Norms, trade and Security: Southeast Asian Countries’ strategic approaches and perspectives on Japan Southeast Asia security Partnerships

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I. Introduction

Japan’s approach to international relations has been highly influenced by the evolution of the global world order from a bipolar to unipolar system to a multipolar system, an acknowledgement of limited ability of traditional power projection (in particular in Japan's case), and the realization of the importance of ‘complex interdependence’ between nation states via implementation of institutions and increased trading agreements (Keohane and Nye, 1997). In this context, since the end of WWII Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution has limited Japanese military capabilities and compelled it to develop other strategies to achieve its foreign policy objectives (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2003). These have included the signing of the ‘Treaty for Mutual Cooperation and Security’, a treaty which provides for the execution of joint military training exercises as well as the promise of mutual security (Manyin, 2011). Complementing that approach has been a foreign policy approach that stressed economic engagement as a means to achieve Japanese foreign policy objectives (Hughes, 2000).

Notwithstanding its alliance with the U.S., Japan has demonstrated realist tendencies in the post WW 2 period and in particular since the return of PM Abe in 2012 (Auslin, 2016). Emerging threats such as North Korea's missile and nuclear tests and a growingly assertive China in the East and South China Seas (Valencia, 2007; Hong, 2013) has brought to light structural and normative factors that limit Japan’s capability to effectively manage and respond to these increasingly contentious relationships, namely Article 9 and a largely pacifist citizenry that is deeply against the use of the military and revision of the so-called pacifist constitution (Miyashita, 2007). As a consequence of the decreasing efficacy of traditional tools of Japanese foreign policy such as economic incentives, regional challenges have deepened Tokyo’s view of the salience of the U.S.-Japan security partnership but also the importance of deepening its partnerships in Southeast Asia through economic, political and security linkages. In line with this view, Japan has been actively courting Southeast Asian countries through ODA and economic partnerships (Asplund, 2015). This engagement has accelerated in intensity and scope beginning in December 2012 with the return of the Abe administration (Shiraishi, 2014).

Historically, Japan's relations with ASEAN countries have been based on mutual benefit and can be understood until recently in terms of three categories: 1) developmental economics; 2) product hubs; and 3) shared values. Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and to a certain degree Thailand represent the first category where large amounts of ODA were injected into these three countries as part of Japan's commitment to helping out Southeast Asian neighbors develop economically (Stubb, 1999). They are also resource rich countries that Japan strives to develop relationships with to secure access to resources for its industries at home and abroad (Jomo, 2006).

Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand represent the second category. These countries have become large manufacturing centers for Japanese businesses. From here, Japanese products are produced for global export (Felker, 2003). Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines represent the third category of relationship between Japan and ASEAN countries, one that is rooted in democracy, rule of law and a commitment to international norms and laws. Brunei is the outlier among the ASEAN member states as its oil resources, monarchy and level of wealth mean that Japan has forged a relationship to secure access to oil resources while not having to engage in developmental economic policies (Islam and Odano, 2010).
With the bitter experience of Japan's imperial past reconciled, forgotten or deprioritized (Takeda, 2012), up until the early 2000s Japan's relationship with ASEAN countries could be considered non-securitized (Yang, 2003). This long standing economic-focused relationship has shifted with two related changes in the region, China's growing economic hegemony in the region and with China's military modernization and expansion (Reilly, 2016). Hand-in-hand with these endogenous regional drivers has been the exogenous factor of the US's declining ability to singly maintain the burden of the East Asia security framework (Goh, 2011). Endogenous and exogenous factors have led to what some scholars call bipolarization of the South China Sea (SCS) (Burgess, 2016). Lastly, political stability under the Abe administration has allowed for a more sustained, engaged and proactive foreign policy, making Japan a more reliable partner in the areas of economic, political and security cooperation (Mark, 2016).

The objective of this paper will be to examine Japanese-Southeast Asian security partnerships from a “Southeast Asian perspective”. In this process, the author will divide Southeast Asian countries into two categories, peripheral-core countries and core-peripheral countries. The author will argue that Japanese-Southeast Asian security partnerships cannot be understood with a blanket formula; rather we must divide ASEAN countries into “peripheral-core” and “core-peripheral” countries that have different security challenges and political-economic relationships vis-à-vis China. This bifurcation in two categories also encompasses the different competitive advantages each grouping has in terms of their position in the regional and global economic chain, their economic relationship with China, and their threat perception with China as it continues to extend its economic, political and military influence in the region. It is the combination of these factors that drives and shapes Southeast perspectives of Japanese Southeast Asian security partnerships.

