for resisting the attack (2) when an attack on another state launches a threat to the life and liberty of nation, and (3) when the minimum amount of force is needed to resist the attack under the circumstances have utilized (MOFA, 2016d, p. 6). Previously, the Constitution only permitted the "use of force" in the face of a direct "armed attack" threat on Japan. Japan's use of force was extended under three conditions as a result of the radical transformation of the security environment (MOFA, 2016d, p. 6). Thus, the Tokyo administration planned to take action as a consequence of the risk to Japan's sovereignty posed by an armed assault from a foreign nation (MOFA, 2016d, p. 7).

Defensive operations like as protecting US ships transporting Japanese nationals, defending American warships under assault, and intercepting ballistic missiles that cross Japanese airspace and threaten the US are also permissible under the agreement. The cabinet decision also agreed to accelerate measures and procedures against gray zone violations to eliminate deficiencies. Thus, apart from

combat in progress, regardless of location, guard the U.S. and other friendly troops munitions in peacetime were assigned to JSDF (Fujishige, 2016, p. 6).

Another recent security legislation change has allowed Tokyo to provide logistical support to other countries' forces. Previously, logistical support was limited to the areas surrounding Japan and only to US military forces. However, with the change in legislation, Japan demonstrated its commitment to support foreign armed forces regardless of geographic or time limits. (MOFA, 2016d, p. 2). As will be discussed in the next section, the scope of partnership with other countries under the leadership and partnership of Japan and the United States has been increased to unprecedented levels. Significantly, a Cabinet resolution authorized the use of force to help a distant unit under assault or to conduct protection operations, so long as certain parameters regulating Japan's involvement in peacekeeping operations were fulfilled (Takahashi, 2016, p. 302-303).

In addition, legislative changes made in national security after the decision of the Cabinet caused the gray zone situations in which the JSDF had to operate in the previous periods to expand even more. This has aimed to increase the reliability of deterrence by enhancing military assets and capacity and strengthening collaboration with the US at the operational level.

Moreover, the change in new security laws led by the Abe administration is an effort to avoid the emergence of threats to Japan's national security through the direct regional act of aggression. For a long time, the Japan-US alliance structure served as an effective and jointly response between the two nations in the scenerio of an strike on Japan, by Article 5 of the Japan-US Security Treaty (MOD, 2020, p. 299). In other words, if a nation attacked Japan, the attacker would have to face not only the SDF but also the United States' armed forces. However, this was not the case in the United States. Abe has fundamentally revised this structure. Significantly, Armitage and Nye's earlier comment that "Japan's burden-sharing in a less allied role should now turn into power-sharing" was further fulfilled (Armitage & Nye, 2000, p. 3). The fact that the SDF can now support US influence in the area in a wider range of operations and undertake greater burden

sharing within the alliance has now been warmly welcomed by US officials (US Department of Defense, 2014).

5.3. SECURITY DIAMOND FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

Broadening security cooperation with the United States is another significant factor of the Abe administration's national security strategy. In spite of the fact that Abe's new security cooperation initiatives mostly reflect shared objectives with the US, Japan is striving to assume responsibility in the area as a more engaged actor. Moreover, in response to the destabilizing effects of Beijing's actions in the SCS and ECS, the assembling of neighboring and regional nations with a shared interest has been the driving force behind Japan's security strategy in recent years. Abe, for instance, sought to build these new security connections with nations that shared similar regional and international values, including the rule of law, values of freedom, and democracy (see, e. g., Abe, 2016). This, together with the revisions to Japan's security strategy, further illustrates Abe's proactive contribution.

Significantly, as Adam Liff notes, Tokyo's recent expansion of regional security partnerships should not be seen as a strategy against the fear of abandonment (Liff, 2019b, p. 17). An Abe administration endeavor is to stress its vision of regional order predicated on shared principles with the US through the new security architecture. Most crucially, it reflects common concerns about China's and the region's future direction. For example, Abe stated in 2015 that Japan openly supports the "rebalancing" of the US to increase peace and security in the region and that they will increase strategic partnership with countries (Prime Minister and His Cabinet, 2015).

