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Abstract

The recent development of the Indo-Pacific region is characterised by the changing balance of power and the emergences of new forms of security cooperation. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) between Japan, the United States (U.S.), Australia and India came back into existence in 2017 after their failed attempt in 2007-2008. This thesis attempts to investigate what factors explain the re-emergence of the QSD by synthesising several alignment/alliance theories in International Relations (IR). Given the previous research on the QSD and theoretical discussions, this thesis points out the two key factors that contributed to the re-emergence of the QSD: the shared threat perception towards China and the shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. The content analysis of a number of official policy documents and press statements revealed that Japan, the U.S., Australia and India have increasingly perceived China as a threat and coordinated their policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region under the concept of the Free and Open-Indo Pacific.

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1. Introduction

The security landscape in the Indo-Pacific has experienced significant changes over the course of the past few decades. The increasing assertiveness of China in the South and East China Sea, along with the recent nuclear missile experiments conducted by North Korea, has generated great concern among the neighbouring countries as well as the international community at large.

At the same time, new forms of security cooperation have emerged in an attempt to ensure the regional security. The prime example of the security cooperation efforts is the establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), also known as the Quad Initiative in 2017. The QSD is an informal strategic security dialogue between Japan, the United States (U.S.), Australia and India that primarily addresses such issues as maritime security, freedom of navigation, and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific region. The initiation of the QSD is often credited to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his opinion piece “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond” (Abe, 2012) that he published on Project Syndicate soon after he came into office in late 2012. In the article, he called for the creation of an alliance to preserve the common good in the Indo-Pacific region, which forms the shape of a diamond with Japan, the U.S. (Hawaii), Australia and India. The very first meeting of the officials from the four countries took place in Manila on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in November 2017, followed by two meetings in June and November 2018.

However, the idea for this quadrilateral grouping is not entirely new. In late 2007, Shinzo Abe in his first cabinet proposed the initial framework for the QSD under the concept of the “value-oriented diplomacy” that focused on the promotion of liberal democratic values. The first attempt for the QSD was rather short-lived and seemed to be completely “dead” in early 2008, with the Australia’s decision to withdraw from the grouping of the four countries. Therefore, a great deal of attention has now been paid to the revival of the so-called “Quad”. Despite its sudden dissolution in 2008, why has the QSD come back into existence? This leads to the research question of the thesis: what factors explain the re-emergence of the QSD?

This thesis attempts to synthesise and modify existing various alignment/alliance theories and points out the two major factors for the revival of the QSD: the shared threat perception towards China and shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter explores the existing literature on the following three themes: the QSD, the conceptual problems of alliance and alliance/alignment formation. The theoretical framework is built in the second chapter upon the conceptual and theoretical discussions in the literature review. The third chapter deals with the
methodological framework that I employed in order to conduct the research. The fourth chapter analyses and discusses the collected data in attempt to offer the answers to the research question. Finally, the thesis is concluded with the summary of the key findings discussed in the previous chapters and the restatement of the argument.

2. Literature Review

This chapter critically evaluates the existing literature relevant to the research question.

2.1. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

It is commonly agreed among scholars that the formation of the first QSD between Japan, the U.S., Australia and India in 2007 was intended to function as a containment or encirclement strategy against China, reflecting its rising power in the Indo-Pacific region (Sharma, 2010; Lee, 2016; Lee and Lee, 2016; Satake and Hemmings, 2018).

Sharma (2010) analyses India’s increasingly deepened strategic ties with Japan, the U.S., Australia and possible setbacks in the pursuit of security cooperation in quadrilateral context. He suggests that Australia and India are not willing to pursue quadrilateral cooperation mainly due to their strong economic ties with China. Given that the Quad is seen as a strategic grouping to contain or encircle China, it seems to be reasonable for India and Australia to act in a way that does not provoke China. However, such an argument fails to account for the contradiction of the economic dependence of Japan and the U.S. on China and their receptive attitude towards quadrilateral cooperation. This claim also contradicts the recent growing inclination of Australia to pursue security cooperation between the four countries.

Sharma (2010:247-250) also identifies several factors that justifies the formation of the quadrilateral grouping. He emphasises the four countries’ interests in promoting democracy and contrasting regime character in the region in addition to the recent Chinese military build-up. Sharma’s focus on identity, values and interests might suggest how ideational factors play a role in the emergence of security cooperation. Sharma further suggests that cooperation on disaster management is also a justification for the QSD given the common concern for natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and climate change.

Lee (2016) analyses Abe’s so-called Democratic Security Diamond strategy and the Quadrilateral Initiative from Australia’s point of view and examines how open Australia would possibly be to engaging in quadrilateral cooperation given that it was hesitant to pursue it in the past.
This paper also includes a historical account of why the first attempt for the QSD in 2007 ended up in failure. Lee (2016) offers several explanations for the demise of the QSD in 2008. One of the main factors is that strong advocates for the QSD lost office one after another from 2007 to 2008 (Lee, 2016:4) While Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the initiator of the QSD, announced to quit his post in September 2007 due to his severe illness, the U.S. President George W. Bush was increasingly focused on stabilising the situation in the Middle East with the termination of his term of office within sight. Also, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, a strong supporter for the deeper security ties between the Quad countries, lost his office in November 2007 to Kevin Rudd, who later declared Australia’s withdrawal from the QSD.

Most interestingly, Lee (2016:6-8) points out how China’s “smile diplomacy”, which intended to convince the international community that its rise was peaceful, had a negative influence on the first attempt for the QSD. Even though China was expanding and modernising its military capabilities at an unprecedented pace, it had not shown its assertiveness in the South and East China Seas at that time. This led some optimistic political elites in the Quad countries, particularly in Australia, to believe that the QSD would provoke China to further reinforce its military or act aggressively in the region, rather than counter its rise (Lee, 2016:6).

As far as Australia’s recent attitude towards the QSD is concerned, Lee (2016) maintains that as Canberra increasingly sees the rise of China as a threat to the law and order in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia might now be willing to pursue quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, the U.S. and India. This assessment involves a content analysis of the Defence White Paper 2016 to identify Australia’s current strategic landscape and its threat perception (Lee, 2016:11-16).

However, Lee (2016:29-31) further argues that Australia would prefer a more informal format of cooperation than Abe’s idea of Democratic Security Diamond, which complements both Australia’s existing bilateral and trilateral cooperation with the U.S. and Japan because formally institutionalised quadrilateral grouping could undermine the ASEAN centrality and create security dilemma with China, which might accelerate its further assertiveness in the region. The same preference for the informality of quadrilateral cooperation goes for India (Lee, 2016:30).

Satake and Hemmings (2018) tackles a similar problem and examined the question: why can the Japan-Australia bilateral, the U.S.-Japan-Australia trilateral relationships and the QSD not ever be portrayed as an alliance, in spite of the fact that these relationships, particularly in bilateral and trilateral context, are increasingly institutionalised? The authors synthesize existing literature and theoretical frameworks on alignment and alliances and argue that security
cooperation between Japan and Australia in both bilateral and multilateral contexts has been slowed down by the fear of provoking China and entrapment by each other or by the U.S.

Satake and Hemmings (2018:834) conclude that even though Japan has shifted its security policy from the conventional bilateral partnership with the U.S. to multilateral ones, it is unlikely that it will seek to evolve the multilateral cooperation into a formal alliance. Yet this claim appears to be questionable as the proposal of the Democratic Security Diamond strategy and the recent statement from the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono, (Hayashi and Onchi, 2017) that Japan is willing to hold a top-level security dialogue within the grouping of the Quad can be interpreted as Japan’s move towards the creation of a formal security alliance.

Lee and Lee (2016) look more into India’s perspective on the QSD and examined how enthusiastic New Delhi would be about engaging in it. The authors assert that though the pursuit of a closer tie with Japan, the U.S. and Australia in security area would be attractive to India, Chinese actions and presence in the Indo-Pacific are not yet threatening to India’s strategic interests at an alarming level: hence, India is still uncertain about promoting quadrilateral cooperation (Lee and Lee, 2016:298).

As Lee (2016) points to how the formally institutionalised QSD will undermine the ASEAN Centrality, this paper also offers the expanded explanations of its possible implications on Southeast Asian countries. Lee and Lee (2016:299) notes that the democratic grouping that the QSD emphasises might discomfort some countries in Southeast Asia. Since some of the ASEAN states such as Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar remain undemocratic, ASEAN nations would prefer the emphasis on the promotion of external liberal order, which ASEAN pursues as their goal.

