

# **Non-Traditional Security Dilemmas on the Belt and Road**

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## **Abstract**

Abstract: Non-Traditional Security (NTS) cooperation has been seen as a ready focus for multilateral dialogue, soft-power enhancement and positive military diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific. Some NTS threats have been responded to by embracing various approaches including ‘military operations other than war’ (MOOTW), as well as disaster relief and humanitarian interventions (HADR). These are also testing grounds for military capacity, indicating power projection and forward deployment abilities. NTS operational capacities can become part of a spiralling security dilemma that undercuts the claimed benefits for military diplomacy and cooperative security approaches. Growing Chinese and Japanese NTS-capacities and are now part of a wider Indo-Pacific dynamic along the Maritime Silk Road. China’s need to provide for non-traditional security along the Belt and Road includes the expanded use of private security companies, ‘paramilitary’ maritime deployments, and PLA units. NTS threats are now important components within Chinese defence and foreign policy, including the calibrated use of armed force. Non-traditional security dilemmas intensify during acquisition of ‘dual use’ assets, and when traditional security competition already exists, e.g. threat perceptions of Chinese military assertiveness. Carefully managed, the BRI represents an invitation for security cooperation. However, it also risks new forms of military competition and increasing securitization of developmental and environmental issues, a well-known problem for NTS as a conceptual and operational category.

## **Introduction: Where Security Cooperation and Military Competition Meet**

Non-Traditional Security (NTS) cooperation has been seen as a ready focus for multilateral and multilevel dialogue, soft-power enhancement and positive military diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region (Baldino & Carr 2016). NTS threats have been responded to militarily by embracing approaches such as ‘military operations other than war’ (MOOTW), disaster relief and humanitarian interventions (HADR), as well as post-disaster recovery and stabilisation operations. However, such operations are also a testing ground and showcases for military capacity, including intelligence and logistic operations that support power projection and

forward deployment abilities. They have been increasingly featured in Chinese, Japanese and Indian doctrines and operations over the last two decades, e.g. via anti-piracy operations, UN support operations, and international humanitarian and disaster-relief (HADR) deployments in relation to tsunamis, typhoons and earthquakes. This has been driven in part by the desire by such states to be seen as ‘net security providers’ rather than security threats (PRC 2013 & 2015; MoD 2018b; Fan & Char 2019; Gill & Mitra 2018). They are also used as an avenue for low-risk bilateral and multilateral cooperation, thereby being used as confidence and trust building measures (Martel 2017; DoS 2014). In turn, observations of HADR and MOOTW operations also provide competing states with information on the strengths and weakness of the state engaging in these activities, a form of ‘secret reconnaissance’ which was of particular concern to China in its anti-piracy deployments from 2008 on (Lin-Greenberg 2018).

In general, NTS concerns go beyond the defence of the state to a wider assessment of risks to the population as a whole and their extra-territorial national interests (Ghiselli 2018). Such transnational security threats provide motives for great power cooperation, but also generate divergent, even clashing, views of how they should be resolved (Cui & Buzan 2016). Wider NTS challenges such as resource depletion and Climate Change have driven decades of diplomacy via the UN and UNFCCC, while transnational organized crime, illicit goods, and money laundering have increasingly engaged global and regional organizations, e.g. via the UNODC, ASEAN, and related groups such the ADMM and ADMM-Plus (Martel 2017; UNODC 2019). Likewise, across the Indo-Pacific diverse groupings use HADR operations as a focus of, or means towards, maritime cooperation. It is a central component of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) agendas (Pennisi 2016). It is a priority area for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Action Plan for 2017-2021 (being developed via the ‘Cluster Group’ on Disaster Risk Management), and engaged in the France-Australia-NZ maritime cooperation agreements (FRANZ). Disaster relief is also a component in numerous multilateral naval exercises such as the MILAN and KOMODO exercises. In so far as NTS issues are seen as ‘soft’ security issues they are often treated as ‘low-hanging fruit’ where cooperation can readily be used to build confidence and trust (CTBMs) among the parties involved (Martel 2017).

However, NTS operational capacities can also become part of a spiralling security dilemma that undercuts the claimed benefits for military diplomacy and cooperative security approaches (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Cycles of capacity-building have already been observed in Chinese and Japanese NTS operations, and are now part of a wider Indian-Ocean dynamic along the Maritime Silk Road. This can be seen in China’s participation in anti-piracy operations in the India Ocean and off the coast of Somalia, an early indication of its ability to maintain small naval task forces operating at a long distance from their bases, though their rules of engagement were rather limited and conservative (Ghiselli 2018). Though often relatively small (usually two combatants and a supply ship), China between 2008 and 2018 sent a total of 30 task forces as part of wider anti-piracy operations, escorted over 5,900 ships in the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden by 2017, and sent vessels to evacuate Chinese and other nations from Libya and Yemen (Fan & Char 2019; Hein 2017; see further below).

These operations are pretexted on humanitarian grounds, protecting SLOCs and cargo shipping, which now includes sizeable numbers of Chinese cargoes and its growing merchant marine. Though such operations do provide shared regional security and economic benefits, they can also be viewed as ‘impure public goods’ in that they differentially serve other ends such as power projection and enhanced diplomatic influence (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Moreover, these trends have created considerable concern from Indian and Australian observers, who see this as a wider pattern of maritime power-projection, especially when combined with threat perceptions based on the so-called ‘string-of-pearls’ and Maritime Silk Road investments which give PRC increased access to ports and fuelling points across the Indian Ocean (Connolly 2018; Ferguson 2018; Sakhuja 2014).

