

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Conclusions

Geographically and politically, Japan has been surrounded by various traditional security threats. The threats are ranging from China's rise to power and its assertiveness, dispute over Taiwan, Senkaku Islands dispute, and North Korean missile launches. These threats left a military gap to be filled by the Japanese government. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan has been struggling continuously to reorganize Japan's defense posture throughout the years. Their domination in the government has always been leaning towards a conservative ideal in which Japan can regain its own defense capabilities. However, Article 9 of the 1946 Constitution and Japan's postwar anti-militarist norms have constrained the government from doing so without a significant opposition from both the parliament and the public. Postwar victimology and strong anti-militarist sentiment within the society have always opposed the enactment of large defense mobilization under any circumstances.

During both periods of the Abe Cabinet, securitization processes to pave the way for increased defenses and military capabilities were happening on a massive scale. Shinzo Abe was generally accepted as a hawkish leader from the LDP pushing for a constitutional revision to enable strengthened Japanese military power and role. The second period witnessed a more significant attempt on securitization, as shown by multiple speech acts and assertive policies with inclinations towards remilitarization. The most notable securitization during Abe's

leadership occurred on several occasions, including when he lifted the ban on weapons exports in 2014 and introduced the Legislation for Peace and Security Bills in 2015. The latter one was substantially more popular, as it involved the reinterpretation of Article 9 and legalize the deployment of JSDF troops abroad. Although the bill was passed by the parliament, the public demonstrated massive disapproval towards Abe's move, leading to large demonstrations across the nation and unfavorable public opinion in surveys and polls. This means that the securitization process could not reach the public audience, as the public still oppose Abe's speech acts and the emergency actions taken.

Ever since the start of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's leadership in late 2021, Japan has been going on another military transformation. Based on the securitization theory (Buzan et al., 1998), the military transformation under Fumio Kishida follows a securitization structure in which the securitizing actors are trying to convince the audience that national security is being threatened, requiring emergency actions to counter the existential threats while neglecting several initially existing norms and rules. The process was meant to securitize Japan's external traditional threats to legitimize the use of extraordinary measures to the audience. The detailed process is illustrated through tables in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Securitization process under PM Fumio Kishida

Variables	Indicators	Applications
Securitizing Actors	Actors or entities who initiate securitization	The Japanese Government, the Kishida Cabinet, Japan Ministry of Defense.
Securitized Existential Threats	Objects that are narrated as existential threats to the referent object	China, North Korea, Russia
Referent Object	The object that is threatened and needs to be protected	Japanese National Security
Audience	Groups that are targeted to be persuaded to accept legitimacy from emergency actions	The Japanese Public
Emergency Actions	Extraordinary measures taken to counter existential threats, overlooking certain norms or rules in the process	Defense-spending increase to 2% GDP, Counterstrike Capabilities, Defense Force Military Buildup
Norms Overlooked	Norms that are being rejected to some extent in order to combat existential threats	Anti-militarism, Article 9 of the 1946 Japanese Constitution
Outcome	The result of the securitization process	The enactment of the three security documents, rising public support towards Japanese defense endeavor, identification of China, North Korea, and Russia as existential threats

This process began with the enactment of securitization speech acts by the Kishida Cabinet, starting with the first policy speech. At its early stage, the speech act encompasses assertive discourse about classical military threats, such as China and North Korea. However, the intensity increased once Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, giving the Kishida Cabinet an ideal security climate for more aggressive securitization. The Kishida Cabinet, as the securitizing actor, securitizes three main objects through several issues. The securitized objects are states that are perceived as threatening to Japan's national security, including China, North Korea, and Russia. The framed issues are China's military rise and its assertiveness, the dispute over Taiwan, North Korea's nuclear projects and missile launches, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ultimately, the security climate eventually leads to intensive speech acts by the Kishida Cabinet. The speech acts were done through various means, such as policy speeches, conferences, and official documents. Linguistically, the speech acts employed by the Kishida Cabinet are more advanced, employing the use of assertive, directive, and commissive patterns of speech in the discourse to convince the audience and construct a sense of urgency for a strengthened military defense.

