
China's 'New Security Concept' and Southeast Asia

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This chapter critically assesses China's 'new concept of security' as a guide to Chinese relations with the states of Southeast Asia. First, the chapter discusses the evolution of China's 'new concept of security', the structure of China's multilateral relations with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the network of bilateral relations as framed by long-term cooperative agreements. With this as background, the chapter then focuses on key issues in China's relations with regional states: geo-strategic rivalry, military assistance programs, the code of conduct for the South China Sea, the 'one China policy' and Taiwan, and US presence in the region. The main argument of the chapter is that despite China's espousal of a 'new security concept' based on 'equality, dialogue, trust and cooperation', its relations with Southeast Asian states are heavily tinged by a realist 'power politics' approach. China seeks regional recognition of its power and status and at the same time it seeks to constrain and depreciate US power and influence.

China's 'New Security Concept'

In the 1990s, China began to develop and articulate a 'new concept of security'. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War altered the context of Chinese security thinking. According to Wu Baiyi, Deputy Director of the Research Department, China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, 'starting from 1993, policy planners and academics began quietly to amend the country's security strategy. After years of work, a renewed security concept came into being' (Wu 2001, 278). This concept expanded the definition of security to include political, defence, diplomatic and above all economic considerations. According to Wu:

[w]hat China pursues now is a security of sustained development. The change is a landmark...The nature of its security policy, therefore, is accommodative, rather than confrontational...Compared to past policies, the current concept signifies two major changes...For the first time economic security is treated as equally important with those of 'high politics'. Second,

it focuses more on the interrelationship between external and internal security challenges.

Other specialists point to the catalytic events of 1996 as having a major impact in shaping China's 'new security concept'. For example, Chu Shulong, Senior Fellow at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, argues:

[s]ince the early 1970s till the middle of the 1990s, China actually liked to see America remaining [sic] its military presence and alliance system in Asia as a useful counter force against the Soviet threat. That position changed since 1996 when the US and Japan started to negotiate the new guideline for their security cooperation. The Chinese feel offended and threatened by the enlarging area of American-Japanese security cooperation from defending Japan to dealing with events in the areas of 'surrounding Japan'...Since then, in the public statements, Chinese position has been strongly against US-Japan security alliance and no longer welcome American military presence in the region (Chu 2001, 1).

Chu also noted, however, that 'the real Chinese position is complicated and flexible. It opposes US-Japan security alliance but does not challenge US-Korean alliance in Northeast Asia'.

Banning Garret and Bonnie Glaser, two American China specialists, argue along similar lines. They claim that China's paradigm shift was not only a reaction to the revised US-Japan defence guidelines, but also due to the dispatch of two carrier groups to the Taiwan Straits in March 1996 as a response to Chinese military threats against Taiwan (Garret and Glaser 1997, 44). These twin developments led Chinese military and civilian leaders to re-evaluate whether the US-Japan alliance and US forward deployed forces were a strategic benefit or a greater threat to Chinese security. According to Garret and Glaser, 'this strategic conundrum has led Beijing to search for a means to counterbalance the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance and bolster Chinese leverage over Washington while not foreclosing the possibility of improving relations with the United States' (1977, 44).

David Finkelstein (2001, 3) argues that China developed the 'new concept of security' for three reasons: to advance its views of a multipolar world order in response to US global dominance; as a reaction to the strengthening of US military alliances (including combined military exercises with Russia and Kazakhstan in Central Asia); and to advance Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

China's 'New Security Concept' and Southeast Asia

Starting in 1997, China initiated a diplomatic and propaganda campaign to publicize its 'new security concept'. According to Chu, the 'new security concept' was first introduced by Chinese officials at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) conference on confidence building measures held in Beijing in March. The following month a joint statement between the Presidents of China and Russia called for a 'new and universally applicable security concept' (quoted in

Finkelstein 2001, 2). In July, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen discussed the new security concept in his address to the 4th ARF meeting in Malaysia. In 1998 the People's Liberation Army issued a paper on the 'new security concept' (Li and Wei 1997), while Defence Minister Chi Haotian made reference to it in speeches delivered to Japan's National Institute of Defence Studies and Australia's Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies in February of that year.

How does China's 'new security concept' relate to China's relations with Southeast Asia? An authoritative elaboration of the 'new security concept' on China's relations with Southeast Asia first appeared in *China's National Defense* (People's Republic of China 1998), a White Paper released in July 1998. This document stressed China's support for 'regional-security dialogue and cooperation at different levels, through various channels and in different forms', including the ARF and the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (CSCAP). The Chinese White Paper also endorsed 'the ARF's creative explorations for the promotion of confidence-building measures' in such areas as military medicine, military law, and multilateral cooperation on conversion of military technologies and facilities for civilian use.