Defined as ASEAN core countries in terms of their geographic location but peripheral in terms of their economic strength, core-peripheral countries, which include Cambodia and Laos will remain client states to China and see growing security partnerships with Japan by ASEAN countries as a difficult tightrope to walk.

In contrast, geographically at the periphery of ASEAN yet at the core of ASEAN’s economic strength, peripheral-core states such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei and to a lesser extent Singapore and Thailand will continue to welcome all forms of engagement from Japan including security and economic partnerships to attenuate and or prevent Chinese regional hegemony from taking root.

This paper poises several questions related to Southeast Asian countries views on Japanese security partnerships within the region. For instance, how does the Japan-China security rivalry positively or negatively affect the evaluation of Japanese security partnerships in the region? What is the relationship between Japanese security partnerships, trade and the advocacy of protecting freedom of thought, expression and speech in Southeast Asia and the protection and promotion of the so-called universal values of freedom, democracy and human rights? What differences and similarities do ASEAN nations have in their perspectives on Japanese security cooperation in the region?

To analyze the perspectives of Southeast Asian countries on Japanese-Southeast Asian security partnerships, this paper will examine strategic choices of Southeast Asian countries by investigating the link between the economic relations Southeast Asian countries have with China and their relative threat perception of China. Based on the relationship of these two variables, this paper argues that Southeast Asian states will engage in bandwagoning, soft and hard hedging, engagement and other balance of power arrangements or fall prey to the pressure of client state relations
depending on the interaction of these two variables. These approaches have been selected as they explain security choices and growing security ties with Japan. Collectively, these theories will enable us to distinguish various factors that drive and shape Southeast perspectives of Japan-Southeast Asia security partnerships.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section above briefly introduces Japan-Southeast Asian relations and how they have evolved from a non-securitized framework to one that is securitizing. The second section introduces the theoretical framework which will be used to evaluate Southeast Asian countries’ views on Japanese-Southeast Asian security partnerships. Specifically, economic dependency vs. threat perception concepts such as bandwagoning, client state relations at balance of power politics will be used to better clarify Southeast Asian countries’ perspectives on Japan’s changing role in the region. The third section examines the perspectives of the core-peripheral countries of Cambodia and Laos whereas the forth section them examines the peripheral-core countries of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Brunei is excluded from the discussion as there is no security cooperation between Japan and Brunei outside commitment to watch the situation in the South China Seas. Singapore, Thailand and Myanmar are not included in this section as they do not face security issues in the South China Sea despite Singapore’s concerns about territorial friction in the South China Sea. The last section will then contextualize Japanese security partnerships in Southeast Asia and their relationship with the Trans Pacific Partnership and norm-diplomacy.

II. Theoretical Framework

States respond to changes in the balance of power by making strategic choices about how they can benefit from the change, counter the change or maintain their status quo. They do this through the strategies of bandwagoning, soft and hard hedging, engagement, balance of power arrangements or fall prey to the pressure of client state relations.

According to Johnston and Ross (2006), we define engagement as “influencing the target’s behavior through promise of boon rather than threat to punish”. The tools of engagement depend on a state’s capacity and include enhance cooperation, military exchanges, security cooperation and bolstering economic ties. Economic and security cooperation through engagement aims to provide reassurances as to each state’s intentions.

Whereas the engagement approach is centered on re-assurances, according to Hurrel (2006) balancing consists of external and internal components. The internal balancing may consist of self strengthening of the economy and or the military in order to attenuate or restrain a potential threat. In contrast, external balancing generally is understood as an attempt to restrain a potential threat from becoming a regional (or global hegemon) through a process of alliance formation and the development of “special relationships” the bolster security, economic and political capabilities.

Another strategy often employ as statecraft to manage changing power dynamics is hedging. Goh (2005, 2011) discusses hedging in terms of a strategic middle-of-the-road approach that strives to create a relationship in which the state in question does not have to choose between the engagement and balancing. Koga (2011) further bifurcates hedging into soft and hard components with the former stressing continued engagement with a state that is seen as a potential security threat while they maintain ties with the current power center (U.S) with the intention of socializing the potential threat nation into the US led system. The latter in contrast still stresses engagement however the degree of commitment to the current security guarantor (the US) remains much more significant.

