China's ASEAN policy in Deng Xiaoping's era: major political and security issues and general trends

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

The Australian National University

June 1994

DECLARATION

All research reported in this thesis is original and my own, except where acknowledgement is given in the text and has not been submitted for any other degree.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies China's policy towards ASEAN in Deng Xiaoping's era by examining its general trends, and examining China's policies and actions in the issues of Soviet/Vietnam "hegemonism" (1978-82), the expanding ASEAN-Taiwan de facto official relations, the Western human rights campaign in Asia, the Spratly dispute, and China's relations with the ASEAN-based communist insurgencies.

By examining those general trends, as well as specific policies and actions in those issues, the thesis demonstrates that because of developments in the domestic, regional and international situations, Deng's China has five main objectives in its ASEAN policy. These objectives are: to create and secure a tranquil regional environment in which China can concentrate on its modernisation; to maintain the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system, both at home and in the changing world order; to protect China's sovereignty; to shore up China's international and regional influence; and to increase economic benefit from trading with, and attracting investment from, the ASEAN countries, and from making some ASEAN countries give up their attempts to slow down Western economic and technological assistance to China.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my appreciation to the following people and institutions:

Mr. G. Jukes and Dr. J. Girling (Department of International Relations, The Australian National University), Dr. Rafe de Crespigny (China Centre, ANU), Mr. Ian Wilson (Department of Political Science, ANU), and Mr. Cheng Bifan (Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) for their guidance;

Mr. Chen Shenhai (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Jinan University, China) for regularly providing me with Chinese-language materials on the subject of China-ASEAN relations;

Dr. Harold Crouch (Department of Political and Social Change, ANU), Dr. Bill Jenner (China Centre, ANU), Dr. Peter van Ness and Dr. Ann Kent (Department of International Relations, ANU) for their useful comments on various chapters of the thesis;

The Australian National University for providing me with a scholarship and field study grant;

the Australia-China Council for providing financial assistance for my Overseas Student Charge;

Mr. Sukhumbhand Paribatra (Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand), Dr. Frances F. W. Lai (Centre for Asian Pacific Studies, Lingnan College, Hong Kong), Mrs. Theresa Chong Carino (Philippine-China Development Resource Centre, De La Salle University, the Philippines), and Mrs Y L Lee (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore) for cordially

receiving me and providing me with various facilities during my field study trip to their countries; and

the editors of The Pacific Review (Britain), Issues & Studies (Taiwan), Asian Survey (USA), Communist and Post-Communist Studies (USA) and of the book China, India, Japan, and the Security of Southeast Asia (Singapore) for publishing some chapters of my thesis.

Introduction

This thesis considers China's policy towards the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Deng Xiaoping's era since mid-1977-78. The "ASEAN countries" under discussion refer to the original five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Although the ASEAN countries are separate entities, China in Deng's era has adopted a largely collective policy paradigm in its relations with these countries. This is because firstly, these countries have tended to coordinate their major external political and security policies, including their policies towards China, within the organisation of ASEAN. China is aware that any major action towards one member country could provoke reactions from other ASEAN countries. Secondly, the organisation of ASEAN has become increasingly influential in the Asia-Pacific region. Thirdly, all of the ASEAN countries are located in close proximity to China's southern border where China has crucial security interests. This is not to say that when dealing with an individual ASEAN country, China has not fine-turned its policy according to the country's particular characteristics.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that with the changing domestic, international and regional scenes, China's major objectives in its ASEAN policy in the whole of Deng's era have been: (1) to maintain a peaceful regional environment in which China can concentrate on its modernisation; (2) to shore up the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system both domestically and internationally; (3) to protect China's national sovereignty; (4) to

maintain China's influence in international and regional affairs; and (5) to increase economic benefit from trading with, and attracting investment from, the ASEAN countries, and from making some ASEAN countries give up their attempts to slow down Western economic and technological assistance to China.

The thesis will demonstrate these points by examining China's policies and actions in what I consider to be the major issues in its relations with the ASEAN countries, and by studying the general trends in China's policy towards them. The organic relationship between these two approaches is that the former provides specific cases for the latter, and the latter puts the former in an overall perspective.

On the basis of my review of Chinese literature on China-ASEAN relations, including both the publicly published works and restricted documents,[1] and of interviews of Chinese diplomats based in the ASEAN region and some leading Chinese academics who have contributed advice to the Chinese government on its Southeast Asia policy,[2] I consider the following are the major issues

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[1] The publicly published works that I have reviewed are mainly articles in major magazines and journals, reports, editorials and official policy statements in leading newspapers, books, and conference papers. The restricted publications that I have considered are mainly Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi neican (World Economics and Politics for Restricted Circulation, a monthly publication of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and Shi jing diao yan (Research of World Economics, an irregular bulletin of CASS which is in fact also about world politics and China's foreign policy).

[2] These interviews were conducted during a field study in the ASEAN countries in July -September 1991, in Beijing in 1987-88, when I worked in

in China's ASEAN policy in the Deng era: Soviet/Vietnamese "hegemonism"; the ASEAN countries' de facto official relations with Taiwan; the Western human rights campaign in Asia; the Spratly dispute in the South China Sea; the ASEAN countries' concern about China's long-term regional intentions arising from China's relations with regional communist insurgencies and ethnic Chinese communities; and trade and economic relations.

Of the major issues in China's ASEAN policy, I concentrate on the following: China's anti-Soviet/Vietnamese campaign from 1978 to mid-1982; the ASEAN countries' de facto official relations with Taiwan; the Western human rights campaign in Asia; the Spratly dispute; and China's relations with regional communist insurgencies. China's policies in the Maoist era will be mentioned mainly to establish historical background regarding the issues of Taiwan and the Spratlys, and to better indicate the general trends of China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era. For convenience the term "ASEAN" will be used to refer to the original five member countries prior to 1967, when the organisation was formed.

Thorough studies have been conducted on economic and trade exchanges[3] and the ethnic Chinese[4] as issues in China-ASEAN

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the Institute of World Economics and Politics, CASS, and through correspondences since I came to Australia in 1989.

[3] See, for example, Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Trends and Patterns (Chinese Social Sciences Publishing Company, Beijing, 1987); Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Developments in ASEAN and China (Chinese Social Sciences Publishing Company, Beijing, 1989); and Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations in the Context of Pacific Economic

relations. For this reason, I will not focus on those areas in this thesis, although they will be dealt with briefly, when addressing the general trends. China's anti-(Soviet/Vietnamese) hegemonism policy towards ASEAN, particularly in respect of the Cambodian conflict, from 1978 till the end of the 1980s have been widely studied in a general fashion.[5] However, there is no research which concentrates on this policy in its most critical period, namely from 1978 to mid-1982, when containment of this hegemonism was *the* important issue in China's declaratory ASEAN policy. Given that the motivation for China's global anti-hegemonism campaign during that period has been reinterpreted by some scholars as the manipulation of the Soviet threat to serve China's economic

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Development and Co-operation (Chinese Social Sciences Publishing Company, Beijing, 1991).

[4] See, for example, Leo Suryadinata, China and the ASEAN States: the Ethnic Chinese Dimension (Singapore University Press, 1985); Theresa Chong Carino, China and the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (New Day Publishers, Quezon City, the Philippines, 1985); Mondejar, Reuben Talana, Two Determinants For A Stable Relationship Between The ASEAN States and China: The ASEAN-Based Ethnic Chinese and the Kampuchean Conflict (Harvard University, M.A. dissertation, March, 1988); Chan Ngor Chong, "PRC Policy on the Overseas Chinese", in Joyce K. Kallgren, Noordin Sopiee, Soedjati Djiwandono, eds., ASEAN and China: Evolving Relationship (Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley, 1988); and Robert S. Ross, "China and the Ethnic Chinese: Political Liability/Economic Asset", ibid.

[5] See, for example, Wang Xinsheng, "Kampuchea Issue in China-ASEAN Relations", paper prepared for "China-ASEAN Relations Conference", organised by China Studies Program, De La Salle University, Manila, the Philippines, 14-16 June, 1990; Jin Xudong, "Zhongguo yu Dongmeng de guanxi yu Zhong Yue guanxi (China-ASEAN relations and China-Vietnam relations)", Sixiang Zhanxian (Ideological Front, Yunnan), April 1988; and Mondejar, Reuben Talana, op. cit.

interests,[6] it is now necessary to reassess China's anti-hegemonism policy towards ASEAN, which was a component of the global campaign. China's approach to ASEAN-Taiwan relations and China's human rights diplomacy towards ASEAN are the two most recent developments in China-ASEAN relations since the end of the superpower confrontation. However, in the existing literature on these relations in the new era, the two issues have been either not mentioned[7] or only described briefly.[8] Ever since the Spratly dispute became a major regional problem, in late 1987, China's Spratly policy towards ASEAN has been widely addressed: most commonly in the works on China-ASEAN relations in the post-

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6 See, for example, Sheng Lijun's Ph.D thesis Chinese Foreign Policy 1978-84: from Anti-hegemonic United Front to the Independent Foreign Policy (submitted to the Queensland University, Queensland, Australia, 1993).

