

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Istikar Ali

**THE INDO-JAPAN SPECIAL STRATEGIC AND GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP – AN ANSWER TO CHINA IN THE INDIAN
OCEAN REGION?**

Master's thesis

International Relations and European-Asian Studies

Supervisor: Ton Notermans, PhD

Co-Supervisor: Joe Burton, PhD

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Istikar Ali

(signature, date)

Student code: 163712TASM

Student e-mail address: istali@taltech.ee

Supervisor: Ton Notermans, PhD:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Co-Supervisor: Joe Burton, PhD:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee: /

Permitted to the defence

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(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of China's economic and infrastructure development strategy called the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) has pushed the rivalry between India and China further as India sees it as a geopolitical, strategic and economic threat to its own position. Additionally, Japan wants a free and open Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership (SSGP) grew out of their joint appreciation for bilateral relations and higher degree of motivation and commitment to closer and significant cooperation. This strategic partnership aims to counterbalance the influence of China's "Maritime Silk Road" in the Indian Ocean Region. The thesis follows the Indo-Japan's SSGP to investigate through a qualitative case study using the theory of soft balancing, whether the strategic partnership can indeed counterbalance China's initiatives in the IOR.

The main conclusion is that the strategic partnership between India and Japan can counterbalance China in few areas but cannot counterbalance fully, due to the far-reaching economic might and capabilities of China. Therefore, it is recommended that India and Japan become more active with each other in economic and security cooperation, in order to lessen their economic dependence on China.

Keywords: India, Japan, China, counterbalancing

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAGC	Asia Africa Growth Corridor
AFDB	African Development Bank
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Technical Cooperation
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
ECS	East China Sea
FDI	Foreign development investment
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
NERCN	North East Road Connectivity Network
NEXI	Nippon Export and Investment Insurance
NSG	Nuclear Supplier Group
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
ODA	Official development assistance
PLA	People's Liberation Army
QUAD	The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
SCS	South China Sea
SLOC	Sea line of communication
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has vital significance for the global trade which passes through it. It covers one-fifth of the world's oceans and is connected to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula in the west, India in the centre, and Myanmar and Indonesia in the east. Thus, it is a crucial trade route connecting Asia with Africa, the Middle East, and further on with Europe. India, considering itself a regional leader in terms of geopolitics, economy, and security, has long established an active naval presence, political influence, and economic ties with IOR littoral nations due to its natural geostrategic position in the centre of the Indian Ocean. Thus, India has strived to present its image as a regional hegemon.

Presently, there are noticeably growing influences in the IOR from pan-regional states, which have already and will continue to spread their presence and importance in what India regards as its regional territory. The growing Chinese influence in IOR with the expansion of its economic and infrastructure development strategy called "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) pushes the rivalry between India and China further as India sees it as a geopolitical, strategic and economic threat to its own position in the region.. While India has the will to stop China's activities or at least slow down the fast acceptance and utilization of BRI, it is lacking the means and strategies to do so – at least alone. Would the help of a 'partner' allow India to have the strength, confidence, necessary resources and support to be regarded as an acceptable counterweight against China in IOR, capable of counterbalancing?

Concerns over the growing influence of China in IOR are not only limited to India, but Japan also has its reservations. Japan has huge interests and concerns over its trade routes in the Indian Ocean due to the fact that 90% of its oil comes through it (Pandey 2018), thus, it is essential for Japan to have a free Indo-Pacific. With the rise of China, India and Japan both share a similar strategic vision for managing their own influences while remaining important regional players (Lynch III and Przystup 2017, 1). They both have strong motives for standing against China's threat, as its expanding global impact and growing geostrategic presence in the IOR has created a problem of

influence for India and Japan. Now, the two are looking at each other for support. However, there's a big question – how might India and Japan achieve this counterbalancing of China?

In 2014, India's decade-old Global Strategic Partnership with Japan took a fresh turn when Prime Minister Modi visited Japan and both New Delhi and Tokyo referred to a new term called Special Strategic and Global Partnership (SSGP) (Chotani 2018, 26-27). The research problem this thesis focuses on is the geostrategic, geopolitical, and economic counterbalancing by India and Japan in the IOR against China through the implementation of their SSGP. The thesis assumes that the strategic partnership formed between India and Japan has become a tool for them to cooperate in lessening the influence of China's "Maritime Silk Road"(MSR), an initiative part of BRI that is directly influencing the IOR. The main research question is: **Whether the Indo-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership can be effective in counterbalancing China in the Indian Ocean Region?**

While both New Delhi and Tokyo avoid directly addressing China in their growing strategic partnership, many authors argue that the increasing Chinese influence and growing dominance in the region forces India and Japan to go beyond their traditional associations and forge strategic ties to outweigh China (Eds. Basrur and Kutty 2018; Chotani 2018; Lynch III and Przystup 2017). That especially as the U.S. is seen to be losing its influence in the region in relative to China. "Only Japan and India have the strategic weight, economic heft, and shared values and interests in a liberal world order to counterbalance prospects of Chinese strategic predominance" (Crowley, Majumdar, and McDonough 2017, 2). Most importantly, Japan and India are seen as having the capacity to guarantee a liberal institutional order even without the U.S. leadership (Ibid., 6).

All of the above has evoked the question, whether India and Japan together possess the necessary means with the SSGP for successful counterbalancing of China. From the regional and international viewpoint, researching SSGP is crucial as there's a need to investigate its dynamics and potential in depth to assess whether it could be used as a tool for counterbalancing or not. Since IOR is notably an important location economically as well as geopolitically, changes in influence or geostrategic alterations between major actors in the region have a high value of topicality for research in International Relations. The sub-questions of the research are: (1) What are India and Japan's concerns regarding MSR in IOR?; (2) Which are the key features of SSGP?; and (3) How can SSGP counterbalance MSR through soft balancing?

The thesis is divided into five sections: an introduction; a theoretical overview of the main concepts; the background of the relevant factors and strategies for the case study; an introduction of the case study methodology following an analysis of research findings; and a conclusion. The introduction presents the motivation for conducting the research, highlighting the research problem and the main objectives of the thesis. Chapter one presents a theoretical background. The theory of the balance of power is introduced for understanding the power distribution present in the IOR. In addition, the concept of balance of threat illustrates the premise of India and Japan who see MSR as a threat in IOR. Furthermore, the fundamentals of the concept of soft balancing are presented, because the concept is applied in the empirical research for an analysis of the Indo-Japan strategic partnership. Chapter two describes the relevance of the Indian Ocean Region, presents the background of 'Maritime Silk Road' initiative, as well as highlighting the main concerns of India and Japan towards the initiative. The chapter further presents the key features of the Indo-Japan 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' and the objectives towards the IOR. Chapter three introduces the methodology of this study research and presents how the soft balancing concept is applied in analyzing the Indo-Japan SSGP. The chapter further provides the empirical findings and an analysis of the results of the research. The final chapter draws conclusions and arguing that the SSGP is only partly able to counterbalance Chinese influence in the IOR. While it has little effect on China itself and the implementation of BRI, it has greater potential for counterbalancing MSR. Furthermore, the author presents policy recommendations.

A case study design is employed, because it allows in-depth exploration and analysis that is necessary for developing an understanding of the potential of SSGP for counterbalancing China. Qualitative research is an "... inductive process of building from the data to broad themes of a generalized model or theory" (Punch 2005, through Creswell 2009), valuable for exploring complex issues or questions. The qualitative nature of case study research can help explore and explain the deeper complexities and meanings of a real-life situation; such as the intricacies of the Indo-Japan strategic partnership. Both primary and secondary sources are used for introducing the theory, presenting the background of the case and conducting the research. In terms of primary documents, official statements, as well as original government documents regarding the Indo-Japan strategic partnership are used. In terms of secondary sources, various articles, published papers, and book are used. Qualitative research allows the author to look at the wider picture and assess deeper connections between variables, helping to highlight important aspects of the case and draw meaningful conclusions. The methodology of the case study is introduced in detail in a later chapter.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. The theory of Balance of Power and Balance of Threat

The theory of the balance of power is a core element of International Relations and has had an essential role in shaping international politics. After the neorealist school of thought and Waltz's depiction of the theory of balance of power, the theory was further developed by Paul et al. (2004, 4-5) and can be understood as such: the balance of power theory presumes the international system to be anarchic with no single state or institution assigned a superior position. Since states are not equal regarding resources, means, capabilities, and their position within the system, the smaller and weaker states are constantly afraid of the rise of a hegemonic power who would want to dominate over others, posing a threat to their own freedom and possibly existence. Therefore, states are likely to try to balance against the dominant state in terms of power allocation, to prevent one state claiming overwhelming power over others (Ibid.). An equilibrium between nations is seen as a harmonious constellation, nations trying to capture power and overthrow the status quo are disturbing the stability of the system, thus the balancing of or against the rising power is needed to restore equilibrium (Morgenthau 1948, 125-126). States pursue the balance of power in the international system through either balancing or bandwagoning.

Balancing describes the choice of a state in how it conducts its foreign policy in order to match or enhance its own power in response to the dominating state (Tziampiris 2015, 8). Balancing can occur in two ways: first, through building up internal means and capabilities (e.g. military strength), or through the external balancing of building alliances with other states (Waltz 1979, 118). Bandwagoning happens when the weaker state forms an alliance with the dominating state due to its own inability to stand against the stronger state thus considering relative losses to outweigh the gains it may obtain during balancing. In this scenario, the weaker state aligns with the stronger state in order to get some incentives rather than suffer higher costs from opposing it (Mearsheimer 2001, 161-63).

Nowadays, the traditional theory of the balance of power which assumes the balancing of power to be an outcome through following a line of deep-rooted strategies of hard (e.g. military) approaches for balancing, does not suit a unipolar system, marked by the hegemonic status of the US. There are indications that the present unipolar system is challenged by other major powers and is moving towards a multipolar system. Nevertheless, the research and determination of the present state of the international system are not within the scope of this thesis as it does not affect the credibility of the theories used. Moreover, the theory of the balance of power has limitations in applicability as it can't explain all of the alignment choices states make (Table 1.1). Especially in terms of posed threat over power balance. Walt (1987) was the first to elaborate and introduce the theory of the balance of threat to help fill gaps in the balance of power theory.