Japan, too, has deployed limited maritime forces beyond East Asian into the wider Indo-Pacific, though usually as part of multilateral or UN mandated operations. This included sending ships into the Persian Gulf for controversial mine-sweeping roles in 1991, with further supply missions into the Indian Ocean through 2001-2010 in support of US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as support for regional coast guard training and other initiatives via its dialogue with ASEAN. This was an extension of Japan’s ‘normalization’ via cautious multilateral and humanitarian support roles, e.g. medical teams in Cambodia (1992-1993), disaster and relief teams to Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand (2004-2005), reconstruction and engineering teams in Iraq and East Timor, as well as early disaster relief teams in western India (2001), Pakistan (2005) and New Zealand (2011), among others (MoD 2011; Hughes 2004 & 2009; UN-OCHA 2005). In the wider context of Japanese SDF modernization, this can be seen as a form of ‘proactive pacifism’ which allows for overseas operations that actively support global peace. Thereafter Japan gradually engaged an extended pattern of defence mobilization in relation to ‘grey areas’ ranging from anti-piracy operations through to air and naval deployments in the East China Sea, checking China’s claims to the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands and adjacent EEZs (MoD 2018; Chipman et al. 2017; Kirsten 2016; IISS 2015; MoD 2016).

In this context, Japan from 2011 has maintained a logistics base with a port and airfield in Djibouti, backed up by a small number of ground troops. Japan’s national defence guidelines for 2019 noted that beyond anti-piracy efforts, the SDF facility will help Japan cooperate in the long-term quest for ‘regional security’ (MoD 2018b). China opened their own logistics base in Djibouti in 2017, while the US, France, Germany, Italy and Spain also have bases in the county, with Saudi Arabia signing agreements for the possible future development of a facility (Melvin 2019). In some measure, these early Japanese and Chinese efforts could be seen as mutual shadowing and matching of extended deployment capacities, at least in the Indian Ocean, followed by a more direct form of strategic confrontation in the East China Sea (Layton 2019; Hughes 2009 & 2004; see further below).

NTS is not an uncontested category. Indeed, it is defined by what it is not, i.e. it is not traditional security, with its focus on interstate conflict, direct national defense, or waging conventional wars (Martel 2017). A long list of ‘other’ issues then get dropped into this NTS category, especially if they are transnational in character, originate from non-military actors/factors, and are not easily dealt with by the direct application of military force, e.g.

climate change risks, environmental and natural disasters, flows of illicit goods, non-documented migration, transnational criminal networks, food and water security (Martel 2017). Debates have continued since the 1990s (following on from the Copenhagen School's work) on how these issues have been framed by national narratives and social discourses prioritise specific non-military challenges as 'threats' (Albert & Buzan 2011). Likewise, such securitizations may mask competing rather than cooperative extensions of governance beyond state borders, using 'risk' to mobilize domestic and regional responses (Hameiri & Jones 2019; Su 2015).

Resource scarcity is an area where these mechanisms can be easily seen, e.g. the extension of concern over fisheries depletion in South East Asia has moved from national monitoring of EEZs towards a wider conceptualization of fisheries management across the South China Sea and the Coral Triangle. This can be seen as a legitimate extension of scientific approaches, allowing a shift toward sustainable use of shared fisheries, especially for off-shore fish species that move across EEZs and open sea boundaries (Teh 2017 et al.). If successful, this approach could act as one CTBM to expand trust among regional states, a methodology explored via groups such as ASEAN, the ARF and CSCAP. However, such trends could also intensify territorial claims via securitized monitoring of transnational fisheries under national rubrics and threat perceptions, e.g. as found in Indonesia, Vietnamese and Chinese responses to 'illegal' fishing in recent years (see CSCAP 2017; Parameswaran 2017; Supriyanto 2016; for caution on inflated 'threat perceptions' of Chinese fishing catches, see Austin 2019).

Further, adopting an NTS agenda will not always lead to automatic cooperation in dealing with harder traditional security issues pretexted on issues of sovereignty and territorial control. This can be seen in ASEAN contexts, where NTS responses have been a way of enhancing regional security cooperation, but have only slowly moved from CTBMs towards preventive diplomacy, with little ability to address China's territorial claims or reduce tensions between the US and China (Martely 2017). In this context, ASEAN has made serious progress in regional coordination for disaster risks governance since the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in 2008 and the creation of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA). However, other NTS responses are more problematic, e.g. the problems of SE Asian air pollution (the Haze) driven by forest fires in Indonesia have induced serious attention from ASEAN mechanisms<sup>1</sup> since 1997, but the process remains controversial and incomplete (Kamolvej 2019).

