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Maritime trade and geopolitics: the Indian Ocean as Japan's sea lane

Takashi Yamazaki

Department of Geography

Osaka City University, Japan

Abstract

This chapter explores the historical relationship between globalization, maritime trade and geopolitics. As maritime trade has developed globally through the expansion of capitalism (and colonialism) from Western Europe, its importance for the state economy has prompted foreign and security policies that ensures the security of sea lanes to sustain international trade. Focuses are placed on the case of Japan which recognizes the Indian Ocean as its "vital" sea lane or sea line of communication for the state economy. The textual analysis of annual *Defense of Japan* reveals how geopolitical codes regarding the Indian Ocean have remained unchanged and have repeatedly been employed to justify Japan's postwar maritime geopolitics with – and against – neighboring states. It also becomes clear from the analysis that behind Japan's geopolitical self-image, there has been an increasing fear of being disconnected to the external world to which Japan feels increasingly connected. Just as deterministic classical geopolitics, so Japan's maritime geopolitics has been founded on the imagination of an inescapable geographical destiny.

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1. Introduction

This chapter explores the historical relationship between globalization, maritime trade and geopolitics. It focuses on the case of Japan which recognizes the Indian Ocean as its “vital” sea lane or SLOC (sea line of communication) for the state economy. As maritime trade has developed globally through the expansion of capitalism (and colonialism) from Western Europe, its importance for the state economy has prompted foreign and security policies that focus on the security of sea lanes to sustain international trade. Therefore maritime security policies have been constructed on the premise that maritime states (both littoral and archipelagic ones) need to secure the control of the seas and the sea lanes for their political economic development through diplomatic and military actions.

Maritime security policies cannot be divorced from geographical factors mainly because these factors directly or indirectly constrain and inform such policies (Germond 2015: 138). The (material) importance of sea lanes for maritime trade is often conditioned by the geographical configurations of seas and sea channels as seen typically in chokepoints (like a strait). In this sense, we can call such geographically constrained and informed maritime policies ‘maritime geopolitics’ which often takes the form of a classical geopolitics on sea powers (maritime states) as exemplified by Mahan (1890 [1987]). Drawing on critical geopolitical perspectives (Ó Tuathail 1996, Germond 2013), it can also be said that the geographical location of a state and the fixity of its position on the globe, condition maritime policy-makers’ identification of external ‘others’ as threats. The discursive justification of their policy and the reasoning of maritime geopolitics for sea-lane security can therefore constitute the subject of critical geopolitical research (see Germond 2013).

In the following sections, this chapter first looks at the historical development of maritime trade as a fundamental aspect of globalization and the interconnectedness of the world. It then examines how maritime geopolitics has been constructed under such global dynamics. In its second half, it uses the case of Japan to illustrate this point by considering its geopolitical codes pertaining to the Indian Ocean as its sea lane and to demonstrate how such geopolitical codes have remained unchanged and have repeatedly been employed to justify Japan’s postwar maritime geopolitics with – and against – neighboring states.

2. Maritime trade and globalization

The global expansion of maritime trade is one of the fundamental aspects of economic globalization. In the contemporary globalizing world, a state cannot survive without conducting trade or exchanging goods with other states in its regions and in other regions. Maritime trade is a core activity of state agencies and private corporations to connect different places in the world.

Historically, due to the limited size of the regional economies and the low level of technology, trade was in large part carried out on land and/or on internal waters. During the 15th and 16th centuries, however, advances in ship design and navigation technology led to the Europeans' discovery of the Americas, the opening-up of new trade routes to Asia around Africa, and Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe (WTO 2013: 46). Map 1 shows the main Portuguese and Spanish maritime trade routes in the 16th century, as a result of the exploration during the Age of Discovery. These 16th-century routes already include the Straits of Florida between Florida and Cuba, the Strait of Malacca between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and other chokepoints which have been heavily used for maritime trade ever since.

This outline of the world economy was already laid out in the 17th and 18th centuries. The emergence of the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s prompted the massive expansion of trade, capital and technology flows, the explosion of migration and communications, and the time-space compression of the world economy (WTO 2013: 46). The construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the Panama Canal in 1914 created significant shortcuts for inter-oceanic navigation. Map 2 shows the present-day density of commercial shipping in the world's seas, and indicates the highly dense shipping routes around the southern fringe of the Eurasian Continent and the broadly spreading routes in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

A comparison between Maps 1 and 2 shows that our world has been increasingly interconnected since the Age of Discovery and that sea routes, canals, ports, and vessels for maritime trade have become the basic infrastructures for modern capitalism, colonialism, and contemporary globalization. Globalizing maritime trade also promoted the establishment of the ship-building industries, transnational shipping agents, banks, and maritime insurance companies. In order to sustain the development of the state economies, international trade of a large amount of resources, food, and manufactured goods has become inevitable. As a mode of international trade, cargo transportation by ship has been more cost-effective than by road, railway or aircraft. Hence maritime trade has played an essential part in the expansion of the modern world economy.