China's next White Paper, *China's Defence in 2000* (People's Republic of China 2000b), added additional commentary on the role of preventive diplomacy. It stated:

China holds that the ARF should continue to focus on confidence-building measures, explore new security concepts and methods, and discuss the question of preventive diplomacy. At the same time, it believes that the parties concerned should have a full discussion first on the concept, definition, principles and scope of preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region and reach consensus in this regard.

A further elaboration of China's new security concept in a Southeast Asian context took place in July 2000 during the course of Vice President Hu Jintao's visit to Indonesia. In a major speech delivered to the Indonesian Council on World Affairs, Hu declared:

a new security concept that embraces the principles of equality, dialogue, trust and cooperation, and a new security order should be established to ensure genuine mutual respect, mutual cooperation, consensus through consultation and peaceful settlement of disputes, rather than bullying, confrontation, and imposition of one's own will upon others. Only in that way can countries coexist in amity and secure their development (quoted in Thayer 2000a).

Two close observers of Southeast Asia's security scene have analysed Hu's visit in these terms (Mitchell and Vatikiotis 2000, 20–22):

China [through Hu Jintao] has made it official policy to gain influence in Southeast Asia by contrasting its behaviour in the region with that of the US. The implication was clear: Not only can China be a good neighbour, but

Southeast Asia would benefit from partnering with Beijing rather than the US, which typically sees political and economic reform as prerequisites for amicable relations. While China has long inferred as much, Hu's speech marked the first time that the message was framed as a formal policy.

According to David Finkelstein, writing in October 2001, China's 'new security concept' failed to 'take hold' in Southeast Asia because the US presence was 'too strong' and too highly valued (2001, 5). China promoted its 'new concept of security' by an unsubtle attack on the United States for maintaining Cold War era alliances. Typical of this heavy handed approach was the speech delivered by President Jiang Zemin in Bangkok in September 1999 (Thayer 1999a). Jiang argued:

Hegemonism and power politics still exist and have even developed in the international political, economic and security fields. The new 'Gunboat Policy' and the economic neo-colonialism pursued by some big powers have severely undermined the sovereign independence and the development interests of many small- and medium-sized countries, and have threatened world peace and international security (Xinhua News Agency, 3 September 1999).

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in September 2001, China renewed its efforts to promote its 'new concept of security' in Southeast Asia ('China's Position Paper', 2002). In July 2002, China submitted a document entitled, 'Concerning China's Stand in Regard to the New Security Concept' to the ninth ARF meeting (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Australia, 2002). At the end of the year, China issued its most recent White Paper. This document argued that the success of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (formerly 'Shanghai Five') was an illustration of the 'new security concept' in practice. The White Paper then declared China's support for the ARF and endorsed a stepped up program of 'dialogue and cooperation in the political and security fields with regional states'.

The following section will review briefly the structure of China-ASEAN relations and China's bilateral relations with Southeast Asian states. The concluding section questions the degree to which China's 'new security concept' has actually replaced 'power politics' as a new approach to state-to-state relations.

The Structure of China's Relations with Southeast Asia

Ten countries in Southeast Asia are members of ASEAN (East Timor's membership has not yet been decided). China's relations with Southeast Asia are structured on a multilateral basis with ASEAN and bilaterally with each of its individual members. Formal linkages between China and ASEAN date to 1991 when Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen attended the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Kuala Lumpur as a guest of the Malaysian government (ASEAN Secretariat 1997). Qian expressed China's interest in developing cooperation with ASEAN in the field of science and technology. ASEAN

responded positively. In September 1993, ASEAN Secretary General Dato Ajit Singh led a delegation to China for talks with Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan that led in July 1994 to formal agreement to establish two joint committees—one on science and technology cooperation and the other on economic and trade cooperation.

In July 1994, China and ASEAN agreed to open consultations on political and security issues at the senior official level. There have been regular annual meetings of senior officials since 1995. The following year China was accorded dialogue partner status by ASEAN, and in February 1997 ASEAN and China formalized their cooperation by establishing the ASEAN-China Joint Cooperation Committee (ACJCC). The ACJCC first met in Beijing where it was decided that the ACJCC would 'act as the coordinator for all the ASEAN-China mechanisms at the working level' (Joint Press Release 1997). As a dialogue partner, China regularly participates in the annual ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) consultation process. This takes the form of a meeting between ASEAN and its ten dialogue partners (ASEAN ten plus ten), and a meeting between all ten ASEAN members and each of its dialogue partners (ASEAN ten plus one). In November 2002, China-ASEAN relations took a major step forward with a joint agreement on cooperation on non-traditional security issues (Joint Declaration, 2002).