7 For example, Taiwan was not mentioned in Leszek Buszynski, "China and the ASEAN region", paper presented to Workshop on China as a Great Power in the Asia-Pacific: Myths, Realities and Challenges, 2-3 December 1993, at the Australian National University; and Robert S. Ross, "China and Post-Cambodia Southeast Asia: Coping with Success", The ANNALS of the American Academy, AAPSS, 519, January 1992. The human rights factor was not mentioned in ibid.

8 For example, the Taiwan factor was described briefly in Ji Guoxing, "Jianpuzhai wenti jiejue hou Zhongguo yu Dongmeng guojia guanxi zhangwan (Prospect of China-ASEAN relations after Cambodia)", Yingduzhina (Indochina, Guangxi), No. 3, 1989, pp1-2; Zhu Zhenming, "Jiushi niandai de Zhongguo yu Dongnanya: qianjing zhangwang (China's relations with Southeast Asia in the 1990s: a prediction)", Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi (World Economics and Politics, Beijing, hereafter SJYZ), September, 1990, pp57-58; Sheldon W. Simon, "China and Southeast Asia: Suspicion and Hope", The Journal of East Asian Affairs, No. 1, Vol. V, Winter/Spring 1991, p198, p200; and Lee Lai To, "ASEAN-PRC Political And Security Cooperation: Problems, Proposals, and Prospects", Asian Survey (hereafter AS), Vol. XXXIII, No. 11, November 1993, pp1099-1101. The human rights factor was described briefly in Leszek Buszynski, op.cit., pp19-21; and Lee Lai To, op.cit, pp1103.

Cambodian era.[9] Also, China's Spratly policy towards ASEAN has been mentioned in studies of China's general Spratly policy.[10] However, in my opinion, the existing works generally have not been based on a systematic and comprehensive review of Chinese literature on the Spratly dispute, consequently having not formed a systematic and comprehensive view of China's Spratly policy towards ASEAN, and/or have not covered the development of China's policy into the 1990s. Since the Spratly dispute, ASEAN-Taiwan relations and China's policy of associating with ASEAN in resisting the Western human rights campaign in Asia are the major political and security issues in China's ASEAN policy since the end of

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9 See for example, B. B. Hamzah, "China and Southeast Asia: Political and Strategic Issues", paper presented at the conference "The PRC and Southeast Asia", organised by the Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, in Phuket Island, Thailand, 27-30 October, 1988; Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda, "PRC-ASEAN relations: strategic and security implications", paper prepared for "China-ASEAN Relations Conference"; Ji Guoxing, op.cit.; Ji Guoxing, "Sino-ASEAN Prospective Relationship and Its Effects on US", Asian Profile (Hong Kong), Vol. 18, No.1, February 1991; Tian Zhongqing, "Dui Jianpuzhai wenti jiejue zhihou Zhongguo yu Dongmeng guojia guanxi de kanfa he jianyi (China-ASEAN relations after Cambodia: some policy suggestions)", circulated by Shanghai Institute of Asian Studies, 1989; Zhu Zhenming, op.cit.; Sheldon W. Simon, op.cit.; Surin Maisrikrod, "The New Dynamics in China-ASEAN Relations", paper for the workshop on Major Asian Powers and the Security of Southeast Asia: The post-Cold War International Order, September 4-8, 1991, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia; Lee Lai To, op.cit.; Robert S. Ross, op.cit.; and Leszek Buszynski, op.cit.

10 See, for example, Li Ning, "Lun Nansha zizheng jiqi dui woguo yu Dongnanya guojia guanxi de yingxiang (Conflict in the Spratlys and its impact on China's relations with the Southeast Asian countries)", circulated by the Chinese Committee for International Friendly Contact, Beijing, October 1989; and Chi-Kin Lo, China's Policy Towards Territorial Disputes: The Case of the South China Sea Islands (Routledge: London and New York, 1989).

the 1980s, a solid research on these areas can significantly contribute to the study of the post-Cold War China-ASEAN relations. China's approach to its relations with regional communist insurgencies in Deng's era have been mentioned in numerous works, mostly when addressing problems in China-ASEAN relations and/or China's measures to improve relations with ASEAN.[11] However, except for William R. Heaton, who did a study which concentrated on China's relations with regional communist insurgencies in the initial years of the Deng leadership until 1981,[12] other scholars have not examined China's policy in depth. All the existing works on the subject have not considered China's relations with regional communist insurgencies in a systematic or comprehensive manner. They are substantially inferior to works on the relations of Maoist China with these insurgencies.[13]

This thesis contributes to studies of China-ASEAN relations in the following ways. Firstly, it contains comprehensive research on China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era as a whole, which is clearly

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11 See, for example, various articles in Frances F. W. Lai, ed., The Emerging Relations Between China and Southeast Asia: Limitations and Opportunities (Centre for Asian Pacific Studies, Lingnan College, Hong Kong,1988).

12 William R. Heaton, "China & Southeast Asian Communist Movements", AS, Vol. XXII, No. 8, August 1982.

13 For major works on China's support for regional communist insurgency in Mao's era, see Peter Van Ness, Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy, Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation(University of California Press:1970); Melvin Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia - The Politics of Survival: A Study of Foreign Policy Interaction (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); and Jay Taylor, China and Southeast Asia, Peking's Relations with Revolutionary Movement (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976).

needed, since this era is fast coming to its end. Secondly, it contributes thorough research on China's approach to ASEAN-Taiwan relations, China's human rights diplomacy in ASEAN and China's Spratly policy towards ASEAN, which, as I have noted above, are the major political and security issues in China's ASEAN policy since the end of the 1980s. Thirdly, this thesis makes a contribution to the study of China's relations with regional communist insurgencies, which is a significant aspect of China-ASEAN relations up to 1990. Fourthly, this thesis contributes to understanding the general trends of China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era. So far little comprehensive research on these trends has been done. Some academics have looked at the policy's transformation from one, which subordinated regional dealings to the requirements of countering the alleged Soviet strategy of encircling China, to a regionalist policy, which looks toward long-term relations with the ASEAN countries.[14] However, in my opinion, the changes in the general evolution of China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era are more diverse. Fifthly, this thesis is one of the very few works on China-ASEAN relations which have consulted the voluminous and rapidly expanding Chinese literature on the subject and ASEAN's foreign relations in general.

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14 See, for example, Michael Yahuda, "China: Will It Strengthen or Weaken the Region?" in T.B. Millar and James Walter, eds., Asian-Pacific Security After The Cold War (Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd., New South Wales, Australia), p34; Michael B. Yahuda, "The People's Republic of China at 40: Foreign Relations", The China Quarterly (hereafter CQ), No. 119, 1989, pp524-525, p531; and Sheldon W. Simon, op.cit., p185.

This thesis contributes to studies of China's general foreign policy because this policy has become more regionalised than any previous period since 1949, and this addresses a lacuna in comprehensive scholarship on China's foreign policy in Deng's era, which is primarily concerned with China's relations with major Western powers. Comprehensive studies of China's relations with major Western powers in the whole of Deng's era have become an academic priority both within and outside China.

The thesis consists of six chapters and a conclusion. The chapters examine respectively China's anti-hegemonism campaign towards ASEAN from 1978 to mid-1982, China's approach to ASEAN's de facto official relations with Taiwan, China's human rights diplomacy towards ASEAN, China's Spratly policy towards ASEAN, China's approach to its relations with regional communist insurgencies, and the general trends of China's ASEAN policy.

Chapter One

China's anti-hegemonic policy in ASEAN: fear of the Soviet threat?

The overriding theme in China's proclaimed ASEAN policy from 1978 until mid-1982 was that China and the ASEAN countries should immediately forge a united front to contain Soviet "global hegemonism" and what China claimed as complicity in Moscow's expansion in the region by Vietnamese "regional hegemonism". It has long been assumed by scholarly communities that China's ASEAN policy in the first three or so years of the Deng Xiaoping regime, if not much longer, was motivated by China's concern about the Soviet threat to its national security. This writer likes to challenge this conventional wisdom. This chapter presents China's declared ASEAN policy, followed by reinterpretation of China's motivation based on some doubts about the policy.