In addition, Lee and Lee (2012:301) highlight the lack of capacities of Southeast Asian countries to counter Chinese pressure. While some countries like the Philippines and Vietnam would show tremendous support for the formation of an explicit anti-Chinese coalition, many other ASEAN states are not yet ready to cope with the possible pressure on them from China to oppose such an exclusive grouping.

Many scholars have attempted to analyse how receptive each country would be towards the QSD as well as the obstacles that the four countries may face in promoting it. Importantly, they have also highlighted the rise of China as a factor contributing to the changing nature of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. However, there seems to be a lack of theoretical explanations on why the grouping of the four countries emerged. Another remark is that such concepts as alliance, alignment, coalitions, strategic partnerships are used interchangeably or
without presenting clear definitions in many of these articles. This leads to the next chapter of the literature review where the concept of alliance will critically be examined.

2.2. Rethinking the concept of “alliance” in International Relations

The review of the various literature on the QSD highlighted the inconsistencies of the terminology concerning different forms of security cooperation. In the field of International Relations (IR), the concept of alliance has been broadly and flexibly used to describe security collaboration among states; however, there has not been a consensus among scholars on its definition despite its conceptual significance.

Walt (1997:157) defines an alliance as “a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states”. According to him, the concept of alliance should entail both formal and informal forms; the former is a case in which security cooperation is promised in a written treaty while the latter is based on mutual expectations for cooperation that arise from verbal assurances or joint military exercises. This definition of alliance is rather broad and seems to blur the distinctions of different forms of security cooperation. Instead, Walt (1997:157-158) suggests that the nature of alliances can vary in many ways even though “the primary purpose of most alliances is to combine the members’ capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests”. For example, alliances can differ in terms of institutionalisation. While some formal alliances like North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are so institutionalised that they can coordinate the behaviours of the member states, coalitions like the Axis during the WW2 or most Arab alliances are ad hoc forms of alliance that lack in coordinated policies or actions (Walt, 1997:157). Alliances can also vary regarding whether they are offensive or defensive. Some alliances are designed to amass the military capabilities of the members in order to assault adversary states while others are focused on collective self-defence that guarantees military assistances in case that one of the member states is under attack from another state (Walt, 1997:157).

As opposed to Walt’s definition, Snyder (1990:104) offers a more narrowed-down concept of alliance as follows: “formal associations of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states, whether or not these others are explicitly identified”. According to this definition, an alliance is an entity focused solely on military means and security purposes, differing from voting blocs in international organisations and custom unions. Importantly, unlike Walt (1997) who defines an alliance regardless of its formality or informality, Snyder (1990:105) notes that
alliance is merely a formal subset of “alignment” that refers to “a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other’s support in disputes or wars with particular other states”. As these mutual expectations emerge primarily from perceived common interest, alignments can always be strengthened, weakened or dissolved due to changes in the interests of states, perceptions of other states’ intent and other domestic factors (Snyder, 1990:105).

However, Walt (1997:158) and Snyder (1990:105) agree that collective security agreements or organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations should be separated from the definition of alliance. Such forms of security cooperation are inclusive; in other words, they are meant to exercise collective security against any act of aggression, even if the aggressor is one of the member states. Snyder (1990:105-106) also recognises that alliances can manifest different features. For instance, he argues that peacetime alliances can be distinguished from those formed during war times: “coalitions”, which often lacks most political functions that peacetime alliances have.

As Snyder proposes the definition of alliance as a subset of alignment, Wilkins (2012) also argues that a clear distinction between alignment and alliance is necessary and that the term alliance has commonly been employed without thorough justification in the research of IR when the use of alignment is more appropriate. In his study, Wilkins presents the following roughly four subtypes of alignment: “alliance”, “coalition”, “security community” and “strategic partnership”, and defines each term through the review of major alliance and alignment literature. First, Wilkins (2012) compares the definition of an alliance put forward by Snyder and Walt and contends that the former should be adopted because the latter is too broad to limit its meaning solely to alliances. Though both Walt and Snyder see coalitions as one of the subcategories of alliances, Wilkins (2012:64) argues that these two should clearly be separated:

Whereas alliances are relatively broad-based and permanent institutions, usually based upon formal treaties, coalitions are more informal, narrowly-focused, and short-lived […] Alliances are when a future threat is clearly identified and planned for (a ‘specific threat’). Coalitions form when this threat has not been foreseen and states are caught by surprise (a ‘non-specific’ or ‘unexpected’ threat) […]

Given their fundamental differences, Wilkins (2012:64) is sceptical about the fact that theoretical frameworks to analyse alliance behaviour in peacetime have indiscriminately been applied to both peacetime alliances and coalitions.
When it comes to security community, it is one of the under-conceptualised or under-theorised taxonomies of alignment (Wilkins, 2012:66). Wilkins attributes Deutsch (1957, cited in Wilkins, 2012:65) to the origin of the term and presents the definition as “a peaceful comity of states through gradual confidence building and integration”. The empirical examples of security communities include the EU and ASEAN, where states work together to eliminate the use of military forces as a means of achieving their own gains within the political sphere and to establish an exclusive shared identity. According to Wilkins (2012:65-66), two different types of a security community can be identified: “pluralistic” and “amalgamated” security communities. The former is concerned with intergovernmental entities like the ASEAN that guarantee a high level of national sovereignty while the latter refers to supranational entities like the EU where the member states delegate their sovereignty to a higher authority to a great extent.

As far as strategic partnership is concerned, Wilkins (2012:67) contends that it is the latest subcategory of alignment and that just as security community, there is little discussion on its definitional problem in the realm of IR in spite of the fact that the term is frequently employed in international politics. He proposes the following definition of a strategic partnership from his previous work:

Structured collaboration between states (or other ‘actors’) to take joint advantage of economic opportunities, or to respond to security challenges more effectively than could be achieved in isolation. Besides allowing information, skills, and resources to be shared, a strategic partnership also permits the partners to share risk” (Wilkins, 2008:368).

This definition has a root in business and organisational studies as the concept of a strategic partnership has widely been used in the business world.

Wilkins (2012:68) further suggests that a strategic partnership is characterised by the following four attributes. First, it is organised primarily based on a general purpose called a “system principle”. Secondly, the development of a strategic partnership is a goal-driven rather than threat-driven, though the member states might cooperate within joint security issues like international terrorism. However, this characteristic seems contradictory to the strategic partnership model that Wilkins (2008) put forward, in which he argues that uncertainty in the external environment creates a ground for the creation of a strategic partnership. His model will be discussed more in detail in the next section. Thirdly, a strategic partnership is likely to be an informal entity without a formal alliance treaty, guaranteeing a greater degree of autonomy.
compared to the other forms of alignments. This informality is one of the advantages over other types of alignment as it is less likely to provoke the states that are targeted or excluded and does not require high level of responsibility. Finally, economic cooperation can emerge from or can be a key factor for the establishment of a strategic partnership as the term has its origin in the business world. Wilkins (2012:68) argues that this also reflects the significance of economic power in the modern international system.

His conceptual revaluation of alignment offers a great insight to the study of alliance and alignment behaviours in IR; however, Wilkins (2012) also notes that more conceptual inquiries should be conducted into different types of alignment, particularly relatively new concepts such as “strategic community” and “strategic partnership”.

2.3. Alignment/Alliance Formation

On what conditions does security cooperation among states emerge? Many scholars have attempted to offer theoretical frameworks to understand alignment behaviours, particularly alliance ones, of states. One of the prominent works on alliance formation was done by Walt in “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power” (1985). Walt proposes balance of threat theory and argues that the alliance behaviour of states is determined by the threat posed by other states, modifying the traditional neorealist balance of power theory. While balance of power theory contends that states form an alliance to balance against the powerful state often in terms of military capabilities, balance of threat theory believes that states seek to balance against the perceived threat in the system.