Another important dimension in the development of maritime trade

infrastructures is how to secure trade routes using naval forces, which will be discussed in the next section.

3. The geopolitics of seas

As maritime trade was globalized, the security of trade routes and governance over oceans become important diplomatic/military agendas for imperial states, leading to the rise of classical (maritime) geopolitics and the institutionalization of seas.

1) The rise of classical geopolitics

According to Wallerstein (1979), modern capitalism began in the 16th-century Western Europe and spread towards the rest of the world through exploration and colonization by sea powers such as the Netherlands and the U.K. What made this possible was open sea sailing equipped with advanced navigation and shipbuilding technologies. The hegemonic rise of these states was promoted through the technological innovations of the time. After the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the introduction of the steam boat accelerated maritime trade and colonization with the support of strong naval forces. Maritime trade became an essential aspect of imperialism in the 19th century and sustained the re-ordering of the world led by the United Kingdom and other Western powers (Flint and Taylor 2007, Flint 2011). Intensified competition for colonies among imperial powers, among other things, finally led to the First World War (1914-18).

Major works of classical geopolitics appeared in that period of time. 'Classical geopolitics' originally refers to a system of geographical knowledge aimed at prescribing foreign and military policies for a selected imperialist state. It became state-centric and geographically deterministic because such prescribed policies were often shaped according to the geographical location and configurations of the chosen state. In other words, the political economic future or survival of a state tended to be described according to its geographical position (i.e. as a continental or an oceanic state).

Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), a British geographer and parliament member, was well-known as a classical geopolitical thinker. He observed that the major axis of conflict was between land- and sea-based powers (Flint 2011: 6-8). His famous "Heartland Theory" (Mackinder 1904) emphasized the geostrategic advantage of land powers occupying the center of the Eurasian landmass while designating the function of sea powers as containing land powers. His geopolitical framing of world order significantly influenced subsequent geopolitical thinkers such as Karl Haushofer (1869-1946) and Nicholas Spykman (1893-1943). Even after WWII, Mackinder became an

intellectual inspiration for Cold War strategists and proponents of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the second half of the 20th century (Flint 2011: 8).

The thinker who influenced Mackinder was Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), a United States naval historian and admiral. Mahan contended that with a command of the sea, even if local and temporary, naval operations in support of land forces could be of decisive importance (Sumida 1999). He also believed that naval supremacy could be exercised by a transnational consortium acting in defense of a multinational system of free trade (Sumida 1999). Compared to Mackinder, Mahan explicitly framed the importance of sea powers in terms of trade for economic wealth.

In the modern world, resource-rich countries make use of monopoly power to pursue their international interests while resource-scarce countries prioritize the pursuit of resource security in their foreign policies (WTO 2013: 167). Therefore, the geopolitics of maritime trade has been a focal point of international relations and has had a decisive impact on underlying technological and structural trends of international trade for the past centuries (WTO 2013: 55).

2) The institutionalization of seas

As Mahan argued one and a half century ago, the relationship between maritime trade and the capability of sea powers has been regarded as a crucial factor to secure the political economic development of a state. As the scope of maritime trade became global in the 17th century, how such trade could be secured became a matter of multilateral negotiation over the principle of “freedom of the seas” (Grotius 1609 [2004]). This principle has been repeatedly discussed and challenged among European thinkers and the international political arena.

For instance, the U.K.’s naval supremacy in the 19th century ensured that the world sea lanes, being so important for the global economy, remained open, not just to British trade but also to the commerce of the world. By the turn of the century, however, the consolidation and expansion of European colonial empires in Africa and Asia was a clear sign that the British “imperialism of free trade” was already waning (WTO 2013: 50-51).

Laws and regulations regarding the sea are called “the international law of the sea.” It provides a framework for contested issues such as the breadth of territorial waters, resource exploitation on the continental shelf, and the use of the high seas. The International law of the sea has a long history from the Age of Discovery in which Spain and Portugal defended a *mare clausum* (closed sea) principle. *Mare clausum* is a Latin term used in international law to refer to the sea under the jurisdiction of a particular

state and not accessible to other states. To counter this principle, Hugo Grotius, a Dutch jurist, propagated a *mare liberum* (free sea) principle in the early 17th century. By claiming a free sea, Grotius provided an ideological justification for the Dutch assault on existing trade monopolies through its strong naval power and for establishing its own monopoly thereafter (Saha 2010: 73).

Discussions on the high seas cannot be separated from those on territorial waters. This separation became another issue in the discussion on “freedom of the seas” in the 18th century, leading to the international recognition of “narrow territorial waters” and “broad high seas.” The latter, however, allowed imperial powers (with the naval force to use these broad high seas) to pursue their colonization overseas. One of the focuses of imperial rivalry in the late 19th and early 20th century was placed on control and security over maritime routes for trade and military deployment. Therefore, if the high seas are broad and free enough for ships of any registries to pass, then they do not become any source of conflict.