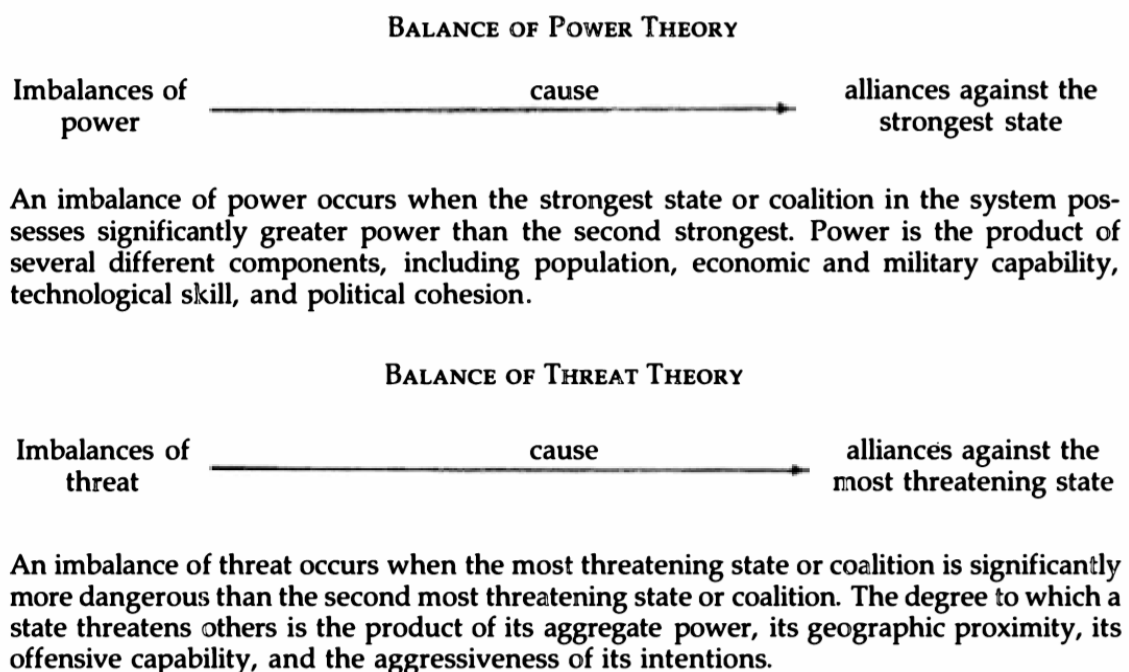


Figure 1.1. Balance of power versus balance of threat theory

Source: Walt (1987, 265).

Walt claims that the external balancing of states is rather determined by threats, while the power factor is simply part of the perceived threat calculation, meaning, that the states balance rather against the state posing the greatest threat although they may not necessarily possess most power (Walt 1987, 263-264). The indicators taken into account when measuring power include the economic and military capabilities, natural resources and population, to name a few; whereas the factors indicating the level of threat a state is facing include accumulated aggregate and offensive power, geographic proximity and aggressive intentions (Ibid., 22, 263). The balance of threat

theory further claims that states seek to balance against the threat, not the other state itself (Paul, et al. 2004, 8-9). Walt explains that in a situation of threat, states will either opt for forming alliances as an external balancing method to secure their position or increase internal capabilities to decrease vulnerabilities; he further states that alliances are primarily formed due to the presence of threat, rather than due to changes in the global balance of power (Walt 1987, 263-264). Since India and Japan perceive the spread of China’s influence through MSR in IOR as a threat, further explained in Chapter 2, relying on Paul and Walt it can be construed that the two are likely to want to form a counterbalancing alliance against the threat.

Discussing the balancing behaviour, Paul has highlighted three concepts of balancing: hard balancing, soft balancing and asymmetric balancing (Eds. Paul, et al. 2004, 2-3). Paul provides a contemporary understanding of the states’ behaviour and actions pursued towards a threat. As seen in Table 1.1. below, he gives a descriptive overview of the nature of rivalry according to each behavioural pattern as well as key strategies for the states to pursue in case of a threat. According to this, soft balancing is pursued when the rivalry is not zero sum and relative gains are not the top priority. The key strategies a state may pursue through soft balancing include limited arms buildup as a preventive measure (Ibid.). However, Table 1.1. presented by Paul does not give a full comprehension of what the essence of soft balancing is. Deeper knowledge on the concept is presented in the following sub-chapter.

Table 1.1. Balancing behaviour

	<i>Nature of Rivalry</i>	<i>Key Strategies</i>
<i>Hard Balancing</i>	Intense, open, often zero sum. Relative gains matter most.	Open arms buildup, formal alliances, or both.
<i>Soft Balancing</i>	Submerged, non-zero sum. Relative gains of limited concern for now.	Limited arms buildup. Informal, tacit, or ad hoc security understandings among affected states, within or outside of international institutions. Preventive strategy.
<i>Asymmetric Balancing</i>	By state or non-state actors (e.g. terrorists). Rivalry intense, although latter are elusive actors.	Non-state actors and their state sponsors pursue asymmetric strategies; state actors follow mixture of traditional and non-traditional strategies to counter threat.

Source: Eds. Paul, et al. (2004, 13).

1.2. The theory of Soft Balancing

The concept of **soft balancing** emerged around the mid-2000s when the United States obtained a status of a single superpower; and the second-tier countries, regardless of growing their materialistic capabilities, were unable to challenge the US hegemony nor could they balance against it. This new theory has received a considerable amount of attention by many authors such as Brooks and Wohlforth (2005), Kelley (2005), Paul (2005), Pape (2005), Lieber and Alexander (2005), Walt (2005), He and Feng (2008), Howorth and Menon (2009), Saltzman (2010), Ferguson (2012), He (2012), and Kucharski (2012) (Datta 2014, 37). One of the most prominent figures in developing the theory is Pape (2005). He describes a situation where an individual state cannot balance against the superpower due to a fear of not enough states willing to form an effective coalition in a short time or the unipolar leader would try to prevent this balancing from happening using harsh treatment, thus preventing the act of hard balancing against the unipolar leader. The theory suggests that the states facing challenges pursuing hard balancing will instead use soft strategies to balance the unipolar world (Pape 2005, 16-17). Pape emphasizes that soft balancing takes place by using non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive state's unilateral action, also adding that soft balancing does not completely balance the power (Ibid., 10). He further describes the **four tools of soft balancing**:

- 1) **territorial denial**, which refers to denying territorial access to an aggressor state as that can decrease the chances for the state to gain superiority and restrict the overall force the stronger state can carry to stand against the weaker states;
- 2) **entangling diplomacy**, which illustrates that states may use international organizations as an ad hoc tool for diplomatic relations to postpone the chances of a superior state dominating the weaker ones since the strong state cannot completely neglect the rules of the significant international organization or pursue the diplomatic practice independently;
- 3) **economic strengthening**, which indicates that a strong and thriving economy has a vital role in enhancing the military capabilities of the superior state, thus, the creation of a regional block for strengthening economic ties between its members while at the same time excluding the hegemonic state will shift the economic balance in favour of the weaker states, especially in the long run;
- 4) **signaling of resolve to participate in a balancing coalition**, which means that states who want to balance the superior state, will have to express commitment for their collective action and build trust by believing the others' willingness to cooperate for the intention of balancing. (Ibid., 36-37)

However, Ferguson (2012, 206-207) added a few more mechanisms by calling them soft assets. These assets are considered as acceptance of alternative normative doctrines, e.g. generating competing NGOs and launching regional institutions that reject outside or antagonistic actors. Therefore, the soft balancing is all in the opposite of traditional hard balancing which has a more normative approach or mechanism for balancing the power in the unipolar world (Ibid.).

There are three preconditions for soft balancing outlined by Paul (2005, 59):

- 1) the hegemon's power position and military behaviour are of growing concern but do not yet pose a serious challenge to the sovereignty of the second-tier powers;
- 2) the dominant state is a major source of public goods in both the economic and security areas that cannot simply be replaced;
- 3) the dominant state cannot easily retaliate either because the balancing efforts of others are not overt [obvious] or because they do not directly challenge its power position with military means.

While soft balancing is considered a realistic approach of balancing for the twenty-first century, it attracts some criticism. The absence of economic and regional security concerns, policy disputes, and domestic political incentives make the theory more limited and do not give a clear image of balancing. For Clark, the word balancing in soft balancing is confusing due to its normative mechanism, according to him, if the theory does not balance the power properly and it is only an approach not an action to hinder or deteriorate the hegemon, it's far from actually balancing (Clark 2011, 282-83). Consequently, there is confusion between non-cooperation and balancing in the theory. Economic strengthening as a measure to balance fails to justify its position in soft balancing because if economic strengthening is balancing then it can be concluded that all the states try to balance each other all the time (Mowle, Sacko 2007, 66-67). Moreover, neoliberal writers raise criticism over the absence of domestic level forces in inter-state relations (Datta 2014, 42).

However, there are underlying restrictions which don't let India and Japan perceive each other as a suitable ally. For example, Japan has constitutional constraints which don't allow it to become a military power and India desires to be free from any alliance (Leake 2014, 50-51). Moreover, the interdependence (e.g. economic, military) of India and Japan with China make it less likely for them to want to form an alliance against China as their alliance would not provide them with similar benefits and strengths as their interdependent relation with China does (Basrur and Kutty 2018a, 5-6). Thus, India and Japan don't want to follow a hard-line approach towards China which

would call for forming an alliance. Therefore, the SSGP can be viewed as an instrument for balancing through soft measures with limited security cooperation as it allows both internal and external balancing.