Japanese and Chinese Non-Traditional Security agendas are often used as part of wider soft-power responses designed to enhance national prestige and expand international influence in the Indo-Pacific. In turn, this may help legitimate Chinese interests and presence along the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), as well providing one platform for focused Japanese activism in the Indo-Pacific under the so-called 'Abe Doctrine' (Envall 2018). Indeed, Chinese responses to NTS threats can be seen as a corollary of its expanding global interests along BRI

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<sup>1</sup> These include the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (2002) and the ASEAN Haze Monitoring System (HMS) from 2013.

corridors. In the Indo-Pacific the expansion of Chinese interests, presence and comprehensive capacities has led to tensions with other states (especially Japan and India), as well as concern expressed in regional organisations such as ASEAN, IONS and IORA (China is a dialogue partner to IORA and became an observer to IONS from 2015). There is no simple remedy for these trends during a period of geopolitical tensions, driven mainly by clashing US, Chinese, Indian and Japanese strategic preoccupations. However, a strong commitment to transparent, ‘permissive’ operations directed towards shared and agreed problems may reduce trends toward competitive power projection as a form of strategic pre-emption (see further below).

The next section of the paper will explore NTS operations in the context of Japanese and Chinese soft power agendas. This will be followed by a brief analysis of Chinese responses to NTS Threats as part of its expanding global interests, channelled through its expanding Belt and the Road Initiative(s). The BRI opens up geo-economic corridors where China’s security concerns are intensified, even if these do not directly engage the PLA itself. China still mainly relies on local armed forces to protect its investments, backed up in part by small amounts of military aid and a limited number of naval and more regular SCO exercises (Ghiasy & Zhou 2017). However, there are now increased pressures to acquire the ‘capacity to respond’, whether through upgraded military capacities, expanded coast guards, special police units, militias, or private security corporations (PSCs). The final section will explore partial remedies to these problems. They rest on two approaches: where joint military capabilities are required they should function through UN, regional or multilateral institutions, and where force is not required, there should be a rapid shift towards demilitarization, with civilian agencies taking up governance roles. When worked in conjunction, these two approaches can reduce the likelihood of NTS security dilemmas being sustained, thereby undercutting the negative construction of shared NTS problems as interstate threats.

### **Japanese and Chinese NTS Responses as Soft Power Enhancers**

Both Japan and China can be seen as using NTS responses, humanitarian uses of military capacities, emergency aid, and developmental funding in support of national soft power, encouraging positive and friendly responses by partner nations and reducing past and present threat perceptions (for definitions of soft and smart power, see Nye 2004a; 2004b; 2008; 2009, 2013). Although, soft power gains need not be seen as a part of a zero sum game, competitive approaches to soft power are more likely when there are unresolved territorial disputes and where security dilemmas have been complicated by military modernisation or existing power differentials. This is the case with the expansion of China’s military capacities and the rise of its comprehensive national power, now projected more widely onto the Indo-Pacific stage via the security footprint of the Belt and Road Initiative (Ferguson & Dellios 2017; Ferguson 2018; see further below). This has been intensified by direct military competition by the PRC with the US and India in their respective spheres of influence in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as concerns over the geopolitical impact of the evolving Belt and Road Initiative.

Over the last three decades, Japanese foreign policy and security trends had emerged into a wider pattern of multilateral cooperation that can be summarized as ‘soft power through development’. This was an extension of Japan’s 21<sup>st</sup> century focus on economic influence and civilian power, combined with limited but robust Self-Defence capacities. This was updated in its Revised Aid Cooperation concept (February 2015) of ‘good’ development as the best proactive contribution to peace, utilizing soft power, aid, and trade along with some hard power capacities (MOFA 2015a). This approach combined shared ‘universal’ values and actively promoted international peace and stability at the regional and global levels. Although linked to the rubric of a ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ from 2016, this was far less assertive than the US interpretation of this concept (Rossiter 2018), but instead focused on cooperative mechanisms with many partners. Its governance focus enhanced Strategic Development Cooperation for economic growth, promoted Human Security and sought to build ‘strategic partnerships’ with small or island states with ‘particular’ vulnerabilities, operating across 18 sub-areas (MOFA 2015a).

This agenda included strong commitments on Disaster Relief and Climate Change, whereby Japan would provide assistance in disaster risk reduction and environmental/climate change management for small island developing states (SIDS). This links to Japan’s ongoing role as a major developmental aid donor, circa fourth in the world overall in 2017 with increases of around 3% for ODA in 2019 over 2018 (Donor Tracker 2019; MOFA 2015a; Japan Times 2015; JICA 2016). Overall around \$10 billion annually has been channeled into aid flows with a focus on poverty reduction and infrastructure development. Japan is also a major supporter of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as both a founding member and major shareholder in that organization.

Beyond financial aid, Japan’s *Official Development Assistance Charter* (revised in 2004) and its updated *Development Cooperation Charter* (from 2015) support JSDF non-combat roles for disaster relief and coast guard operations, as well as cooperation with ASEAN on naval patrols and protection of sea lanes (MOFA 2015a; Kyodo 2016; Kyodo 2014). It was recognized that there was a clear link between security and the ability to sustain socio-economic development:

In natural disasters and other emergencies, Japan will provide prompt assistance taking into account longer-term recovery and reconstruction. In view of the fact that threats to stability and security can hamper socio-economic development, Japan will also provide assistance to enhance capacities in developing countries such as: the capacity of law enforcement authorities including capabilities to ensure maritime safety; the capacity of security authorities including capabilities to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime including drug trafficking and trafficking in persons; and the capacity of developing countries in relation to global commons such as seas, outer space, and cyberspace. (MOFA 2015b)

Japan has long been active in global human security and sustainable development networks, with these agenda now part of soft power positioned within the idea of ‘Proactive Pacificism’, i.e. the idea of making a sustainable ‘pro-active contribution to peace.’ Development is thus seen as way to aid global security, e.g. as means to reduce transnational terrorism as well improve environmental and health security. This aid is not just focused on