As a consequence of concerns over Southeast Asia and the SCS, such as the disputed islands, the Abe administration has increased focus on close cooperation with like-minded countries on both non-traditional and conventional maritime security. In fact, as a result of Japan's 2015 legislation change, the JMSDF's capabilities have already been turned into far more qualified and effective for

international cooperation. Following this, Japan provided the necessary environment for defense partnerships and security structure, with access to new missions both regionally and overseas. According to Satake, a distinguishing feature of the Abe administration's strategy is its ability to encourage connection with other countries in the region to improve maritime security and the rule of law (Satake, 2017, p. 243). In this context, the Abe government has strengthened Japan's engagement in regions from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia and beyond the Indian Ocean. In other words, Japan has expanded its geopolitical engagement in recent years mainly from the Asia-Pacific region to an area called the "Indo-Pacific" region.

Furthermore, the policies that guide the development of the strategic partnership in these new regions trace back to the early periods of Abe. In an address to the Indian parliament in August 2007, Shinzo Abe highlighted "Broader Asia" and the critical interests Japan and India share in the security of maritime routes (MOFA, 2007a). After Abe's second election to power in 2012, the concept of a "Broader Asia" reemerged quite promptly. Abe noted in a statement titled "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond" that Tokyo's desire for regional cooperation is exclusively based on China-related concerns (Abe, 2012). Abe's statement also had striking statements about China as:

“... the South China Sea seems set to become a “Lake Beijing... China seeks to establish its jurisdiction in the waters surrounding the islands as a fait accompli... Japan’s top foreign-policy priority must be to expand the country’s strategic horizons...” (Abe, 2012)

5.3.1. Free and Open Indo-Pacific for Japan

From the outset, it was evident that the Abe government intended to establish a security diamond comprising the US, Australia, India, and Tokyo to counteract China's rise. Hence, in 2014, shortly after taking office, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a state visit to Japan. Under the guise of a Special Strategic and Global Partnership, Abe and Modi have taken the Japan-India relationship to

a point where its long-term political, economic, and strategic objectives are broadly aligning (MOFA, 2015c).

Moreover, Shinzo Abe's speech in Kenya on August 27, 2016 signaled the beginning of a new era of security cooperation with like-minded states. Abe publicly promoted the concept of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP), stating that Japan will preserve and strengthen the rules-based international order due to the strong link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans (MOFA, 2016e). This concept has quickly incorporated into the foreign ministry publications of the region's governments, particularly Australia and the United States (See e.g, Australian Government, 2017, p. 37). More significantly, it expands simultaneously with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) established in 2007 by Australia, the US, India, and Japan, with Abe highlighting its relevance to the conceptual framework for FOIP.

Moreover, in terms of maritime security, the Abe administration has increased cooperation with the US, Australia, India, and other Southeast Asian coastal countries to maintain freedom of navigation on important naval connectivity (Japan Institute of International Affairs, 2019, p. 32). Following the United States, India and Australia are Japan's two most important security partners under the Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept. As Smith noted that, Beijing's willingness to challenge the regional status quo and its lack of democratic values have heightened the QUAD partners' concerns at the common point (Smith, 2021).

As Japan Institute of International Affairs' annual strategy report has stated that, there are two reasons for the inception and key indicator of FOIP. The first is the challenges that revisionist powers (such as China) pose to the international order, and the second is the growing need for states to maintain the status quo and rule-based international law (Japan Institute of International Affairs, 2019, p. 30). In this context, states that share common values and concerns have become more willing to cooperate under the partnership of connectivity and fundamental values, especially maritime security.