In the Indo-Japan case, China matches the preconditions presented by Paul (2005). Although the author talks about the unipolar world through an example of the US, from a regional perspective of Asia, China can be given a similar role. China is the second largest economy and has the second largest military spending in the world, entitling it regional superpower characteristics as it has the capacity to project its dominating influence and power onto the IOR. In the context of Asia, China represents the economic and military hegemony that no other regional state alone can match, when not discussing the US. Explaining why Asian countries, India and Japan among them, are cautious of China's actions and perceiving the threat of its actions rather high as they cannot be certain whether the actions are taken to gain more power or not. Even together India and Japan cannot easily match the military and economic capabilities of China, e.g. to build naval bases and trade ports in various other states; thus, soft balancing tactics are easier to carry out than a full hard balancing approach. As per point 1 of preconditions, China's military behaviour in the ESC and SCS, as well as increased naval and PLA presence in the IOR have become concerning to India and Japan as they perceive China's actions threatening, at the same time they don't see it as a directed threat towards their own sovereignty. As per point 2, China is the largest import partner for both India and Japan, without whom their economies would suffer huge losses. Therefore, China's economic importance to Indo-Japan is not easily replaceable. Finally, as per point 3, China cannot be sure whether Indo-Japan SSGP is directly targeted at its own actions or initiatives, because there are no hard-balancing actions taken, China has no reasons to react or pursue any countermeasures.

2. THE GROWING CONCERNS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION AND AN INTRODUCTION OF SSGP

The Indian Ocean plays a significant role in shaping Asia's economic growth and prosperity as it serves as one of the largest economic trade routes and essential sea line of communication (SLOC) for Asia. Around 80% of the world's sea-borne trade in oil passes through it and there are vast reserves of natural gas resources present. (McClam 2016, 63). Moreover, half of the world's container traffic and one-third of cargo trade passes through the Indian Ocean, which makes it one of the world's busiest trade routes (Roy-Chaudhury 2018, 99).

India is extremely reliant on the Indian Ocean for trade and energy transport as its rapid economic growth demands more energy. 42% of India's GDP is accumulated by trade through the Indian Ocean, reflecting the economic importance of IOR for India; additionally, 90% of India's foreign trade by volume and 70% in terms of value is sea-borne. (Roy-Chaudhury 2018, 99). Other major Asian economies such as China and Japan are also depending on trade through the Indian Ocean. Around 80% of Chinese oil imports (Upadhyaya 2017, 63) and 40% of its exports to the Middle East and North Africa (Bajpae 2015, 128) pass through there. China, being the second largest economy and energy consumer, in order to guarantee its sustained growth, experiences rising demand to gain access to the Indian Ocean trading routes and securing the SLOC for maritime trade for the supply of raw materials and access to new global markets (Upadhyaya 2017, 64). China's strategic vulnerability can be identified at the maritime checkpoints where China has to deal with territorial waters and laws. Chinese former president Hu Jintao first expressed the term "Malacca Dilemma", describing a situation where half of the Chinese oil passed through a narrow Malacca Strait and created many concerns of military blockades, control of navigation, terrorism, and piracy (Len 2017, 43-44). This led China to create a more self-reliant maritime route and waterways to be more independent and eliminate the strategic maritime vulnerability.

Although China has been actively increasing its presence in the IOR, the historic turn came in 2013 when president Xi Jinping initiated the idea of China's new vision of "One Belt One Road" (OBOR), which in 2016 officially became the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) (Van Alphen 2015,

1-3). The BRI which consists of a land-based “Silk Road Economic Belt” (SREB) and an ocean route of the 21st century “Maritime Silk Road” (MSR) (Figure 2) is a grand development strategy for the connectivity and cooperation among Eurasian countries. According to an official BRI vision document, there are five major goals: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people connection (Vision and Actions ... 2015) between Asia, North Africa, and Europe.

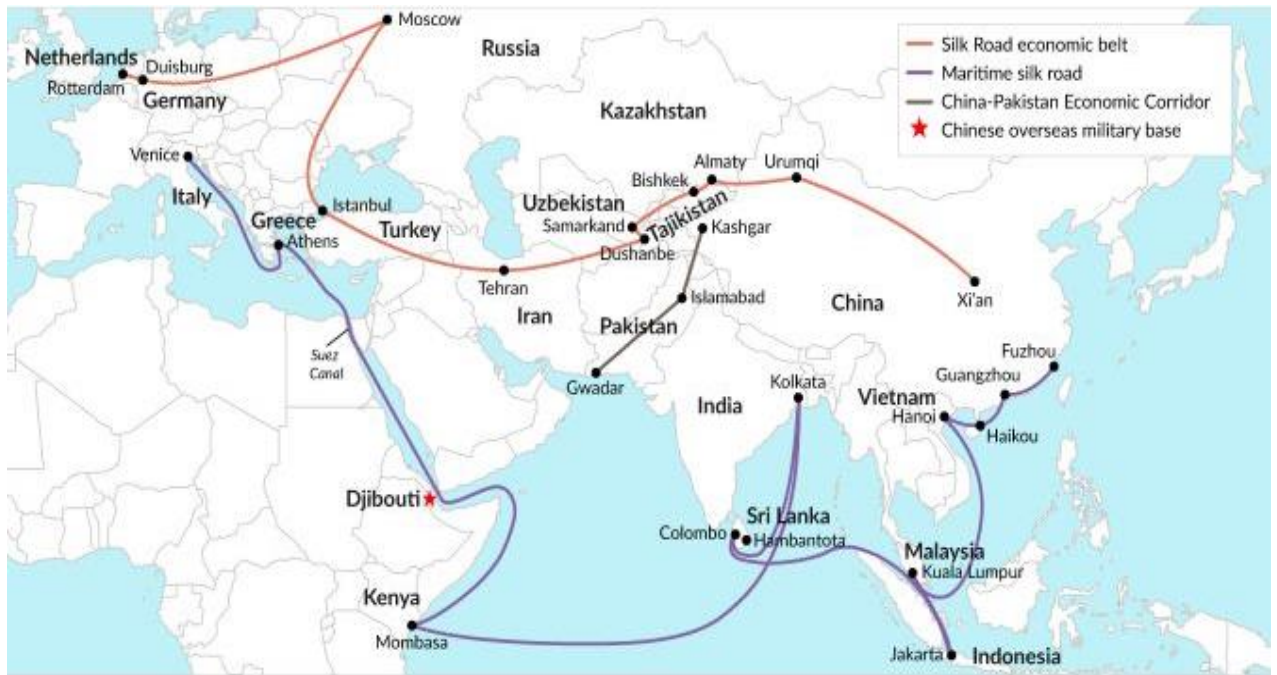


Figure 2. Map of the Belt and Road Initiative

Source: Geopolitical Intelligence Services

The main goals of “Maritime Silk Road” initiative include building port infrastructure, smoothing land-water transportation, and advancing the cooperation among the MSR participatory nations. It also encourages expanding the sea route and enhancing the information technology and cooperation in maritime logistic (Vision and Actions... 2015). Under the MSR initiative, China is investing US\$ 1 trillion by providing loans to countries involved (Weerasinghe 2018). In addition, it has pledged to invest US\$ 40 billion in infrastructure developments in the IOR (Albert 2016).

Over the years, the MSR initiative has gotten positive responses from various IOR countries and the process of ports construction, expansion and operation has begun in many locations within the IOR, such as Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota, and Colombo in Sri Lanka, Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, Sonadia in Bangladesh and many others in Maldives, Tanzania, and Kenya (Brewster 2017, 277).

The named initiative also provides the opportunity for feasible trade agreements among signatory nations (Ibid., 280). Two economic corridors are part of MSR: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor (Vision and Actions... 2015).

Liu and Dunford (2016) give examples of positive traits talking about the open and inclusive model of cooperative economic, political and cultural exchanges through BRI and MSR. Jin (2018) highlights the sustainable development of these initiatives. Other authors like Chen (2016) and Palit (2017) restrict themselves to bringing out only key economic features of these initiatives. Blanchard and Flint (2017) make the MSR initiative more interesting by illustrating its peaceful collaborations to economic development from a political-economic approach. Although China and many pro-MSR and BRI scholars bring out the economic and development benefits of it, the security viewpoint is missing. Moreover, there are many other scholars who perceive MSR as a regional threat for India and Japan in terms of economy, geopolitics, and security.

Various scholars view MSR as a threat to India's role in the region. Increasing People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Naval presence in the Indian Ocean worries India from the security position as India sees Chinese constructed ports in the Indian Ocean as a security threat; they could be used for both economic and military purposes (Blah 2018, 318). The docking of a Chinese nuclear submarine in a Chinese state-run port in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2014 despite the warning from the National Security Advisor of India to Sri Lankan Defence Secretary (Rupasinghe 2014) and a deployment of a submarines sailing through the Arabian Sea to Karachi, Pakistan in 2015 (Krishnan 2015) have increased the fears of Indian authorities. Separately from these economic ports, China inaugurated its first foreign military base in Djibouti in 2017 and has also come to an agreement with Pakistan to establish a military (joint naval and air) base in Jiwani (Blah 2018, 318-319), not far from Gwadar port. In addition, Maldives is another option China is looking to build military assets. This increasing military presence of PLA in the Indian Ocean further challenges the Indian security role in the region.

On the other hand, China clarifies that docking submarine is part of a routine port call, not a power projection (Tao 2014), further arguing that it will use its ports with limited military purpose as its main aim is to protect its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean; still, many see it as a step for expanding its strategic hegemony in the region (Pattanaik 2016, 132). Brewster (2017, 277) presents a "String of Pearls" strategy which follows China's motive-building chain of naval bases to protect its

SLOCs, dominating the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, in 2015, China introduced its first ever Defense White Paper, where it clearly indicates plans to develop a modern maritime military force structure with the purpose of protecting the security of strategic SLOCs and its national and overseas interests (China's Military Strategy 2015).

CPEC is another major concern for India due to its complicated relations with Pakistan and China's high involvement with its neighbour creates suspicion for India. It is one of the most ambitious construction projects among all BRI initiative and by 2017 its investment had increased to US\$62 billion (Garlick 2018, 519). CPEC which connects Gwadar, Pakistan with China's north-western Xinjiang region goes through the disputed Pakistani Occupied Kashmir region, alarming India; and PLA's presence for the safety of its workers in the region further creates insecurities for India (Blah 2018, 318–19).