Asia. Japan has pledged circa \$30 billion (private and public) to help stabilize key zones across Africa through 2013-2019, allowing improved resource access and but also part of ‘soft’ competition with the PRC (Sun 2016). This was based in part on the Yokohama Action Plan of 2013-2017, with targeted agriculture and health programs to Kenya, Morocco, Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Zambia and elsewhere (JICA 2018; MOFA 2015). Japan has developed a regional plan for development within Africa, with sub-regional plans with a human security focus evolving since 2015 (MOFA 2015). More recently, Japan has partnered with India in an ‘Asia Africa Growth Corridor’, seen by some as an unofficial counter to China’s BRI operations in Africa and the Indian Ocean (Brinza 2018; Beri 2017; Puri et al. 2017).

Of course, Japan’s recent policies go beyond soft power and NTS responses into a more robust posture via the so-called ‘Abe Doctrine’ and the use of the concepts of ‘Dynamic Deterrence’ and ‘Grey Zone’ engagements. Dynamic deterrence allows for counter-strike based on a more integrated air warning and defense control system within Japan, and well as some further southward position of SFD assets. Beyond this, it allows some deployments of Japanese forces overseas and permits overseas combat in defense of a friendly country or forces being attacked (Ramirez 2017; MacIntyre 2012). Grey zones can be “defined as a broad range of contingencies that fall between peace and war – for example, disputes over territory, sovereignty or economic interests. Grey-zone contingencies typically involve a government decision to show a military presence or to attempt to change the status quo using physical means.” (IISS 2015) This situation can be applied to the tensions over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, where deployments of naval and air patrols occur on a regular basis, signalling rising military tensions between Japan and China even if neither intends to escalate this situation into a direct military clash. With overlapping air defence identification zones and important resources such as the Chunxiao gas field at stake, it is not surprising that both countries sought to stake a strong presence. From 2010 to 2015 the number of ‘scrambles’ by Japanese SDF against Chinese aircraft rose rapidly (MoD 2014 & 2016). By 2016 total Japanese interceptor scrambles peaked at 1,168, while in 2018 Japanese aircraft scrambled 999 times in response to Chinese and Russian aircraft, indicating a situation that was not war but certainly not peace either (Burke & Ichihashi 2019; MoD 2018). Bearing in mind that overall Japan is ranked around 9-10<sup>th</sup> globally in its diverse military capabilities, this is a serious deployment of hard power that needs to be assessed in the strategic balance of the Indo-Pacific. (Ramirez 2017; MacIntyre 2012).

Overall, gradual revisions of the *interpretation* of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution has allowed Japan a more active role across the Indo-Pacific region, including potential deployment of naval missile defence systems, advanced attack submarines, use of military satellites (after adoption of the Basic Space Law from 2008), enhanced cyber security, and stronger maritime cooperation with Indonesia and India (Chipman et al. 2018; MOD 2018; Matsuoka 2016; Ramirez 2017; IISS 2015; Robertson 2011). However, it seems unlikely that PM Abe will be able to actually revise the text (versus the interpretation) of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution by 2020. This would need two-thirds support in parliament, a referendum, and stronger political support publicly: as of 2017 46% of surveye Japanese were

against this, and through 2018-2019 there was limited support from coalition partners and NGOs for these revised policies (Tatsumi 2019; Lewis 2017; Matsuoka 2016). Here there is some trade-off between soft power and more assertive strategies. Even though Japan can be seen as gaining soft power globally, rising from 7<sup>th</sup> in global ranks in 2016 to around 5<sup>th</sup> in 2018 in the Portland Soft Power surveys, this was still limited by negative perceptions in China and South Korea, with Abe's doctrine eroding soft power influence due to displays of military capability (McClory 2018; McClory 2016). Japan's rating with the *Soft Power 30* is largely based on cultural and technical factors, combined with extensive diplomatic, development and aid programs, plus regional leadership on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (now relabelled the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or CPTPP) after the US withdrew from the TPP (McClory 2018).

China, too, has long been aware of the growing reality of non-traditional security threats and more recently has been willing to enter into international agreements to help collectively manage them (Ferguson 2018a). Drug control, for example, has been a long-term focus of modern China, which saw itself as a victim of ruthless exploitation of the opium trade from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, with continued 21<sup>st</sup> century flows from Myanmar and Afghanistan as current challenges (UNODC 2019; Su 2017; for alternative narratives of the Opium Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Platt 2018; Wang 2012). These concerns have continued to shape PRC's NTS relations with Southeast Asia. China entered into cooperative mechanisms to cope with transnational organized crime (from 2000) and signed the *Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues* with ASEAN in 2002, recognizing that a wide range of trans-border issues needed pan-Asian cooperation, especially with neighbouring states and groupings such as ASEAN, the ARF and the SCO (Cui 2013; Su 2015; Wong 2007; Ghiselli 2018; ASEAN 2002).