As David Arase pointed out, Japan's attempts to counter China's ambitions in Southeast Asia and overseas may appear to contradict including its desire to maintain strong bilateral trade relations and peace in the region (Arase, 2019, p. 6). For instance, multiple studies have indicated that Japan uses tactical hedging and vision to bridge the gap between nations rather than the FOIP strategic framework and balancing behaviour (Koga, 2020, p. 72-73). Also, other studies have suggested that Japan might not target China through FOIP but instead build new relationships that can help bring the region together by accommodating China's rise (Satake & Sahashi, 2021, p. 18).

However, Japan's strategy for security cooperation and defense policy at Free and Open India-Pacific is compatible with Japan's implementation of mutual strategic interests with the US (United States National Security Council, 2020, p. 2). In other words, analyzing Japan on FOIP as if it were outside the US or away from the US may lead to an incomplete result. Indeed, Ministry of Defense Japan's annual white paper stipulates that "Japan-US Alliance forms the axis of Japan's foreign policy." (MOD, 2020, p. 300). According to Green and Cooper's study, which analyzes the US rebalancing and deterrence efforts against China in 10 key recommendations, the US does not essentially form a one-dimensional concept of collective security as occurred in Western Europe during the Cold War (Green & Cooper, 2014, p. 36). Based on this definition, Green and Cooper point to a "federated" defense model. Consequently, the US seeks not only to build bilateral or multilateral relations with its allies in the area, but also to urge them to participate in multilateral exercises and develop armaments among friendly nations (Green & Cooper, 2014, p. 38).

Crucially, according to the Washington, the US supports its allies in regional leadership roles and works in flexible groups that pool collective power, especially the QUAD (The White House, 2022, p. 9). For example, in June 2012 the MSDF conducted a first bilateral Japan-India Naval Exercise (JIMEX) with the Indian Navy off the coast of Sagami Bay (Indian Defense Review, 2012). As Ishibashi points out, this exercise, for example, is not Japan's move toward greater independence from the United States but further encourages interoperability

among the US navies as a part of the US-led federated model (Ishibashi, 2018, p. 527).

India's recent maritime alliance with Japan has become stronger. Essentially, during the mid-2000s, China expanded by developing a network of ports and alliances on the high seas and the coast, not just in the SCS but also in and around the Indian Ocean. Since that time, China has begun to increase its maritime activities with nations such as Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka. Similarly to Japan, India is concerned about freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean and its interests in the SCS. Moreover, according to Ladwig, India views the continued expansion of the The People's Liberation Army Navy as a potential threat to its strategic interests in the region (Ladwig, 2009, p. 89). India considers China as a possible danger to its strategic interests in the area, according to Burgess and Beilstein, and since 2014, the Modi administration has stressed balancing against PRC's potential threat (Burgess & Beilstein, 2018, p. 273).

Japan made its first security partnership with India after the cooperation of the US and Australia. This alliance is founded on the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation from 2008. Since the re-election of Shinzo Abe as prime minister in 2012, the breadth of cooperation between the two governments has expanded in several areas, including bilateral naval exercises, defense engagements, joint training of the both nations coast guard personnels, and high-level ministerial dialogues (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2020, p. 23). Significantly, before Abe's presidency, strategic cooperation between Tokyo and New Delhi was usually hampered by China's objections. For example, Japan withdrew from the annual US-India Malabar naval exercises in 2007 after PRC objected to Japan's participation. However, Abe's administration decided to rejoin Japan's Malabar exercises in October 2015 (Mukherjee, 2018, p. 22). Furthermore, according to Lynch and Przystup, given its wide land border with China and a potential strategic advantage in destabilizing Beijing, India represents Japan's best long-term hope for balancing China on the Asian continent (Lynch & Przystup, 2017, p. 25).