China's declared policy

From the late 1960s, believing that the Soviet Union was gaining the upper hand in the superpower rivalry, and in view of the US military debacle in Vietnam, Sino-Soviet armed border clashes and the rapid build-up of the Soviet military forces around China's northern border, China's late leader Mao Zedong maintained that a world war initiated by the Soviet Union and a large-scale Soviet invasion of China were not only inevitable but also imminent. The Chinese People's Liberation Army actively prepared against "an

early war, a big war and a nuclear war" with the Soviet Union.[1] Meanwhile, Mao launched a foreign policy from the early 1970s centred on seeking the formation of a global united front against the so-called (Soviet) "social imperialism". China's ASEAN policy was part and parcel of its overall united front-building efforts in the whole world. From 1978 the newly arising Deng Xiaoping leadership intensified China's warnings about the Soviet threat to China's national security and to world peace. Meanwhile, claiming that China firmly stood by the side of the "peace-loving forces" in the world, and was a significant force for containing Soviet hegemonism, the Chinese government pushed more strenuously for the formation of an international anti-Soviet united front, particularly with the US-led Western world.[2]

China's ASEAN policy appeared to be a regional function of this overall anti-hegemonism campaign. According to the Chinese government, Moscow's expansion in Southeast Asia from 1978 was well coordinated with its strategic initiatives in the Indian Ocean, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and Horn of Africa, in an elaborately planned "Nan Xia Zhanlue (Southward Strategy, hereafter SS)". The most important step Moscow planned to take in this strategy was to control the Malacca Strait in order to link its strategic deployments in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Through SS, Moscow attempted to form a curve-shaped strategic front line encircling the whole area from Japan to West Asia. This would

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1 Qi Zhenjun, Wang Kefu, eds., Xing shiqi Mao Zedong junshi sixian de fazhan (Development of Mao Zedong's military thinking in the new period) (People's Liberation Army Publishing Agency, Beijing, 1991), p108, p110.

2 For China's anti-Soviet propaganda, see Renmin Ribao (the People's Daily, hereafter RR), February 2, 1979, p1; and RR, February 13, 1981, p7.

enable Moscow to control some major international sea-lanes and nations rich in strategic resources important to Western economic survival. Being a vital part of Moscow's "global strategy" for "world domination", SS sought to threaten the lifeline of petroleum and other resource supplies to the Western nations on one hand, and to strengthen strategic encirclement of China on the other, by imposing the threat of a war on two fronts (namely Sino-Soviet border and Southeast Asia).[3] The Chinese government claimed that the background of SS was that on one hand, facing years of East-West strategic stalemate in Europe, the major theatre of superpower confrontation, Moscow decided to outflank Western Europe in its peripheral regions by intensifying its expansion into Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region.[4] On the other hand, Moscow was concerned about the increasing international influence of China with its stronger relations with the Western nations and commitment to the four modernisations, hence the enhancement of a strategic pincer movement against China in order to hinder its new progress.[5]

Adding to its warnings about the Soviet threat, China also strongly argued from late 1978 that Vietnam, while having its own regional ambitions, was acting first and foremost as Moscow's "hatchet man"

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3 This outline of China's view of SS is based on RR, December 30, 1978, p5; RR, April 22, 1979, p4; RR, June 22, 1979, p6; and RR, March 13, 1980, p6.

4 Si Mu, "Dangqian guoji xingshi he wuoguo shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe (International situation today and construction of socialist modernisation in our country)," Sixiang Zhanxian (Ideological Front, Beijing), No. 4, 1981, p12.

5 "Keng Piao's Report on the Situation of the Indochinese Peninsula", Issues & Studies (Taiwan, hereafter IS) Vol. XVII, No. 1, January 1981, p84. p87.

for SS.[6] China claimed that while Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia reflected its own "regional hegemonism" aimed at establishing an Indochinese Federation, the nature of the Cambodian issue was first and foremost that Moscow had instigated its "hatchet man" to invade Cambodia so as to turn that country into an outpost for Moscow's own SS.[7] Specifically, Moscow wanted to use Cambodia as a spring-board to reach the Malacca Strait.[8] Thus Vietnam's invasion was not an isolated or local incident. In the same vein, the significance of the Cambodian resistance movement was that by containing the Vietnamese invaders, it became a force against the Southeast Asian part of the Soviet "global strategy".[9] It could bog Hanoi down in the Cambodian quagmire, so that Moscow could no longer expect to use Hanoi to move further southward to the Malacca Strait.[10]

From mid-1981, China started to play down its strident call for an united front against Soviet hegemonism in its ASEAN policy, and

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6 RR, November 5, 1978, p4. RR, December 30, 1978, p5. RR, April 22, 1979, p4. RR, May 3, 1979, p5. RR, September 29, 1979, p5. RR, December 24, 1979, p5.

7 RR, December 30, 1978, p5. RR, January 17, 1979, p5. RR, March 27, 1981, p7. Based on classified documents and interviews with some Chinese military and foreign affairs leaders in charge of Indochina policy in the 1950s-60s, Du Weidong and Juan Yenche, two writers in the Chinese military, have revealed for the first time a series of top-level closed-door discussions among the Chinese leaders in the late 1950s and early 60s about Vietnam's ambition to create an Indochinese Federation and its anti-Chinese thoughts. See Du Weidong, Juan Yenche, Gongheguo mi shi (Secret Envoys of the Republic)(Guangmin Ribao Press, Beijing, 1990), pp14-15, p129, p249.

8 RR, January 17, 1979, p5. RR, June 22, 1979, p6. RR, February 3, 1980, p4. RR, April 14, 1980, p7. RR, August 2, 1980, p7. RR, September 2, 1980, p7. RR, July 18, 1981, p6.

9 RR, January 8, 1979, p1.

10 RR, March 27, 1981, p7. RR, July 15, 1981, p1.

dropped the call altogether from mid-1982. This followed the trend of China's general foreign policy. A clear signal was sent by the Chinese leaders when they met Prem Tinsulanond, the then Prime Minister of Thailand, the ASEAN country needed most in China's anti-Soviet/Vietnam crusade in Southeast Asia, when he visited Beijing in November 1982. Neither Deng nor the then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Hu Yaobang touched on the subject of anti-Soviet united front. Instead, Deng emphasised that China's policy of developing friendly relations with Thailand and other ASEAN countries represented China's "long-term" consideration rather than a matter of "current convenience".[11] Hu stated that China's top priority in dealing with Thailand was to establish a "long-lasting" relationship of good-neighbourliness.[12] This was a glaring contrast to the contents of the previous Sino-Thai leadership meetings and meetings between Chinese leaders and their counterparts from other ASEAN countries.

It was indicated by the Chinese press that China's reason for dropping its united front policy was the decline of the Soviet threat. This was also the view widely shared by academic communities. From mid-1981 to early 1982, China claimed that at the global level, due to the newly hardened US policy towards the Soviet Union and the latter's increased economic problems and international over-commitment, the "anti-hegemony force" had become stronger than the "hegemony force".[13] However, China also expressed its suspicion that this may only be a fragile situation,

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[11] RR, November 21, 1982, p1.

[12] RR, November 20, 1982, p1.

[13] Si Mu, op.cit., pp13-14.

claiming that the problems the Soviet Union faced both at home and abroad were not serious enough to make it slow down its "global expansion",[14] and that the world should not take for granted either the effectiveness or sustainability of the Reagan administration's tough Soviet policy.[15] From mid-1982 China appeared to see more seriously Moscow's internal and external difficulties, and meanwhile believed that parity had been reached between the two superpowers in their competitive strength.[16] From late 1983, China expressed the view that the United States had effectively gained the upper hand in its rivalry with the Soviet Union.[17] China's publicised perception of the strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific including Southeast Asia followed a similar path of change. Thus from mid-1981, China claimed that the United States strengthened its military deterrence in the Asia-Pacific through defense commitments and military-economic aid to its allies and friends, including the ASEAN countries, and coordination with these countries on major security issues.[18] From mid-1982, China described the two superpowers as having essentially reached a strategic stalemate in the Western Pacific.[19] From mid-1984

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14 RR, January 8, 1982, p6.

15 RR, January 7, 1982, p6. RR, January 8, 1982, p6.

16 Li Jingjie, "Muqian Sulian de duiwai zhengce (Recent foreign policy of the Soviet Union)", Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi neican (World Economics and Politics for Restricted Circulation, Beijing, hereafter SJYZN), December, 1983, pp2-4.