This has been folded into a combined military and diplomacy approach as part of China's emerging 'new security concept' from 2002 onward:

The complex relationship between non-traditional security and China's national security and foreign policy is reflected in Jiang Zeming's words during the 16th National Congress of the CCP in 2002. He stressed that traditional and non-traditional security threats, especially terrorism, are interwoven and are having disruptive effects over the stable international environment that China needs for its own development. Consequently, the solution was to make the NSC operational through multilateral dialogues, such as the UN and other international organizations. . . . In summary, non-traditional security issues were not seen as threats to China's existence, but to the external environment it needed to develop. Consistently, the response advocated by the Chinese leaders is diplomatic in nature even if it has a limited military component. These were the very early stages of the securitization process. (Ghiselli 2018, p. 614).

Subsequently, NTS issues and protecting Chinese interests abroad have been given growing prominence in China's defence white papers, and since 2006 lead to a strong emphasis on 'military operations other than war' (MOOTW) as a crucial part of PLA missions, training, logistics, and research, including expanded peace keeping operations (State Council Information Office 2013 & 2015; Ghiselli 2018). It is important not to read this trend as 'military operations short of war' along a spectrum using different levels of force, but rather as a spectrum of diplomatic engagement that ranges from peace-keeping through to public

dissemination of information. This can be broadly described as the public diplomacy of China combined with the ‘political work’ within the PLA and other state agencies (Fan & Char 2019). The PLA began to evolve conceptual, doctrinal, educational and operation bases for the response to both domestic and international emergencies, developed first with the Academy of Military Science (AMS), the National Defense University (NDU), the Army Command College (ACC) and other PLA teaching centres, and within the Emergency Office of General Staff Development (GSD) (Fan & Char 2019). In parallel, the PLA and police units became more involved in ‘on-call peace arrangements’ with the UN, eventually having deployed over 30,000 personnel into 24 UN missions through 1997-2018, as well as creating a Peacekeeping Centre in the Ministry of National Defense (Fan & Char 2019). From late 2017 China registered 8,000 troops for the peacekeeping standby force of the UN, with 800 being made available for rapid deployment via the UN ‘Vanguard Brigade’ (ISDP 2018).

Diverse conceptualizations of MOOTW operations include different aspects of “deterrence, counter-terrorism, riot suppression, mass event management, border blockade, disaster rescue and relief, nuclear, biological and chemical rescue and relief, air and sea security, air and sea control, protection of maritime strategic communication lines, international peacekeeping, and overseas rescue and relief.” (Fan & Char 2019, p4.) It is important to note what is excluded from MOOTW operations as well. The US military discontinued the term in 2006, but originally had 18 types of operations, including items not found in Chinese thinking such as “arms control and disarmament, enforcement of sanctions, enforcing exclusion zones, support for insurgencies, counter-insurgency, strikes and raids.” (Fan & Char 2019, p9). Overall, China’s MOOTW principles are closely aligned to the non-interventionist stance of PRC’s foreign policy principles, with restrictions on intervention, enforcement, or targeted strikes against other countries. However, as Chinese interests via trade and geopolitical competition have moved from a regional to a global agenda, China’s security policies have had to move well beyond the framework of territorial defence and sovereignty claims. Rather, PLA’s ‘new’ mandated missions have a wide brief in protecting Chinese interests on the global stage, even if this largely pursued preferably by cooperative rather than by coercive means. (Ferguson & Dellios 2017). Although formally aligned with UN goals, such operations have a primary focus on China’s expanding economic and geopolitical interests (ISDP 2018).

These humanitarian operations have earned China some credibility as an international actor able to respond to emergencies overseas. Thus China has been engaged in seeking the protection or withdrawal of Chinese during crises (natural and political) in the Solomon Islands, East Timor, Tonga, Lebanon, Chad, Thailand, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Darfur, the Gulf of Aden, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Libya (where over 36,000 Chinese citizens evacuated), Yemen, Japan and Mali (Ghiselli 2018; Connolly 2018). At first these were small, non-military operations but from 2011 on began to include PLA support and PLAN ships, especially for major crises (Connolly 2018). These figures reflect the growing number of Chinese people going overseas, including government officials, business persons, contractors, tourists, students, engineers, workers and potentially even farmers (as part of China’s food security agenda, Hofman 2016). China has about 30-40,000 businesses operating globally,

and over 100 million Chinese travel abroad annually, sometimes to fragile or conflict-prone states (Heath 2018; Ferguson 2018). This provides a direct and serious rationale for China's widening engagement in regional and global security processes. It has prompted the creation of a Department of External Security and a Small Group for Coordination on External Emergencies, as well as created the demand for increased risk assessment capacities (Ghiselli 2018). This expanded circle of interests and capabilities have become embedded in the 'holistic national security' (HNS) concept that was endorsed by Xi Jinping and the Central National Security Commission from 2015 on (Ghiselli 2018).

Support for MOOTW, sea-lane security, anti-piracy and peacekeeping operations were the rationales for the creation of a logistic support base and supply port at Djibouti in 2015. It was also used to justify the building of infrastructure (including airstrips) on some of the islands in the South China Sea, and for future improved access to Gwadar, nearby Jiwani, Bagamoyo (Tanzania) and other ports across the Indo-Pacific (Brewster 2018). Likewise, Chinese been involved in responding to international emergencies and disasters, e.g. in October 2005, the China International Search and Rescue Team arrived at the earthquake struck Balakot area in Nepal, bringing with them a team of 49 earthquake experts, PLA engineers, and PAP (People's Armed Police) medical workers (Fan & Char 2019). In 2014 medical teams were sent to Haiti and to several West African countries fighting Ebola (Renwick 2017). Since 2013 China has been involved in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations in Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, having sent international rescue teams, medical teams and a DNA testing group to the tsunami-hit countries, including deployment of its Peace Ark hospital ship. From March 2014 China also deployed almost 20 PLAN and Coast Guard ships as well as air assets to search missing Malaysian Airline Flight 370, working with some 26 countries including India (Lin-Greenberg 2018).