Besides the mutual benefit arising from Japan's close cooperation with India, Japan's strategic interest benefits in many ways. For example, again according to Lynch and Przystup, when India focuses more on defense along its border with China and takes more responsibility for Indian Ocean security, it paves the way for Japan, and also United States, to access more resources against China (Lynch & Przystup, 2017, p. 26). Critically, India can operate as a bridge in terms of developing a dialogue partnership between Vietnam and Japan, which implies that Vietnam can be more receptive to collaboration against China's military activities (Lynch & Przystup, 2017, p. 26).

Additionally, as a result of Abe and Narendra Modi's cooperating in the civil nuclear partnership in 2017, India has strengthened its civil nuclear energy program by purchasing materials and technology from Japan. This is the first transaction between Japan and a country that has not accepted the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Rodgers, 2017). As Nagao stated, Japan also supports India's rise as a regional power by partnering in civil nuclear energy (Nagao, 2016).

Along with India, Japan has been strengthening maritime cooperation and defense partnership with Australia through that makes up the "Diamond of Democratic Security of Asia". The two countries had signed the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation with Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard during the short first term of Shinzo Abe in 2007 (MOFA, 2007b). With Abe's re-election as prime minister in 2012 and Tony Abbott's election as prime minister of Australia in 2013, the significance of Japan-Australia collaboration has increased. In a single remark, Abbott named Japan Australia's "best friend in Asia" (Kenny, 2013).

Furhermore, in 2014, under the leadership of Shinzo Abe and Tony Abbott, Tokyo and Canberra signed the Defense Equipment and Technology Transfer agreement, laying the groundwork for cooperation in the areas of transfer, research and development, and manufacture (MOFA, 2014b). This cleared the path for Japan to provide Australia with superior submarine technology and equipment. For example, the Abbott government took steps in 2014 to buy Japanese Soryu-class submarines. Nevertheless, the decision was eventually rescinded owing to domestic leadership turmoil within the Australian ruling party (Dood, 2020). As

mentioned in the previous sections, the Abe administration lifted the long-standing ban on the export of military equipment and, with this development, constituted an initiative for an important first foreign military sale.

Crucially, in 2014, both Abe and Abbott stated in the Joint Statement on Special Strategic Partnership that via this partnership, the two countries will maintain comprehensive US engagement in the region and reiterated their support for the US rebalancing to Asia-Pacific (MOFA, 2014c, p. 1). Australia and Japan increased their extensive training and operational partnerships, including their longstanding submarine cooperation with the US. According to Shearer, the trilateral submarine collaboration between Japan, the United States, and Australia would be a geopolitical game-changer in the Asia-Pacific region (Shearer, 2016, p. 28). Shearer further stressed that the purpose of the US-Japan-Australia cooperation arrangement is to bridge gaps in military and defense capabilities and enhance deterrence (Shearer, 2016, p. 28).

Moreover, joint exercises conducted by Japan and Australia demonstrate that the collaboration for maritime security is progressing. For instance, in 2013, the Royal Australian Navy, United States Navy, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force participated in the multi-national naval drills, which included anti-submarine warfare exercises and anti-air warfare drills (Navaltoday, 2013). Notably, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces participated in the biennial Talisman Sabre 2019 exercise, which included amphibious, air, and naval combat operations, with considerably more effective navy units and a newly formed Japanese Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (Yeo, 2019). According to Panda from the Diplomat, Talisman Sabre exercise was closely followed by the Chinese Type 815 Auxiliary General Intelligence (AGI) ship in order to gather information (Panda, 2019).