In the context of security relations in Southeast Asia, the security calculus and choice of the above strategies is closely tied to economic relations rather than tangential or non-tangential
military concerns or threat perception (See Table 1.0). In this sense, we would expect states with the closest economic relations with China in the region (the country which is changing the balance of power in the region) to have limited choices concerning their security choices and thus be subject to the pressures associated with client state relations. Countries with less economic dependency on China may either choose to bandwagon or form an economic, security and or political alliance with neighboring countries.

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<th>Economic dependency with China</th>
<th>Threat Perception</th>
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<td>High</td>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Philippines, Vietnam Singapore</td>
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Using the below matrix (Table 2.0) we could argue four different scenarios in terms of responses choices vis-à-vis strengthening relations with Japan. The first category is the case of high economic dependence on China and high threat perception. In the case, a country would engage in a hedging process of security alignments in which a strategy of engagement and hedging occurs synergistically to maximize benefits while preventing conflict. This approach may simultaneous engage in soft and hard hedging strategies. The second case concerns those countries test have high economic dependency and low threat perception. Countries in this category, depending on geographic proximity could be considered client states and as a result their security choices would highly influenced by Beijing. Here, security partnerships with Japan would be seen as a liability rather than a strategic advantage and subsequently would be avoided. The third category is those countries with low economic dependency but high threat perception. Here, economic distance allows them to engage in a bandwagoning strategy to balance China or perhaps contain China. Security partnerships, whether they are formal alliances or strategic partnerships, would be seen as a strategic imperative to avoid being dominated. Lastly, the forth category is the situation in which there is both a low threat perception and low level of economic engagement. Countries in this category when considering security partnerships would choose the path of engagement if the current trajectory is symbiotically beneficial or neutral.

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<td>Engagement, soft and hard hedging, balancing</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Soft and hard hedging</td>
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It can be argued that based on the aforementioned matrix, Southeast Asian states depending on their threat perception and economic relationship with China will engage in security
relationships with Japan using the strategies that may include the various permutations of hedging (soft, hard hedging), balancing/ bandwagon, institutional engagement through enmeshment or other tactics.

III. ASEAN core-peripheral countries: Japan’s security partnerships as a risk to political independence

Landlocked Cambodia and Laos remain at the lowest end of socio-economic development in the region (Pink, 2016). Although benefactors of Japanese ODA, their largest trading partner is China and as China’s economy continues to grow in dominance in the region, so does their dependency on Chinese demand (Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2016). This economic dependency has created a client state relationship with China in which both states find it difficult to deviate from Beijing’s influence (Ciorciari, 2013).

To illustrate, in The 2012 ASEAN meeting in the 45th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) on 9-13 July 2012 in Phnom Penh was concluded without issuing ASEAN’s traditional Joint Communiqué (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2014). At the meeting, ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed on an ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles to deal with the South China Sea issue. ASEAN countries attempted to put forth the following proposal that they would agree to territorial dispute only in multilateral forum.

“STATEMENT of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea

ASEAN Foreign Ministers reiterate and reaffirm the commitment of ASEAN Member States to:

1. the full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002);
2. the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2011);
3. the early conclusion of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea;
4. the full respect of the universally recognized principles of the International Law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);
5. the continued exercise of the self-restraint and non-use of force by all parties; and

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers resolve to intensify ASEAN consultations in the advancement of the above principles, consistent with the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976) and the ASEAN Charter (2008).”

(Statement of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea. Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia)

Under Chinese pressure, Cambodia refused the proposal preventing it coming into effect owing to the so-called ASEAN way of consensus or nothing (China Brief Volume: 12 Issue: 15). The end
result was maintaining Beijing's preference for bilateral negotiations over territorial disputes allows is to exert overwhelming pressure on its negotiating counterpart. With so many smaller counters engaged in disputes with China over territory, a multilateral approach would severely weaken Beijing's position.