Even if the Chinese main interest is to protect its SLOCs with its increased presence in the IOR, it creates economic insecurities for India and other major economies in Asia. By protecting its SLOCs, China will try to restrict other maritime trade routes by giving them a hard time in Freedom of navigation and the right to pass (Brewster 2017, 278). The threat to India's economy is not only limited to SLOCs. The involvement of Chinese companies and workers in ports construction and other projects in IOR littoral nations takes India out of competition of being economically involved in such projects – Indian businesses cannot participate in such projects due to Chinese ownership of the projects (Palit 2017, 298). Since China is highly efficient and competitive, it is more likely that Chinese companies will be involved in executing the projects rather than any others (Ibid.). Additionally, there is a high doubt of transparency in Chinese investments in BRI and MSR plans since there's no clear picture of opportunities for other firms' involvement in these projects (Bulckaert 2018). Therefore, equal opportunities to be able to compete fairly along with Chinese firms in participating in MSR projects is likely to be limited for India and other littoral nations. Lastly, the Free Trade Agreement under MSR with signatory nations could further hurt the Indian economy.

Under BRI and MSR, 23 countries out of 65 signatories are currently identified as vulnerable to debt distress and 8 countries are to be in the near future; several of them are littoral IOR nations (Hurley, et al. 2018, 6). China, instead of acknowledging the debt vulnerability, is still proceeding to give loans and invest in these countries with minimum economic conditions. With its loan granting and investments, China is taking the economic and political leverage of these countries.

For instance, Hambantota port in Sri Lanka is given on lease to China for 99 years due to Sri Lanka's inability to pay back loans and in return (Chellaney 2017) and Gwadar port in Pakistan, which was given on lease to a Chinese state-run company for 40 years (PTI 2017). The fear of India can be described as China's economic colonization of the region. The expansion of MSR projects in IOR and China's involvement with the littoral countries not only creates economic instability for India but also political strain by interfering in bilateral affairs through economic wooing of domestic corrupt politicians and supporting the pro-Chinese regime. Domestic political instability was a result in the Maldives, where the foreign debt to China is very high, as the former pro-Chinese president ordered an arrest of the judges and leaders of an opposition party who were criticizing the Chinese debt trapping investment in the country (Mohan 2018). Mass protests of land procurement by China under MSR initiative left Myanmar and Sri Lanka politically paralyzed and further became the reason of collapsing of Sri Lankan government (Ibid.). Therefore, the biggest concern of India is seeing China destabilizing IOR economically and politically to gain strategic advantage and taking dominance over the Indian Ocean.

Japan's concerns over MSR in the IOR are similarly to India's related to maritime security, geopolitical reservations, and economic rivalry. In 2012, the Sino-Japan relations flopped to a historical low point over the East China Sea (ECS) dispute (Zongyou 2017, 174). In 2015, China built artificial islands to intensify its claim over South China Sea (SCS), the construction was in addition to civilian, also for military purposes (Cruz De Castro 2017, 213). Chinese assertive behavior to intensify its maritime power by increasing its influence in East and South China Sea creates nervousness for Japan as Tokyo sees it as Chinese exertion to change the status quo of the region (Ibid., 211).

Japan is highly dependent on its SLOCs for international trade and energy transport; around 80% of its energy comes through SCS via the Indian Ocean (Ghosh 2017, 1-2). China remaining unbalanced in SCS creates a strong apprehension for both India and Japan that this ongoing confrontation in SCS can spill over into the IOR as well. Prime Minister Abe's speech at an international conference on African development in 2016 gives the hint of wariness of Japanese authorities, as he directly talks about the importance of sea lanes and peace and security of the Indian Ocean (Address by Prime Minister Abe 2016). As China creates a strong chain of commercial ports in the IOR and establishes strong Sino-centric relations with IOR littoral nations through MSR, it won't be hesitant to confront anyone to secure its own SLOCs by using commercial ports for military operations (Len 2017, 51). Furthermore, according to Mr. Tanaka,

a member of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, China's actions of showing its maritime power in the Indian Ocean through MSR have become a huge concern for Japan (Bennett 2017).

Japan additionally sees negative economic implications of Chinese MSR in IOR as investments expansion takes ground. For instance, securitization of SLOCs will greatly affect the maritime traffic for Japan; as an island nation, Japan is heavily dependent on sea route trade, also due to its own resource deficiency (Panda n.d.). Thus, any maritime disruption might lead to problems resulting in very high economic costs. Reflecting on the experience of SCS, Japan's freedom of navigation in the IOR could be affected. In addition, the establishment of MSR has pushed the China-Japan economic rivalry forward. Investments for constructing the infrastructure in the region and the creation of AIIB have presented a substantial impact on the Asian Development Bank (ADB), of which Japan holds the largest share (Yoshimatsu 2018, 722–24). The massive geographical expansion and financial capacity of the proposed initiatives of MSR give China an advantage to win the infrastructure projects over Japan (Ibid., 731). However, in 2017, due to strong pressure from some Japanese businesses, Japan attended the BRI Forum. Prime minister Abe expressed willingness for consideration about Japan joining BRI and AIIB under several conditions. Nevertheless, the doubts on transparency and bilateral nature of BRI initiatives remains, as the economic viability of indebted nations – so they wouldn't fall into debt trap – is not actively considered. (Japan and "One Belt, One Road" 2017)

Japan, like India, has also concerns regarding geopolitical ramifications of MSR. While China seeks to establish friendly and Sino-centric ties with IOR nations by investing in infrastructure (Shabir 2018), the pro-Chinese attitudes of certain littoral nations could turn bilateral relations with Japan complicated and non-friendly. Chinese economic support also extends to undemocratic and corrupt regimes making them less likely to be suitable investment opportunities for Japan; therefore, giving rise to autocracies and non-democratic strategies. The weakening of the democratic set up in the IOR might harm the Japanese geopolitical and security interests. In sum, both India and Japan have reservations regarding MSR in the IOR. While the security is of top worries, the economic and geopolitical concerns have significance too.

2.1. India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership (SSGP) – a possible measure for counterbalancing?

The relations between India and Japan are deeply rooted, going back to the time of Buddha and his birthplace in India. After the Second World War, the newly independent India signed its first Peace Treaty with Japan in 1952 and actively supported Japan's entry into the United Nations (UN) (Joshi 2013, 118). During the Cold War, the relations were not warm as both nations chose to be on the different side. After the Cold War ended, both states engaged again in forming closer relations with the emergence of India's "Look East" policy – focused on forming close ties with East Asian countries (Eds. Basrur, Kutty 2018, 3). However, India's nuclear test in 1998 strained the ties, resulting in Japan implementing economic sanctions, following the US (Ibid.).

In 2001, after lifting the sanctions, the first ever bilateral security dialogue was held between the two countries (Joshi 2013, 127), and after five years, in 2006, the term "Strategic and Global Partnership" came into existence, which focused on regional peace and stability by establishing closer economic, diplomatic and political ties, while also creating effective defence ties (Joint Statement 2006). Furthermore, an annual summit meeting procedure for the two top leaders was created, institutionalizing the dialogue between foreign ministers of both countries (Joshi 2013, 127). However, the lifting of sanctions and the pursuit of the strategic partnership was incited by two influencing factors: the US and China. In one hand, Japan's relations with India can be compared with the US's relations with India. After the US lifted its sanctions on India, Japan did the same and when the US started to form closer relations with India, Japan also felt the urge to do so, following the example of a like-minded democracy (Ibid., 129-131) and a close ally. On the other hand, the increasing Chinese influence in the region was a topic of concern for both nations even back then. The mentioning of China in Japan's "Defense White Paper" in 2000 and the adoption of new "National Defense Program Guidelines" titling China as a security concern in 2005 (Ibid., 119), as well as the Chinese increased forming of relations with India's neighbouring states and its modernizations of the China-India border (Ibid., 123), raised stakes for both countries to come closer. The partnership was taken further with the inclusion of Japan in India-US Malabar Naval exercise (Joint Statement 2007). In the same year, Mr. Abe visited India for an annual summit meeting and gave a speech on "Confluence of Two Seas", where he emphasized the importance of the Indian and the Pacific Oceans and their security (Speech by Prime Minister Abe 2007). Further joint statements on "Advancement of Strategic and Global Partnership" and on "Security Cooperation between India and Japan" in 2008, "The Action Plan to advance Security

Cooperation based on the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India” in 2009, and the first India-Japan Bilateral Exercise off the coast of Japan in 2012 also kept the Partnership flourishing even after the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) briefly came to power and Mr. Abe was no longer the Prime Minister (Joshi 2013, 128).

The return of Mr. Abe as a Prime Minister of Japan and the rise of Mr. Modi assuming the position of Prime Minister of India have taken the partnership to new heights as India and Japan coined a term called “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” (SSGP) in 2014. In their meeting, both leaders announced the beginning of the new era of India-Japan Relations with the Tokyo declaration of SSGP (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014). Under this declaration, many key initiatives were discussed to create a more advanced and comprehensive partnership. Some of the important key features are:

- Political, Defence and Security Partnership: under this, both leaders have decided to enhance the political as well as the strategic dialogue between the two nations. They further emphasize strengthening the defence and security ties and possible purchasing of defence equipment in near future. (Ibid., 1-2)
- Global Partnership for Peace and Security in the Region and the World: while both leaders stressed the agenda of stronger partnership leading to a stronger engagement of both nations in regional and world peace stability, they also show the intention to engage in the social and economic development of the region. Moreover, maritime security, the Iran nuclear deal, Afghanistan economic-led development, and UN reform are some important issues discussed under the initiative. (Ibid., 3-4)
- Partnership for Prosperity: under this initiative, Japan and India issue the “Japan-India Investment Promotion Partnership” which is to increase the investment including Foreign Direct Investment(FDI) and Overseas Development Fund (ODF) for economic, social and infrastructure development in India and the region. Furthermore, the energy issues are also a key focus under it. (Ibid., 5-7)
- Exploring Science, Inspiring Innovation, Developing Technology, Connecting People: understanding and collaborating in science and technology, developing skills and education, and people-to-people interactions for mutual understanding are some of the key features under the initiative. In addition, Leading for the Future initiative to create a strong partnership for future success in areas of Civil Nuclear Energy, Non-proliferation and Export Control is also highlighted as a feature of Tokyo declaration. (Ibid., 2-9)

India and Japan have emphasized their commitment to freedom of navigation, peaceful settlement of disputes within the international laws (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014). This statement can be seen as a result of China's involvement in sea disputes with Japan and its growing influence in IOR. Following the annual summit meeting of SSGP in 2015, a future vision of the partnership is described by Japan and India Vision 2025. In this vision document, both parties have concluded their future aims for investing in economic and social development, fostering the peace and stability in the region and building deeper, an action-oriented partnership for strong bilateral ties (Joint Statement 2015). Thus, the vision document can be viewed as an outlined framework of SSGP for the next seven years in specific areas to promote and improve their partnership. The latest summit meeting between India and Japan was held in October 2018, where both Tokyo and New Delhi put forward more agreements and initiatives to work together for the development of economic and security areas (Japan-India Summit Meeting 2018).