After having been swinging between the principles of closed and free seas, the institutionalization of the use of open seas finally led to the conclusion of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. UNCLOS is a territorial (zonal) allocation of the degree of exclusive/free use of the seas depending on the distance from the coastal line of states’ land territory. Article 87(1) provides “high seas are open to all states, whether coastal or land-locked.”

Such abstract legal spaces, however, need to be reconfigured to see how they work in concrete geographical settings. The actual shapes of maritime trade routes are constricted bundles of curves, especially in the seas connected by chokepoints (see Map 2). The geographical configurations of open seas include several chokepoints or sea passages (straits or canals) of strategic importance which have often caused geopolitical tensions among the implicated states until today. The (in)security of these chokepoints can greatly influence the global flow of trade items as well as naval deployment, which has constituted geopolitics over sea lanes.

4. The security of sea lanes for Japan

As mentioned above, globalizing maritime trade has (re)constructed maritime geopolitics. In order to illustrate this process this section examines Japan’s postwar maritime geopolitics that has focused on sea-lane security in the Indian Ocean and demonstrates how and why geopolitical codes of the Indian Ocean have changed/unchanged in the shifting geopolitical context of Asia.

1) Premises of Japan's sea-lane security

As the development of maritime trade became crucial for the wealth of states, the security of maritime trade routes came to have important geostrategic implications, especially for littoral and archipelagic states. Such geostrategic routes are called sea lanes, sea roads, or sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Sea lanes are the key maritime passageways that facilitate heavy shipping traffic and host the transportation of key maritime trade goods such as crude oil. Sea lanes often include chokepoints such as sea straits and channels, the disruption of which can have an adverse political economic effect on the states and the corporations using them (Khalid 2012).

The globalization of maritime trade and its intensification, therefore, have inevitably (re)constructed geopolitics over sea lanes for their user states. In order to understand how sea lanes have connected maritime trade and maritime geopolitics, this section investigates how sea lane security is incorporated into its user state's maritime geopolitics. The case chosen is Japan because it is an archipelagic state in Asia with numerous past military confrontations with neighboring and Western states and because it has been dependent for its national and imperial development on maritime trade since the late 19th century. Postwar maritime trade, in particular, is one of the elements for Japan's success in becoming a global power regardless of its scarcity of natural resources (Graham 2006: 10-11). Currently Japan ranks sixth regarding the size of its territorial waters and of its Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ's)¹ in the world. In this sense, Japan can be seen as a maritime state seeking resources, markets, and places of investment overseas.

Unlike the prewar period, however, Japan's military capabilities have been restrained according to the new Constitution, and its security policies have been closely tied to U.S. foreign/security policies toward the Western Pacific. Thus Japan's sea-lane security policies have been framed to combine security alliance with the U.S. and dependence on global maritime trade for its economic prosperity.

In the 1970s, at the peak of Japan's economic growth, the Ministry of Defense of Japan began to publish an annual white report titled *Defense of Japan* (hereafter *DOJ*) which describes Japan's security policy towards sea lanes. During the 1980s the increasing dependence on the Middle East for the import of petroleum made *DOJ* focus on the Indian Ocean as a vital sea lane for Japan which connects the Persian Gulf and the

¹ An Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a sea zone over which a coastal state assumes jurisdiction regarding the exploration and use of marine resources from its coast out to 200 nautical miles offshore. This concept was adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1982).

East China Sea. A content analysis of successive *DOJs* should reveal how Japan has perceived the Indian Ocean from a geopolitical point of view during and after the Cold War.

Such a geopolitical perception of a state is called “geopolitical code.” Such codes can be described “more or less coherent perspectives on global geopolitics and/or the position and interests of one particular state” and become the basis “of prescribed or pursued foreign policies” (Nijman 1994). A geopolitical code consists of several calculations such as the specification of allies and enemies, the way to maintain good links with allies, the way to counter enemies, and the justification of such calculations (Flint 2011: 43-44). Therefore, an investigation on Japan’s geopolitical codes on the Indian Ocean could illuminate how Japan’s sea-lane security policies have been framed in relation to globalizing maritime trade and shifting geopolitical contexts in Asia.

2) Japan’s geopolitical codes on the Indian Ocean

DOJ is a comprehensive report on Japan’s security policies and its perception of international security affairs. It can be used as a source of information that contains Japan’s geopolitical codes on the Indian Ocean and their temporal shifts. The full-textual data for *DOJ* from 1970 to 2016 are available and downloadable at the Ministry’s website (Ministry of Defense 1970-2016). There is also a search engine for the contents of *DOJs* at the website so that particular terms can be searched and located. This search engine was used to find and locate terms such as “Indian Ocean (*indoyō* インド洋)” and “sea lanes (*shī rēn* シーレーン).” *DOJ* has hierarchal contents consisting of Part, Chapter, Section, and one or two sub-section levels.