The above example is illustrative of two ASEAN core-peripheral countries' sensitivities to Beijing's security concerns and thus their position on Japan's more sustained and qualitatively proactive security partnerships in the region. In this sense, Cambodia's approach towards security partnerships with Japan can be viewed as representative an approach that is based on high economic dependency and a low threat perception emanating out of its relationship with China in the security realm. As a consequence, it views a security partnership with Japan as a liability but other forms of engagement with China as a boon.

Japan's engagement includes ODA, commitments to shared norms, principles of engagement, to peace, to technological aid, economic incentives, the provision of coast guard vessels and surveillance technologies (Pagon, 2013). These increasing numbers of commitments have real benefits for the beneficiaries but have the effect of increasing China's presence and pressure in the region. For Cambodia and Laos, this pushes the boundaries of client state relations to what may be unacceptable.

As a result of this conundrum, Cambodia and Laos, while potential beneficiaries of increased competition between Japan and China for their support, view Japanese security partnerships in Southeast Asia with the potential to increase Chinese influence on their polities and thus decrease their political independence. This also decreases the effectiveness of ASEAN as a regional institution as the ASEAN –way of consensus decision making becomes vulnerable to the influence of non-ASEAN countries with strong and unbalanced economic relations with weaker members such as Laos and Cambodia.

**IV. ASEAN Peripheral-core Countries: Security through trade**

Members of the ASEAN peripheral-core countries with the exception of Malaysia see Japanese-Southeast Asian security partnerships in a positive light. Malaysia had a more nuanced view owing to the influence of Beijing on the large number of ethnic Chinese Malaysians with strong, trans-regional business ties to China (Smart and Hsu, 2004). As a result, Malaysia strives towards a relationship with China that is characterized as a “productive relationship in both economic and diplomatic areas with China, but with whom she has unresolved territorial issues” (Izzuddin, 2016).

With low to moderate threat perceptions and deepening economic ties to China, Hughes (2015) and Nagao (2015) asserts that Malaysia is actively engaging China while at the same time engaging in soft hedging by holding joint naval exercises with Japan and the US focusing on maritime cooperation. Moreover, Malaysia-Japan security cooperation includes the initiation of negotiations on the framework for cooperation on the transfer of defense equipment and technology and both countries have elevated their relations to a Strategic Partnership (MOFA, 2015a). Focusing on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and maritime security, according to our model this security partnership can be understood as soft hedging with Japan wedded to a commitment to continued engagement with China.

While not large scale, the symbolic nature of the cooperation can be interpreted at several levels. First, Malaysia recognizes that multilateral cooperation is crucial to ensuring its maritime security and territorial integrity. Second, having Japan and the US as the major partners in these activities demonstrates that Malaysia not only sees these countries as best being able to contribute to its security needs but also that they view these partners in a constructive light that brings
stability, capability and experience to the region. Third, remaining in a peripheral position within maritime security cooperation, Malaysia aims to allay concerns that it is proactively engaged in an encirclement of China.

In terms of the other driving factors behind other peripheral-core countries’ support for Japanese security partnerships in the region are at least twofold. The first level relates to Beijing’s practice of opening or closing its economic market with countries who engage in practices that deviate from Beijing’s preferred approach (Reilly, J., 2012). To illustrate in both Asian and non-Asian contexts we can examine how France was temporary penalized by Beijing for meetings with the Dalai Lama which caused bilateral trade to decrease 8.1% to 16.9% (depending on measuring tool) (Andreas and Klann, 2010). Numerous other examples include of applying damaging economic sanctions on states that have political disagreements with China include China stopping the import of Philippines’ bananas; disruption of travel by Chinese tourists to the Philippines, ¹ France, ² and Norway; and stopping the import of Norwegian Salmon and removing Norway from the list of countries allowed visa-free visits to Beijing after the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Liu Xiaobo.

In 2010 and then in 2012, Japan was also punished for political differences with Beijing. The first case involved the imprisonment of a Chinese fishing boat Captain after the ramming of a Japanese coast guard vessel. Imprisonment resulted in a rare earths embargo against Japan (Johnston, 2013). The second case of punitive economic measures followed the September 2012 nationalization of the Senkaku/ Daioyu Tai islands which were characterized by vandalism and arson against Japanese businesses in some parts of China (Nagy, 2013, 2014).

A vulnerability to punitive economic measures applied by Beijing (directly or indirectly) have compelled Southeast Asian countries and Japan to strengthen economic ties (Garrison and Wall, 2016). At a business’s level, corporations see political risk as “the plus alpha” that business contingency plans cannot inculcate well into their strategic vision.