In sum, although Indo-Japan relations have been influenced by the US, the China factor has proven to be a greater influence for the emergence of closer relations between India and Japan and the development of SSGP. The declining role of US in the region and the growing connections and presence of China thus encourage the two major players to form an ever tighter and effective partnership to help keep China in check (Pant and Joshi 2016, 84). Both India and Japan see each other as a potential partner and the current geopolitical, economic and strategic scenario of MSR expansion in the IOR urges them to come closer and enhance their partnership to a new level. Over the course of four years of SSGP, India and Japan have set various economic, security, development, geopolitical and social aims through respective agreements and taken steps toward a closer strategic and global partnership.

3. IS INDO-JAPAN SSGP EFFECTIVE FOR COUNTERBALANCING CHINA?

3.1. Methodology of the case study

Before moving onto answering this question, first, an introduction of the research method is presented. A case study is an intensive, in-depth study of a situation, phenomenon or event, based on variables or units present, with a purpose of forming a comprehensive picture of the case. This thesis focuses on states as the single variables, researching the interactions and intricacies of engagement as situations of relevance. A case study can be used effectively for studying and understanding interactions between a specific context and a phenomenon, as Yin defines this: "... an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin 1994). Therefore, thanks to its flexibility and versatility, to better understand the underlying factors and complexity of the Indo-Japan SSGP as a possible tool for counterbalancing China's influence in IOR, conducting a case study allows an in-depth research of the presented problem (the phenomenon), to help draw relevant conclusions and construct as complete of a picture of the real-life situation (the context) as possible. However, the case study research also holds certain limitations that the author needs to bare in mind. For example, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) point out the biasness of the author in interpreting and conveying data or when presenting the results as it can affect the research findings and conclusions; therefore, the author needs to remain as objective and true to unbiased interpretation of the found data as possible. They further add that generalizations in a wider context can be difficult, because the case study is actor and context specific, thus the compatibility with other actors and situations to repeat the case study and have similar results can prove to be difficult and inconclusive (Ibid.); this means that even researching the same phenomenon within a slightly different context, using other variables, can present differing results. Therefore, the author is presenting a disclaimer that this research is conclusive to the data and variables used and the use of different data can lead to other conclusions.

The data is collected using primary and secondary sources. In terms of primary documents, official statements (by the leaders, by the foreign ministries, etc.), as well as original government

documents (joint statements, vision documents, etc.) regarding the Indo-Japan strategic partnership are used. These are important for investigating the true purpose of the SSGP and its initiatives, as well as understanding the official regard to the strategic partnership and perception towards its actions. In terms of secondary sources, various journal and media articles, published papers, and books are used. The use of secondary sources coexisting of other authors' opinions and evaluations is necessary for the purpose of justification or criticism of particular claims following the analysis of data and to provide deeper content validity for statements. Purposive sampling method in selecting the sources is used to constrain the size of the research and collected data. The sample consists of actions connected to economics, geopolitics and security that India and Japan have carried out under the frame of SSGP. The sample building starts first with the main primary source connected to the SSGP, the Tokyo Declaration (2014), to narrow down the proposed actions in the areas of economics, geopolitics and security. Next, various actions expressed in other primary sources are gathered and structured under the sample categories. Further specific actions connected to the purposive statements made in official documents are found from secondary sources and therefore also included. To keep a level of objectiveness in gathering the secondary data, the sources are selected in random purpose, based on media and academic literature search of the Indo-Japan cooperation in areas of economics, geopolitics and security. A total of 35 sources were used for identifying a sample of relevant actions.

For the analysis, the tools and outcomes of soft balancing are applied to measure whether SSGP can be considered effective for counterbalancing China and MRS in IOR. The three outcomes of soft balancing are to **undermine**, **frustrate** and **delay** an aggressive state's unilateral action. To undermine refers to a situation that is causing something to become weaker or making someone less powerful, less confident, or less likely to succeed (Cambridge Dictionary); to frustrate means to hinder someone's confidence or annoy them because of constraints preventing them from completing their task or goal (Ibid.); to delay signifies causing something to prolong and happen later than planned (Ibid.). These outcomes are taken as means of measure to evaluate whether the SSGP has been able to undermine, frustrate and delay China's actions through MSR in the IOR effectively. The soft balancing tools by which these outcomes can be reached are **territorial denial**, **entangling diplomacy**, **economic strengthening**, and **signaling of resolve to participate in a balancing coalition**, as well as **limited security cooperation**. These tools are taken as themes under which the data gathered from the actions is grouped. Then the themes are inductively analyzed in respect of the means of measurement to determine, how effective has Indo-Japan SSGP been in counterbalancing China.

3.2. Research results and analysis

To begin with, a total of 13 actions expressed by India and Japan under the SSGP umbrella or connected to their strategic partnership are identified using different official government statements as well as information from various academic and media sources. These actions are grouped under respective themes of territorial denial, entangling diplomacy, economic strengthening, signaling resolve to participate in a balancing coalition, and limited security cooperation, to establish, under which theme the actions were performing. Furthermore, the means of measure are applied to each of them to evaluate whether they undermine, frustrate or delay China's initiative, determining whether the SSGP can effectively help counterbalance China and MSR in the IOR or not. Next, the main results of this research are presented with an analysis of their effectiveness.

3.2.1. Territorial denial and its effectiveness

Firstly, there are a few preconditions that precede the SSGP but are important to be discussed here as they are the foundation for India's actions of territorial denial towards China. Since the launch of BRI and MSR in 2013, India has not endorsed or formally announced any intent to join China's initiatives. China has officially invited India to join MSR on many occasions, however, unsuccessfully. In 2017, the Belt and Road Forum Summit was held in Beijing and while delegations and leaders from all over the world joined the meeting, India decided to boycott the summit, despite China's formal invitation (Park, Singh 2017). Within the plans of the MSR initiative, the Indian port of Kolkata was presented as a proposed sea route. However, due to apprehension, India never agreed to the terms; India has doubts about mutual benefits, sovereignty and equal opportunities for participation. In addition, India has drawn back from the BCIM Economic Corridor which would connect China with Kolkata port. The BCIM was officially proposed in 1999 for regional connectivity among these nations (Sajjanhar 2016, 1), but has witnessed stagnation from the Indian side since 2013 when it became part of the BRI projects (Yao, He 2018). India has chosen to exclude itself from all China's plans, demonstrating a clear territorial denial by not allowing China access to its ports and land. This way, China cannot use Indian territory for its unilateral action and benefits, further assuring India's commitment to boycott Chinese access to its territory through MSR or BRI related initiatives, solidifying its territorial denial intentions.

No BRI or MSR related projects have intended to pass through the areas belonging to Japan nor has China established any naval or commercial bases within Japanese territory, assuring Japan's territorial denial against China from the beginning. Additionally, Japan does not endorse the MSR or any Chinese expansions with commercial and military bases in IOR, supporting the stronghold of India on this matter, criticizing China's motives due to its own territorial disputes with China. Japan attending the BRI summit in 2017 can be interpreted by some as a possible change in Japanese negative attitudes towards BRI and MSR (Sano 2018), nevertheless, considering Japan's concerns of transparency, sovereignty, and fair loan arrangements for debt nations, it is not likely for Japan to follow China or open access to its territory.

Following the research, this thesis has valid grounds to reflect that firstly, territorial denial can be used as a tool against any unilateral action taken by the aggressor state for stated outcomes of soft balancing (undermining, frustrating, delaying) against its actions of expanding its hegemony: the purpose of India to impose territorial denial is to undermine, frustrate and delay the expansion of MSR as by denying territorial access to China, the latter cannot fully enforce its proposed routes or has to change them; and secondly, the imminent threat can increase the need and want for imposing or continuing the territorial denial: the possible dual purpose of ports allowing them to be used additionally for military purposes whenever China would see necessary, gives grounds for concerns for India as the proximity of some of the ports is very close, thus, influencing the irrevocable enforcement of territorial denial towards China. In addition, Japan sharing India's concerns in IOR supports its strategic partner within its means.

Although India's intent in denying China access is for the purpose of undermining its plans and initiatives, it is concluded that it does not undermine the MSR in the sense of making it weaker or prohibiting its success even if it doesn't pass through the Indian territory. Firstly, China has already demonstrated its presence in the IOR through well-established relations with various Indian neighbouring littoral countries (i.e. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives) and this in itself provides China with a relative advantage for IOR territorial use, because China has access to ports and waterways around the territory of India. Secondly, although there are two major projects under BRI and MSR which were proposed to go through the Indian territory and may thus experience a moment of stagnation, this does not weaken the Chinese initiatives overall because there are dozens of other projects already in progress.

India not attending the BRI Summit additionally does not prove to frustrate China. The Summit turned out to be one of the biggest summits, with more than 100 participating delegations and national representatives from all over the world, including India's trusted partner, Japan. Therefore, missing one country did not jeopardize the overall agenda. Beijing's calmness over India's boycott was reflected in the Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement specifying that the BRI and CPEC's motives of mutual cooperation and benefits are not targeted to harm any third party, assuring that everyone is welcome to participate (Hua 2017). The same tone is expressed by the Chinese consulate in India, emphasizing the shared interests and mutual benefits of BRI for both nations (Ma 2017). No direct or indirect criticism towards India for not attending the meeting was expressed in any of the researched statements. This supports the conclusion that India's actions have not frustrated or shaken China's confidence in BRI and MSR.