There are 458 sub-sections containing the term “Indian Ocean” against 92 for “sea lanes.” As shown in Figure 1, there are recognizable peaks in the appearance of “Indian Ocean” and “sea lanes” which are not proportional to a general increase in the number of pages of *DOJ*. For each appearance, a paragraph (or a group of paragraphs) that contains a searched term was examined and classified by five criteria: term location (where it appeared in *DOJ*), key player country/region, key player administrative/military unit, subject(s) of the description, and geopolitical context of the description.

The content analysis of *DOJs* shows several interesting tendencies. First, descriptions on the Indian Ocean had appeared only in the first part of *DOJ* before 2001, meaning that originally the Indian Ocean had been described as a place *external* to Japan and that after 2001 the Ocean began to be referred to as more than an external place for Japan. Descriptions on the Ocean appeared in other parts of *DOJ* after 9/11 took place and promoted Japan’s involvement in the War on Terror in 2001.

Second, before the end of the Cold War, key player countries related to the Indian Ocean were rather limited to a few countries such as the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. suggesting that *DOJ* saw the geopolitical context of the Indian Ocean in light of the confrontation between the two global powers. After the demise of the U.S.S.R., *DOJ* almost ceased to refer to the former U.S.S.R. or to Russia as a key player in the region.

Third, given Japan's postwar dependence on U.S. military presence, it is not difficult to understand that *DOJ* continues to pay attention to U.S. military posture toward the Indian Ocean. For Japan, the deployment of U.S. military forces in the Indian Ocean as well as in the West Pacific has been considered crucial for its resource import and maritime trade. More specifically, the military deployment of the U.S.S.R. towards the Indian Ocean and Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s directed Japan's attention to U.S. military posture to counter such a challenge.

Fourth, even after the end of the Cold War, *DOJ* continued to mention the military role of the U.S. in the Indian Ocean. This is mainly because Japan (has) depended on U.S. military deployment in the West Pacific and Indian Ocean for its military and resource security according to the Japan-U.S. security alliance. *DOJ* states the role of the U.S. after the end of the Cold War as follows:

The U.S. has so far deployed the Pacific Command in the Asia-Pacific region as the Joint Force of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine and carried out policies to prevent conflicts in this region and protect interests of the U.S. and its allies by concluding security agreements with Japan and several countries in the region. [...] The U.S. Pacific Command located in Hawaii responds to unexpected contingencies swiftly and flexibly and forward-deploys the forces consisting mainly of its own navy and air force units in the Pacific and Indian Ocean (*DOJ 1992*).²

Finally, *DOJ*'s descriptions on the Indian Ocean began to mention other key players in the region after 2001, including Japan itself. The appearance of "Indian Ocean" decreased in the first part and moved to other parts of *DOJ*, meaning that the Indian Ocean began to be mentioned in the parts on counterterrorism measures in the Indian Ocean and humanitarian and reconstruction support in Iraq. The *DOJ* has clearly different geopolitical codes of the Indian Ocean, representing the shift from a bipolar to multi-polar structure in which Japan could play a certain role.

² http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/1992/w1992_01.html (accessed May 27, 2017), my translation into English.

3) The Indian Ocean as Japan's sea lane

DOJ often refers to the Indian Ocean as an important maritime transportation route but does not necessarily use the term “sea lane(s).” As shown in Figure 1, “sea lanes” appear from the early 1980s to the early 1990s and from the mid-2000s to present. From 1983 to 1990, “sea lanes” were referred to as a key word for the Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in *DOJ*. *DOJ* used “sea lanes” to express one of the policy objectives of such defense cooperation.

The discussion about sea lanes between Japan and the U.S. began in the late 1970s and was finally laid down the “Guidelines for Defense Cooperation between Japan and the U.S.” in 1978. The Guidelines stipulated that Japan’s Self Defense Forces (SDFs) had the responsibility for the defense of Japan’s territory and the surrounding sea and air areas, while the U.S. forces supplement functions beyond the abilities of the SDFs. Following the U.S.S.R. military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki and U.S. President Reagan defined their bilateral relationship as an “alliance” and agreed on an appropriate “division of roles” for security issues in 1981. With regards to this division of roles, Suzuki stated that Japan would defend sea lanes within 1,000 nautical miles from its territory, while the U.S. 7th Fleet would handle the security of the Persian Gulf (Kotani 2006: 195-196). *DOJ* began to refer to these sea lanes in 1983, when the Japan-U.S. joint research on the defense of sea lanes started (it ended in 1986).