17 Li Yi, "Mei Su dangqian de zhengduo taishi ji tamen dui Zhongguo zuoyong de gulian (Current pattern of US-USSR confrontation and their views of China's role)", SJYZN, December, 1983, pp27-28.

18 RR, September 10, 1981, p7. RR, March 10, 1984, p7.

19 RR, January 19, 1983, p7. Bei Muonong, "Zhongguo weilai zai Yazhou de diwei (China's future in Asia)," Shijie zhishi (World Knowledge, Beijing, hereafter SZ), No. 10, 1983, p4.

China's view was that their balance of power in the region was increasingly in America's favour.[20]

Apparently to reflect this new strategic situation and the initial progress in the Sino-Soviet rapprochement process marked by bilateral deputy-ministerial consultations aimed at normalising relations, which started in October 1982, Deng declared in October and December 1984: the world forces for peace were stronger and growing faster than the forces for war; it was possible that world war would not break out for a fairly long time to come, thus a long-term world peace could be maintained; and China had achieved a safe global and regional environment for the first time since 1949.[21] In early 1985 the Central Military Committee of the CCP published a document entitled "Strategic Changes to the Guiding Thoughts on National Defense Building". It abandoned the defense strategy based on the assumption that a world war and massive invasion of China by the Soviet Union were inevitable and imminent, and abolished the doctrine of preparing against "an early war, a big war, and a nuclear war".[22]

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[20] Bai Yulin, "Mei Su zhai Dongnanya he xinan Taipingyan de qingzheng (USSR-US competition in Southeast Asia and the Southwestern Pacific)," Xiandai guoji guanxi (Contemporary International Relations, Beijing), No. 1, 1986, pp27-30.

[21] "Deng Xiaoping tan weihu shijie heping (Deng Xiaoping on safeguarding world peace)", Liao Wang (Outlook Weekly, Beijing, hereafter LW), No. 5, 1985, p9. "Deng Xiaoping tan shijie xingshi (Deng Xiaoping on world situation)", LW, No. 18, 1985, p11. RR, November 2, 1985, p4.

[22] Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army's Daily), September 5, 1986. For military-circle discussions of this document, see Planning and Organising Department, Military Academy, ed., Lishixing de zhuanbian (Historic Transformation) (Military Academy Publishing Agency, Beijing, 1986).

Doubts and reinterpretation

Many academics have commented on the nature of China's ASEAN policy from 1978 to mid-1982 and several years afterwards. China's SS theory has not been particularly commented on. However, there has been a consensus that China's concern about the perceived Soviet threat dominated China's ASEAN policy and its wider Asia policy. For example, Steven Levine pointed out in 1984 that in recent years China had viewed relations with its Asian neighbours primarily through an anti-Soviet prism.[23] He said that just as Asia was harnessed to the chariot of anti-Americanism during the Bandung era, China now envisioned a similar role for Asia vis-a-vis the Soviet hegemonism.[24] Michael Yahuda argued in 1985 that since the 1970s Chinese policies towards Southeast Asia had been determined by the perceptions of Chinese leaders of the character of the threat posed to China by the Soviet Union, and China's assessments of their regional friends and enemies had tended to be a consequence of its calculations of the nature of this threat and the place of the region within that calculus.[25] He reasserted in 1992 that China's dealings within the Asia-Pacific region until the decline and end of the so-called "strategic triangle" from late 1987 were subordinated to the requirements of countering the alleged Soviet strategy of encircling China, and that the conduct of Chinese foreign policy until the declaration in 1982 of a policy of "independence" might be seen as an extreme example

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23 Steven I. Levine, "China in Asia: the PRC as a Regional Power", in Harry Harding, ed., China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p123.

24 Ibid., p124.

25 Michael Yahuda, "China and the Region", Southeast Asian Affairs 1985 (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore), p54.

of a Chinese tendency to subordinate all foreign policies to the purpose of resisting Moscow's challenge.[26] Sheldon Simon indicated that China's Southeast Asia policy looked toward short-term opportunities designed to harm Moscow/Hanoi until Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and enhanced the Soviets' efforts to improve relations with China.[27] Robert Ross wrote that until the post-Cambodian period, Beijing formulated policy toward the ASEAN countries largely in the context of Soviet-Vietnamese alliance.[28]

However, it is seriously doubtful that China's anti-hegemonism policy as it was from 1978 until mid-82, let alone the period since, was motivated by apprehension about the Soviet threat. First, how could the Deng leadership decide to shift the Party's work focus from class struggle to peaceful economic development from late 1978 and invade Vietnam in February-March 1979, if a large-scale Soviet invasion and world war were inevitable and imminent, as it so strongly claimed at that time? How could China establish a number of coastal Special Economic Zones in Guangdong and Fujian provinces bordering the South China Sea in 1979-80 as the frontline of the newly announced open-door policy, if there was a Soviet SS as horrific as China portrayed? And why should China pay only lip-service to the issue of establishing bilateral military cooperation with the US against the Soviet Union, and in fact many times turn down US proposals about enhancing such cooperation, as revealed in some restricted documents in China,[29] if the Soviet threat to China

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26 Michael Yahuda, "China: Will It Strengthen or Weaken the Region?" pp34-35.

27 Sheldon W. Simon, op.cit., p185.

28 Robert S. Ross, op.cit., p55.

29 See, for example, Li Yi, op.cit., p29.

was as grave as China claimed? These questions are now answered by some works on Deng's defence thoughts, recently published by some authoritative publishing agencies of the Chinese military establishment. They show that Deng seriously disagreed with Mao's judgement about the timing and scale of a world war and the Soviet threat to China. They reveal that ever since as early as 1978 - not 1984 - the Deng leadership had already held the view that a world war would not break out for a long time to come, and that the Soviet threat to Chinese national security was at worst a long-term one.[30] They also disclose that in practice as the result of Deng's change away from Mao's judgement about the timing and scale of a world war and the Soviet threat, the Chinese military had since late 1978 - not 1985 - stopped preparing against "an early war, a big war and a nuclear war".[31] Thus it is clear that the Deng government had deliberately continued to propagate Mao's already abolished judgement of imminent war to serve China's interests in other areas.

Second, the Chinese government could not have ever believed in SS, as it could hardly have made any geographical or strategic sense to Chinese leaders and military strategists. As if to explain the sudden disappearance of the subject of SS in China's policy deliberations from mid-1982,[32] an authoritative People's Daily

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30 Yang Chunchang, Deng Xiaoping xingshiqi jianjun sixiang yanjiu (A study on Deng Xiaoping's military thinking in the new era)(People's Liberation Army Press, Beijing, 1989), p351.

31 Ibid. Guo Shouhang, Deng Xiaoping guofang xiandaihua sixiang yanjiu (A study of Deng Xiaoping's thinking on defence modernisation)(Defence University Press, Beijing, 1989), pp36-37.

32 For the dropping of the subject of SS in China's statements and comments about Moscow's expansion in Asia, Moscow-Hanoi relations and the

commentary was published in January 1983, rejecting the SS argument. The commentary stated that the physical characteristics of the Malacca Strait simply did not allow either superpower to effectively control it and then maintain a solid linkage between its military dispositions in the Pacific and Indian oceans. It also said that in any case Malacca was not a bottle-neck, since there were several other passages like the Sunda and Lombok Straits linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and that in a situation of war with the US, the Soviet Pacific Fleet would have enormous difficulties getting from its Vladivostok base through the straits of Tsushima, Tsugaru and Soya, never mind the Malacca Strait.[33] However, it stretches one's imagination that it should take the Chinese till 1982 to realise these simple facts, especially the strategic position of the Malacca Strait, which was not the only strait for which they had a map. If anything, China held voluminous historical records about various straits bordering the South China Sea. Since the Chinese could not ever have believed in SS, it followed that instead of making China discover a SS, developments like Moscow's intensified strategic penetration into peripheral regions of Europe in 1977-78, Moscow-Hanoi alliance and Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia actually led China to think about making up something like SS, and that the Chinese could also never have had faith in their own accusation that Vietnam acted as Moscow's "hatchet man" for SS,

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Cambodian issue, see RR, May 11, 1982, p4; RR, May 12, 1982, p1; RR, June 25, 1982, p6; RR, July 31, 1982, p4; RR, September 5, 1982, p1 and p4; RR, October 5, 1982, p6; RR, November 14, 1982, p6; RR, November 18, 1982, p1; RR, November 19, 1982, p1; RR, November 20, 1982, p1, p2, and p6; RR, November 21, 1982, p1; November 22, 1982, p1; RR, December 25, 1982, p1; RR, November 26, 1982, p6; RR, November 28, 1982, p6; RR, September 29, 1983, p4; and RR, November 3, 1983, p6.