*The anti-Japanese riots are another example of the risk of doing business in China. This risk has been known for some time and our company has made adjustments. There is definitely a rise in anti-Japanese sentiment but in addition to this, the increasing cost of labor and doing business has made ASEAN states such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar attractive business destinations and as a result we are building manufacturing centers there.” (Manager, Sales and Marketing, Japanese Manufacturing Company, interview, May 2013)*

With the acknowledged geopolitical risk associated with China, corporations are realigning their FDI to maintain current footprint in a China but also build another footprint in Southeast Asia where geopolitical risk is less of a concern.

At the second level, countries in Southeast Asia have growing concern over China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea and activities associated with those claims. With territorial disputes with several countries in the South China Sea, island building and militarization of those islands, the placement of oil platforms in claimants territorial waters, a growing number of Chinese fishing vessels conducting fishing activities in Indonesia, Philippine and other countries waters (Tanner and Wang, 2016). Southeast Asian countries from this peripheral-core welcome security and other forms of cooperation with Japan and other extra-regional powers such as the US (Center, 2016). That being said, as with the previous cases of Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia, security cooperation is being calibrated to take into consideration threat perceptions and levels of economic dependency with China.

The Vietnamese view on security cooperation with Japan is highly favorable and is based based on a high threat perception and China being Vietnam’s largest trading partner (China Daily, 2015). In terms of the high threat perception, this is based on a history of Vietnamese-Chinese conflict including the most recent war between the two in 1979 but also the colonialization of Vietnam by China. This threat perception is further enhanced by territorial disputes between the two claimants, incursions into Vietnamese territory and other incidents. These tensions seem to be on the rise despite China being Vietnam’s largest trading partner.

Whereas the role of China as Cambodia and Laos largest trading partner resulted in an aversion to security partnerships with Japan, in the case of Vietnam, a rapidly diversifying and growing economy and large expected gains from its participation in the TPP, Vietnam has economic space to prioritize is security issues and commit to security partnerships with Japan and other countries such as the US. Thus in the case of Vietnam, the variables of high threat perception and moderate (but declining) economic dependency with China has resulted in a soft and hard hedging approach to security calculation and a positive approach to cooperation with Japan in the form of a Strategic Partnership, the provision of second hand marine vessels to enhance surveillance, visits by Japanese destroyers to Vietnam’s Cam Ranh Bay which faces the South China Sea as well as a commitment to deepen cooperation on maritime security as China’s militarization of the South China Sea continues (The Japan Times, 2016b). Other initiatives such as the signing of a memorandum in September 2015 to bolster-defense related cooperation and the provision of new marine patrol vessels are meant to buttress the Strategic Partnership to strengthen their bilateral ties but also to meet their overlapping and national security interests in the South China Sea (MOFA, 2016).

The Philippines has similar a threat perception when it comes to China but its economic dependency is relatively low with Japan and the US ranking first and second in terms of trade volume and China ranking third (Worldstopexports, 2016). The outcome has been a greater commitment to both soft and hard hedging strategies and a proactive outreach to Japan (and the US) to help with its security. The end result includes agreements “in principle to negotiate the transfer of defense equipment and technology from the Japan Self-Defense Forces to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)” (The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and The Center for Strategic and International Studies (AMTI), 2016). This commitment has been further buttressed by joint naval exercises, transfer to the Philippine Navy three JMSDF Beechcraft TC-90 King Air patrol planes with basic surface and air surveillance radar, to be followed in the near future by P-3C Orions, allowing access of Japanese Marine Self Defense Forces (JSDF) to military bases, the formulation of a Visiting Forces Agreement and other cooperation (AMTI, 2016).