According to Walt (1985:9), the threat is defined by the following four elements: “aggregate power”, “proximity”, “offensive capabilities”, and “aggressive intentions”. States evaluate the threat posed by other states by these four criteria. First, aggregate power is translated as a state’s total resources such as population, technological advancement, military capabilities, etc. (Walt, 1985:9). Second, proximity simply refers to geographical distance between states (Walt, 1985:10). States are less likely to perceive it as threatening even if another state in distance has increased its power; likewise, states tend to feel threatened by a nearby state more than necessary even if it does not possess tremendous power. Third, offensive capabilities are often understood in terms of military capabilities (Walt, 1985:11). It is important to note that military capabilities here do not simply mean possessing a large military but one that is capable of conduct offensive operations. Finally, offensive intentions mean that states are more likely to balance against another state that appears aggressive (Walt, 1985:12). Importantly, Walt
highlights that the perceptions of intent play a particularly significant part in the identification of a threat. States are less likely to balance or form an alliance against another state with powerful military capabilities if it does not show any offensive intentions.

Despite his logical explanation that states do not simply balance against power but threats and the seemingly clear picture of what constitutes a threat, Walt’s balance of threat theory seems to be theoretically flawed in several ways. In particular, the significance of offensive capabilities and aggressive intentions that Walt emphasises might be problematic as these variables are difficult to measure. Almost any military weapons can be used for offence and defence while it is quite unclear as to what is meant by “intention” and what makes it appear aggressive.

In fact, Barnett (1996) in “Identity and Alliances in the Middle East” criticises the concept of offensive intentions as under-specified and under-theorised. He argues from a constructivist perspective that identity is closely related to the construction of threat and that it can offer a theoretical leverage over the neorealist view that structural or material factors alone cannot explain what constitutes a threat. To be more specific, a shared identity creates an awareness of the “Self” and the “Other”, which determines who is an ideal alliance partner or whom to balance against (Barnet, 1996). Barnet explains how an identity has played an important role in the alliance formation in the Middle East through a few case studies.

Similarly, Snyder (1990) argues that even though systemic anarchy is a key factor to explain why alliances are formed, ideational factors like common interests and values play a significant role in alliance behaviour of states especially in a multipolar system. According to his study, the dynamics of alliance formation differs significantly in bipolar and multipolar system. In a bipolar system where only two superpowers dominate, the process of alliance formation can be explained in a simpler way than in a multipolar one (Snyder, 1990:117) Since there exists no common potential enemy for the superpowers to ally against, the system level factor predominantly determines who allies with whom. On the other hand, in a multipolar system where multiple major states exist, shared interests and values among states play an important role in determining a pattern of alignment that might supplement the creation of a formal alliance as these factors generate some expectation of mutual support (Snyder, 1990:108-109).

Barnett (1996) and Snyder (1990) seem to shed light on a major theoretical weakness in Walt’s balance of threat theory, his preoccupation with system-level and material factors in explaining alliance formation.

Keohane (1988:174), on the other hand, points out the lack of attention to historical context and international institutions in neorealist theory, and argues that such theoretical flaws are also
present in Walt’s work “The Origin of Alliances” in which Walt (1987) further elaborated on
balance of threat theory. Keohane (1988:174) argues that the lack of focus on institutions in
Walt’s argument is a weakness as an alliance itself is an institution where rules and norms are
imposed on the member states. This leaves institutional questions regarding the conditions
under which alignments become formalised or institutionalised.

Wilkins (2008) attempts to formulate a theoretical framework to specifically explain how a
strategic partnership is formed and developed, relying on organisational and business studies.
As discussed in the previous section, he demonstrates that a strategic partnership is the latest
subtype of alignment so that conventional alliance and alignment theories are not adequate to
understand this phenomenon. He proposes an analytical framework called a strategic
partnership model that divides phases of a strategic partnership into the following three:
formation, implementation, and evaluation. In the formation phase of the model, Wilkins
explains what factors contribute to the emergence of a strategic partnership.

First, uncertainty in the external environment creates a condition for the formation of a
strategic partnership as prospective member states (or actors) attempt to counter it through
combining capabilities and forces (Wilkins, 2008:363-364). As mentioned in the conceptual
discussion of a strategic partnership, this is where the theory seems to contradict the prerequisite
concept. He fails to explain what is meant by “uncertainty” and continues to argue that states
that form a strategic partnership do not necessarily share a common threat perception. In view
of uncertainty in the external environment, states seek to approach possible collaborators based
on mutual interests, rather than shared values or ideology, which become solidified into a
system-principle (Wilkins, 2008:364). The concept of a system principle is defined as “a reason
for being”, originating from the business and organisational studies (Roberts, 2004 cited in
Wilkins, 2008:364). Despite his emphasis on the role of “mutual interests”, Wilkins (2008:364)
continues to contend that the essence of a strategic partnership is “inter-state cooperation to
achieve mutual objectives”. Here, it appears that Wilkins fails to conceptualise the concept of
“interests” and confuses “mutual interests” with “mutual objectives”. Wilkins also notes that
the formation of a strategic partnership is top-down and elite-driven process; thus, a
considerable support and involvement of top leaders are to create and continue to maintain the
partnership.
3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter attempts to offer the theoretical framework to help answer the research question. The existing literature on the QSD shows that there is a consensus among scholars that the grouping of the four countries arose in response to the rise of China. At the same time, it highlights the lack of theoretical explanations as to why the security cooperation between Japan, the U.S., Australia and India emerged and why the initial attempt resulted in failure. Wilkins (2008;2012) provides a useful taxonomy of alignment and an analytical framework to understand the dynamics of a strategic partnership. Given the conceptual discussion of different forms of alignments, the closest concept to the QSD is a strategic partnership due to its distinctive informality. Therefore, I argue that the theoretical basis can be placed on the strategic partnership model that Wilkins (2008) put forward. Yet I also believe that a refinement of the theory is necessary in order to build further credibility to the research. I propose the following theoretical framework for this thesis that combines two theories: Wilkins’s strategic partnership model and Walt’s balance of threat theory, while also considering various discussions of alignment/alliance formation.

3.1. Shared Threat Perception

Wilkins (2008) contends that a strategic partnership is impelled to be formed in response to uncertainty in the external environment. Even though external uncertainty indicates the significance of system level factors, he fails to specify what it means and makes a somewhat contradictory claim that the member states of a strategic partnership do not necessarily share a common threat perception. This can be supplemented by Walt’s assumption that states balance against a threat rather than power alone through forming an alliance. Walt identifies a threat as the combination of the following four elements: aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and offensive intentions. However, I assume that geographical proximity and offensive capabilities are redundant. I argue that the geographical proximity has lost its significance due to the emergence of extremely long-range weapons such as intercontinental ballistic missiles and technological development while the offensive capabilities is unnecessary as any military weapons can be used for offense and defence; thus it is not possible to draw a line between offensive and defensive capabilities. According to Walt, aggressive intentions are particularly important factors to consider in assessing a threat level; however, it is extremely problematic since Walt fails to theorise and develop the concept of intent. In this thesis, I maintain that aggressive intentions can take many forms like certain foreign policies and
military behaviours such as exercises, deployments of military forces, and intrusions. As alliance/alignment formation has long been considered a response to a threat, shared threat perception is an important factor for a strategic partnership formation.

3.2. Shared Objectives

While recognising the significance of material factors in realist and neorealist terms, many theorists maintain that material factors alone cannot explain the alliance/alignment formation. Snyder (1990) emphasises the role of shared value and interests in alliance behaviours in a multipolar international system. Barnet (1996), from a constructivist point of view, argues how the identity of states contributes to the construction of threats and shape the choices of alliance partners, critiquing the preoccupation of Walt with material factors. Similarly, Wilkins (2008) also contends that the existence of mutual interests, which becomes solidified into a system-principle, “a reason for being”, is necessary for states to form a strategic partnership. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, I point out that the concept of the mutual interests is rather under-conceptualised and that Wilkins appears to confuse “mutual interests” with “mutual objectives”. Since common objectives are not necessarily based on interests in the economic sense, it seems more accurate to say that states seek to approach possible collaborators on the basis of “mutual objectives”, instead of “mutual interests”. Based on this critique, I assume that shared objectives can encompass a wide range of areas including security, economy, environment and development. A strategic partnership is a relatively new form of alignment and differs significantly from a traditional alliance that is exclusively oriented to security of states. Therefore, the coordination of various common objectives among the member states is another important factor for a strategic partnership formation.