[33] RR, January 19, 1983, p7.

and its invasion of Cambodia was premeditated by Moscow as a step in that strategy. Similarly, the dropping of this accusation from mid-1982 was not because China had suddenly discovered that SS did not exist.[34] In fact, when some Western governments claimed to see Moscow's manipulation behind North Korea's invasion of South Korea and China's intervention in the Korean War, and see Mao's manipulation behind Ho Chi Minh's liberation struggle in South Vietnam, the Chinese government firmly rejected such claims as Cold War propaganda. From their own experiences in international communism, Chinese leaders knew well that it was intrinsically fallacious to make such claims. This should make one doubt the seriousness of China's own claim to have seen Moscow's manipulation behind Vietnam/Cambodia, with or without SS. When SS and the association of Vietnam/Cambodia with it were dropped from Chinese propaganda at the same time as China's anti-hegemonism campaign in Southeast Asia, China did not even offer any explanation about whether the dropping of this campaign had anything to do with its apparently changed views of SS and of the close relations between Vietnam/Cambodia and SS, a further indication of the convenient nature of the latter two theories in the first place.

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34 For the dropping of this accusation in China's statements and comments about Vietnam and Cambodia, see RR, May 11, 1982, p4; RR, May 12, 1982, p1; RR, June 25, 1982, p6; RR, July 31, 1982, p4; RR, September 5, 1982, p1; RR, October 5, 1982, p6; RR, November 18, 1982, p1; RR, November 19, 1982, p1; RR, November 20, 1982, p1+2; RR, November 21, 1982, p1; RR, November 22, 1982, p1; RR, December 25, 1982, p1; RR, September 29, 1983, p4; and RR, November 3, 1983, p6.

Based on the above doubts, China's motives from 1978 to mid-1982 in its vigorous united front campaign in the ASEAN region, as in the world in general, should be reinterpreted. The author of the January 1983 People's Daily commentary indicated privately that SS was mainly the Chinese military's view, which the newspaper found it necessary to challenge by publishing his dissenting argument.[35] Based on this information, it is tempting to assume that SS was made up by the military in the hope of increasing defence expenditure. After all, except in 1979, when China launched a war with Vietnam, defence spending saw steady decline after Deng came to power, which also cast doubt on China's expressed view of the Soviet threat. However, this assumption is readily challenged by the simple fact that it was Deng himself and other staunch reformers in the Chinese government, people who agreed with Deng's policy of downgrading defence modernisation to the bottom of the list of four modernisations, who were leading the international preaching of SS theory.

This writer believes that China's united front campaign was intended to strengthen the Western, particularly the US, commitment to China's own modernisation program which started in 1978 and required substantial Western help. Deng was convinced that although conditions for increased China-West economic and technological exchanges were more favourable now than any previous period since 1949 with the newly established diplomatic relations between Beijing and Washington, it was not easy for a major communist developing country like China to obtain

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35 Personal communication with Professor Cheng Bifan of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, October 1991.

financial assistance and advanced technology from Western countries. As he put it in 1978, "some people in those countries still have old colonialists' mentalities and attempt to put a stranglehold on poor countries like us, unwilling to see us developing".[36] Deng may have calculated that China would have easier access to technological and economic assistance from the US, and, through the US, other Western nations, by most strongly convincing the West that the new Chinese regime under Deng's leadership was firmly on the side of the Western world in international politics, by exploiting US concern about Soviet expansion, China's usefulness to the West for containing this expansion and the US view that China's security and independence were in the interest of the West, and by forging an anti-Soviet strategic cooperation with the USA. Thus China intensified its propaganda about the Soviet threat to world peace and China's security, projected China as a crucial force against Soviet hegemonism, and more strenuously pushed for the formation of an international anti-Soviet united front.[37] Creating the bogey of SS and associating Vietnam/Cambodia with it were Southeast Asian components of a whole game to exaggerate the Soviet threat to the West and China, and project China's importance in containing the Soviet expansion. The Chinese alleged that SS sought to threaten the lifeline of petroleum and other resource supplies of the Western nations and to enhance a strategic pincer movement against China. And since among all the major allies and friends of the USA, China was geographically closest to the Malacca Strait and the SS "outpost"

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36 Deng Xiaoping, Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan: 1975-1982 (Collected Works of Deng Xiaoping: 1975-1982) (People's Press, Beijing, 1983), pp360-361.

37 This chapter's argument about Deng's manipulation of the Soviet threat in China's US policy in 1978-82, except the Southeast Asian component of China's global anti-Soviet campaign, partially draws on Sheng Lijun, op.cit.

Cambodia, and was the only country in that category bordering the SS "hatchet man" Vietnam, China's strategic value in protecting the Western interests was only too obvious. Deng may have also hoped that, once having been led to believe in China's version of the Soviet/Vietnam threat to the region, the ASEAN countries would push the US and other Western nations to help China's modernisation on a massive scale. At least they would not attempt to obstruct this help. Being fully aware of their apprehensions about China through personal experiences mentioned below, Deng must know well that once China went all out to seek such help, ASEAN could be concerned. That propaganda about SS and the association of Vietnam/Cambodia with it were part of the whole game could be seen clearly in the fact that they were dropped at the same time (mid-1982) as China's anti-(Soviet) hegemonism campaign in the world as well as in Southeast Asia.

While China's anti-Soviet game in general was directed at the US-led Western nations, its anti-hegemonism campaign in Southeast Asia was also intended to serve two regional purposes. One was to improve political relations with the ASEAN countries, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia. For its newly started modernisation drive, China needed a tranquil regional environment in East Asia; achieving it depended to no small extent on improving China's political relations with its peripheral countries including the ASEAN members.[38] Another purpose was to help to fully mobilise the technical know-how and financial resources of the ASEAN-based

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38 For an authoritative presentation of Deng's emphasis on good relations with China's peripheral countries, see Gao Jindian, ed., Deng Xiaoping guoji zhanglue sixiang yanju (A study of Deng Xiaoping's international strategic thoughts) (Defence University Press, Beijing, October 1992), pp140-159.

Chinese communities to contribute to China's modernisation. This was the priority of the Deng leadership's new overseas Chinese policy finalised in late 1977. Under Deng's personal instructions, China's new overseas Chinese policy was designed as a critical means to facilitate China's foreign trade and foreign investment in China. The policy took into full account the fact that the ASEAN-based Chinese communities constituted about 85% of the total overseas Chinese population, and during the first half of this century, they made significant contributions, especially investment and donations, to the development of modern industries and infrastructure in China's coastal provinces. Through his personal involvement in Mao's policy of befriending the ASEAN governments in 1974-75 before he was purged for the second time in 1976, Deng was clearly aware of the enormous difficulties in improving relations with those governments. These arose because of their long-held suspicions of China's regional intentions, which were largely caused by China's support for local communist insurgents and China's past call to the local ethnic Chinese communities to rebel against the ruling regimes. Deng also knew that such difficulties were compounded by the local governments' sensitivities about their ethnic Chinese communities in general. These suspicions and sensitivities also led these governments, with the exceptions of Thailand and the Philippines, to take extremely cautious attitudes towards relations between the local Chinese and China, and to impose various restrictions on their travelling to China. In the autumn of 1977, worried by Deng's efforts to restore the so-called "correct policy" towards the overseas Chinese practised before the Cultural Revolution, certain officials in the Foreign Ministry strongly suggested to him that any policy targeting the ethnic Chinese

communities in the ASEAN countries would damage relations with those countries.[39] While his reply was "don't abandon the thirty million plus people (overseas Chinese) to foreign countries, because they still have (Chinese) national consciousness,"[40] Deng knew only too well what these officials meant. Deng's knowledge about the ASEAN countries' sensitivities was enhanced from the spring to the autumn of 1978, shortly before the theories of SS and Vietnam acting as Moscow's "hatchet man" were propagated. Deng and other Chinese leaders were impressed with the seriousness of the ASEAN countries' reactions to the conflict between China and Vietnam over the question of the ethnic Chinese minority in Vietnam. The fact that China received large numbers of Chinese refugees from Vietnam, including Vietnamese citizens of Chinese origin, and condemned Vietnam because of its harsh treatment of them, gave rise to regional doubts about China's intentions towards the large Chinese minorities in other countries of the region. A Malaysian publication maintained in August 1978 that the Chinese government's guarantee concerning its non-interference policy should be questioned, as should the loyalty of the overseas Chinese.[41] Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja urged that Indonesia become more cautious in its steps towards normalizing relations with China as a result of the Sino-Vietnam conflict over the overseas Chinese.[42] Things became more troublesome for China when Moscow and Hanoi energetically used this event in their propaganda to foment resentment against China

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39 Li Rongde, Liao Chengzhi (A biography of Liao Chengzhi) (Yongsheng Shuju Publishing Agency, Singapore, July 1992), p382.