China was also admitted into the ASEAN Regional Forum where it has given cautious endorsement to multilateral security activities. The ARF meets annually in conjunction with the AMM and PMC. Generally, the ARF considers regional security and political matters, while the ASEAN PMC considers economic and development cooperation and other international issues that do not fall within the purview of the ARF. China has also taken an active role in the ARF's inter-sessional work program related to confidence building measures. In September 2000 it hosted the 4th ARF meeting of the Heads of Defense Colleges (Thayer 2000a). The meeting was opened by Chi Haotian, China's Defense Minister, who argued in his address that the ARF's stress on dialogue and consultation represented a 'new security concept' and the trend of 'multi-polarization' in the region. Chi noted that regional flash points still exist, 'hegemonism and power politics have shown new traces of development' and 'democracy and human rights' were being used as excuses for intervention. According to Chi:

separatism was gaining ground. All these will endanger or jeopardize the security and stability of the region. That's why we advocate that all countries adopt the new security concept built upon equality, dialogue, mutual confidence and cooperation (Xinhua News Agency, 6 September 2000).

In addition to ASEAN and the ARF, ASEAN-China relations have been restructured as a result of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process inaugurated in the late 1990s. The APT groups ASEAN with China, Japan and South Korea. The APT process has evolved into annual summit meetings at head of state level. At the APT summit held in Cambodia in November 2002, ASEAN and China signed a

'Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Between the ASEAN Nations and the People's Republic of China'. This agreement aims to establish a Free Trade Area between China and ASEAN's six oldest members by 2010 and with ASEAN's newer members by 2015.

Bilateral Cooperation Agreements

Between February 1999 and December 2000, the People's Republic of China (PRC) negotiated long-term cooperative framework arrangements with all ten ASEAN members: Vietnam, Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma, Laos and Cambodia (see Appendix A). Each of the ten cooperative arrangements varies by title and content. The PRC-Thailand document, entitled a 'Plan of Action for the 21st Century', is the most formal. Three of the bilateral agreements are described as 'framework' documents, while the remaining six take the form of joint statements or communiqués. Taken as a whole, these bilateral cooperation agreements share six points in common:

- All were signed by high-level officials, usually foreign ministers but also by vice premiers, and in the case of China and Vietnam, by party secretary generals.
- All affirm that bilateral relations will be based on the basic norms found in the UN Charter, Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), and 'recognized principles' found in international law. China's agreements with Singapore and Vietnam omit reference to the TAC, while the China-Indonesia agreement includes a reference to the ten principles adopted by the Bandung conference in 1955.
- All agreements call for frequent high-level exchanges and regular consultations between foreign ministries if not at foreign minister level.
- All agreements contain a paragraph acknowledging support for a 'one China' policy including recognition that Taiwan is part of China.
- Eight of the agreements contain a specific pledge by China to respect the 'independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity' of the other party. This commitment is omitted from the PRC-Brunei and PRC-Vietnam documents.
- Eight of the agreements include the pledge to consult and cooperate in various multilateral forums including the United Nations, ASEAN, and ASEAN Plus Three. Seven agreements also include the ASEAN Regional Forum; five include Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), four include the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the PRC-Indonesia includes the Non-Aligned Movement.

The bilateral cooperation agreements also contain substantial differences. Six of the agreements made reference to various forms of defence cooperation (Brunei,

Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand), but the wording varied from document to document. The PRC-Brunei agreement, for example, only mentioned 'possible cooperation in...defence'. Three of the agreements made specific mention of human rights (Indonesia, the Philippines and Laos). The PRC-Indonesia agreement stated, for example, 'human rights issues must not be solved at the expense of the principles of state sovereignty and sovereign equality among nations or in contravention or violation of the principles on which the United Nations itself was founded'. Three of the agreements specifically mentioned territorial disputes in the South China Sea (Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia). China's agreements with Malaysia and the Philippines declared that the settlement of disputes would be based on international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea. The PRC-Vietnam agreement clearly indicated that territorial disputes were still a contentious matter. 'Both sides', it declared, 'will refrain from taking any action that might complicate and escalate disputes, resorting to force or making threats with force'. Finally, the PRC-Indonesia joint statement was the only one to mention weapons of mass destruction.

Issues in China-Southeast Asia Relations

Geo-strategic rivalry. China's assertions that its 'new security concept' represents a break from 'power politics' cannot be accepted at face value. China's espousal of a multipolar international system and 'new security concept' are aimed at transforming the present balance of power in East Asia in America's favour to one in which China will play a more prominent role. According to Finkelstein and McDevitt (1999), China views the US system of bilateral military alliances 'as destabilizing and anachronistic. It believes they are latent threats'. China would like to see the transformation of the present unipolar balance into a triangular relationship involving China, the United States and Japan. This new power configuration would evolve as a consequence of the weakening of the US-Japan alliance and the development of a more equal relationship between Beijing and Washington.