While not declaring a formal alliance, the Philippines sees Japan as a useful partner to engage in its own soft and hard hedging strategies vis-à-vis China based on its threat perception but also an implicit understanding of its own limitations. This engagement is expected to increase as the South China Sea becomes more volatile.
Indonesia’s views on Japanese security partnerships have been evolving. Until recently, Indonesia held a low to moderately low threat perception towards China and experienced positive economic relations prior to the slowdown in the Chinese economy and accompanying commodities bust (GBGI, 2015). Its territorial dispute with China has been managed and de-prioritized through diplomacy preferring to prioritize comprehensive relations with China. This approach has been fairly constant but changing economic relations as a result of the commodities bust, a more assertive China and the March 19, 2016 incident in which an Indonesian Maritime Affairs and Fisheries patrol ship intercepted a Chinese trawler lowering its nets in waters at coordinates that placed it within Indonesia’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) north of the Natuna Islands has shifted the strategic calculus of the Indonesian security establishment. (Weatherbee, 2016)

Whereas the Philippines and Vietnam have actively courted Japanese aid and expressed a desire to have more security dialogue, Indonesia has been caught unprepared as to how to maintain its economic ties with China in the face of China’s track record in the South China Seas and now in its backyard of the Natuna Islands. Not withstanding, on December 17th, 2015 at the Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting, Indonesia and Japan agreed to hold Politico-Military (PM) and Military-Military (MM) Dialogues in 2016, initiate negotiations on an agreement on the transfer of defense equipment and technology, and stated that going forward Japan would strive to develop security and defense cooperation, including in the area of defense equipment, and to further promote its effort to enhance Indonesia's capability to secure the safety of its oceans and skies and to respond to disasters, through active participation in the multilateral joint exercise KOMODO 2016 (MOFA, 2015b).

These Japanese driven initiatives are less about direct security cooperation and more about creating the institutional linkages that can be utilized for further defense cooperation in the Straits of Malacca but importantly in the South China Sea. Indonesia’s “March 19th Shock” and changing economic relationship has shifted what the model in this paper would have predicted in terms of Indonesia’s security choices, that is continued engagement with China and at best soft hedging because of its previous low threat perception and mutual beneficial economic relationship. Instead, we see the threat perception of China on the rise and the previously mutually beneficial economic relations deteriorate shifting Indonesia’s approach to security towards soft and hard hedging as evidenced through expanding security times with Japan as explained above.

**IV. Linking Security and Trade: TPP**

Although the TPP is trades pact linking participating countries in the Asia Pacific, it also strengthens ASEAN’s importance as a manufacturing export hub. The peripheral-core countries which form the central nexus in this trade framework almost exclusively export their products through the South a China Sea. With additional members such as the Philippines and Thailand receiving support fit their ascension to the TPP (The Japan Times, 2016a), more and more peripheral core countries will have not only territorial stakes within the region but economic stakes that will require a multilateralisation of security partnerships to ensure the South China Sea export/import lanes are not disrupted by territorial disputes or unilateral claims of sovereignty (Nagy, 2016).

From this point of view, peripheral-core countries see increased Japanese security partnerships in Southeast Asia as an extension of Japan's economic strategy based on the TPP. Security partnerships that anchor Japan into the region, consolidates smaller countries’ positions on territories in dispute with China. In this sense, peripheral-core countries interpret Japanese security partnerships in the region as the embedding of a multitude of bilateral security partnerships based on the TTP.
Peripheral-core countries view Japanese security partnerships as a pyramidal structure consisting of the promotion of international norms (human rights, freedom, and human security), trade, and security. They are interrelated and mutual self reinforcing. The promotion of international norms in the region, especially since PM Abe's visit to South East Asia in 2013 in which he espoused the view that Japan will protect and promote human rights, freedom and democracy (read not China) (Kantei, 2013) creates the foundation for building stronger, deeper and broader economic relations between Japan and Southeast Asian countries based on shared norms and rules. The TPP is the most illustrative aspect of this.

Whereas the promotion and the protection of international norms creates the conditions to strengthen economic cooperation, intensified and deepen trade increases not only the number of stakeholders in the region but it increases and multilateralizes those who have to lose from conflict or a destabilisation in the region of the South China Sea. The potential loss or potential to disrupt trade flows in the region thus strengthens the incentives for Southeast Asian countries to form security partnerships amongst each other but also with Japan.