40 Ibid.

41 Leo Suryadinata, op.cit.,p123.

42 Leo Suryadinata, op.cit., p123

in Southeast Asia, by alleging that overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia played the role of a "fifth column" for China.[43] The ASEAN countries' worries revolved round two inter-related issues of nationality and China's constitutionally stipulated legal obligation to "protect the legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese". Because differences always existed between China and the local governments as to what constituted "legitimate rights and interests," China's commitment always raised the possibility of Chinese intervention in what ASEAN governments tended to consider strictly internal matters.[44] As for nationality, the problem arose from the definition of "forced naturalization". China argued that the ethnic Chinese in the north of Vietnam were never given a chance to adopt Vietnamese nationality voluntarily as specified in the 1955 Beijing-Hanoi agreement, and China had no obligation to accept as valid the forced acquisition of Vietnamese citizenship under the Saigon regime. This argument worried the ASEAN governments greatly. If China did not regard those Chinese as Vietnamese, and claimed responsibility for their welfare and safety, some ASEAN countries, which from time to time had pressured their Chinese communities to adopt the citizenship of their country of residence, had reason to fear that China might apply the same argument to them.[45]

Given all the above factors, Deng was likely to have realised that sophisticated tactics were needed to create an atmosphere favourable to contributions to China's modernisation from the

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43 RR, April 13, 1978, p6.

44 Theresa Chong Carino, op.cit., p65.

45 Theresa Chong Carino, op.cit., p65.

Chinese communities in the region, and that while reducing China's relations with regional communist insurgents and reiterating China's stand on the issue of dual nationality were necessary to create such an atmosphere and improve relations with the ASEAN countries, regional distrust towards China was too deep to disappear quickly. Thus Deng may have calculated that only by greatly exaggerating the Soviet/Vietnam threat to the region could China achieve its purposes, hence the creation of the SS bogey. The Malacca Strait, supposedly the central link in SS, was in the heart of the ASEAN region bordering Malaysia and Indonesia, the two ASEAN countries which were most difficult for China to improve relations with, and which had imposed the most severe restrictions in the region on relations between their ethnic Chinese communities and China. Moreover, with Vietnam acting as a "hatchet man" for SS and Cambodia having already becoming a SS "outpost", the ASEAN countries appeared to be in great and imminent danger. Deng could hope that this game would on one hand drive the ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia and Indonesia, closer to China, and on the other, increase their interest in seeing China modernised and becoming powerful enough to contain the Soviet/Vietnam expansion, thus creating an atmosphere conducive to Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore relaxing their attitudes towards contribution to China's modernisation by their ethnic Chinese populations. Creation of such an atmosphere should also be facilitated by the improvement of general political relations.

The above reinterpretation of what motivated China's policy certainly does not mean that China neglected its normal national security interests. Undoubtedly, China was aware that there was a

Soviet threat, and in fact an increasing one, though its scale and timing was reassessed by the Deng leadership. China had good reason to be alarmed about Soviet strategic encirclement - though it was not part of the so-called SS - and its use of Vietnam to that end. The Soviet Union was steadily expanding its military strength in its Far East, especially the Pacific Fleet. With Hanoi's membership in Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the signing of Hanoi-Moscow Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1978, an anti-Chinese alliance between the Soviet Union and a united and militarily powerful Vietnam had finally materialised. So far as Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia was concerned, China would not favour a dominating role for Vietnam in Indochina under any circumstances, for this could disrupt regional strategic order and stability on its southern border. It was in China's security interest to ensure a balance of power among the smaller states in the region, and that none of these states allied itself with an extra-regional major power hostile to China. The security challenges posed by Moscow and Hanoi in Southeast Asia were definitely a major regional concern of China. In dealing with these challenges, China clearly needed support from the USA and the ASEAN countries, especially Thailand. The ASEAN countries were indispensable for maintaining diplomatic pressure on Vietnam, and keeping the Cambodia issue under the international spotlight. However, satisfaction of China's security interests would be a natural function of its anti-hegemonism united front policy based on a deliberately exaggerated Soviet threat to itself, Southeast Asia and the West, and an exaggerated significance of the Cambodian resistance. Compared with a factual description of the Soviet/Vietnamese threat, a SS-based theory of that threat would be only more effective in

mobilising the US and ASEAN to contain it. Deng may have been convinced that by playing his game successfully, China had everything to win and nothing to lose.

However, China largely failed to gain what it expected from the West and the ASEAN countries in its anti-hegemonism crusade. Instead, China was indignant at its limited access to the US market, US hesitance over high-tech exports to China, the passing of the Taiwan Relations Act by the US Congress, and the continued arms sales to Taiwan. The US President Carter believed that the Soviet threat to world peace was exaggerated by China and other hawkish Western politicians. Things went from bad to worse for China after Reagan was elected President in 1980. US governments of the 1970s generally regarded China as a major strategic partner, wishing to see a close quasi-alliance against Moscow. This perception reached its climax in the aftermath of Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan. However, the Reagan administration treated its rivalry with the Soviet Union more as a confrontation between two different social systems and ideologies, and put more emphasis on the role of military strength in this confrontation. As a result it regarded China, a militarily weak communist country, as a regional power with only limited strategic and political value for containment of the Soviet Union. This made a dent in China's prestigious role in the "strategic triangle".

Despite its vehement propaganda about the Soviet/Vietnam threat to Southeast Asia, China's political relations with the ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia and Indonesia, continued to be affected by their long-held apprehensions of China's own regional

intentions. An important lesson China learned from its ASEAN policy during this period was that in order to achieve its regional goals including the containment of Soviet/Vietnam expansion, it had to focus earnestly on solving its own bilateral problems with the ASEAN countries caused by its relations with regional communist insurgencies and its ambiguous relations with the regional Chinese communities. In fact, China's united front campaign was to a certain extent counter-productive to reducing the ASEAN countries' apprehensions because it gave the impression that its policy of befriending ASEAN was only a temporary consideration. A major Malaysian newspaper said in 1981:

> This friendly interest (of China) in ASEAN is however, as much a by-product of great power rivalries as the hostility that characterised China's attitude towards the regional grouping prior to 1974. . . . For China, the relationship with ASEAN is thus not an end in itself but only one strand in its larger calculations regarding the global balance of power.[46]

The ASEAN countries did not push the West to aid China, and a favourable and free regional atmosphere for China to fully mobilise ethnic Chinese technical and financial resources did not materialise. On the contrary, for most of the 1980s, Malaysian and Indonesian leaders repeatedly expressed concern to their US and Japanese counterparts that Western assistance to China's modernisation

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[46] New Sunday Times, August 9, 1981.

programs could jeopardise regional security.[47] The governments of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia started to relax immigration restrictions on their citizens including ethnic Chinese travelling to China only from 1985. And it was as late as 1990-91 before these governments permitted their citizens to travel to China without restriction, as mentioned in Chapter Six.

While China claimed that the threat to regional peace came from Soviet "global hegemonism" and its regional "hatchet man" Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia pointed to China as the major threat. Although Thailand and Singapore believed that the Hanoi-Moscow alliance and Hanoi's regional ambitions created an imminent threat to the region, and the Philippines - because of its preoccupation with internal problems, its geographical distance from the Indochinese battle ground, and protection provided by US military bases - saw neither Moscow/Hanoi nor China as the present threat, they took only a longer perspective about China's threat to regional security.[48] In fact, Indonesia and Malaysia saw the Chinese threat

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47 Chen Cuihua, "Yinni zongtong Suhatuo jiqi neiwai zhengce (Internal and external policies of the Indonesian President Suharto)", SJYZN, August, 1983, p63. Robert O. Tilman, Southeast Asia and The Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threats (Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado, 1987), p131, p142. R K Jain, ed., China and Malaysia, 1949-1983 (Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1984), p313, p316. John Franklin Copper, "China and Southeast Asia," Current History, December 1984, p408. Susumu Awanohara, "A sense of unease", Far Eastern Economic Review (hereafter FEER), March 17, 1983, p20. Stephen Leong, "Malaysia and the People's Republic of China in the 1980s: Political Vigilance and Economic Pragmatism," AS, October 1987, pp1116-1117.