In terms of India not approving the proposed project including the Kolkata port, this action may impose some delaying effect as India's decision would call for China to change its original proposed route and the project. The study concludes that the effect of prolonging is not extensive as the initiative has gained positive and supportive attitudes from other IOR nations (i.e. Bangladesh and Myanmar) and thus will not cause many constraints for China to implement it.

3.2.2. Entangling diplomacy and economic strengthening and their effectiveness

The entangling diplomacy and economic strengthening are two major categories where India and Japan are working hard together for the purpose of counterbalancing China. The areas of cooperation are supported through their commitment to the SSGP. First, India and Japan use international organizations as a medium to help them push each other's agendas forward. They both support a reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in increasing the numbers of Permanent Members through G4 nations along with Brazil and Germany; Japan seeks a permanent seat because it is one of the biggest aid donors to the UN, while India has a long history of contributions to the UN peacekeeping forces (Kaura 2016, 29). Although the two nations have been individually demanding restructuring of UNSC since the creation of G4, the forming of SSGP under the Tokyo Declaration, has given India and Japan a shared voice to state their concerns over the reforming issue (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014), showing strong support for each other's bid (Joint Statement 2017). By helping each other and reforming the UNSC, they want to break down the Chinese traditional hegemony as the only Asian Permanent Member nation among all P5 in the security council and its power of veto, which India and Japan see used as a leverage to oppose their bids. The thesis finds that SSGP has provided India and Japan with a platform for enhanced

opportunities for discussion and support as the scope of the strategic partnership widens. Supporting each other's bids within the international organizations and pushing forward each other's potential shows mutual trust and strength. This confident attitude of the two is what builds reservations of China and challenge its "comfortable" position within the international organizations.

As a second example of entangling diplomacy, Japan is helping India with its bid to join the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). Despite China opposing this, India is pushing on to become a member as it has already entered the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement (Press Trust of India 2018). Joining NSG would give India an opportunity for technological advancements, so in the future, it could become involved in nuclear commerce trade along with China and Japan. Japan supports India's membership with an intention for better cooperation with India over nuclear issues, according to the SSGP statement (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014). Furthermore, in 2016, Japan and India signed a civil nuclear deal under SSGP (India, Japan... 2017). This agreement is a first of its kind Japan has made with a country that is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The agreement is strongly going to favor both: India is the third largest importer of crude oil and selecting nuclear energy as a cheaper and cleaner alternative to it can help it cover its growing energy needs, profiting economically and technologically, additionally cutting its dependency on ocean trade for crude oil; and Japan would get a large market for exporting its nuclear technology and plants to. In addition, India could build more energy cooperation with other major nuclear suppliers, like the US and France, to break the Chinese monopoly of being Asia's major supplier. Recently, other members of NSG expressed their desire to find alternative ways for India's entry (Samanta 2018). The statement in itself does not help India and Japan undermine China, yet. However, if the advocacy of India becoming a member of NSG succeeds despite the objections from China, it will be a clear move for undermining, as it would make China's weight in decisions hold a weaker degree of significance. From the perspective of frustrating, the research has not recorded any response or opinion to the recent declaration. Despite this, continuing with the perspective of "what if" India is granted access, overriding China, the frustration of the latter would not go unnoticed. The consequences of other members overstepping China's say could end up with counterreaction from China, for example, convincing them to also allow the entrance of Pakistan. Today, none of the "what if's" have taken place and China enjoys its authoritative position both within the UNSC and the NSG. It does not display any levels of undermining, frustration or delay according to the data gathered. Even though these examples of entangling diplomacy within international organizations did not

exhibit effective counterbalancing by India and Japan against China, it represented their commitment to pursue their bid and continue building stronger cooperation through SSGP. Although, India and Japan stands alone some of the important organisations, for example, India and Japan has steel import tariffs dispute in World Trade Organisation and they don't have much bonding in International Monetary Fund, therefore, these are some of the areas where India Japan lack of understanding.

Multilateral cooperation is another area where India and Japan are working together to challenge China in the IOR. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between the United States, Australia, India, and Japan is an informal security dialogue group. The Quad was initially launched by Prime Minister Abe in 2007, but after Australia pulled out of the group it discontinued until 2017 when the representatives from all four nations met for a Quad security dialogue (Roy-Chaudhury, Sullivan de Estrada 2018, 181). India and Japan are using the Quad as a tool for security dialogue and cooperation along with the other members to keep China's rise under control. The US and Australia share much of the same wariness of Chinese activities in the Indo-Pacific region, including the MSR projects taking place in the IOR (Ibid., 182-185). Therefore, the Quad presents India and Japan with a diplomatic platform to meet other like-minded partners for balancing China. Peace, security, stability and international rule-based order for free and open Indo-Pacific are some of the key dialogues of this meeting (Ibid., 182). Apart from the security dialogues and cooperation, the Quad has been used for performing joint military exercises. That is very important for India and Japan in order to project their united power in the region and show China that its military hegemony in the region is not simply viewed at from the sidelines and accepted. During the last meeting held in June 2018, support for free, prosperous, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific was shown by all members (Panda 2018).

The Quad reflects a prestige of a "members only club" that frustrate and undermine China, as it focuses on the security guarantees of the Indo-Pacific instead of the Asia-Pacific. The apparent step overlooking the position and status of China is what China has taken offense to, seeing it as a deliberate effort for weakening its perceived position. Recent mocking of the term by the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, by describing the Quad's mission in Indo-Pacific as an agenda grabbing the idea that would soon "dissipate like ocean foam" (Lee 2018, 7), illustrating visually the frustration of China, being neglected by the term. Additionally, the involvement of the US in the Indo-Pacific Regional Grouping projected an image of an anti-Chinese squad. Although the Quad is essentially an informal security cooperation and does not directly point out the China factor; by

emphasizing the keywords of peace, security, international rule-based sea and freedom of navigation, it indirectly points at China due to its involvement in South China Sea disputes. In one hand, the Quad has been able to demonstrate undermining and frustrating by weakening the apparent status of China as it worries about being overlooked in terms of maritime security and left out by the continuous naval exercises, while at the same time being indirectly judged through statements of freedom and openness. On the other hand, the Quad does not appear to delay the actions of China, as it does not stop its patrolling in the IOR nor slow its process of increasing its naval presence in the region. The submarines and vessels are found patrolling the Indian Ocean regularly (Unnithan 2018). Activating the Djibouti and Jiwani bases, and proposing other ports in Bangladesh, Maldives Myanmar and Sri Lanka, has not slowed down China's action and MSR. In conclusion, the Quad demonstrates cases of undermining and frustrating China, but it does not delay its activities. India and Japan, as members of the Quad, can regard their joint cooperation to help counterbalance China, however, they have achieved this with additional help and not on their own.

From an economic strengthening point of view of counterbalancing MSR, India and Japan have come out with a grand initiative of a slightly smaller scale themselves. The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) is an ambitious economic and strategic project under the SSGP that projects to build a maritime economic corridor linking South Asia with Africa (Asia Africa Growth Corridor 2016). The AAGC first came into light with a joint declaration issued during an annual SSGP summit with an intention to merge India's "Act East" policy with Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Policy". The main goals of AAGC are to develop quality infrastructure and industrial connectivity and to enhance capacities and skills for better people-to-people connection (Ibid.). Together, India and Japan are expected to carry out around US\$ 200 billion in investments in the near future (Pathak 2017). From the beginning, AAGC was considered to be an alternative to China's MSR, which has a similar sea route as AAGC does (Figure 3.2.2).

Unlike the MSR, the AAGC focuses on wider development and connectivity approaches, including human resource development. While MSR is a means for China to pursue its unilateral action, the AAGC is a joint initiative proposed for collaboration, holding input also from ASEAN and AfDB, terming it a multilateral action. The AAGC excludes China. Although China is a member of AfDB, it holds a small position having no voting rights. Therefore, AAGC directly challenges the economic perspectives of the MSR. The AAGC promotes the value of broader cooperation among member states, over the Chinese Chequebook diplomacy (giving aid to invest for winning favor)

and infrastructure loans trapping nations into a debt crisis. India has a long history of economic and political ties with Africa, thus, its wide regional network paired with Japan's ability to provide quality infrastructure assistance give a high backdrop for competition against MSR. In addition, the project wants to bring more African and Asian countries together for better diplomatic relations to have a stronger voice in the UN and within other important intergovernmental and international organizations.