China itself has historically been subject to major natural disasters, including floods and earthquakes that affect densely populated areas, leading to major reforms of its disaster risk reduction strategies (DDR) since 2008, and a willingness to cooperate internationally with the Sendai Framework (for Disaster Risk Reduction). China also has ongoing trilateral dialogues with Japan and South Korea on these and related environmental issues (the Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting, TEMM, operating from 1999 on), agreements with ASEAN on disaster management cooperation (from 2014), plus limited 'small-team' medical cooperation with the US from 2013 (Renwick 2017; Cui 2013).

The soft power benefits and public diplomacy aspects of HADR responses are well understood by PRC:

It is common for MOOTW to come under public scrutiny. Positive media coverage about PLA MOOTW, thus, not only boosts morale but also inspires personnel to carry out their tasks well. Prompt dissemination and exchange of information is recommended to enhance troops' capacity; while timely news conferences are encouraged to promote situational awareness among the public, with comprehensive media coverage also employed to showcase PLA work style. (Fan & Char 2019, p8).

Overall, China's increased engagement in UN operations has been seen as supporting 'system stability' in a world it describes as fraught by risk, hot spots, and increasing tension with the United States (PRC 2017 & 2015). At the same time it has rejected efforts to restrict its access and use of the East and South China seas, and responded to criticism of its Belt and Road Initiative by seeking to address excessive debt, energy and environmental issues that concern states such as Australia, India and China (the 'green development' agenda and BRI 2.0, see Schmitt 2019; Dong et al 2017). Another controversial area will be how far China needs to mobilize extra forms of security for its BRI's economic corridors.

### **The Expanding Security Needs of the Belt and Road**

China's increased need to provide for non-traditional security along the Belt and Road includes the expanded use of private security companies, 'paramilitary' maritime deployments of coastguard and other marine units, and the PLA's mandated 'new missions' to protect Chinese interests and citizens beyond national borders. Indeed, PRC is transforming operations towards a stronger and comprehensive maritime focus:

Today, modern China is at the turning point of becoming a truly maritime-capable nation in terms of the emerging capacities of the PLA Navy (PLAN), its development as a leading shipbuilder, its growing merchant marine, its interest in seabed mining for resources, and its huge fishing fleet (the world's largest for distance fishing). China is developing a comprehensive approach to its evolving maritime strategy, including a focus on oceanic resource management as well as security and legal issues. Several agencies other than PLAN are involved in this process including the Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), the Coast Guard of the Border Control Department, the China Maritime Police, the China Marine Surveillance (CMS), Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (FLEC), and Maritime Anti-smuggling Bureau (Ferguson & Dellios 2017, pp107-108)

Overall, China is increasingly engaged in the West and South Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and most recently the Arctic, now added as an 'Ice Road' to the BRI (Liu 2018; PRC 2018a). Along the diverse corridors of the BRI, NTS threats and their management are now important components within Chinese defense and foreign policy. Such operations have allowed China to build up its operational capacity to support peace keeping and other roles in Africa and the Indian Ocean. In operations in Africa (including South Sudan, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo), China has sent not only engineers and medical teams but well-armed and trained soldiers, with these units being given similar training to PLA special forces (Ghiselli 2018). These factors have led to an increasingly securitized approach that embraces the calibrated use of force combined with a civil-military responsiveness:

The fact that the PLA became the main protagonist of this process after an initial civilian response, from showing the flag in support of China's international standing, to more concrete actions to defend the country's interests and citizens abroad, shows how powerful the process of securitization has been. Ultimately, this process not only led to growing military activities abroad and the creation of the relevant institutional-legal framework, but it also caused a broader reconsideration about the use of force in foreign policy. (Ghiselli 2018, p624)

These trends have been observed with concern by the US, India, Australia and Japan. Non-traditional security dilemmas are likely to intensify over acquisition of 'dual use' assets, e.g. landing-craft, helicopters, helicopter-carriers, heavy-lift transport aircraft, mobile hospitals,

expanded intelligence gathering via new satellites, and in future the social monitoring via digital data and AIs (Lin-Greenberg 2018; Nagy 2019; Lee 2018). Such dilemmas are most intense when traditional security competition already exists, e.g. threat perceptions of Chinese military modernisation, expanded fields of operation in the Indian Ocean and parts of Africa, as well as an assertiveness in relation to Japanese and US challenges (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Access to its logistic base at Djibouti and port-fuelling agreements elsewhere in the Indian Ocean have long been seen as presaging a wider power projection capacity as the PLA Navy modernizes, or even as the ground work of a future network of dual-use bases (for such speculations, usually denied by host countries, see Brewster 2018).