In addition, under Shinzo Abe's leadership, Japan's regional cooperation has been expanded under FOIP and mutual security cooperation with many Association of Southeast Asian Nations in addition to QUAD. According to Koga's analysis of Japan-Southeast relations, the FOIP strategy for Japan in recent years has been "The United States in, China out, and ASEAN, India, Australia up" (Koga, 2019,

p. 126). In particular, Prime Minister Abe has attempted to underline the significance of international rules and regulations governing the freedom of sea navigation in the region and the resolution of territorial disputes beyond the SCS. Furthermore, China and a number of ASEAN nations, including Vietnam and the Philippines, assert territorial sovereignty in the SCS, namely over the Paracel and Spratly islands. In a document released by Japan's Ministry of Defense, satellite imagery showed China's large-scale land reclamation and military infrastructure work such as ports, military facilities, and airfields in the SCS (MOD, 2021b, p. 2). In addition, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, on the other hand, published satellite photos of China's instruction the islands of outposts in the Paracel Islands and in the Spratlys (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, nd). Japan and Vietnam formed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia in 2014, motivated by a desire to bolster defense and naval cooperation. Abe emphasized the significance of cooperative response in the case of unilateral and forceful action, taking into account Japan and Vietnam's air and maritime connectivity (MOFA, 2014d, p. 14). Abe also supported Hanoi in enhancing its maritime cooperation implementation capabilities. Japan sent six coast guard vessels to Vietnam in 2014 to enhance the Southeast Asian nation's capabilities to protect its coastlines ("Japan gives vietnam six navy", 2014). In 2016, Abe promised the Vietnam Coast Guard six new patrol vessels, and a \$345 million loan agreement was signed (Panda, 2017).

On the other hand, in 2015, Shinzo Abe and President of the Republic of the Philippines Benigno S. Aquino III agreed on the Strengthened Strategic Partnership, in which partnership between the two nations enhance for common principles and goals (MOFA, 2015d). In particular, the two states, which share the territorial dispute with China, signed a new defense agreement in 2016 that allows the transfer of defense equipment and technology. This agreement not only enhances the burgeoning security partnership but also contributes to the manufacturing and technological foundations for Japan's growing defense industry (Castro, 2016). In this regard, Japan sent five TC-90s to the Philippines in March 2017 and 2018 to boost its maritime patrol capabilities ("Philippines receives

final”, 2018). In addition, Japan is preparing to deliver the UH-1H helicopters it no longer needs and the JTPS-P14 Mobile Air Defense Radar System to the Philippines Air Force. This is Japan's first export of finished defense equipment since it lifted a ban on such transfers in 2014 (Abe, 2020).

The Abe administration has also tried to expand the scope and effect of the FOIP policy by fostering collaboration with western nations such as the United Kingdom and France. Especially as of 2017, capacity-building programs have been developed with the UK and France to further strengthen maritime security with an inclusive aim to maintain and develop Japan's desire for a rules-based international system (Koga, 2020, p. 66). For instance, Japan and France reached an agreement on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in 2016 (MOFA, 2016f). In addition, in 2020, it was announced that France, Japan and America will conduct joint military exercises on land and sea for the first time at a later date (“Japan, France, U.S. plan their first joint”, 2020). On the other hand, Japan and the United Kingdom, establish outstanding collaborations in the number of defense exchanges, defense cooperation and defense-related industrial cooperation.

For instance, the two countries started work in November 2014, aiming to integrate a Japanese seeker, on a new joint air-to-air missile aimed at integrating with the United Kingdom's Meteor missile (Hornung, 2020b, p. 26). In addition, in 2018, Japan, the USA and the UK conducted exercises that demonstrated their anti-submarine warfare skills for the first time. (Hornung, 2020b, p. 29). Tokyo's efforts to establish coalitions to retain current international laws and norms and prevent sub-regions from coming under the dominion of a single major power, notably PRC, are supported by this diplomatic endeavor.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyses Japan's changing defense policies and strategies in response to the emergence of PRC's economic and military supremacy in the region using the neoclassical realism theory and provides a comprehensive overview of previous studies on the issue. In addition to the continuous increase in fundamental changes in Japan's regional security environment since the early 2000s due to China's rise, Japan's defense policies and stance toward its strategic future and challenges to the status quo have undergone a dramatic internal transformation. Although this dramatic change in Tokyo's national defense structure is still a source of debate, numerous evidence support this conclusion.