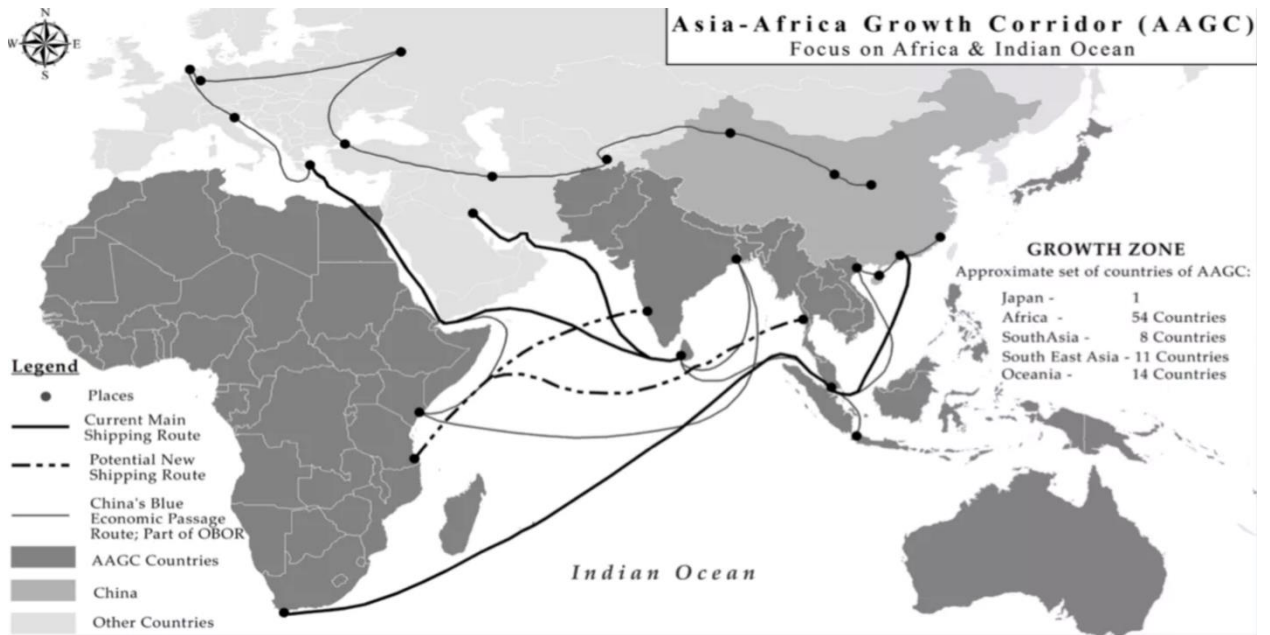


Figure 3.2.2. Map of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor

Source: Eurasia Business Forum

The AAGC is a good example of India and Japan designing an initiative under SSGP with the purpose of providing competition to China and potentially counterbalancing its capacity. Although it is evident that the two cannot match the proposed economic capabilities and output of the BRI, targeting the maritime route and potential of the MSR seems more manageable. Looking at Figure 3.2.2., it is clear that the routes of the two initiatives intersect, therefore, the interests and competition of the both eventually also need to come face to face. The outcomes of this face-off or judgment of who would outweigh the others are too early to say for certain. Nevertheless, the AAGC portrays key components necessary for undermining the MSR and Chinese influence if it becomes a successful reality for investing and interregional cooperation. Currently, this is not taking place due to the initiative still being in the study phase. All we can read on it are the future objectives as the platform has yet to announce any major project developments. For now, it has only been able to create talk and questions in China over the competition, generating rather a level

of confusion and debate instead of frustration. Even if the AAGC became a reality sooner, then the current economic circumstances wouldn't let it delay China much, because, first of all, China is the largest trading partner as well as the biggest foreign aid donor for Africa; second of all, China has already been able to set up several major projects under BRI and MSR, investing heavily in various African nations; and third of all, most importantly, many African nations favor Chinese condition-free loans and economic assistance over any other (Ghasiya 2017, 3). Although one can argue that growing concerns of Chinese debt diplomacy are also rising among African people, then since the decision-making is in the hands of the political elites, they are likely to prefer less conditional Chinese Investment and assistance.

Another important example of economic strengthening between the two SSGP partners is financial support. Japan is the biggest investor through foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA) to India, highlighted under the Tokyo Declaration of SSGP. India's grand economic vision partner for prosperity, Japan, has made a promise to invest 3.5 trillion yen (around \$US 30 billion) towards development and infrastructure (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014). This is the highest foreign investment ever proposed by any country in India. Additionally, in 2015, Nippon Export and Investment Insurance (NEXI) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) proposed a plan to invest 1.5 trillion yen (around \$US 13 billion) in India's infrastructure and manufacturing project "Make in India (Joint Statement 2015). In the same year, Japan made a deal with India to sell its high-speed railway technologies (the Shinkansen system) for the Mumbai-to-Ahmedabad route (Ibid.) and in 2017, under the ODA loans, many infrastructure projects including ship recycling and North East Road Connectivity Network (NERCN) were planned.

The Indo-Japan economic partnership has grown in recent years under the umbrella of SSGP even more. Although India is the world's fastest growing economy, it still cannot stand up alone against China due to the poor infrastructure and manufacturing, lack of advanced technologies and insufficient investment capabilities. Thus, it sees Japan as a valuable partner thanks to its economic power and advanced technologies. India seeks more participation and mutual cooperation in investments and loans for its development, which the SSGP delivers and therefore it can easily hedge the Chinese debt trap strategy. There are growing numbers of Japanese businesses being established in India and over the years, many new companies have invested in the Indian economy. As a result, it is helping India to create new jobs for the youth and support the overall economic growth.

On the other hand, Japan sees India as an investment opportunity due to its economic, geographic and populations size. It regards India as an alternative to China, where Japan's investment and business opportunities rapidly decreased when the Chinese economic boom boosted it into the position of the second largest economy in the world, surpassing Japan. India and Japan are not only giving each other a helping hand for economic strengthening, but they are also committed to building firm bilateral ties. Strong economic and strategic relations with India and an active economic development role within South and South East Asia may open the door for Japan to become part of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Technical Cooperation (BIMSTEC), a sub-regional economic and social-cooperation organization. This would help India and Japan not only establish an active economic role but also form a strong strategic regional grouping for IOR which China is not part of.

Indo-Japan economic cooperation is mainly dependent on Japanese FDI and ODA, but it does not affect trade with China as it continues trading with both. China is the biggest trading partner of India (Worstall 2017) while the second largest of Japan (ZX 2018). The economic interdependence is the main important factor for economic strengthening and successful trade. Because China is also apart of this equation, then crossing the line of what is acceptable for China in terms of being counterbalanced, will indicate whether China will want to impose certain restrictions as countermeasures to India or Japan or not as dependency on trade with China is very high for both. The stronger economic cooperation between India and Japan can help secure their economic trust for a worst-case scenario but neither wants to lose their economic advantages earned from trading with China. To conclude, India and Japan are far too dependent on trade with China to pursue any aggressive or restrictive counterbalancing measures that would harm their position. Therefore, in pursuing the economic strengthening, they will remain to pursue counterbalancing against China within the limits of acceptable balancing action. As China won't likely know or perceive every action by India and Japan to be a counterbalancing act, then they will continue to test the limits of China's acceptance. One such area will be the economic competition in Africa for development and assistance. Whether India and Japan can successfully apply the AAGC to match up against the MSR is hard to predict, but one is clear, in the current economic setting, India, and Japan even with their joined forces are not able to undermine, frustrate or delay Chinese projects and influence. However, China only sees India Japan as a threat to its infrastructure projects in IOR where they are actively involved in grabbing the projects from China. India-Japan have already seized projects in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Maini 2018) and it might escalate further into other IOR nations If

this keeps happening, there are high chances that they can be able to delay and undermine the initiatives and most important annoy China.

3.2.3. Signaling of resolve to participate in the balancing coalition and its effectiveness

First of all, the SSGP is seen as the strongest representation of bilateral relations between India and Japan yet. It is considered an ad hoc geopolitical, social, economic and security relationship with the aim of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, serving the interests of both. Separately from their bilateral relations, this thesis regards the views and political position of Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Abe to be nationalist as their main objective first and foremost is to serve their respective national interests, emphasizing their political independence within the international system. This similar nationalist thinking is what has brought the two leaders together due to the rising threat from globally expanding Chinese initiatives, to jointly work towards projecting their similar interests and protecting national benefits. Above all, the SSGP holds necessary features for being viewed as a means for achieving the aims of the two leaders. It represents that the two leaders value their joint cooperation highly because, through their long-standing relations illustrated in Chapter 2, they have built up a significant degree of trust.

The “trust” in cooperation and partnerships with other states is the key factor for the successful formation of a balancing coalition. The signaling of resolve or expressing readiness and determination to cooperate is the first major step to build such a coalition. The difficult part is building the trust to express commitment as it takes time for states and leaders to form such connections. States traditionally tend to continue building relations and cooperate with states which they have already established trust. Apprehensions about security guarantees and questions over mutual benefits cloud the readiness to cooperate with unfamiliar states, repressing the will to express full trust.

The start of relations between India and Japan dates back for centuries. Together, they have worked on improving and strengthening their diplomatic relations for decades. The formation of a bilateral strategic partnership was a step forward in declaring the higher degree of trust and commitment towards each other. The mutual concerns over expanding Chinese activities and the shared notion of historic experiences have given grounds for India and Japan to take their strategic partnership to the next level through forming a balancing coalition with a joint declaration for “Special Strategic and Global Partnership”. The SSGP is not only a guideline for proposed joint initiatives

and mutual outcomes the two nations wish to achieve through strong cooperation and support, but it is also a signal to the outside, especially to China, that India and Japan are committed to their partnership and ready to set limitations to the proposed monopoly of BRI. India and Japan present each other as trustworthy partners (Japan-India Joint Statement 2016, India-Japan Vision Statement 2018).

To evaluate this tool's efficiency, the side of China and its reactions to the growing Indo-Japan relations need to be considered. The analysis shows that India and Japan expressing a greater degree of trust and willingness to cooperate through their bilateral relation does not noticeably undermine their national relations with or the position of China as both continue holding a degree of mistrust towards China. The determining factor for these close partners not to let their relations with China deteriorate is due to it being a valuable trade partner for both.

China has not publicly released a concrete statement expressing frustration towards closer Indo-Japan relations. However, the apprehension and caution towards the consequences of the growing bilateral relations are present in the responses of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's media briefings. In 2016, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang cautioned India and Japan upon Prime Minister Modi's state visit to Japan that amidst developing their ties, the two should "...also respect the legitimate concerns of other countries especially those in the region..." (Lu 2016). Whether it is a declaration that "China is watching" or "do what you want, but don't forget about me" is unknown. Nevertheless, China has shown alertness towards Indo-Japanese relations and their cooperation under SSGP. In 2018, a media report was published, indicating the growing frustration of China. Ahead of Indian Prime Minister visiting Japan, Chinese media warned India with potential economic losses if India were to get involved with the South China Sea dispute. The publication stated, "India won't benefit much by balancing China through Japan. It will only lead to more mistrust between New Delhi and Beijing" (PTI 2018). This statement highlights the presence of mistrust which is why China won't turn its attention away from frequent India and Japan meetings. As this continues, the presence of discontent and frustration remain.

The Indo-Japan partnership in itself does not hold enough weight to be a factor delaying the actions of China. However, the cooperation through structured and goal oriented SSGP with infrastructure and development initiatives matching up to the MSR, the two are able to provide competition to China and ultimately delay the implementation of the "grand plan" of China.