Massive investment into the Maritime Silk Road and the BRI, initially over \$1.3 billion to be committed by various Chinese and multilateral banks such as the AIIB, demonstrates an increase in Chinese economic interests and activity across Eurasia, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. These projects often cross, or are adjacent, to areas of recent or present instability, e.g. The New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor passes just north of Afghanistan and needs improved security in nearby Tajikistan, while the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor engages infrastructure projects in areas disputed by India and Pakistan, as well as crossing through troubled Balochistan in West Pakistan. China has some fifty BRI and AIIB projects underway in the Middle East, including a comprehensive strategic partnership with Egypt and a strong presence in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, and may consider further reconstruction aid and investment in Syria beyond the \$2 billion already pledged if the situation there stabilizes (Hemenway 2018; Ehteshami & Horesh 2017; Al-Tamimi 2017).

Although China mainly relies on host countries' military and policing capabilities, it has also expanded the role of private security companies (PSCs), which are still to develop the legal structure to allow for Chinese to operate in armed private security roles overseas (Legarda & Nouwens 2018; Kai 2016a; Arduino 2016b). In 2014 Chinese firms probably spent up to \$8 billion on overseas security, while from 2017 several security providers, including the Chinese Overseas Security Group, China Security and Protection Group, Control Risks, Beijing Dewe Security Services, Hua Xin Zhong An and the Frontier Services group operated along parts of the BRI, usually working with local companies and training staff (Legarda & Nouwens 2018; Ferguson 2018; Reuters 2017c; Liu 2015). These groups have been involved in evacuations of Chinese workers (from Samarra, Iraq, 2014, from Juba, South Sudan, 2016), and even train for hostage rescue situations. However, there are certain risks in these trends:

Despite their nominally private status, Chinese private security companies tend to operate with the tacit support and encouragement of the Chinese government and are often staffed by former PLA officers with close, if indirect, ties to the Chinese authorities. This makes them complex, quasi-governmental international actors whose behavior is unregulated, since existing legal frameworks – both at the domestic and international level – do not clearly specify who is responsible for policing their operations. (Legarda & Nouwens 2018, p4)

Overall, these trends suggest a heightened role for China in providing direct and indirect means to enhance security along the BRI, operating at an almost global level. To avoid

parallel threat perceptions, China might in theory evolve into a net security provider as a shared good rather than a ‘security problem’ at the regional and global levels. Although this may be possible to achieve with targeted partners such as Russia, Pakistan, and Kazakhstan, these enhanced operations have generated threat perceptions and an emerging security dilemma operating for NTS issues and how they are contained and controlled. We can see this most clearly when we turn back to the limits of Chinese and Japanese cooperation in these areas.

### **China and Japan as NTS Partners and Competitors**

Japan, via its historical expansion into mainland Asia in the early and mid-twentieth century, and its place as the primary US ally in Asia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, find itself positioned as a strategic competitor with China. This adversarial relationship seems to be deepening in spite of strong trade flows (China was Japan’s second largest trading partner in 2018) and past cycles of diplomacy aimed at improving relations. As we have already seen, both countries have been actively involved in anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean, and both have opened support bases in Djibouti, alongside other countries (MoD 2018b; Melvin 2019). These Japanese and Chinese maritime efforts can be seen as mutual shadowing and matching of extended deployment capacities in the Indian Ocean, in contrast to more direct forms of strategic deterrence in the East China Sea (Layton 2019; Hughes 2009 & 2004).

For both countries, NTS challenges have been an area where cooperation has been very active. Japan and China have both been subject to major natural disasters, and both have experienced serious earthquakes that have led to mutual patterns of emergency relief, plus an active exchange of scientific information through government agencies (the China Earthquake Administration and the Japan Meteorological Agency) and several universities (Cui 2013). For example, China’s 2008 Wenchuan earthquake disaster led to large-scale government, NGO and public responses from Japan:

Many people in China were touched by the fact that the support was obviously sincere and had been provided without delay. Given the historical distrust and animosity between China and Japan, the dedication and professionalism of the Japanese rescue and medical teams made a particularly positive impression. The story of Japanese help has become a significant factor in the improvement of the image of Japan in China. According to a survey taken shortly after the Wenchuan earthquake, 83.6% of Chinese liked Japan, a remarkable 73.6% increase compared to the previous survey. (Cui 2013, p876)

Overall, environmental security has been seen as a useful area for cooperation and dialogue between China and Japan, even acting as a kind of ‘shock absorber’ during periods of cyclic tension between the two states (Cui 2013, p882).

However, strategic and tactical tensions have also been experienced in the midst of complex humanitarian disasters as well. Perhaps the clearest case of tensions over HADR can be seen during the response to the March 2011 Fukushima disaster which stretched Japanese and US humanitarian response mechanisms. These were closely observed by Russia and China, ‘possibly allowing them to identify SDF skills and capabilities to balance against’ (Lin-Greenberg 2018, p292). China did send a 15 member rescue team to the affected area, and offered immediate material aid such as fuel, tents and blankets, alongside aid mobilised by

China's Red Cross (Cui 2013). However, further aid such as deployment of its PLAN Peace Ark hospital ship and special robots designed to operate in nuclear incidents were declined (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Two other important factors were engaged in relation to the Fukushima crisis. First, Japan was disturbed by close surveillance of its operations by both Russia and China (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Second, Japan officials used the short-comings it experienced in the disaster to argue for the subsequent acquisition of dual-use mobile assets including Osprey aircraft and amphibious vessels. This would thereafter raise concern in China:

Because systems like airlift assets and amphibious ships can be used during both MOOTW and combat operations, Chinese officials and commentators have criticized Japan's post-3/11 acquisitions as evidence of Tokyo's aggressive intentions. A Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson condemned Japan's 2013 decision to acquire RQ-4 reconnaissance aircraft [Global Hawk UAVs] and amphibious ships, arguing that Tokyo's actions "us[ed] the pretext of safeguarding Japan's own national security and regional peace for its military expansion." In recent years, China has stepped up its own development of remotely piloted reconnaissance aircraft and has continued to modernize its fleet of amphibious warfare ships, suggesting it is balancing against Japan's military expansion. (Lin-Greenberg 2018, p296, brackets added material).