3.3. Hypotheses

Given the previous research on the QSD, these two factors discussed above lead to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H:1 There has been a growing threat perception towards China among the Quad countries since the time when the first attempt for the QSD failed.
H2: The Quad countries have increasingly shared and coordinated their policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.
4. Methodology

This chapter discusses how I conducted the research to answer the research question: what factors explain the re-emergence of the QSD between Japan, the US, Australia and India.

4.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

This study primarily employed qualitative content analysis as the method to tackle the research question. Content analysis is defined as “an activity in which researchers examine artifacts of social communication” (Berg and Lune, 2012:353, cited in Lamont, 2015:89). According to Halperin and Heath (2017:346), content analysis can either be quantitative or qualitative, depending on what types of contents one attempts to investigate. Quantitative content analysis is concerned with the “manifest” content of communications, meaning that the content is easily observable and translated into numerical forms. For example, it can be employed to count how many times certain words or phrases appear in a communication. The qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, is focused on “latent” content of communications, meaning that it attempts to infer underlying meanings, motives and purposes within the text (Halperin and Heath, 2017:346). As this study requires a deep understanding of the contents of documents and statements, qualitative content analysis was selected.

The first part of the analysis starts with the assessment of to what extent China has been seen as a threat, using the criteria of what constitutes a threat discussed in the previous chapter: aggregate power and offensive intentions. As for the aggregate power, I looked into a number of quantitative indicators to evaluate China’s capabilities in terms of economic and military power in comparison with Japan, the U.S., Australia and India. The assessment of aggressive intentions was discussed using various news articles and data from a think tank. The analysis proceeds to the content analysis of defence white papers or equivalents of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India in order to examine if the theoretical assessment of China as a threat has been reflected in the threat perception of the four countries. In content analysis, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, it is important to define categories that the researcher will search for in the materials that they have selected (Halperin and Heath, 2017:347). According to Lamont (2015:90), the categorisation can be approached in either an inductive or deductive manner. The inductive approach allows the researcher to create categories during the analysis of the materials while the deductive one utilises pre-existing theoretical framework to create coding categories. In the analysis of the threat perception, the coding categories were defined deductively based on the proposed theoretical framework namely: aggregate power and
aggressive intentions. Thus, each mention of concepts such as the military build-up, economic growth, military activities, and certain policies of China was coded and analysed.

The second part investigates whether the QSD is formed on the basis of common objectives. The theoretical framework argues that the presence of common objectives and goals among the collaborating countries is a necessary condition for a strategic partnership to be formed. Here, I took an inductive approach to generate coding categories by examining the press statements of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India on the QSD. These documents present the long-term objectives and goals of the QSD. Therefore, I coded goal-driven or objective-driven statements in the documents in order to identify the objectives of the QSD. This leads to the next step of the analysis, which examines whether objective-driven or goal-driven statements that fall into the generated categories can be found in other official policy documents or press releases of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India.

4.2. Data Selection

This study depended on a number of official governmental reports and press releases from Japan, the U.S., Australia and India. When it comes to the content analysis of the threat perceptions towards China, the defence white papers or equivalents published in each country were employed. For the research to be manageable, I mainly looked into one document from 2007, the initial attempt of the QSD, and one document when the QSD re-emerged in 2017 from each country.

When it comes to the identifications of the shared objectives of the QSD, as mentioned above, I utilised press statements on the QSD that were released by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JMFA, 2017a;2018a;2018b), the U.S. Department of State (USDS, 2017a;2018a;2018b), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ADFAT, 2017a;2018a;2018b) and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (IMEA, 2017a;2018a;2018b) shortly after the meeting of the QSD in November 2017, June 2018 and November 2018. The subsequent analysis of policy objectives of the four countries looked into various official publications from different branches of each government since objectives and goals cannot necessarily be limited to a specific realm but can cover a range of areas such as security, economy, development and environment. As with the analysis of the threat perception, I investigated both recent publications and the ones that came out around the time when the first attempt for the QSD was made in order to compare the changes in the policy objectives of the four countries.
Additionally, I employed various news articles such as The Diplomat, Financial Times and The New York Times and statistical data from different institutions such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO). The analytical data from a think tank, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) was also employed. These sources were used in order to assess China as a threat in the first part of the analysis as well as provide background information throughout the analysis.

4.3. Limitation
Just as no single theory in IR is without its flaws, there are also limitations for the proposed theoretical framework above. Among other things, the assessment of the shared threat perception is extremely difficult. As discussed earlier, though the perception of the intent seems to play a significant role in shaping states’ threat perception towards another state, the concept of the intent has been poorly theorised in terms of how it is determined. After all, a perception is a subjective cognition of the objective reality; therefore, the analysis of official statements or documents was necessary in order to assess the threat perception of states. The further theoretical development in threat perception or construction is needed, perhaps, with the help of different fields of studies such as psychology.

In terms of the limitation in data selection, some of the documents such as the U.S. National Security Strategy and Australia’s Defence White Paper are not published on an annual basis. In such cases, the documents that were published in the closest years to the two events were used for the analysis.

5. Analysis
Given the theoretical and methodological frameworks discussed above, the collected data will be critically analysed in this chapter. This chapter is divided into the following two parts: China as a Threat; and Shared Objectives of the Quad.

5.1. Shared Threat Perception: China as a Threat

5.1.1. Aggregate Power
China has experienced an unprecedented economic boom over the course of the past few decades. The nominal GDP of China skyrocketed since the mid 2000 after its gradual increase
to become the second largest in the world, exceeding that of Japan in 2010 (IMF, 2019a). The U.S. remains in its position as the largest GDP holder, steadily increasing its nominal GDP; yet it is expected to be surpassed by China in the next couple of decades (IMF, 2019a).

![Figure 1. GDP, Current Prices 2000-2018 (Billions of U.S. dollars) (Generated from IMF, 2019a)](image)

In terms of the rate of economic growth, the real GDP growth of China has slowed down in the past few years, decreasing from the peak of 14.2% in 2007 to 6.3% in 2019 (IMF, 2019b). However, China, along with India, still remains relatively high in its growth rate compared to the other Quad countries that have seen their economic growth at a sluggish pace. (IMF, 2019b)

![Figure 2. Real GDP growth 2000-2018 (Annual percentage change) (Generated from IMF, 2019b)](image)

The rise of China in economic terms brought about substantive benefits for many countries around the world and the Quad countries are no exceptions. As of 2017, the percentage of
merchandise imports from China was the highest in all the four countries, accounting for 24.5% in Japan, 21.9% in Australia, 21.8% in the U.S. and 16.6 % in India (WTO, 2017a;2017b;2017c;2017d). The evidence that all the Quad countries are dependent on China in their trades invalidates Sharma’s claim (2010) that Australia and India are hesitant to deepen security cooperation in quadrilateral context due to their economic ties with China despite the willingness of Japan and the U.S., whose amounts of trade with China are even higher than Australia and India.

China has also recently been rapidly increasing their military budget and succeeded in modernising their military capabilities. According to the data from SIPRI (2018a), there has been a significant rise in China’s total military expenditure from approximately 41 billion U.S. dollars in 2000 to 228 billion US dollars. In comparison with the Quad countries, the military budget of China outnumbered that of the three countries except the U.S. as of 2001 and continued to widen the gap while the other three countries did not experience dramatic changes in their military spending, if anything, they saw a slight increase. Even though the U.S. has remained in its position as a military hegemon, with by far the largest military spending, China is increasingly closing the gap with the U.S. in their military strength, year after year (SIPRI, 2018a).

However, different data revealed that the percentage of the Chinese military spending against its GDP has remained between 1.9% and 2.1% (SIPRI, 2018b). Thus, it can be argued that the ever-increasing military spending and capabilities of China are not an extraordinary phenomenon but no more than the reflection of its economic growth.
5.1.2. Aggressive Intentions

The theoretical framework argues that the perception of intent plays a vital role in shaping the threat perception of a state against another state, and thus contributes greatly to creating a condition on which a strategic partnership is formed. Aggressive intentions can take many different forms such as certain foreign policies and military activities. However, it is extremely difficult to objectively evaluate whether a state is showing aggressive intentions through its certain behaviours. In this section, therefore, I will present major events concerning China, that fall into the definition of aggressive intentions and have also drawn considerable international attention and controversy.