Although Japan was to protect sea lanes in its surrounding areas according to the above-mentioned guidelines, *DOJ* continued to express Japan’s (SDFs’) inability to defend itself from nuclear threats from the U.S.S.R. *DOJ* recognized that the SDF’s capabilities were not sufficient to carry out the geopolitical division of roles with U.S. military forces.

The appearance of “sea lanes” from the mid-2000s has different nuances from the previous decades. “Sea lanes” appeared again in 2004 in the section titled “U.S. Forces in the Asia-Pacific Region.” The section explains the roles of U.S. 7th Fleet as “an operational unit with a mission to protect the territory, nation, *sea lanes*, allies, and other vital national interests of the U.S.” (*DOJ 2004*, p. 73, emphasis added).³ The term continues to be used in this description till present, suggesting that *DOJ* regards one of the roles of U.S. 7th Fleet as the protection of sea lanes and allies for the U.S.

In 2006, the above-mentioned description on U.S. 7th Fleet began to include the

³ http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2004/2004/pdf/16130000.pdf (accessed May 27, 2017)

“Indian Ocean.” These two descriptions were formerly separated but combined in 2004 to indicate both action areas and missions for the 7th Fleet. Here *DOJ* came to clearly describe in a single description the roles of the Fleet as the protection of sea lanes, allies, and the Indian Ocean. *DOJ 2006* also contains the declaration of “The Japan-U.S. Alliance in the New Century” which was published jointly by Japan’s Prime Minister Koizumi and U.S. President Bush in 2006.⁴ It states in the first part that:

The United States and Japan share interests in: winning the war on terrorism; maintaining regional stability and prosperity; promoting free market ideals and institutions; upholding human rights; securing freedom of navigation and commerce, including *sea lanes*; and enhancing global energy security. It is these common values and common interests that form the basis for U.S.-Japan regional and global cooperation. (emphasis added)

“Sea lanes” has become a term mentioned in the (geopolitical) context of the Japan-U.S. alliance in which Japan basically depends on and cooperates with the U.S. for its own security from the Indian Ocean to the West Pacific. All descriptions on sea lanes in *DOC 2011* also appear in the context of the Japan-U.S. defense cooperation.

However, *DOJ 2010* has different features on the description of sea lanes in two respects. First, it begins to explain Japan-India defense cooperation and exchange by stating that “India is located in the center of *sea lanes* which connect Japan with the Middle East and Africa, making it an extremely important country for Japan in a geopolitical sense, which relies on maritime transportation for most of its trade” (*DOJ 2010*, my translation, emphasis added).⁵ In this sub-section, *DOJ 2010* emphasizes that Japan and India share fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and capitalist economies and that these countries have established a strategic global partnership for the peace, stability and prosperity of Asia and the world.

From 2006 to 2008 *DOJ* also paid attention to the movement of China in the Indian Ocean. This is mainly because China became interested and intensified military activities in the Indian Ocean. Compared to Japan’s strong dependence on U.S. 7th Fleet for the security of remote sea lanes, these descriptions imply a more independent Japanese effort to be involved in the protection of such sea lanes.

Second, *DOJ 2010* includes the summary of the report titled *Japan’s Visions for*

⁴ <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/summit0606.html> (accessed May 27, 2017)

⁵ http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2010/2010/html/m3322300.html (accessed May 27, 2017)

Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation (Japan's Visions). The report was made by the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era. In the 2009 Lower House election, the coalition government led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was replaced by a coalition led by the Democratic Party of Japan. In that context the report showed new directions of Japan's security policies promoted by the new government. In the original report "sea lanes" (and "SLOCs" in the English version) appear several times as shown below:

The scarcity of resources and energy in Japan makes *SLOCs* and their surroundings an important security issue. Japan relies for most of its energy supply on maritime transportation across *the Indian Ocean*. Thus, the security of *the SLOCs* that run from the Persian Gulf, *the Indian Ocean*, the Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea, the Bashi Channel, and the east coast of Taiwan to Japan's vicinity and the stability of the coastal countries around the *sea lines* are of crucial importance for Japan. This will not change in the future. (*Japan's Visions*, p. 12, emphasis added)⁶

In sum, with regards to sea-lane security in the Indian Ocean, it can be said that Japan aims at maintaining the alliance with the U.S. as a global power and seek cooperation with India as a regional power by enhancing the SDFs' capability for such purposes. In order to achieve these objectives, Japan would need to be more actively involved in the security of the Indian Ocean.

4) The shifting importance of the Indian Ocean for Japan

Until 2001 almost all descriptions on the Indian Ocean had appeared in the first part of *DOJ*, indicating that the Indian Ocean had never constituted any national security issue for postwar Japan. This is mainly because the Japanese Constitution prohibits the use of military forces outside Japan's territory. However, 9/11 has completely changed these geopolitical codes regarding the Indian Ocean.