China has since expanded its development of UAVs and modernized its amphibious warship capacities, suggesting ongoing balancing against Japan's military capacities. Recently this has included PRC's commissioning of 5 Type-071 large landing ships and the building of a new Type-075 amphibious assault vessel, while UAVs, such as SULA30 reconnaissance and Sea Cavalry SD-40 drones, are being developed and increasingly acquired for surveillance, reconnaissance and limited strike roles (Hackett et al. 2019; Lin-Greenberg 2018).

### **Conclusion: Inclusive Multilayered Security Rather than Pre-emption**

The well-known problem for NTS is that it reconstructs the field of possible 'threats', thereby expanding potentially inappropriate solutions derived from conflict experiences and military operations to developmental and environmental problems (Chiselli 2018). One noted example of this was the shift of Plan Colombia from its wider developmental, crop substitution and policing origins (as originally planned in the late 1990s) towards a 'war on drugs' model that ended up escalating regional violence, leading to an intensified 'irrational war' model that Colombia would take decades to moderate (Richani 2005). Excluding the South China Sea and the East China Sea, where direct territorial claims are in conflict, competition in the Indian Ocean is indirect, concerned with the ongoing presence of naval forces, access to ports, and the relative power projection and soft power influence of India, Japan, China, the US, and to a lesser degree other states (Australia and Indonesia). In such a setting "even the most-benign military deployments can amplify mistrust and arms racing, suggesting that capabilities – rather than intentions – play a more significant role in driving competition between rivals" (Lin-Greenberg 2018, p283).

Solutions to these problems are simple in theory but complex in application. They rest on two approaches: where force is required this should function through UN or multilateral institutions, and where force is not required there should be a shift towards de-militarization of responses even when they viewed as security issues (Cui 2013). For example, a response

to high levels of piracy requires armed, sea-going vessels to deter, destroy or capture raiding pirates, often moving beyond EEZs into open seas. Over the last two decades, this has forced the creation of mixed international flotillas, engaging NATO, EU, and Indo-Pacific navies, as well as regional frameworks such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP). Through such frameworks, US, Japanese, Indian, Australian and Chinese naval forces (ReCAAP now has 20 member states) have become shared responders to pirate attacks, and do provide improved SLOC security, while the UN, the African Union and the EU have worked on reducing the land-based causes of piracy.

However, individual, uncoordinated task forces operating in remote oceans can equally be seen as power projection demonstrations rather than net security providers. Even when they are designed to protect regional shipping, they still run the risk of being seen to wave the flag of national capacities. Instead, military forces should clearly distinguish and announce SLOC patrols operations versus other kinds of military exercises. Likewise, care needs to be taken to reduce reactive and competitive factors coming into play when framing MOOTW and HADR operations, with clear public diplomacy shaped to reduce cycles of follow-on competition (Lin-Greenberg 2018). Where possible, such operation should avoid deployment into sensitive regions and be used to build wider people-to-people relations, e.g. via the coordinated deployment of multinational civilian responders (Cui 2013).

Where major military force is not needed, there is a need to rapidly de-militarize operations after the initial period of emergency deployment. In part this can be done by the handover of tasks to other government agencies as well as UN, civilian, NGO and aid groups (30,000 civil society groups are now registered or liaising with the UN at different levels, see Ha 2015). It also requires an improved flow from emergency and disaster response to aid, reconstruction, and then developmental phases (Ha 2015). Only the early part of these tasks can be undertaken by HADR or MOOTW responses, though cooperation is also run through multilateral frameworks such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and ASEAN's Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA), with global preventive measures being developed through the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (from 2015). De-militarization requires a widening of cooperation beyond the involved militaries to other agencies, and a deepening towards cooperation among non-state actors, NGOs, civil society and volunteer groups, thus enhancing people-to-people engagement (Cui 2013). In most cases, the aim should be to first demilitarize and where possible de-securitize responses as they come under effective international management.

Traditionally, NTS and humanitarian operations were seen as areas where cooperation was more likely than competition, and soft power easy to accrue through constructive use of military assets. However, given the complex geopolitical and geo-economic contexts of the Indo-Pacific and divided reactions to the Belt and Road Initiative, these assumptions need further investigation (Lin-Greenberg 2018). India, Australia, the US and to some degree Japan have remained highly critical of the lack of transparency and multilateral accountability found in many BRI projects. Beyond specific concerns such as environmental standards and

levels of debt for poor and small countries, there is also concern about the geopolitical leverage China gains by leading a project that might transform at least three continents (Ghiasi & Zhou 2017). In such a setting, even logical provisions against NTS threats along BRI corridors become two-edge swords, strengthening a web of security relationships in which China is the senior partner. Given the rising geopolitical tensions between the major powers of the Indo-Pacific, it is time for a calibrated review of the use of military diplomacy and HADR operation among competing states.

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