V. Conclusion
This paper has shown that Southeast Asian perspectives on Japanese security policy in the region are not uniform. Indeed, they are divided into peripheral- core and core-peripheral countries and their views on Japanese- Southeast Asian security cooperation are influenced by their threat perception associated with the rise of China and their economic relationship with China. The core-peripheral countries view Japanese security partnerships as a destabilizing influence that could further deepen their client state relationship with China, leading to a further erosion of their sovereignty owing to China's economic influence. Peripheral-core countries on the other hand, view Japanese security partnerships favorably as they inculcate more stakeholders into the South China Sea through increasing trade ties based on international norms, the protection of human rights, democracy and freedom. Norms form the basis for trade and increased trade creates the incentive invest in security relationships. A plethora of bilateral security partnerships thus strengthens smaller countries security interests within the region. As does the adherence to international law in the forms of international conventions such as UNCLOS (United Nations Convention for the Law of the Seas)

Returning to the questions posed at outset of this paper, the Japan-China security rivalry positively and negatively affects the evaluation of Japanese security partnerships in the region as demonstrated by the peripheral-core and core-periphery division outlined above. The core-peripheral nations of Cambodia and Laos are particularly facing a difficult choice in how to balance their bilateral relations with an influential China and a generous Japan.

This tug-of-war that China is winning also has implications for Cambodia and Laos's role in ASEAN but also the future of ASEAN as a regional institution. If the ASEAN way of consensus-based decision making will continue to be influenced by China through Cambodia and Laos the institution itself may lose its raison d’être in the region.

The relationship between Japanese security partnerships, trade and the advocacy of protecting freedom of thought, expression and speech in Southeast Asia and the protection and promotion of the so-called universal values of freedom, democracy and human rights is an intentional shift by the Japanese government but one that has enabled some countries to come together and join the TPP.

ASEAN nations have shared and different perspectives on Japanese security cooperation in the region as evidenced by the bifurcation of ASEAN in peripheral-core and core-periphery groupings.
Among these groupings, there are further divisions depending on the influence of overseas Chinese communities in the local polities but also regional trade flows. Malaysia with its influential overseas Chinese-Malaysian community with trans-regional business interests play a moderating role in Malaysian responses to Chinese expanding economic and military power in the South China Sea.

Asian countries from the peripheral-core see Japanese security partnerships at the bilateral level in four ways. First, bilateral security partnerships help smaller Southeast Asian neighbours in their territorial disputes with China. Second, the TPP and other trade agreements between Japan and Southeast Asian countries at bilateral and now in multilateral trade agreements means Japan has a much larger stake in what happens in the South China Sea. With a significant Japanese trade volume and a large percentage of its energy resources flowing through the South China Sea, it would be a national security miscalculation to not have at least bilateral ties in the region. Third, peripheral-core countries understand that security partnerships with Japan not necessarily exclusively focused on the security dimension of cooperation. The wedding of development aid, bolstering infrastructure, increasing FDA and promoting values diplomacy to security cooperation is seen as a comprehensive approach to achieving development strategies while also dealing with a growingly assertive China in the South China Sea. Fourth, by virtue of expanding security partnerships with Japan Southeast Asian countries implicitly understand that they are also expanding their security and other ties with Japan’s most important security partner, the United States.

At the time of writing this paper the security situation in the South China Sea has been evolving. The outcome of proceedings against the PRC under Annex VII to UNCLOS by the Philippines and China’s reaction to that judgement will influence the direction of Japanese Southeast Asian security partnerships in the future. An acceptance of the judgement and subsequent reversal of current territorial claims would dramatically decrease the threat perception vis-à-vis China. China would be seen as a status quo power that is willing to follow international law resulting in Southeast Asian countries strengthening their engagement and a preference for soft hedging over hard hedging strategies. A rejection of the judgement will heighten the threat perceptions of Southeast Asian countries, Japan and other countries within the region leading to an increase in soft and hard hedging against China through the strengthening of security partnerships with Japan.

Further militarization on the South China Sea by building military facilities, incidents at sea like the “March 19th Shock”, or through the declaration of and Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) will also erode confidence among Southeast Asian states that China’s rise will be at their expense increasing the incentive to form security and other partnerships with Japan.

There is at least one other factor that may affect Southeast Asian countries’ approaches to security cooperation with Japan and that is the Chinese economy. As the Chinese economy continues to transform away from an export-led, manufacturing based economy that requires commodities from the region (and the world) towards a service-based economy that does not require commodities, commodity exporters in the region (Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam) will have decreasing economic interests with China. This decline in economic dependency may result in more robust approaches to dealing with bilateral issues and increase their commitment to deeper security cooperation with Japan and extra-regional powers such as the U.S., Australia and India.
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