Consequently, the period of Japan's defensive strategy against the PRC's rise can be divided into three parts. The first is that Japan's regional concerns attempted to take a more active role in the international arena after 1989. Second, the impact of political discourses and political cleavages on national security when the LDP administration for the first time since 1955 experienced significant opposition. The third is the security capabilities and cooperations developed as a consequence of the first official National Defense Strategy and the concept of Proactive Contribution of Peace implemented by the Shinzo Abe administration.

Before Shinzo Abe's re-election as prime minister in 2012, measures had already been made within the country to provide active support for the international conflicts of allied nations. Even while the change in global power has been demilitarized and has an influence on peace-oriented Japan, the efforts of local political decision-makers to strengthen the country's state power cannot be underestimated. Another significant development before the Abe administration was the replacement of the peaceful old bureaucrats who witnessed the war in the late 1990s with the new electoral system. Thus, the lack of decision-making and weak bureaucracy had eliminated. In addition, the DPJ, led by political figures such as Ichiro Ozawa, has produced political cleavages in Japan as the leading opposition party with more realistic views about nuclear proliferation in the area

and China's emergence. In fact, the increasing hostility of the Japanese public against China has persistently supported Japan's national security prospects.

During this period, both internal and external balancing aspects began to develop gradually in Japan's unofficial security strategy. Japan demonstrated its 'internal balancing' elements in NDPGs by maintaining a favorable conventional air and naval military presence against China in its particular region. For instance, SDF soldiers were relocated from the north to the south and were relatively close to Senkaku Islands with a concentration on strengthening sea and air capabilities while reducing land forces. In addition, the efforts to become a more active partner of the US, such as the first deployment of SDF personnel overseas, presented the earliest signs of external balancing.

Furthermore, as offensive realist theory would suggest, this thesis partially affirms the allegation that Japan did not increase its conventional forces directly in response to PRC's increasing military capabilities. However, the most distinctive feature that distinguishes Japan from other developed countries was that it had constitutional restrictions and was completely dependent on the US as a requirement of Japan's domestic policy. In other words, Japan did not need to balance against China in accordance with offensive realism, which is another significant consideration. As there are no constitutional requirements for Japan to confront China alone, its reliance on the United States in the sphere of security is rather high; for instance, there were more than 30,000 US military personnel under the United States Forces Japan (USFJ) stationed on the Japanese mainland. Thus, Japan followed the US' presence and leadership in the region, particularly in balancing against China before Abe's presidency.

The fact that Japan's shifting policy towards China may be compatible with other theoretical perspectives but loses effectiveness over time. Defensive realists have been conducted in several studies to explain Japan's hesitancy and lack of collective defense for many years. Nevertheless, Abe obtained the right to Japan's collective defense through legislative change. Abe's revision established Japan's willingness to protect allied countries in the region in the event of a potential attack.

The thesis demonstrates that there is remarkably little evidence that Japan's efforts to establish a role as a middle-state between Beijing and Washington are intended to accommodate China due to mutual economic interdependence. As seen by Japan's official annual defense white papers, the perception of China has shifted from one of attention to one of the grave security concerns over time.

The precise manner in which Japan manages regional security concerns has been the subject of numerous studies over the past decade. This question must be addressed in any examination of Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's reelection. If just foreign policy considerations are taken into account, Japan's security framework and posture may be deemed insufficient. Significantly, Shinzo Abe's first actions as prime minister were the establishment of the National Security Council, the modification of the National Defense Program Guidelines, and, most crucially, the formation of Japan's first National Security Strategy. Moreover, under Abe's leadership, Japan has prioritized expanding its military equipment and defense capabilities, deepening the US-Japan alliance, and expanding defense cooperation with other states in the region that share its values and interests.