China was initially resistant to the idea of multilateralism in the security realm in the Asia-Pacific. China soon discovered, however, that participation in multilateral activities could serve to constrain the United States. China therefore espoused multilateralism as a key component of its 'new security concept' in order to offer an alternative to alliance relations with the United States. China views the US-Thai and US-Philippines bilateral alliances as weak links. According to Robyn Lim (1998, 131):

China...[is] beginning to use multilateral approaches to 'question the appropriateness' of the 'prevailing security arrangements.' So-called new security concepts call for bilateral alliances to be replaced by non-allied relationships and an as-yet undefined mechanism that provides 'equal security' for all states.

With respect to Southeast Asia, China's espousal of its 'new concept of security' is to develop a 'strategic partnership' with ASEAN and to develop bilateral relations as a substitute for bilateral alliances (Finkelstein and McDevitt 1999). China's drive to attain these objectives has revived the embers of geo-strategic rivalry with India and Vietnam. For example, China's decision to forge a strategic partnership with the Burmese regime in the late 1980s and early 1990s provoked India into competing for influence in Yangon (Garver 2001, 258–74). China's geo-strategic concerns surfaced when it was announced that Russia would finally withdraw from naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay in May 2002 (Storey and Thayer, 2001). During the course of President Jiang Zemin's visit to Hanoi in late February, for example, it was reported that Jiang extracted a promise from Secretary General Nong Duc Manh not to allow the United States access (Breckon 2002c).

China has also sought to play on elite differences in Cambodia and Laos about their relations with Vietnam. China's actions have triggered Vietnamese suspicions and rekindled sub-regional rivalry (Thayer 2001c). Mitchell and Vatikiotis (2000, 20–22) argue that Sino-Cambodia relations are a good example of how China's 'new security concept' works in practice. They note that after an estrangement in Washington-Phnom Penh relations dating to 1997, China moved to fill the void by providing over US\$200 million in aid. China has supported the Hun Sen government's resistance to external pressures to establish an international tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge for war crimes. China has also given high-level attention to Cambodia. In the six-month period from November 2000 until May 2001, China's president, defence minister, premier and minister of foreign trade all visited Phnom Penh. Cambodian commentators were quick to point out that China was seeking simultaneously to counter US influence, weaken Hun Sen's links with Vietnam and increase its influence in ASEAN (Thayer 2001).

In response to an economic crisis in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1999, mounting internal security problems, and a reported split in the Lao leadership along pro-Hanoi versus pro-Beijing lines, China built up its influence in Vientiane (Thayer 2000b and 2001c). China provided a package of interest-free loans that helped stabilize the *kip* and reduce inflation. China has also provided a growing volume of development assistance and investments as well as undisclosed military aid. As with Cambodia, China also dispatched high-level visitors to Laos. In November 2000, President Jiang Zemin made his first visit, and in February 2001 Defence Minister Chi Haotian and a large military delegation called in. Immediately after Chi's departure, his Vietnamese counterpart, General Pham Van Tra, flew in to offer military assistance that cash-strapped Vietnam had earlier declined to provide. China's support for the Lao government was widely viewed as designed to shore up stability in a country bordering China and to undercut Hanoi's influence. Chinese actions prompted Vietnam to redouble its efforts to maintain its historic 'special relations' with its Indochinese neighbour.

China's Military Assistance Program. China has used the instruments of military aid to gain influence in Burma and Cambodia. China first came to the assistance of the Burmese regime after the suppression of the pro-democracy movement in 1988. Two major arms agreements were signed in 1989 and 1994. China provided military training, technical and maintenance assistance in an effort to transform the Burmese army into a modern force. Chinese assistance in bolstering Burma's communications and electronic surveillance capabilities and modernization of the Burmese navy has been of particular concern to India and Thailand.

In 1999, China granted Cambodia military assistance valued at US\$1.5 million (Thayer 2000d). In October of that year Ke Kim Yan, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, led a senior military delegation to Beijing to discuss China's offer of military assistance. Ke Kim Yan held discussions with Fu Quanyou, Chief of the General Staff, People's Liberation Army (PLA). This was the highest level Cambodian military delegation to visit China since 1993. It was immediately followed by a return visit by a senior delegation from the PLA's General Logistic Department. According to one report, China offered to supply a number of tanks, artillery pieces, trucks and weapons (Thayer 2000d).