During the Gulf War in 1991, Japan did not dispatch any military forces according to the Japanese Constitution but provided financial support for the U.S. and relevant countries after the war. Japan's 'passive' attitude towards such an international crisis became controversial within Japan and prompted the LDP-led government to

⁶ http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo_e.pdf (accessed May 27, 2017)

dispatch the SDFs for U.N. Peace Keeping Operations in the 1990s. Since then Japan has become more active in pursuing a 'military' contribution in the international arena. Immediately after 9/11, the Koizumi cabinet decided to dispatch the SDFs to the Indian Ocean and to Pakistan to provide logistic support for the U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan. During the Iraq War, the Koizumi cabinet also sent the SDFs to Iraq to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance.

9/11 facilitated international military cooperation (i.e. "War on Terror") initiated by the U.S. and it contributed to the construction of a new geopolitical context in East Asia that allowed Japan to become more active in the international security arena. Accordingly Japan has been more proactive in dispatching the SDFs for international disaster-relief activities such as the tsunami relief in Indonesia. Japan's interest and involvement in the Indian Ocean region should be seen in this context.

After 9/11, the Indian Ocean began to be mentioned in the second and latter parts of *DOJ*. *DOJ 2002* and *2003* referred to the Ocean in the part on responses to security emergency after 9/11 and SDF dispatch to the Ocean. Then *DOJ* increased the number of descriptions on the Indian Ocean in the part on international cooperation for the War on Terror, the subsequent humanitarian intervention in Iraq, and the recent involvement in disaster relief in Indonesia and other countries.

An important implication of this shift is a completely new definition of the Indian Ocean as a "space of engagement" (Cox 1998) for the SDFs. According to the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law (2001-07) and the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq (2003-09), the basic plans to implement these laws designated the Ocean as an area for SDFs' activities. The Indian Ocean is no longer a remote space for Japan's security policy.

There has also been a new trend in which Japan is seeking bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges with countries other than the U.S. such as Australia and India. In addition to the emerging description of China as a challenger to the Indian Ocean, we see an attempt to build such a regional security network that will definitely be continued in the future.

5) Japan's geopolitical self-image as a maritime state

Japan's security policy has been consistently premised on its geography of isolation by the seas (Graham 2006: 36) and reinforced by basic dependence on foreign imports of minerals and fossil fuels (Graham 2006: 11) since the end of WWII. These factors have constituted Japan's geopolitical self-vision as a maritime state in *DOJs*. As shown in

Figure 1, descriptions on sea lanes have been increasing in number since 2010. An important turning point is the formulation of “The National Security Strategy (Kokka anzen hoshō senryaku 国家安全保障戦略)” in 2013 (hereafter *NSS 2013*).⁷ *NSS 2013* re-defines Japan as follows:

Surrounded by the sea on all sides and blessed with an immense exclusive economic zone and an extensive coastline, Japan as a maritime state has achieved economic growth through maritime trade and development of marine resources, and has pursued “Open and Stable Seas.” (*NSS 2013*, p.2)

Based on this premise and to ensure maritime security it states:

As a maritime state, Japan will play a leading role, through close cooperation with other countries, in maintaining and developing “Open and Stable Seas,” which are upheld by maritime order based upon such fundamental principles as the rule of law, ensuring the freedom and safety of navigation and overflight, and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with relevant international law. More concretely, Japan will take necessary measures to address various threats in *sea lanes of communication*, including anti-piracy operations to ensure safe maritime transport and promote maritime security cooperation with other countries. (*NSS 2013*, p. 16, emphasis added)

Then the document specifies sea lanes that are crucial for Japan:

In particular, *sea lanes of communication*, stretching from the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the surrounding waters of Japan, passing through *the Indian Ocean*, the Straits of Malacca, and the South China Sea, are critical to Japan due to its dependence on the maritime transport of natural and energy resources from the Middle East. In this regard, Japan will provide assistance to those coastal states alongside the *sea lanes of communication* and other states in enhancing their maritime law enforcement capabilities, and strengthen cooperation with partners on the *sea lanes* who share strategic interests with Japan. (*NSS 2013*, p. 17, emphasis added)

Accordingly *DOJ 2014* contains the descriptions regarding *NSS 2013* and adds a

⁷ <http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf> (accessed May 27, 2017)

new sub-section on China's maritime activities, indicating that Japan formally acknowledges China as a challenger of the security Japan's sea lanes. *DOJ 2014* (p. 44) points out that China has been intensifying its activities in the South China Sea in which China has territorial disputes over the Spratly and Paracel Islands⁸ with neighboring countries. It also refers to the improvement of Chinese Navy's capabilities that allows its advancement into the Indian Ocean. Such a perception of China is implicitly reflected in Japan's geopolitical self-vision described in *NSS 2013*.