The details of Japan's expansion of its military defense capabilities are gradually becoming largely effective. Japan has been accumulating potential offensive military technology and equipment in recent years, even though its constitution only permits it to maintain a force for self-defense. Furthermore, Japan continues to invest in cyber and space technologies following its supremacy strategy in new domains. From this perspective, the establishment of the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency (ATLA) in 2015 by the Abe administration is noteworthy. For instance, unmanned aerial vehicles, Izumo-class destroyers with Short Take-off and Vertical Landing capability for F-35B aircraft, Joint Attack Missiles, Extended Range Joint Air-to-Terrain Missiles, and Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles have been developed in recent years. Remarkably, the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (the first Japanese marine brigade since World War II) was created by the Abe administration in 2018 to conduct amphibious operations in response to the Senkaku islands dispute with China.

Moreover, the strengthening of the Abe administration's deterrence capabilities in and around the East China Sea necessitated a review of the US-Japan security structure. Guidelines for Japan-United States Defense Cooperation were formed in 2015 to address the need for Japan and the United States to expand their global security collaboration as Shinzo Abe's new security strategy highlighted. Thus, the alliance structure between the two allies extended beyond Japan and its surrounding region. As Japan lifted its limitation on collective self-defense in July 2014, the groundwork had already been prepared. Accordingly, the new guidelines specify the scope where the Japan Self-Defense Forces may use force to protect US troops.

Abe's last strategy for national security is to increase defense cooperation with countries that have common interests in the Asia Pacific and beyond. Thanks to Abe, the Indo-Pacific term is now officially a regional term with equal political significance to the Asia-Pacific region in the foreign guidelines of a number of governments. Conceptually, the Abe administration's objective of constructing a security diamond consisting of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States in order to contend with China has become crystal evident. Furthermore, what is significant here is Shinzo Abe's leadership and ability to utilize state power to form this regional security partnership.

The FOIP concept provided a new strategic meaning by integrating the gradual evolution of Japan's security policies prior to and during Abe's leadership. This thesis disagrees with the conclusions of several research articles that characterize Japan's bilateral relations as moving away from the United States under the concept of FOIP. In addition, Japan intends to contain China by increasing its security partnerships with the US, India, Australia, and certain ASEAN states. As part of a strategic relationship, Japan continues to bolster its defense capabilities by providing the Philippines and Vietnam with defense equipment, personnel, and training for the first time. Additionally, joint naval exercises, such as multilateral anti-submarine warfare drills, are growing more extensive in the Sea of Japan and SCS.

This thesis was initiated when Shinzo Abe was Japan's prime minister. In addition, Yoshihide Suga was appointed prime minister in 2020, following the resignation of Shinzo Abe due to health concerns. The fact that Suga's first foreign visit as head of state was to Vietnam and Indonesia instead of the United States indicates that FOIP is irreversible. As previous findings have shown, many critical factors such as the prime ministers' visit to the Yasukuni Shrine have the potential to adversely affect Sino-Japan relations. Furthermore, under the leadership of Japan's current Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, it would not be unexpected if Japan maintained further the Free and Open India Policy. Japan's defense policies have changed dramatically more than ever before. Minor legal revisions have been authorized even though the constitutional amendment that has been on Japan's agenda for many years has still not materialized. Even minimal changes that do not provoke international or national reactions had been far-reaching consequences. In this context, Japan's constant strategies survive for decades and never change direction. This context motivates the contribution of the thesis to the base of information.

The most difficult component of this study was that I never visited Japan and did all of work outside the Japan. This study was included after a two-year period of intensive research on Japanese unique political culture, history and diplomacy. The security structure of the Asian area merits examination, and the region's increasing conflict concerns need more investigation. In particular, the issue of superiority in the new domain mentioned in previous chapters should be further analyzed to advance an investigation. Especially China and Japan's approaches to new domain security needs such as space and cyber security will be critical in understanding the national defense strategies toward each other. Because the concept of establishing supremacy in new domain has separately referenced in Japan's and China's official defense publications.

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