In September 2000, China announced a military assistance grant to Cambodia for personnel training valued at US\$2.7 million. Later, Kun Kim, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, visited Beijing where he held discussions with Zhang Wannian, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission and Fu Quanyou. In February 2001, Defence Minister Chi Haotian visited Cambodia at the invitation of the co-Ministers of Defence, Tea Banh and Prince Sisowath Sereyraph. Prime Minister Hun Sen requested a loan of US\$12.5 million to assist in the demobilization of the Cambodian army. Chi responded by promising to take this request back to Beijing for consideration, and he announced a grant of US\$3.5 million to aid in the rehabilitation of a military hospital and provincial training centre.

During 2000, Laos continued to experience civil unrest by armed Hmong ethnic minorities. In addition, unknown perpetrators set off five or more explosions in Vientiane and Pakse. Lao hardliners sought and received Chinese military and economic assistance. In February 2001, after visits by top Lao military officials, China's Defence Minister Chi Haotian visited Laos for talks with his counterpart. Chi was accompanied on his visit by a delegation that included senior representatives from the Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou and Nanjing military regions and deputy director of the PLA's General Armament Department. General Chi's visit was clearly aimed at beefing up China's support for the modernization of the Lao People's Army and improving its capacity to deal with internal threats, especially from anti-regime Hmong rebels. On 7 February, for example, Chi told Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh 'China has always supported the Lao government in its efforts to modernize its military and maintain state security and social stability' (Xinhua News Agency, 7 February 2001).

South China Sea Code of Conduct. China (and Taiwan) and four members of ASEAN (Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei) maintain overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea. China has never clearly demarcated its claim preferring to rely on a 1948 map published by the Republic of China that contains nine dash marks in the shape of the letter 'u' (US Pacific Command, 2000, 7–8). Through this means China has kept its claims deliberately ambiguous.

China has long preferred to settle territorial disputes in the South China Sea on a bilateral basis. However, as a result of ASEAN's reaction to Chinese 'creeping assertiveness' in the South China Sea in 1992 and 1995, China's territorial claims became in effect 'multilateralized'. At the first ASEAN-China SOM held in Hangzhou in April 1995, for example, China was confronted by a unified ASEAN stance on this issue. This led to an alteration in China's declaratory policy. At the 2nd ARF meeting China announced that it would settle its maritime disputes peacefully on the basis of international law including the UN Convention on Law of the Sea. At the 7th ARF meeting, when Thailand attempted to raise the Spratly Islands question, 'the Chinese slapped down the Thai proposal brusquely and rudely. Never, they threatened, will Beijing discuss the Spratlys in a forum—even though six nations claim the archipelago' ('China's Alarming Military Growth', *The Bangkok Post*, 27 August 2000).

Despite this stance, China has consented to discuss a South China Sea code of conduct at special meetings with ASEAN officials. A number of working group meetings on a draft code of conduct were held between March 2000 and August 2002. At the first meeting held in Thailand in March 2000, China and ASEAN both tabled drafts for discussion. These documents covered four specific concerns: dispute resolution, building trust and confidence, cooperation on marine issues and environmental protection, and modes of consultation. Both documents urged self-restraint and the non-use of force or threat of force pending resolution of disputes. The drafts also advocated cooperation to protect the environment, marine scientific research, safety of navigation, and search and rescue.

One of the major differences between the two drafts was the scope of geographic coverage. China wanted the code confined to the Spratly Islands, while Vietnam insisted on the inclusion of the Paracels. ASEAN also insisted on a halt to future settlement and construction. China, for its part, sought to curtail harassment of its private fishing vessels by Philippines' navy patrol craft. Beijing proposed that the claimants 'refrain from use or threat of force, or taking coercive measures (seizure, detention and arrest)...against fishing boats or other civilian vessels engaged in normal operation in the disputed areas, nor against nationals of other countries thereon' (People's Republic of China 2000a).

At the second ASEAN-China working group meeting held in Malaysia in May 2000 agreement was reached to combine the two drafts. The consolidated draft was discussed by the joint working group in August. Vietnam once again objected to the exclusion of the Parcel Islands. China opposed wording that would restrict or prohibit construction on occupied features in the area. The next working group

meeting, held in Hanoi in October 2000, reached an impasse over three major issues: the geographic scope of the code of conduct, a ban on new construction activities and prohibition on new occupation of unoccupied features. Chinese officials were adamant that the code of conduct be classed as a political and not a legal document.

Subsequently, the Philippines drew up a new draft that deleted reference to the code's geographic scope and included a Malaysian proposal to make the code a non-binding agreement. This was presented to the ASEAN SOM held in Hanoi in July 2001. Once again Vietnam argued for the inclusion of the Paracels and the matter could not be resolved. The following year the impasse was finally broken. ASEAN and China agreed to a face-saving non-legally binding declaration that outlined how the parties should conduct themselves ('Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea', 2002). Nonetheless, China has not altered its claim to 'indisputable sovereignty' over the entire South China Sea.