The assertive speech acts focus on building consensus on objects that are being perceived as threats. Kishida described all the threatening traits of China, North Korea, and Russia to explain why Japan's national security is vulnerable to these threats. This can be seen through the description of China as an irresponsible and assertive dominant power who wants to change the status quo in the region,

North Korea as a rogue state hell-bent on developing nuclear weapons and disrupting Japan's area of security, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a significant threat to the international order and Japan. The directive speech acts revolve around how Japan should address these threats using a straightforward approach and its comprehensive power. In other words, Japan should not simply back down in the face of danger and use all available resources to counter it. The commissive speech acts are centered on how the Kishida Cabinet will act to counter these threats, foreshadowing the emergency actions that will be taken in the process.

As explained in previous chapters, there are strong differences between securitization speech acts during the Kishida Cabinet's leadership and previous speech act attempts. There are notable changes in how Japan identifies and describes securitized existential threats. This can be seen in how Japan describes China as no longer a mere "concern" but rather "the greatest strategic challenge". Russia also experiences this change in description in a more significant manner, being described as an existential threat to the entire international order ever since its invasion of Ukraine. The speech acts' consistency also goes beyond mere words as the Kishida Cabinet consistently emphasizes the threat of unilateral attempts to change the world's status quo.

As the empirical reality of the security climate became harsher, Japan released the Three Security Documents, which include the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program. The National Security Strategy. These documents, mainly the National Security

Strategy (NSS), serve as instruments of the securitization process. They encompass parts of the securitization speech acts while being the institutionalization of securitization. Consequently, as the institutionalized documents of securitization, these documents also encompass the enactment of emergency security actions that will be implemented by the securitizing actor.

Based on these documents, Japan is planning to achieve three objectives by fiscal year 2027. These include increasing the total of defense-related spending to 2% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), gaining counterstrike capabilities, or the ability to missile strike enemy bases during attacks, and making an overhaul to its overall lackluster defense force. Unlike in previous years, these ambitious militaristic plans are being largely approved by the public audience. Since the invasion of Ukraine, various research centers across Japan have collected the data regarding public opinion on the current state of national security. The surveys indicate that most of the public have perceived the securitized threats and give the government the legitimacy to counter these threats using extraordinary measures, focusing less on preserving anti-militarism and more on defending the state from traditional military threats.

The discourse and content analysis shows that the surge in public support happened due to contribution of the securitization speech act and the equally menacing empirical reality. The language of security used by the Kishida Cabinet in the speech acts is more assertive and advanced than previous attempt. The speech acts of this securitization utilize assertive, directive, and commissive pattern of speech to accurately describe the sense of danger and urgency posed by

China, North Korea, and Russia. Combined with the equally menacing reality, these threats were easily perceived by the audience. As the audience learn the danger of these threats, the emergency actions taken by the Kishida Cabinet seems reasonable since Japan is very vulnerable to attacks unless these actions are taken.

Seeing the audience positive response and the enactments of extraordinary security measures, it can be concluded that the securitization of China, North Korea, and Russia is a success for the Kishida Cabinet. The securitization manages to construct a new consensus on security within the society and pave the way towards a national defense buildup. Although this is not the first military securitization in Japan, the Kishida Cabinet has successfully constructed the urgent international security condition to the public audience, which previously has low concern towards security and holds anti-militarism dearly. Hence, it is only fair that this securitization is seen as an extension of previous attempts. Despite not being the first military securitization, it is without a doubt of LDP's largest success in pushing their revisionist agenda.

4.2. Recommendations

This research analyzes Japan's newest national security strategy and its reception within the public using an external-oriented approach. Most of the studies and literature within the context of military securitization in Japan revolves around how the LDP convince the Japanese diet or parliament to revise and strengthen its military posture to a more proactive one. This study manages to view the public as the audience instead of the common format. This is due to the

fact that security and defense initiatives under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida managed to garner record-setting public support, reflecting both the urgency and the state of the art of this study.

However, the study regarding increased Japanese public support towards security initiatives could benefit from a more in-depth domestic approach. This study focuses heavily on external threats and how they are narrated, as well as perceived domestically in Japan while neglecting internal shifts. Nevertheless, the external approach used in this study can only answer one of several factors leading to the security transformation happening in Japan. Therefore, a detailed study with an internal approach with a bottom-up perspective would result in a massive contribution and better understanding regarding the issue of Japan's shifting security trajectory.