In recent years, there have been a growing use of “assertiveness” to describe China’s activities in the region in political, media and even academic discourses. This might suggest that China has increasingly shown its aggressive intentions in the region. One of the primary examples of this assertiveness is China’s land reclamation activities in the Spratly Islands in the South China Seas, on which multiple countries including China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei claim their territorial right. China unilaterally initiated its reclamation projects at several locations in the Spratly Islands in order to strengthen its territorial claims in the region in late 2013 (Lockett, 2016). As the construction of military facilities such as radar dorms, runways and ports was observed along with the land reclamation, this series of unilateral actions of China led to the escalation of tension in the region (Beech,
According to AMTI (2019), China has carried out its reclamation activities in the total of seven locations in the Spratly Islands so far.

Another example is the unilateral declaration of the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Seas. The ADIZ is defined as a designated “area of airspace […] within which the ready identification, and the control of aircraft are required in the interest of national security” and usually has no legal binding force. (U.S., n.d. cited in Green et al., 2017). China unilaterally announced its establishment of the new ADIZ in the East China Seas in 2013. Since the designated area consists of the disputed Senkaku (Diaoyu) islands controlled by Japan and overlaps with the ADIZ of South Korea and Taiwan to some degree, it gives rise to possible conflicts through the lack of mutual understanding and thus the instability in the region (Gladstone and Wald, 2013). Therefore, it sparked great concern and criticism from the neighbouring countries as well as many EU countries and the U.S.

Figure 5. The Overlapping ADIZs in the East China Sea (Source: Green et al., 2017)

Given the growing military and economic power of China relative to the U.S., Japan, Australia and India and its activities in the region that appear aggressive, it might be fair to argue that China has increasingly been a threat to the four countries.

5.1.3. Threat Perception

The analysis proceeds to examine to what extent China as a threat is reflected in the defence white papers or equivalents of the U.S., Japan, Australia and India.
Japan

Defense of Japan 2007

Japan, perhaps the strongest advocate for quadrilateral security cooperation, seems to have had a great degree of threat perception towards China since the first call for the QSD. The Defense of Japan 2007 highlighted many Chinese military activities as well as the increasing power of China (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007). Despite admitting that many countries in the Asia-Pacific regional had improved their military capabilities as their economies grew, the document expressed particular concern towards China over the pace of its military reinforcement and the lack of transparency (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007:4-5). Given such a circumstance, it further stated that it was increasingly necessary for China to disclose more information on its national defence policy and military capabilities.

In regard to the Chinese military activities, the Defense of Japan 2007 primarily addressed alleged China’s maritime aggression in proximity to Japan. For example, it referred to an incident in which a submerged Chinese nuclear-powered submarine intruded into Japanese territorial waters in 2004 and the fact that Chinese government-owned ships were frequently observed carrying out oceanographic research within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Japan (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007:59). It further mentioned the case in which a Chinese submarine reportedly broached in a close distance to the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy in international sea waters near Japan in 2006, calling it a “noteworthy military incident” (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007:59). Even though explicit criticism was hardly made, it is obvious that Tokyo was anxious over the increasing maritime activities of China off the coast of Japan, whether these were for military or research purposes, and that it had perceived the intentions behind them as aggressive.

It also appeared that Tokyo was watchful of the presence of the Chinese military in other parts of the region:

In addition to activities in the Japanese waters, China is enhancing its bases of activities in the Spratly and Paracel islands, over which it has territorial disputes with countries including ASEAN counties. China is seemingly interested in the Indian Sea area, which provides a shipping route for transporting crude oil from the Middle East (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007:59).
The above statement indicates that Tokyo had calculated that China would exert more influence in the Asia-Pacific region as it boosted its economic and military power.

Furthermore, Tokyo also pointed out China’s missile experiment that shot down its own satellites, claiming that China did not provide enough explanations on its purposes, and that it should be more accountable for its military actions (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2007:53).

**Defense of Japan 2017**

After a decade since the demise of the first QSD, Tokyo seemed to become even more vigilant in the face of the growing military capabilities of China and its intensifying maritime and airspace activities near the Japanese waters. In the Defense of Japan 2017, while welcoming its active participations in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities, Tokyo explicitly criticised some behaviours of China in the region as follows:

[...] while advocating “peaceful development,” China, particularly over maritime issues where its interests conflict with others’, continues to act in an assertive manner, including attempts at changing the status quo by coercion based on its own assertions incompatible with the existing international order (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017:85).

It is no doubt that this statement is referring to the unilateral land reclamation projects in the Spratly Islands as well as the establishment of the new ADIZ in the East China Sea. In fact, the document repeatedly condemned these particular activities as “extremely regrettable”, presenting several visual images to describe the situations in detail (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017:98-106).

Regarding China’s maritime activities around the Japanese waters, the Defence of Japan 2017 stated that Chinese government-owned ships had continued to intrude into the territorial waters of Japan at significant frequency. Also, Tokyo showed its deep concern about the increasing activities of Chinese naval fleets in Japan’s contiguous zone around Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands, on which China also claims territorial rights, as well as the navigation of a Chinese Navy vessel within the Japanese territorial waters in June 2016.

As far as the China’s activities in airspace are concerned, the document stated that the frequency of the emergency takes off (scrambles) against Chinese aircrafts hit a record high as of 2016 (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017:322). In 2016, Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) fighter planes scrambled in response to Chinese airspace aggression 851 times out of the total emergency takes off of 1,168 times. The frequency of scrambles against Chinese
aircrafts saw a steady increase from 38 times in 2008 to 156 times in 2011. The number suddenly doubled with 306 times in 2012 and continued to increase rapidly to reach 851 times in 2016 (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017:321). It might be reasonable to assume that these intensifying activities of Chinese aircrafts are associated with the unilateral declaration of the East China Sea ADIZ in 2013.

Given the unilateral activities of the Chinese military in the region mentioned above, Tokyo also expressed concerns particularly about the rapid modernisation of China’s Naval and Air Forces, and continued to urge China to be even more transparent about its military expansion and its purposes (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017:87;97).

The United States

National Security Strategy 2006

The U.S. government periodically publishes a document called “National Security Strategy” that outlines the major national security concerns and how it will cope with them. According to the National Security Strategy 2006, which was released under Bush administration, it seemed that Washington had a rather optimistic view on the rise of China (U.S., 2006). The low frequency of references to China also indicates that the priority of the U.S. in the security area was not directed towards China at the time of the first QSD emerged. Instead, what was looming large in the document were the unstable situation in the Middle East and war on global terrorism (U.S., 2006). The optimism of Washington towards the rise of China was, for example, shown in the following statement:

China’s leaders proclaim that they have made a decision to walk the transformative path of peaceful development. If China keeps this commitment, the United States will welcome the emergence of a China that is peaceful and prosperous and that cooperates with us to address common challenges and mutual interests (U.S., 2006:41).

However, Washington also showed its scepticism towards China, warning it to give up its “old ways of thinking and acting that exacerbate concerns throughout the region and the world” (U.S., 2006:41). Specifically, it pointed out China’s continuing non-transparent military build-up and the support for resource-rich countries that show misbehaviours at home or abroad of those regimes. Washington further urged China and Taiwan to resolve their disputes peacefully without the use of any means of violence or unilateral actions (U.S., 2006:42).
What changes occurred in the content of the National Security Strategy after a decade? The National Security Strategy 2017 was released under Trump Administration. As opposed to the National Security Strategy 2006, Washington showed its strong and explicit opposition to China throughout the document, claiming that it is attempting to undermine American security and prosperity by challenging American power, influence and interests (U.S., 2017:2). Washington’s concern about the rise of China and its increasing assertiveness was most intensely articulated in the following statement:

Although the United States seeks to continue to cooperate with China, China is using economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and implied military threats to persuade other states to head its political and security agenda. China’s infrastructure investments and trade strategies reinforce its geopolitical aspirations. Its efforts to build and militarize outputs in the South China Sea endanger the free flow of trade, threaten the sovereignty of other nations, and undermine regional stability. China has mounted a rapid military modernization campaign designed to limit U.S. access to the region and provide China a freer hand there. China presents its ambitious as mutually beneficial, but Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of many states in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S., 2017:46)

Interestingly, not only did the report make a reference to the land reclamation in South China Sea, but it also gave harsh criticism towards the infrastructure investments that China has been promoting under the Belt and Road Initiative, also known as the One Belt One Roads. Washington openly fears the Chinese influence particularly in Africa, claiming that “some Chinese practices undermine Africa’s long-term development by corrupting elites, dominating extractive industries, and locking countries into unsustainable and opaque debts and commitments”. (U.S., 2017:52)

Despite Washington’s strong condemnation over China’s growing military power and its aggressive intentions in Indo-Pacific region, however, any direct mentions of China’s ADIZ in the East China Sea were not made throughout the document. Overall, it is obvious that Washington is projecting the future and consequences of the rise of China with more pessimistic view than ever before.
**Australia**

*Defence White Paper 2009*

Australian Department of Defence published its Defence White Paper in 2009, one year after Australia’s decision to withdraw from the QSD. In the document, Canberra appeared to have an ambivalent view on China, remaining largely hopeful of China’s peaceful growth but filled with suspicion (Australian Department of Defence, 2009).