Chinese construction activities and the deployment of warships to the South China Sea are viewed with concern by ASEAN states. In April 2001, for example, a Philippine military official disclosed that 'the Chinese have installed modern communications equipment there (Mischief Reef), far more sophisticated than before' (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 16 April 2001). Early the following month, US intelligence detected signs that China's South Sea Fleet was preparing for large-scale military exercises in waters south of Hainan Island (Geertz 2001a). A PLA advanced team was observed on Woody Islands in the Paracels. China's exercises were timed to coincide with Cobra Gold, a multilateral Thai-US-Singapore military exercise held in Thailand.

On 18 May 2001, two Chinese *Jianghu*-class frigates and an intelligence gathering ship were spotted off Scarborough Shoal. Helicopters launched from these ships were observed flying in the area. These Chinese actions raised fears in Manila that Beijing was contemplating erecting structures on Scarborough Shoal similar to those on Mischief Reef. In June, more than a dozen Chinese warships, including *Luhu*-class destroyers and *Jianghu*-class frigates, transited the South China Sea (Geertz 2001b). These naval deployments coincided with the largest and most complex Chinese war games in the Taiwan Straits simulating a mock attack against Taiwan.

According to a classified report by the Armed Forces of the Philippines prepared in March 2002,

China's actions are widely viewed as a double-edge diplomatic strategy aimed at furthering its strategic goals in the region. Beijing uses negotiating tactics to keep neighboring governments hopeful of a peaceful compromise while the Chinese military continues to build up its permanent 'fortresses' in the Spratly Islands (Gomez 2002).

Taiwan and the 'one China policy'. All ASEAN states adhere to the 'one China policy' while some maintain investment, commercial and trade links with Taiwan.

China remains ever vigilant to prevent ties between ASEAN states and Taiwan from transgressing this policy. The 1999 Sino-Vietnamese joint statement, for example, was notable for the following passage: 'It (China) resolutely opposes the establishment of any form of official relationship or any contact of an official nature with Taiwan by any country that has established diplomatic relations with China'.

In early 2001, Singapore's longstanding ties with Taiwan became an irritant in bilateral relations with China (Thayer 2001c). In February, Singapore's Second Minister of Defence, Teo Chee Hean, visited Beijing for discussions with Guo Boxiong, Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff, on cooperation in the fields of politics, trade, and education. During the course of discussions between Teo and Guo, the latter remarked that China was opposed to any country that had diplomatic relations with China from developing official relations with Taiwan. Guo continued, 'We hope that the related countries shall keep alert for the political attempt of Taiwan authorities of splitting from the motherland, and observe one-China commitment' (Xinhua News Agency, 19 February 2001). Guo was referring to reports that Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian was planning a 'vacation trip' to Singapore. On 8 February, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson demanded that Singapore clarify reports concerning Chen's proposed visit. Singapore denied that there were any such plans. Guo was also alluding to longstanding Singapore-Taiwan defence links that were then under discussion. In 1996, Taiwan agreed to host Singaporean infantry, armour and artillery units for joint combat training and to maintain and repair tanks and Hawk missiles. Under a program known as Operation *Hsing Kuang* (Starlight), Singapore armed forces utilized three training camps in Taiwan.

In late 2000, Taiwan's Navy Commander-in-Chief, General Le Chieh, reportedly made a 'vacation trip' to Singapore. Singapore's Chief of the General Staff then paid a reciprocal visit to Taiwan where he held discussions on their joint military training agreement. In early 2001, Taiwan's Minister of National Defense, We Shih-wen, made an unpublicized trip to Singapore. It was in the context of these developments that in January, China used the occasion of the exchange of the first defence attaches with Singapore, to offer training facilities on Hainan Island. China had made a similar offer in 1999. Singapore rejected Beijing's offer and renewed its training agreement with Taiwan (*Tzu-Yu Shih-Pao*, 12 February 2001). The issue of Singapore's use of Taiwanese military training facilities surfaced again in September 2002 when Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, accompanied by Singapore's Defence Minister, paid another visit to Taipei.