Geostrategic prescriptions against China's challenge, as mentioned in the previous section, could be the reinforcement of the Japan-U.S. security alliance and the promotion of bilateral defense cooperation with India and with Australia. *DOJ 2015* and *2016* devote pages to these issues, in particular, to the role of Australia for sea lane security while *DOJ 2016* (p. 59) provides more descriptions as to China's maritime activities in remote seas including the Indian Ocean (to protect its own sea lanes as the "String of Pearls" strategy). As dependence on maritime trade increases in a globalizing world, Japan's maritime geopolitics continues to single out new challengers of its sea lanes and to reinforce its geopolitical self-image as a vulnerable maritime state in the West Pacific, in a fashion that follows the deterministic tradition of classical geopolitics.

5. Conclusion

As discussed above, the historical development of maritime trade is a fundamental aspect of globalization and the interconnectedness of the world. Under such global dynamics, the maritime security policies of sea powers had been shaped and reshaped over time. This is because the availability of maritime trade routes for free trade in the high/open seas inevitably requires infrastructures to sustain it, including the deployment of naval forces. It can thus be said that maritime geopolitics over sea lanes has been a political outcome of globalizing maritime trade.

This chapter, using the case of Japan and its sea-lane security policies as described in *DOJ's*, analyzed Japan's geopolitical codes on the Indian Ocean. The results of the analysis showed that the Indian Ocean has been constantly coded as a sea lane vital for Japan's maritime trade and that such coding has been repeatedly employed to justify Japan's military alliance with the U.S. to protect the sea lane against emerging challengers.

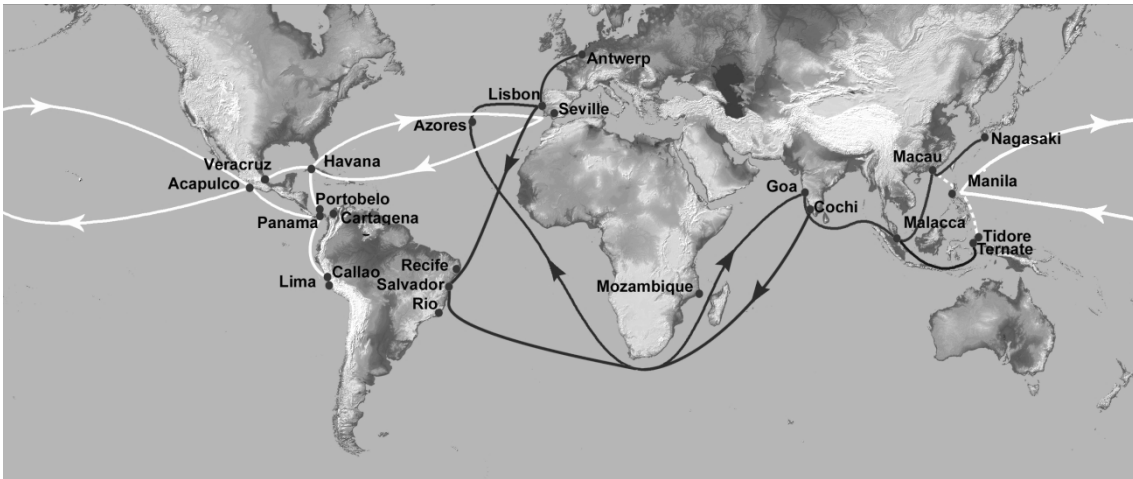
⁸ The Spratly Islands are called *Nánshā Qúndào* 南沙群島 in Chinese, *Kapuluan ng Kalayaan* in Tagalog, and *Quần đảo Trường Sa* in Vietnamese. The Paracel Islands are called *Xisha Qúndào* 南沙群島 in Chinese and *Quần đảo Hoàng Sa* in Vietnamese.

Despite the deepening globalization and interconnectedness of the world, Japan's maritime geopolitics has stemmed from ontological anxieties about the disruption of its sea lanes by their challengers. Japan's geopolitical self-image has been that of a vulnerable maritime state located in the West Pacific. Based on such a self-image, Japan's sea-lane security policies have been shaped to build security networks with the U.S. and other friendly states along the sea lanes. It is clear that behind this image, there has been an increasing fear of being disconnected to the external world to which Japan feels increasingly connected. Just as deterministic classical geopolitics, so Japan's maritime geopolitics has been founded on the imagination of an inescapable geographical destiny.