48 For the ASEAN countries' threat perceptions, see Shen Shishun, "Dui Dongmeng guojia waijiao zhengce de bijiao yanjiu (a comparative study of the ASEAN countries' foreign policies)", SJYZN, October, 1984, pp13-16; Bai Yumin, "Xiwang yu yiulu: Dongmeng guojia duiyu Zhongguo gaige kaifang

as a problem common to ASEAN and Vietnam, believing that it should be effectively contained by a combination of pro-Western ASEAN states and an independent and reasonably strong Vietnam. The ASEAN countries all perceived the Cambodian conflict as essentially a competition between China and Vietnam for hegemony in Indochina. They suspected that China attempted to use them to crush Vietnam to pave the way to creating its own sphere of influence in Southeast Asia. In this sense, China's high-profile diplomacy and uncompromising policy regarding Vietnam/Cambodia actually strengthened the ASEAN countries' suspicions of China's own regional intentions. To varying degrees these suspicions led to their differences with China over solution of the Cambodian issue. While China advocated mobilisation of all international military, political and economic pressures upon Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia appeared ready to accept some variant of a Vietnamese-dominated government in Cambodia. They proposed to give economic aid to Vietnam and involve the USA in the process of solving the Cambodian issue, with a view to weaning Vietnam from Moscow's embrace. China believed that underlying their policies was a calculation to maintain hostile

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zhengce dui Dongmeng yingxiang de kanfa (hopes and fears: ASEAN countries' views of the impact of China's reform and open-door policy on ASEAN)," SJYZ, November, 1987, pp41-46; Yu Yake, "Su Yue jiemeng yilai Dongmeng geguo dui Su de kanfa he lichang (the ASEAN countries' views of the Soviet Union since Soviet-Vietnam alliance)", SJYZ, August, 1988, pp42-46; Robert O. Tilman, op.cit., pp63-78, pp85-96; Lau Teik Soon, "National Threat Perceptions of Singapore," in Charles E. Morrison, ed., Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific (Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1983), p123; Carlos F. Nivera, "National Threat Perceptions in the Philippines," ibid., pp127-128; Zainal Abidin B. Abdul Wahid, "Malaysian Threat Perceptions and Regional Security," ibid., pp108-110; and Jusuf Wanandi and M. Hadisoesastro, "Indonesia's Security and Threat Perceptions," ibid., p93, p99.

relations between China and Vietnam and make Vietnam a more effective anti-Chinese force.[49] Further to China's chagrin, even Thailand and Singapore, concerned about the prospect of the pro-China Khmer Rouge being restored as *the* ruling party in Cambodia and Vietnam being crushed by China, agreed to treat the resistance movement and Vietnamese-installed People's Republic of Kampuchea equally after Vietnam's troop withdrawal. Indonesian and Malaysian sensitivities to China's motives in Southeast Asia cast a shadow on Thailand-China security cooperation, for Thailand could not ignore such sensitivities. Although they recognised the importance of China to Thailand in restraining Vietnam's expansionism, Indonesia and Malaysia were worried that Thailand-China military ties might enable China to establish a foothold in the ASEAN region, thus threatening regional security. In fact, Thailand's own concerns about China's regional intentions also determined its desire not to give China too great an access to the region through this cooperation. In the whole process of Thailand-China security alignment, voices could be heard in Thailand, particularly from some forces in the military, arguing that Thailand should not identify too closely with the Chinese line on Indochina,

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49 Wang Shuhai, "Dongmeng de zhanlue diwei jiqi jiben zhengce (ASEAN's strategic position and its basic policy)", SJYZN, July, 1982, p45. Liu Pu, "Jianpuzhai de kang Yue douzheng yu Yinzhi xingshi de qianjing (The anti-Vietnam war in Cambodia and the future of the Indochinese situation)," SJYZN, March, 1986, pp46-47. Sun Guoyuan, "Yinni dui Yue tuoxie zhengce pouxi" (an analysis of Indonesia's conciliatory policy towards Vietnam)", SJYZ, July, 1988, pp46-48. Gao Weinong, "Yinni yu Zhongguo guanxi zhengchanghua de dongyin (Indonesia's purpose in normalising relations with China)," Dongnanya Yanjiu (Southeast Asian Studies, Guangzhou, hereafter DY), No.3, 1989, p12.

and should take care not to become dependent on China for its own security.[50]

Because it largely failed to gain what it wanted by its intensified anti-Soviet posture, China dropped it in mid-1982. Thus, while China was genuinely relieved to see the decline of the Soviet threat, and was genuine when arguing about this decline per se, it was not entirely because of the decline that the Chinese government announced the "independent foreign policy" at the twelfth Party Congress in September 1982. It was more because of the need to justify the newly strengthened reform and open-door programs at a public theoretical level, than the new strategic situation and improvement of the Sino-Soviet relations, that Deng expressed his optimistic views in 1984 regarding the world peace and China's security. When Chinese leaders emphasised in late 1982 that their policy of developing friendly relations with the ASEAN countries represented China's "long-term" consideration, and that China's top priority in dealing with Thailand was to establish a "long-lasting" good-neighbourliness, thus indicating a readjustment of China's ASEAN policy, it was only partially because of the decline of the Soviet threat. These remarks were made more because China's anti-hegemonism campaign did not work well in improving political

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50 See, for example, Thailand and the Major Powers: Executive Summary on Policy Recommendations (International Studies Centre, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok: August 1987), pp10-11; Lucian W. Pye, "China and Southeast Asia," in Robert A. Scalapino and Jusuf Wanandi, eds., Economic, Political, and Security Issues in Southeast Asia in the 1980s (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1982), pp164-165; Edward Rouwhorst, "China and Thailand: From Enmity to Friendship?" China Information, Vol. V., No. 2, Autumn, 1990, p51; and R K Jain, ed., China and Thailand, 1949-1983 (Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1984), p253, P257, pp356-357.

relations with the ASEAN countries, and actually engendered a regional impression that China's policy of befriending ASEAN was a temporary tactic, hence the need to find a new set of rhetorical reassurances.

Conclusion

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China from 1978 intensified its warnings about the Soviet threat to the world peace and its own national security, and more strenuously pushed for the formation of a global united front against Soviet hegemonism. China's ASEAN policy, declared to aim at containing the Soviet Southward Strategy, was part and parcel of its overall united front campaign. However, contrary to what has been widely assumed, to contain the Soviet/Vietnam threat constituted only one of the goals of China's China's anti-hegemonism crusade in ASEAN from 1978 to mid-1982, and China's policy was not directly motivated by the need of containment. It was intended to help China extract maximum economic and technological assistance from the US-led Western nations to help in China's newly started modernisation drive. This campaign towards ASEAN was also intended to improve political relations with the ASEAN nations and help China freely and fully mobilise the technical and financial resources of the ASEAN-based ethnic Chinese communities to contribute to its modernisation. In the same vein, it was more because of its failure to gain what it wanted in its intensified anti-hegemonism call, than the decline of the Soviet threat, that China dropped this policy from mid-1982.

Chapter Two

The "Taiwan problem" in China's ASEAN Policy

Taiwan has become a serious concern in China's ASEAN policy since 1988. This chapter studies this newly intensifying issue in China-ASEAN relations. It includes five sections: 1, definition of the "Taiwan problem"; 2, review of the "Taiwan problem" before 1988; 3, new aspects of the "Taiwan problem" since 1988; 4, a case study of China's concern about Philippine-Taiwan relations; 5, China's special approach to Singapore-Taiwan relations. The emphasis of this chapter is on sections 3 and 5.

Definition of the "Taiwan problem"

Ever since the Chinese National Party (Kuomintang, or KMT) lost the Chinese Civil War and fled to Taiwan in 1949, there has been a struggle between the two Chinese regimes in seeking recognition in the international community. The government of the communist People's Republic of China based in mainland China (hereafter China) has claimed to be the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China, including Taiwan as a province of China. The nationalist Republic of China based in Taiwan (hereafter Taiwan) had claimed the same authority for itself until signs of change started to emerge in 1988, when the post-Chiang Ching-kuo government began to adopt a "flexible diplomacy" which sought international recognition of the ROC as a political entity separate from mainland China.

The so-called "Taiwan problem" in China's foreign policy can be defined as a situation where foreign countries, particularly those already having diplomatic relations with China, deal with Taiwan in a way which treats Taiwan as a political entity separate from mainland China. China's concern is that this situation represents a creation of, in China's own words, "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan", contrary to the Chinese government's own claim to legitimacy as the government of the whole of China.