US Presence. China is opposed to bilateral military alliances and argues that these are destabilizing. As noted above, China regards the US-Thai and US-Philippines bilateral alliances as weak links. China has moved closer to Thailand since the election of the Thaksin government. For example, China's Defense Minister Chi Haotian altered the itinerary of his trip to Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal to include Thailand after it became clear that General Chavalit would become

Minister of Defence in the new government. Although Chi's visit was billed a personal one, his agenda included meetings with all of the current and former top military brass. Chi and Chavalit discussed strengthening Sino-Thai security cooperation, drug suppression, and the ongoing border clashes between Burma and Thailand. Chi also used the occasion to lobby his 'old friend' to assist in curtailing the activities of the Falun Gong religious movement in Thailand (Thayer 2001c). In August 2001, President Jiang Zemin promised Prime Minister Thaksin that Beijing would continue to provide assistance to the Thai armed forces in maintaining weapons and equipment sold by China.

Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea in 1995 was instrumental in changing elite opinion in the Philippines towards a more favourable view of their alliance with the United States. Official US policy under the Clinton Administration was that the United States took no position with respect to territorial disputes. Rather, the United States stated its concern for safety and freedom of navigation on the high seas. In the view of some observers, this excessively legalistic and ambiguous interpretation provided China with an opportunity to devalue the US-Philippines 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty by occupying and constructing facilities on Mischief Reef.

In 1999, Thomas Hubbard, the United States Ambassador in Manila, sent a letter to the government of the Philippines clarifying that the Mutual Defense Treaty had both 'territorial and situational applications'. This letter was sent a week before the Philippines Senate passed a Visiting Forces Agreement (Kyodo News Agency, 4 June 1999). Philippines spokesperson Fernando Barican disclosed that the Hubbard letter made references to official statements by former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in 1977 that the 1951 treaty covered Philippine armed forces, vessels, planes and supply ships 'that may be attacked, no matter where, by a hostile force' (quoted in Thayer 1999b). At issue was whether or not the United States was bound to defend Philippines-claimed islands in the South China Sea that were occupied after the 1951 defence treaty was signed.

After the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement, the United States and the Philippines resumed military cooperation including joint exercises. China has repeatedly expressed concern about this development. In ASEAN-China negotiations on a South China Sea code of conduct, China has attempted to include references prohibiting 'any military exercises directed against other countries' in or near the Spratlys, and 'dangerous and close-in military reconnaissance' (People's Republic of China 2000a). In August 2000, China tried to insert in the revised draft code of conduct wording that would restrict US military exercises in the 'waters around' the Spratly Islands.

These Chinese actions have forced Philippine officials to allay Beijing's concerns. For example, a joint US-Philippines exercise codenamed *Balikatan 2000* (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) was held in late January-early March 2000. This exercise involved up to 5,000 troops in a variety of activities (Thayer 2000c). On 29 January 2000, Defence Secretary Orlando Mercado assured Chinese Ambassador

Fu Ying that naval exercises around Palawan island would be in Philippine waters. Armed Forces Chief General Angelo Reyes said the exercises were not meant to send any message to China or any other country, adversary or notional enemy. On 7 February, Mercado stated that joint US-Filipino military exercises were not linked in any way to growing tension between the Philippines and China over competing claims in the South China Sea. Despite these assurances, on 14 March, on the eve of China-ASEAN discussions on a code of conduct for the South China Sea, it was reported that Yang Yanyi, Senior Counsellor of China's Foreign Ministry, expressed concern about large-scale military exercises involving countries outside the region. 'If some countries continue to beef up their military alliances or joint exercises, all sides will continue to be suspicious of one another', she said (quoted in Thayer 2000c).

China has also played its 'anti-American' card in its dealings with other Southeast Asian states. When Vice President Hu Jintao visited Malaysia in April 2002, for example, he endorsed the emergence of the ASEAN Plus Three as Prime Minister Mahathir's East Asia Economic Group under another name. When Mahathir first proposed an East Asian caucus he specifically excluded the United States and drew strong protests from Washington. Hu told his Malaysian hosts that China opposed big nations bullying the small (Breckon 2002b).

China has also exhibited concerns about the growth of US influence in Southeast Asia as a result of its prosecution of the war on terrorism. In an address to ASEAN ministers in July-August 2002, Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan portrayed China—not 'certain outside countries' (read the United States)—as the region's natural partner in the new century (Breckon 2002a). As noted above, Tang chose this opportunity to revive China's 'new security concept' by endorsing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the ARF as models for shaping regional security arrangements in the future.

Conclusion

China's relations with the ten independent states of ASEAN have undergone a sea change in recent years. China is no longer viewed as a threat but as a political, economic and diplomatic partner (Yee and Storey 2002). China has established formal links with ASEAN and is currently implementing an extensive program of cooperative activities. China has joined the ARF and has stepped up its participation in the process of dialogue and consultations as well as practical confidence building measures. China has been an active supporter of the ASEAN Plus Three process and is successfully negotiating a free trade agreement between China and ASEAN.