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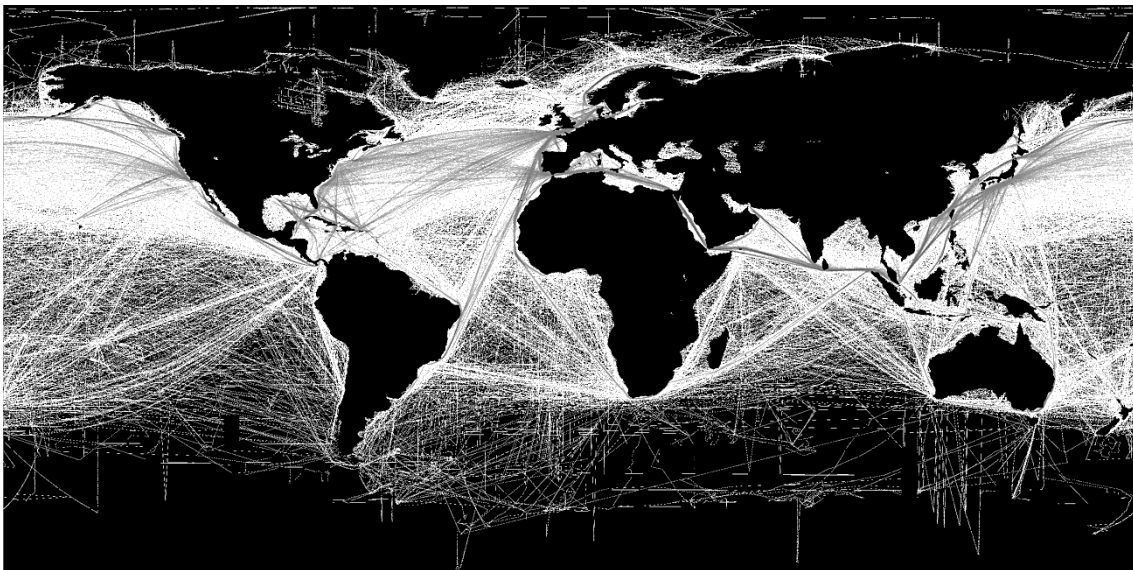
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Map 1. Trade routes of Spain (white) and Portugal (black) in the 16th century.

Source:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:16th_century_Portuguese_Spanish_trade_routes.png (extracted May 27, 2017)



Map 2. Shipping routes of the world.

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship_transport#/media/File:Shipping_routes_red_black.png (extracted May 27, 2017)

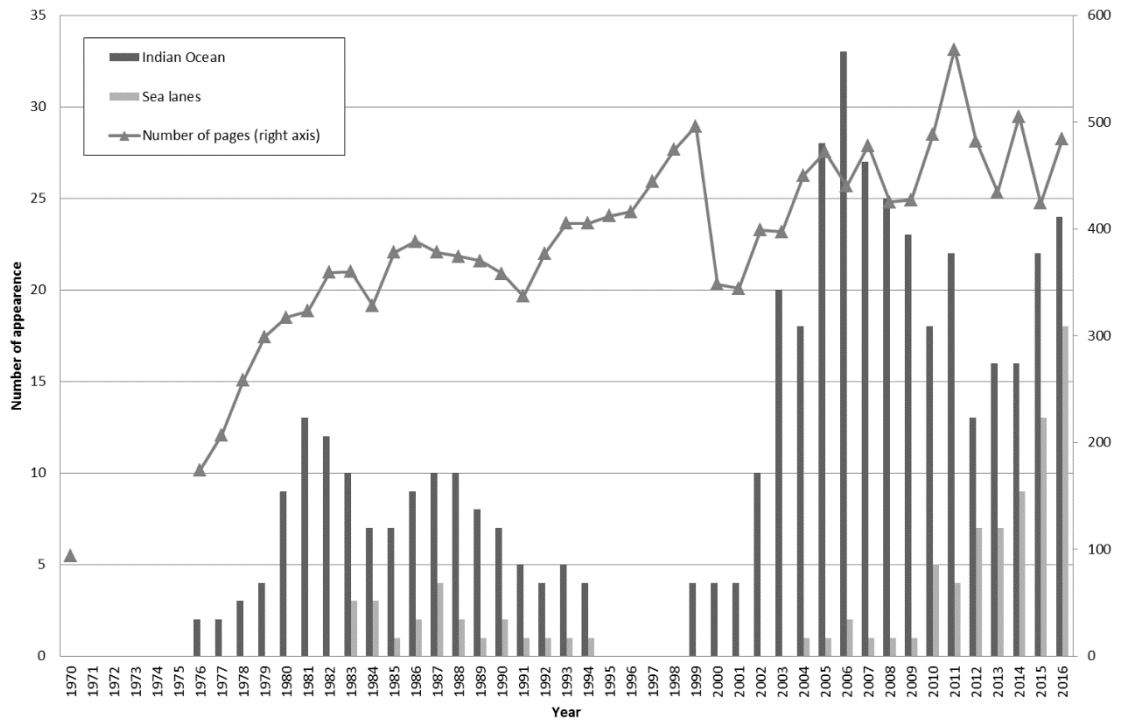


Figure 1. The contents of *DOJ*, 1970-2016.

Note: there is no comparable data for the periods between 1971 and 1975 and between 1995 and 1998.