In coming years, China will develop an even deeper stake in the global economic system, and other major powers will have deep stakes in China’s economic success. China’s political leadership is likely to continue to appreciate the need for it to make strong contribution to strengthening the regional security environment and the global rules-based order (Australian Department of Defence, 2009:34).

As the above statement shows, there might have been a positive expectation among the political elites in Canberra that China would be convinced that its peaceful and moderate posture in the region will benefit itself more economically, gaining the trust of international community at large. However, the anxieties over China’s growing military capabilities were also prevalent in the document.

A major power of China’s stature can be expected to develop a globally significant military capability befitting its size. But the pace, scope and structure of China’s military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern if not carefully explained, and if China does not reach out to others to build confidence regarding its military plans (Australian Department of Defence, 2009:34).

While accepting China’s military expansion that correlates with its economic boom, Canberra emphasised that China should be more accountable for its objectives and purposes. The White Paper further stated that it is necessary for Australia to actively engage with China in order to encourage transparency about its military build-up and intentions and deepen the mutual understanding (Australian Department of Defence, 2009:95-96).

*Defence White Paper 2016*
The latest Defence White Paper of Australia came out in 2016, following the publication in 2013. According to Defence White Paper 2016 (Australian Department of Defence, 2016), it appeared that two major incidents in the East China and South China Seas as well as continuing development of the Chinese military led to the changes in Australia’s threat perception towards China. Canberra repeatedly raised concerns about the increasing China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea throughout the document, referring to the land reclamation in Spratly Islands.

Australia does not take sides on competing territorial claims in the South China Sea but we are concerned that land reclamation and construction activity by claimants raised tensions in the region. Australia opposes the use of artificial structures in the South China Sea for military purposes. […] Australia is particularly concerned by the unprecedented pace and scale of China’s land reclamation activities (Australian Department of Defence, 2016:58).

With a direct mention of China, the above articulation implies a clear signal that Australia is uncomfortable with the presence of the Chinese military in the region and will hold its activities in check. The White Paper further stated that it is crucial that the countries concerned become more open and transparent about their intentions and establish an agreed framework for the dispute resolution (Australian Department of Defence, 2016).

When it comes to the regional security in the East China Sea, Canberra also displayed its strong opposition to the offensive intention of China.

China’s 2013 unilateral declaration of an Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea, an area in which there are a number of overlapping Air Defence Identification Zones, caused tensions to rise. Australia is opposed to any coercive or unilateral actions to change the status quo in the East China Sea (Australian Department of Defence, 2016:58).

Although Australia does not have any direct connection with those territorial disputes with China, it has become obvious that Canberra increasingly perceives that some of recent China’s actions are aggressive and disrupting the regional order. Canberra’s anxieties over the regional security in the Indo-Pacific is further underpinned by its statement that the rules-based order which was maintained over many decades has been showing “signs of fragility” (Australian Department of Defence, 2016:45).
India

Annual Report 2006-2007

Indian Ministry of Defence publishes its report every year in which India’s security environment and defence policies are outlined. Just as the U.S. and Australia, India seemed to maintain a rather optimistic view on China at the point of the first attempt for the QSD despite the ongoing border disputes in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007). New Delhi emphasised China as an important partner in both security and economic areas throughout the document; yet the growing power of China was a matter of concern. The Annual Report 2006-2007 articulated that the situation along the India-China border had remained and would stay peaceful even given the different perceptions regarding the territorial issues (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007:6). However, it continued to state as follows:

> China’s military modernisation, with sustained double-digit growth in its defence budget for over a decade and continued upgradation of its nuclear and missile assets, development of infrastructure in the India-China border areas and its growing defence links with some of India’s neighbours continue to be monitored closely. (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007:6).

While highlighting their peaceful relationship, it is apparent that New Delhi was a little uncomfortable about the growing military power of China and some of their behaviours. The mention of China’s military links with some of India’s neighbouring countries most likely referred to China’s support for Pakistan, with which India has historically experienced a few conflicts. In fact, the Annual Report 2006-2007 further claimed that China’s technological assistance to Pakistan in the nuclear and missile projects could affect the national security of India negatively (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007:6).

> Interestingly New Delhi at the time predicted that there was a possibility that conflicts could arise over the security of the sea-lanes of communication as the economy of countries like India, China and Japan is highly dependent on oil shipments that go through the same marine waters (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007:3). Overall, the Annual Report 2006-2007 showed New Delhi’s willingness to enhance cooperative engagement with China, putting aside their ongoing disputes and contrasting attitudes towards some neighbouring countries.
The Annual Report 2016-2017, published in the same year when the first revived QSD meeting was held, appeared to reflect New Delhi’s growing fear towards China. New Delhi became even more anxious about the China’s military modernisation that focused on the improvement of airspace and maritime capabilities (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2017:4). The report described today’s international and regional security environment as follows:

The past year witnessed significant changes that directly impacted on the global and regional security scenario. The current international security environment can be characterised as one of rapid change, continued volatility and persistence of vast swathes of instability, compounded by uncertainty about policies and approaches of major powers. [...] The re-emergence of territorial disputes, including in the maritime domain, has sharpened differences between states and could lead to militaristic approaches and challenges to norms of international law as well as standards of international behaviour (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2017:2)

Though it avoided criticising certain countries by name, the reference to the territorial disputes in the maritime realm might have implicitly pointed to the increasing assertiveness of China in the region. This is further corroborated with the statement regarding the territorial disputes in South China Sea. The report stated that the implications of the recent developments in the South China Sea for the regional stability are inevitable and that India will continue to support the principles of international law and the resolution of the disputes through peaceful means (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2017:4). While highlighting its neutral stance towards the conflicts in the South China Sea, it is evident that New Delhi is extremely anxious about China disrupting the regional maritime security.

The Annual Report 2016-2017 also mentioned the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its implications to India. The CPEC is a set of infrastructure projects crucial to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which runs through the Kashmir region where territorial disputes have long existed between India and Pakistan. New Delhi explicitly claimed that the project would pose a threat to India’s national sovereignty (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2017:4).

In terms of the situation around the India-China borders, the document reported that there had been a number of cases of Chinese border patrols trespassing into though those incidents were resolved peacefully through dialogues (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2017:16). This shows that there had also been increasing activities along the India-China borders compared to the
time when the Annual Report 2006-2007 was published, contributing to the changes in India’s threat perception towards China to some extent. Just as the other three Quad countries, India has increasingly regarded China as a threat to its national security.

**Concluding Remarks**

The content analysis of the Defence Whiter papers and equivalents revealed that there has been a significant rise in the threat perception among the Quad countries towards China except for Japan, which has considered China as a threat throughout the entire period of the analysis. The fact that Japan has been the strongest advocate for the QSD makes sense given such a relatively higher threat perception towards China compared to the other three countries. With their extreme proximity to China, Japan and India have been in a similar situation in that both countries have had overlapping territorial claims with China. However, even given the territorial issues, there seems to be a gap between Japan and India in the threat perception towards China. While Japan and China have insisted that there is no such thing as territorial dispute over Senkaku (Diaoyu) islands, both India and China have recognised through joint statements and agreements that there exist several unsolved territorial issues between the two countries. The establishment of the Working Mechanism on Consultation & Coordination (WMCC) is one of the initiatives to peacefully resolve the conflict through dialogues. (IMEA, 2018c). In this sense, it might be fair to say that India-China relations have stayed one step ahead of Japan-China relations, contributing to the relatively low threat perception of India towards China compared to that of Japan.