China has also developed extensive bilateral ties with each Southeast Asian state. These have been codified in long-term cooperative framework agreements. These extend beyond state-to-state relations to include the private sector and party-to-party relations. China also gives consistent high-level political attention to the region. Its president, premier, defence minister and other cabinet officials regularly

travel to Southeast Asia; their regional counterparts are just as regularly received in Beijing (Breckon, 2001; 2002a-c; 2003; Thayer 2000a-d; 2001a-d).

China's assiduous wooing of Southeast Asian states, coupled with its defence cooperation programs, have revived geo-strategic rivalries, especially with India and Vietnam. India is most concerned about Chinese inroads into Burma, while Vietnam frets about losing its influence in Laos and Cambodia. China's claims to the South China Sea and its assertiveness in this area have aroused suspicions in Hanoi, Manila and elsewhere. The inability of China and ASEAN to negotiate a formal code of conduct for the South China Sea is indicative of mutual suspicions and lack of trust. Nationalist sentiment has been stirred up in the Philippines and Vietnam. There is concern by some ASEAN states that China seeks to influence ASEAN and its future direction by developing close relations with Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia as avenues of influence.

All nations in Southeast Asia adhere to the 'one China policy' while most conduct commercial and other relations with Taiwan. China brings instantaneous pressure to bear at the slightest sign of transgression. Vietnam's economic linkages to Taiwan have featured in joint statements between Beijing and Hanoi. Singapore's longstanding defence links with Taiwan have also proven to be an irritant.

Since 1997 China has promoted a 'new concept of security' as its main policy towards security cooperation with Southeast Asia. As noted by two experienced security analysts, 'many observers believe that it is intended to replace the current US-led bilateral security alliance structure of the Asia-Pacific region' (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 118). Southeast Asian states by and large value the US military presence as contributing to regional stability. They do not wish to face a situation where they will be forced to make a choice. This is the major reason why China's 'new concept of security' has not gained traction in Southeast Asia. In the wake of 9-11, the United States has recouped its influence as a major security player in the region through its war on terrorism. This development has resulted in a renewed effort by China to repackage and promote its 'new concept of security' through the ARF process (Ling 2002, and *People's Daily* 2002).

China's 'new concept of security' cannot be taken at face value as a new form of state-to-state relationship devoid of power politics. China employs the 'new security concept' to pursue its national interests by traditional power politics, including such instruments as economic and military aid and political pressure. This is evident in a review of the key issues in China-Southeast Asia relations in the case studies presented above.

China's growing economic and commercial links with Southeast Asia should be welcomed by states external to the region. These ties increase Chinese interest in seeing the region remain peaceful and stable. External states should continue to give due recognition to China's power and status. However, external states should oppose Beijing's attempts to undermine existing US bilateral military alliances in

the Asia-Pacific region. These alliance relationships are a vital underpinning of regional security until some form of effective multilateral security mechanism emerges.

Appendix A—Bilateral Cooperative Agreements

PRC-Brunei. Joint Communiqué between the People's Republic of China and Brunei Darussalam, Beijing, August 23, 1999. Xinhua News Agency, August 23, 1999.

PRC-Burma. Joint Statement on the Framework of Future Bilateral Relations and Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and Myanmar, Beijing, June 6, 2000. Xinhua News Agency, June 6, 2000.

PRC-Cambodia. Joint Statement on the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, November 13, 2000. Xinhua News Agency, November 13, 2000.

PRC-Indonesia. Joint Statement on the Future Directions of Bilateral Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia, Beijing, May 8, 2000. Xinhua News Agency, May 8, 2000.

PRC-Laos. Joint Statement on Bilateral Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vientiane, November 12, 2000. Xinhua Domestic Service, November 12, 2000.

PRC-Malaysia. Joint Statement on Framework for Future Bilateral Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and Malaysia, Beijing, May 31, 1999. Xinhua News Agency, May 31, 1999.

PRC-Philippines. Joint Statement Between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines on the Framework of Bilateral Cooperation in the 21st Century, Beijing, May 16, 2000. Xinhua News Agency, May 16, 2000.

PRC-Singapore. Joint Statement on Bilateral Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Singapore, Beijing, April 11, 2000. Xinhua News Agency, April 11, 2000.

PRC-Thailand. Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Thailand on a Plan of Action for the 21st Century, Bangkok, February 5, 1999. Xinhua News Agency, February 5, 1999.

PRC-Vietnam. Vietnam-China Joint Statement on an Official Friendly Visit to China by Le Kha Phieu, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Beijing, February 27, 1999. Xinhua Domestic Service, February 27, 1999.

PRC-Vietnam. Joint Statement for Comprehensive Cooperation in the New Century between the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Hanoi, December 25, 2000. Vietnam News Agency, December 25, 2000.

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