3.2.4. Limited security cooperation and its effectiveness

Defence partnership and cooperation are key features of SSGP. The first Indo-Japan Joint Declaration of Security Cooperation was signed in 2008 under a strategic partnership with the establishment of 2+2 foreign ministerial dialogue between two nations (Joint Statement 2008). It grew stronger over the years with the creation of maritime security dialogue and maritime bilateral exercises. The creation of SSGP via the Tokyo Declaration signified a more comprehensive partnership between the two leaders. In the document, both leaders announced regulation of maritime bilateral exercise and re-joining of Japan into the Indo-US Malabar Naval Exercise as a regular member (Tokyo Declaration ... 2014). This represented a huge blow for China who has opposed Japan's participation. Thus, India pursues the policy of enhancing its defence relations with Japan by instating it as a regular member of Malabar and challenging the Chinese position on the issue. The transferring of defence equipment and technology concluded in 2015, with the possible purchasing of Japanese "US-2" search and rescue seaplane and technology (India-Japan Fact Sheets 2018). While this defence purchase of "US-2" is vital for India to conduct the rescue and search missions in the Indian Ocean and for the advanced capabilities of navy, it will also help India maintain surveillance on the IOR and keep an eye on China's activities in the region. Contrarily, for Japan it's the first time exporting arms after the second world war, helping Japan with portraying an important image of a defence player in Asia. Moreover, with the success of "US-2" deals, India and Japan can enter into a more sophisticated defence deal, beneficial for both in terms of building their strategic partnership.

Transferring defence technology is also crucial for both countries as they together established a joint working group on defence equipment and technology cooperation with the aim of further expanding defence managements (Japan-India Joint Statement 2016). Japan also lifted the ban on several Indian defence companies for joint participation which was imposed in 1998 after the nuclear tests conducted by India. It further opens up the chances of India Japan working together in the field of defence related research and technology which may help them to make military stronger.

Japan assistance for infrastructure connectivity in Indian North East region can be seen as a big help for the Indian Army in securing its border with China. With Better Road and Rail network along the border will certainly help India to deploy its army and supplies quickly and smoothly in a time of need which China has already done with its border with India. Japan is also proposing

the assistance in many Indian Islands for the airport construction, radar system and power plant (Nagao 2018, 85). If India comes to an agreement with this assistance, it would probably be the biggest power project of SSGP in the Indian Ocean by having the strategic position with well and advanced infrastructure and defence technology.

India-Japan security partnership shows the balancing behaviour of both. They might not have an alliance but they have a better alignment with limited security cooperation aiming for a common agenda and relative gains of security and peace within their connected regions, important for both. Even in the SSGP documents, instead of calling themselves a military ally, they talk about the importance of partnership and a strong teamwork to achieve their goals. Therefore, there might not be a sum-zero game but a better **positive sum game**. Meanwhile, India-Japan security cooperation has many things to discuss but when it comes to the effectiveness it does not add much due to the many loopholes. First of all, the security dialogue between these two nations has not been a major threat to China, even though the dialogue is often on the agenda of peace and security of the region, it's only a dialogue, not a concrete implementation. Moreover, it doesn't point out directly Chinese factor in security cooperation rather the common interests of the region, thus, China would hardly look at it as a conspiracy against it. Second, the arms and technology purchasing might be a usual activity of defence relations between anyone as long as it does not harm the interests of the third party. Even though, this transfer of arms and technology is in its initial phase of agreement and only a memorandum of understanding has been signed, there's possibility for future purchasing by India. Therefore an assessment and understanding of what these arms and technologies would do, can only be developed after they are in action.

China does not look very nervous about this security partnership except for the inclusion of Japan in India-US led Malabar exercise as a permanent partner. This is the part of the partnership which brings a level of fear to Beijing because China perceives the move as a potential threat to its own strategic and economic interests in the region. Although this year China remained silent on the exercise held in Guam, last year there was a clear outrage from Beijing when the foreign ministry of China clearly stated that it has no opposition to countries having bilateral relations and cooperating, but these relations should not be targeted against third countries and peace and security of the region, when the exercise was held in the Bay of Bengal, in the Indian Ocean (Krishnan 2017). Thus, this leads to further assumptions that China has clear thoughts of any military activities can undermine Beijing interests and further lead to frustration which might create some countermeasures by China. Also, not to forget that China objected to the exercise in

the past too, which led to discontinuing the exercise. There is another possible fear that China sees in a Malabar exercise that it might prove Indo-Japan's image as a security provider in the region and those nations who hesitate to confront China directly, may join the club or seek some support from them.

There are additionally other initiatives which have been proposed under SSGP and it would be interesting to see how they affect Chinese influence. For instance, the construction projects in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and getting access to each other military bases by India and Japan. These might produce some counterbalancing effects for China as they are very crucial for having a strong and trustworthy partnership against its rival, but again, the questions remain that without the proper action of an initiative, there is not a clear sight to look at the effectiveness of it. Moreover, China does not or at least pretend not to have any hostility against Indo-Japan's defence partnership, it also keeps its eyes open to any activity under the partnership which does or might confront the Chinese interests in the region. Although, it does not interrupt Chinese activities in the region or force China to slow down in spreading its influence in the region. As mentioned earlier, China is already well established in the region in terms of economic and strategic capacity and it would like to continue its presence without the fear that other entities may weaken its position in the region, thus, we may witness some counterbalancing back from China directed at Indo-Japan initiatives under the SSGP.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed the different dynamics of Indo-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership with the purpose of answering the question proposed in the introduction and presenting an assessment of whether the SSGP can be regarded to effectively counterbalance China's influence in the Indian Ocean region or not. Indo-Japan relations grew stronger after the increasing influence of China in the IOR started posing a threat to their own interests and activities, since the IOR is vital for both. In terms of economics, geopolitics, and security, they want to counterbalance Chinese influence, especially of BRI's MSR initiatives.

The research findings are mixed and the conclusion of this paper is that the SSGP partially counterbalances Chinese influences and MSR in the IOR. In territorial denial, it evidently does not undermine or frustrate China and its initiatives since China has a very strong presence in the IOR and MSR is grown out one of the biggest economic and strategic grand plan involving a high number of participants. This means that China is well established in IOR and Indian territorial denial will not harm China. Although it might cause a slight delay as India not providing the territory for China's initial plans may cause China to change its original plan. For Japan, it is a different case because Chinese initiatives do not directly go through the Japanese territory, therefore no undermining, frustration or delay from the Japanese side. The entangling diplomacy and economic strengthening again provide very mixed results with some partial effectiveness. For instance, while India and Japan join their voices for the UNSC reform using G4 as an institutional tool for it, it does not provide any effectiveness due to the fact that a reform is very hard to achieve, additionally, Japan and other nations' support for India's bid in the NSG irritates China on a small scale, but in the end it does not harm any of its policies regarding the IOR and is therefore not effective. The Quad is a major platform where Chinese military policies and MSR are undermined, creating high levels of frustration expressed by Beijing against military exercises by the Quad members, especially in places which China considers its regional territory and areas of influence. Although, this does not slow down any of Chinese activities through MSR.

AAGC brings fear and weakens the Chinese confidence in MSR a little, which thus, leads to slight frustration but evidently does not undermine or delay the process. That is because the AAGC is still just an economic strategy and needs the commitment for implementation, while the Chinese MSR is already a huge hit in Africa. Plus, Chinese trade is larger than any other countries', therefore AAGC at the moment as a grand plan does not give any containment or discouragement. But it has high potential to be received well in Africa and rise up as a sizable competition against MSR. Economic cooperation, on the other hand, has a different approach according to initiatives under it. Indo-Japanese economic cooperation is mainly dependent on Japanese investment in India, but for trading, China plays a vital role as it is the major trading partner of India and Japan. Thus, considering the economic and development capacity of China, it is unlikely that India and Japan can catch up any time soon, thus, their infrastructure development projects alone might not affect or restrain Chinese influence as BRI has already gathered international support. Although some of the joint infrastructure development projects such as NERCN (development of road and rail network along the areas bordering China) and other projects in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka can undermine, frustrate and delay the MSR. These projects directly challenge the Chinese hegemony due to their strategic position and some of them are snatched away from China which was supposed to be the part of MSR. Therefore, they effectively counterbalance the Chinese initiative by increasing Indo-Japan influence in the region.

The last tool of soft balancing does not produce any effects because even though the SSGP is based on mutual trust and common goals, this trust and goals are not a direct threat to China or its position in the region. Even while enhancing their bilateral strategic partnership, India and Japan still have to look to China as one of the major players in the region as both individually in their trading relations have, to an extent, a dependency on China. Therefore, some of their goals relate to China too and they cannot affect Chinese influence for the sake of achieving those goals.

Security Cooperation has some effectiveness in counterbalancing China but only through the Malabar exercise which China thinks undermines its military position which further may lead to challenging its strategic and economic role in IOR. Thus, the undermining of Chinese influence comes out leading to Chinese frustration towards India and Japan, especially if their military activities position is IOR. Although it is not effective enough to stop or slow down China and its initiatives due to Chinese countermeasure of increasing more and more its presence to show that it is not easily stoppable.

In sum, the results of the analysis conclude that within the areas of economic strengthening and limited security cooperation, India and Japan have more potential for effective counterbalancing of China. The cases and examples examined indicated, that at the moment India and Japan do not possess necessary capabilities to fully counterbalance China in any of the categories. The concluding position is that under those initiatives connected to SSGP which challenge Chinese strategic, economic and security policies within the scope of MSR in the IOR have more effectiveness in undermining and frustrating but, there are very few to no indications of delay by those SSGP initiatives and policies. That is, because China has had a far-reaching effect with its BRI grand initiative and presents now its influence in almost every region. This paper offers these further recommendations on how India and Japan could enhance their capabilities for better counterbalancing of China's initiatives through the SSGP: firstly, enhanced economic cooperation between India and Japan, especially in trade and trade organizations, could help lessen their dependence on China, therefore, it would be easier to pursue more effective counterbalancing actions. Secondly, through AAGC, deepened economic cooperation with various African countries could be developed further for the purpose of infrastructure development and assistance, which in turn would allow Japan and India enter new markets for investment. However, for this to take place, India and Japan need to work on developing the AAGC framework structure further, so it could accommodate a larger applicability in both regions. Thirdly, in terms of military cooperation, India should become a more active partner of Quad and take part in the joint naval exercises. In addition, India and Japan signed a defence and security partnership, but this has not seen much actions being taken, especially in the area of transferring of defence equipment and technology.

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