The military expansion of China with the lack of transparency has long been a matter of concern among the four countries; yet it was not serious or threatening enough for some Quad countries like Australia and India to establish a hedge against China at the time when the initial attempt for the QSD was made, sacrificing the benefits they could derive from China. Over the course of a decade, however, Japan, the U.S., Australia and India have increasingly shared a common recognition that China is a threat to their national security in the face of its ever-growing military capabilities and some of its policies and activities in the region which the four countries have regarded as aggressive. Particularly, all the four countries have perceived the unilateral land reclamation of China in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea as highly aggressive, which can be considered one of the key factors that contributed to the changes in their threat perception towards China.
5.2. Shared Objectives of the QSD

The analysis proceeds to the identification of the common objectives of the QSD. In order to identify the objectives of the QSD, I conducted a content analysis of the press statements that foreign ministries or equivalents of each Quad country published after the QSD meetings. Each goal-driven or objective-driven statement in the press statements was coded and analysed.

5.2.1. Identifying the Objectives of the QSD

The senior official-level meetings of the QSD have taken place for three times so far. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JMFA, 2017a;2018a;2018b), the U.S. Department of State (USDS, 2017a;2018a;2018b), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ADFAT, 2017a;2018a;2018b), and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (IMEA, 2017a;2018a;2018b) published their press releases each time after the QSD meetings were held. The content analysis of the press statements of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India on the QSD revealed the following objectives of the QSD:

- The promotion of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific
- Strengthening the rule-based order
- Respect for international law
- Ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight
- Increasing connectivity
- Respect for ASEAN centrality
- Development of quality infrastructure
- Regional security (maritime, cyber, proliferation and counterterrorism)

All the identified objectives were specifically focused on the Indo-Pacific region. It also turned out that the contents of the press releases of the four countries were not always necessarily identical and that there were cases where some minor omissions were made in the statements. For example, the JMFA (2017a) omitted the objective of connectivity upon the first meeting of the QSD. On the other hand, the ADFAT (2017a;2018a;2018b) continuously avoided any mentions of the objective to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight and respect international law. However, it might be unlikely that the differences in the statements implied the disagreements among the four countries on some areas. It might point out, if anything, different priorities that each country has in the Indo-Pacific region.
5.2.2. Policy Objectives of the Quad Countries

Given the analysis in the previous section, this section will examine if these identified objectives and goals of the QSD are reflected in other official policy documents and press releases of the four countries. In order to compare the changes in their objectives, I looked into both the recent publications and the ones that came out around the time when the first attempt for the QSD was made.

Japan

Among the eight identified objectives of the QSD, the promotion of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific seems to be particularly unique. The origin of the concept is often credited to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He unveiled the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIPS)” at Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Kenya in August 2016 (JMFA, 2017b). The basic concept of this strategy was described as follows:

Develop a free and open Indo-Pacific region as “international public goods” through ensuring the rule-based international order, in a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent manner, attaching importance to ASEAN’s centrality and unity, in order to bring stability and prosperity for every country as well as secure peace and prosperity in the region as a whole (JMFA, 2018c:2).

According to the above statement, the identified objectives of the QSD are clearly reflected in the FOIPS namely the rule-based order, respect for international law, ASEAN centrality and regional security. Apart from these four, other objectives of the QSD were also mentioned in the following three pillars of the FOIPS:

1) Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc.
2) Pursuit of economic prosperity
3) Commitment for peace and stability (JMFA, 2018c:3).

In the second pillar, the improvement of connectivity and quality infrastructure were addressed. Furthermore, the third pillar of the FOIPS goes into detail about regional security and stressed Japan’s commitment to such areas as counterterrorism, anti-piracy, and maritime law
enforcement. Considering that the identified objectives of the QSD almost perfectly corresponds to those of the FOIPS, it can be assumed that the general objective of the QSD lies in the FOIPS.

The concepts of the FOIPS were also frequently brought up throughout the Diplomatic Bluebook 2018 published by the JMFA (2018d). The details of the FOIPS were laid out in an independent chapter, highlighting it as a special feature of the document. This implies the significance of the FOIPS to the foreign policy framework of Tokyo. Though there was no direct reference to the FOIPS, the Defense of Japan 2017 affirmed Japan’s active commitment to peace and stability in the region (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2017).

Looking back at the past, however, Japan had also proposed a similar foreign policy objective called “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity (AFP)” when it first called for the creation of the QSD in 2007. Originated in the speech of the Foreign Minister Aso Taro, the AFP focused on advocating universal values such as freedom, fundamental human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which can be considered one of the primary examples of Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy that Tokyo promoted at the time (JMFA, 2007:2). The Diplomatic Bluebook 2007 offered the following explanation on what the “Arc” of the AFP represents:

This Arc would start from Northern Europe and traverse the Baltic states, Central and South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, then cross Southeast Asia finally to reach Northeast Asia. Here, a region of stability and plenty with its basis in universal values -the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity- would take shape, and indeed it is just such a region that this initiative seeks to create (JMFA, 2007:2).

The extensive regions that the “Arc” covered as well as the abstract emphasis on “universal values” might indicate that Tokyo was uncertain about the policy objectives that it should pursue in the Indo-Pacific region. In fact, the Diplomatic Bluebook 2007 was very ambiguous in explaining how Japan will achieve this objective of the AFP (JMFA, 2007:2-3). Given these policy changes, it is clear that Tokyo has become more focused on the Indo-Pacific region and set clear objectives through the pursuit of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

**The United States**

31
The U.S. also adopted its own FOIPS as early as October 2017, making it public by the speech of Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (USDS, 2017b). Following this, the U.S. President Donald Trump repeatedly used the concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific in his statements during the visit to five Asian countries the next month (Sevastopulo, 2017).

Even though specific content of the strategy was not clarified at this point, the details of the U.S. version of the FOIPS were explained thoroughly in the regional policy document published in November 2018 by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the USDS (2018c). The opening sentence articulated that the current administration identified advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific as a priority in foreign affairs (USDS, 2018c:3). The document listed the following five categories that the U.S. will be focused on under the FOIPS:

1) North Korea  
2) China  
3) Security  
4) Socio-Economic Growth  
5) Governance and a Rules Based Order

The Security section talked largely about ensuring freedom of the seas and skies and support for regional security in the domains of maritime, cyber and counter-terrorism while the Socio-Economic Growth section proposed a number of objectives to enhance economic integration and connectivity and develop high-standard infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region (USDS, 2018c:11-14). In the Governance and A Rules Based Order section, the promotion of the rule-based order and the reinforcement of ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region were set as objectives (USDS, 2018c:15-16). What is remarkable to note as opposed to Japan’s FOIPS is that the document clearly proposed an objective to “counter Beijing’s revisionist ambitions and coercive actions that threaten continued stability of a rules-based order in the region” in the China section. This objective openly reveals that the FOIPS is intended to contain China’s growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

The National Security Strategy 2017 also included many of the above objectives, though it did not refer directly to the concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific:

We will reinforce our commitment to freedom of the seas and the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes in accordance with international law. […] The United
States will encourage regional cooperation to maintain free and open seaways, transparent infrastructure financing practices, unimpeded commerce and the peaceful resolution of disputes (U.S., 2017:46).

In relation to “Beijing’s revisionist ambitions and coercive action” mentioned earlier, here the reference to the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes and transparent infrastructure was highly likely directed towards China’s assertiveness in the East and the South China Seas as well as the un-transparent nature of its One Road Initiative. Though it was not objective-driven statement, the National Security Strategy 2017 also mentioned ASEAN centrality, stating that ASEAN remains a centrepiece of the regional architecture and platforms in the Indo-Pacific (U.S., 2017:46).

Considering the above findings and the fact that greater priority was given to the stability of the Middle East as of 2006 (U.S., 2006), it is apparent that there have been significant changes in the policy priority of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Australia**

Australia has also coordinated its regional policy with Japan and the U.S. and explicitly incorporated the concept of the FOIPS into its policy documents. The Foreign Policy White Paper 2017 of the ADFAT (2017b) made it clear that the establishment of the open, inclusive, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific region is one of the core foreign policy objectives of Australia. The significance of this objective is even more clearly seen in the opening statement of the chapter where Australia’s Indo-Pacific policy is explained in detail:

> No long-term foreign policy is more important to Australia than ensuring our region evolves peacefully and without an erosion of the fundamental principles on which the Indo-Pacific’s prosperity and cooperative relations are based (ADFAT, 2017b:37)

As specific objectives in the region, the White Paper promised to pursue and promote:

1) Respect for international law
2) Open markets that facilitates flows of goods, services, capital and ideas
3) Open and inclusive economic integration
4) Respect for freedom of navigation and overflight
5) Continuing engagement of the U.S. in the economic and security affairs of the region (ADFAT, 2017b:38).

The first and second sections correspond to the identified objectives of the QSD. It is interesting to note that Canberra showed great support for the further presence of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region in the fifth section. Given its significant implications for the region, it is natural that Australia coordinates its policy with the United States that Canberra considers the most important partner. The White Paper also mentioned ASEAN centrality, stating that Australia will ensure ASEAN’s central role in shaping the regional security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific (ADFAT, 2017b:43). The Annual Report 2017-2018 published by the ADFAT (2018c:21) reaffirmed that Australia would actively seek these objectives outlined in the Foreign Policy White Paper. Furthermore, it also announced to pursue high-quality and transparent infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific region, initiating a joint undertaking with the U.S. (ADFAT, 2018c:22-23).

The Defence White Paper 2016, on the other hand, talked largely about the establishment of rules-based global order as their security objective in addition to such objectives as securing immediate neighbouring region in maritime and counter-terrorism areas and promotion of freedom of navigation and overflight (Australian Department of Defence, 2016). The importance of the rules-based order to Australia was explained as follows:

> Our third Strategic Defence Interest is in a stable Indo-Pacific region and rules-based global order which supports Australia’s interests. […] A stable rules-based order is critical to ensuring Australia’s access to an open, free and secure trading system and minimising the risk of coercion and instability that would directly affect Australia’s interests (Australian Department of Defence, 2016:70).

Even though this objective to achieve the rules-based global order seems to have long been a core of Australia’s security policy, it has been rather broad and unspecific. The Defence White Paper 2009 also outlined the similar objective; yet it was not focused on certain parts of the world (Australian Department of Defence, 2009:42-43). On the other hand, the promotion of the rules-based global order was sketched out in specific connection with the Indo-Pacific region in the Defence White Paper 2016 as quoted above. This shift also underpins the growing significance of the region to Canberra and Australia’s foreign and defence policies.
India

It is apparent that India has also increasingly placed its policy importance on the Indo-Pacific region. A prime example of this is the Act East policy that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made public at the ASEAN-India Summit in November 2014 (Parameswaran, 2014). The Act East policy is widely recognised as a replacement of the Look East policy that India has adopted since 1991, under which New Delhi aimed to improve relations with Southeast Asian countries. The shift from “Look” to “Act” seems to represent a clear signal from New Delhi that India will engage even more with ASEAN and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Even though there is a lack of the details of the policy, Indian Minister of External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar explained the policy objectives during a question time in the parliament:

The key principles and objectives of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region with other countries in our neighbourhood (IMEA, 2017b).

In relation to connectivity, he also added the objective to develop physical infrastructure such as road, airport, telecommunication and power in the region. Judging from the above statements, it seems that New Delhi is particularly focused on the two of the identified objectives of the QSD: increasing connectivity and development of quality infrastructure.

Despite India’s own regional policy in the Indo-Pacific, however, Indian Prime Minister Modi also affirmed India’s strong support for the FOIPS of Japan in the joint statement upon the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister Abe in India (IMEA, 2016). In the statement, not only did Modi displayed India’s support and understanding of the FOIPS but also announce to seek synergy between the Act East policy and the FOIPS. The Annual Report 2017-2018 published by the IMEA (2018d:2) also articulated its commitment towards achieving a “free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region where international law is rigorously respected.

When it comes to the other policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region, Delhi emphasised its commitment towards upholding the rule-based global order in the Defence Annual Report 17-18 (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2018:5). Despite its continuous omissions of respect for freedom of navigation and overflight and reluctance to include the mention of maritime security in the press releases upon the QSD, New Delhi also made the following statement:
Ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo Pacific region is a key security imperative and one of the key objectives of India’s engagement with the U.S. and other partners (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2018:5).

Considering the above statement, it can be assumed that New Delhi continuously omitted or avoided the mentions of the two objectives in the press releases on the QSD simply because it attempted to mitigate the risk that Beijing regards the QSD as an explicit containment against China, not because India’s regional policy does not consist of these objectives.

The analysis of previous policy documents such as the Defence Annual Report 2006-2007 (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007) and the External Affairs Annual Report 2006-2007 (IMEA, 2007) revealed that none of the objectives were explicitly mentioned and that New Delhi was not clear about its specific regional policies during the time of the first QSD attempt. Thus, the recent policy documents and official statements indicated India’s ever-increasing focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

**Concluding Remarks**

The content analysis of the press releases of the JMFA, the USDS, the ADFAT and the IMEA on the QSD revealed several objectives that the QSD is intended to achieve. All the identified objectives had a specific focus on the Indo-Pacific region. The subsequent content analysis demonstrated that the identified objectives of the QSD were reflected in different policy documents and statements of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India Policy, many of which were not present in the policy documents and official statements published around the time when the first QSD was planned to be created. Among the eight identified objectives of the QSD, particular attention should be paid to the promotion of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Given the evidence that the other seven objectives almost perfectly coincide with those of the FOIPS that Japan and the U.S. have actively been pushing forward in recent years, it is fair to say that the revived QSD was formed on the basis of the FOIPS. Unlike the other three Quad countries, India has its own unique regional strategy called “Act East Policy” that aims to improve relations with ASEAN and other East Asian countries. However, it was also found that the Act East Policy shared a number of the objectives with the FOIPS and that New Delhi has recently showed its support for and commitment to the FOIPS. Therefore, as the hypothesis suggests, Japan, the U.S., Australia and India have increasingly shared and coordinated their regional
objectives in the Indo-Pacific. This might suggest that the first QSD was planned to be created with the absence of common objectives which are crucial for the formation and survival of a strategic partnership.

In addition, it is also important to note that all the QSD underscored the guarantee of ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region. The reason as to why the QSD takes a form of a strategic partnership, rather than an explicit alliance might not be only that the Quad countries want to curb the potential protest from Beijing but also that they seek to ensure that ASEAN continues to be the main actor in shaping the order in the Indo-Pacific region.

6. Conclusion

This thesis attempted to address the puzzle of why the QSD between Japan, the U.S., Australia and India re-emerged despite its sudden demise in 2008 and argued for the two major factors: the shared threat perception of the four countries towards China and their shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific. Even though there has been a consensus among scholars that the QSD first emerged in response to the rise of China, there was still a lack of theoretical explanation to support it. Given this gap and discussions of the alliance/alignment literature, I identified the QSD as strategic partnership and developed the theoretical framework through the theory synthesis of Wilkin’s strategic partnership model and Walt’s balance of threat theory to point out the above two factors.

The content analysis of the defence white papers or equivalents of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India showed that the Quad countries have increasingly perceived China as a threat in the face of China’s ever-growing military power and its aggressive intentions in the Indo-Pacific region such as the Chinese land reclamation in the Spratly Islands and the unilateral declaration of the ADIZ in the East China Sea. On the other hand, the content analysis of the press releases of Japan, the U.S., Australia and India on the QSD identified a number of key objectives that the QSD aims to achieved in particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. The further analysis of various recent policy documents and statements of each country proved that all the four countries have increasingly shared and coordinated the identified objectives of the QSD, most of which were not present in the previous policy documents and press releases. It also revealed that the revived QSD was formed on the basis of the FOIPS that Japan, and the U.S. have actively promoted. Given these findings, it is fair to argue that the shared threat perception of the Quad countries towards China and their shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region have contributed to the re-emergence of the QSD and that the failure of the first QSD attempt was
characterised by the lack of the common threat perception and the shared objectives in the region.

This research offered a new insight to the field of alliance/alignment formation in IR as well as the study of the changing dynamics of in the Indo-Pacific region. As Wilkins (2008;2012) put, among other different types of alignment, the concept of strategic partnership is rather novel and requires a further reconsideration of its conceptual definition and theoretical framework to explain on what conditions it emerges. Therefore, this bachelor thesis contributed to the development of the concept and theory of a strategic partnership.
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