Before 1988, because it also claimed to represent the whole of China, Taiwan also rejected the concept of "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan". That Taiwan was treated as a political entity separate from mainland China only arose from an objective situation seen by China as caused by semi-official or de facto official relations between Taiwan and foreign countries, and perhaps also resulting from deliberate policies of foreign countries. However, it neither represented Taiwan's view of the nature of such relations, nor Taiwan's intention in developing such relations. Taiwan saw these relations, at least theoretically, as representing tactical and transitional stages before the ultimate (re-)establishment of diplomatic relations with the countries concerned. This was not unlike the tactic used by China itself from the 1950s to the early 1970s, when it was struggling hard to shift foreign countries' diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. For example, China invited US Assistant for National Security Affairs Kissinger, and Presidents Nixon and Ford, to visit Beijing in their official capacities over the period 1971-75, while the USA still maintained official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Thus the game of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" was useful to the diplomatically isolated

side of the Taiwan Strait if an official relationship with the foreign country concerned could not be (re-)established for the time being.

The Taiwan factor in China's ASEAN policy before 1988

The Taiwan factor, whether in the form of the "Taiwan problem" as defined above, or in the form of Taiwan enjoying full diplomatic recognition, was only a peripheral concern in China's ASEAN policy from 1949 till 1988. This was because firstly, China was preoccupied with other more important foreign policy issues, mainly its relations with the superpowers, and hence paid little attention to the non-superpower countries' relations with Taiwan. In turn, China's perceptions of, and approach to, such relations were influenced by its policy towards the superpowers. Secondly, Thailand and the Philippines had already established diplomatic relations with Taiwan when communist China was founded in 1949. China had to face this realistically, and did not expect to establish diplomatic relations with these two countries until it could substantially improve relations with their chief ally, the United States. Thirdly, the semi-official or de facto official relations between the ASEAN countries (including the post-1975 Thailand and the Philippines) and Taiwan had not developed to a degree, or in a way alarming to China until the post-Chiang Ching-kuo era.

Before 1971, three ASEAN countries (the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia) incurred China's strong reactions about their relations with Taiwan.[1] A conspicuous characteristic of these reactions was a perceived linkage between these relations and America's foreign

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[1] Based on the Chinese government's statements reported in RR from 1949 to 1970.

policy in Asia, particularly its hostile China policy. It appeared that China invariably attributed these relations to the dictates of America. For example, when the Philippine delegation tried to help a Taiwan delegation admitted into the "Asia-Africa Economic Conference" in 1958 despite China's participation, it was condemned by China as attempting to create "two Chinas" under American manipulation.[2] When Taiwan opened a consulate in Kuala Lumpur in November 1964, China charged that this indicated the Abdul Rahman regime was abjectly following the bankrupt "two Chinas" line of its American masters, and that the opening was part of a wider US plot directed against the people of Southeast Asia.[3] In the aftermath of deterioration and suspension of diplomatic ties between China and Indonesia in 1967-68, the new Indonesian leadership started to improve relations with Taiwan and even expressed an intention of recognising the Chiang Kai-shek regime "if it could return to mainland China".[4] China sternly warned Indonesia of the serious consequences of "open and whole-hearted complicity in the US plot of creating 'two Chinas'".[5] And when the Philippine government deported two pro-China newspaper publishers to Taiwan in 1970, China alleged that this only showed "the Philippine reactionary regime being dead set on following America's order".[6]

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2 RR, December 12, 1958, p4.

3 "Abdul Rahman and Chiang Kai-shek: Like Attract Like", Peking Review, commentary, December 11, 1964, pp29-30.

4 The Guardian, January 18, 1968.

5 RR, September 10, 1967, p6. RR, September 25, 1967, p5. RR, June 10, 1968, p6. RR, June 26, 1968, p5. RR, September 2, 1968, p4.

6 RR, May 16, 1970, p6.

Judging from its statements, which were largely name-calling rather than criticism based on evidence, it might be that China did not believe in the linkage it claimed. In this case the use of the "US factor" was one way of expressing China's anger at what it saw as the pro-US foreign policies in general of the three ASEAN countries. China regarded ASA and ASEAN as aggressive military groups formed by a group of US accomplices and instigated by the US.[7] On the other hand, China believed that the three countries individually were earnestly contributing to US Cold War efforts in Asia - China's major concern in its foreign policy in the first twenty years since 1949 - in one way or another. This was particularly true of the Philippines, America's chief ally in Southeast Asia. Because of the Philippines' membership in SEATO, security treaty ties with the USA, presence of US military bases, and direct personnel involvement in the Vietnam war, China accused it of having become America's springboard for aggression in Southeast Asia, particularly Indochina.[8] The self-claimed neutral countries of Malaysia and Indonesia were perceived by China as indirectly contributing to the US war effort in Vietnam by maintaining friendly relations with the USA.[9]

China may also have suspected that Taiwan's relations not only with the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, but with all the ASEAN countries were indeed dictated by the USA. After all, from China's point of view, the roles played by the ASEAN countries and Taiwan

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[7] RR, February 11, 22, 1961, p6. RR, May 22, 1961, p3. RR, June 25, 1961, p3. RR, August 6, 1961, p4. RR, August 12, 1967, p6.

[8] RR, September 4, 1951, p4. RR, February 26, 1954, p1. RR, March 4, 1966, p4.

[9] RR, March 7, 1961, p6. RR, October 31, 1968, p6. RR, November 27, 1968, p5. RR, July 28, 1969, p6. RR, May 2, 1970, p5.

in America's Asia policy were similar. Two other ASEAN countries were also accused of complicity in America's strategy in Asia. Thailand was described as functioning as a springboard for US aggression in Asia,[10] since its relations with the USA, like those of the Philippines, were characterised by membership of SEATO, security treaty ties with the USA, presence of US military bases, and direct personnel involvement in Vietnam war. Singapore was alleged by China to have become a supply base for US aggression in Vietnam.[11] Similarly, in the eyes of China, the Chiang Kai-shek regime was simply another accomplice serving America's anti-Beijing and anti-communist strategy in Asia. To put it briefly, it is possible that from China's point of view, the development of relations between the ASEAN countries and Taiwan only indicated collusion among a bunch of accomplices in serving their US masters' interests. China may particularly have seen the US bogey in Philippines-Taiwan and Thailand-Taiwan relations. All three countries were staunch US allies, and both the Philippines and Thailand had diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The Philippines was used as the staging ground for US logistical support to Taiwan during the battle for the off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu in 1958.[12] And as late as mid-1969, proposals were still floated in Thailand of forging a "Thai-Formosa-South Korea anti-communist

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10 RR, May 30, 1959, p4. RR, August 27, 1960, p6. RR, March 25, 1961, p6. RR, September 11, 1961, p3. RR, May 23, 1962, p3. RR, April 26, 1965, p4. RR, July 8, 1965, p3. RR, July 31, 1965, p4. RR, October 7, 1965, p3. RR, September 24, 1966, p6.

11 RR, September 2, 1968, p6.

12 Edgardo B. Maranan, "China and the Philippines: from Conflict to Cooperation", in Joyce K. Kallgren, Noordin Sopiee, Soedjati Djiwandono, eds., op.cit., p259.

link",[13] something China may understandably see as instigated by America.

In its struggle to seek diplomatic recognition in the region before the early 1970s, China took a realistic and gradualist attitude towards the Philippines' and Thailand's diplomatic relations with Taiwan, in the hope that, despite their official relations with Taiwan, people-to-people relations could be promoted in order to pave the way for ultimate establishment of diplomatic relations. This was put most clearly by the then Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai when he received a Philippine press delegation in 1964. Stressing that Manila-Taipei diplomatic relations should not obstruct Beijing-Manila relations, Zhou cited China-Japan relations as a good example. He said that Japan's situation was similar to that of the Philippines in that Japan also had diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and that in making its China policy, Japan also faced great pressure from America. This, however, he claimed, had not prevented the establishment of semi-official people-to-people relations between China and Japan.[14]

The period from 1971 to 1980 was notable as the only decade from 1949 during which China made no public criticism of any ASEAN country regarding Taiwan.[15] The only occasions on which China

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13 Bangkok World, May 13, 1969.

14 Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry and Documentary Research Section of the CCP, eds., Zhou Enlai Waijiao Wenxuan (Selected Documents on Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy) (Central Documentary Publishing Agency, May 1990, Beijing), pp426-427. For Zhou's and Mao's similar suggestions to the Thais, see RR, January 29, 1956, p1; and RR, February 11, 1956, p1.

15 Based on the Chinese government's statements reported in RR from 1971 to 1980.

raised the Taiwan question in public were during its negotiations with Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand on establishing diplomatic relations. However, the issue was raised and solved in a routine manner, as happened between China and so many other countries anxiously seeking official ties with China in the early 1970s. The quiescence of the Taiwan factor in the 1971-1980 period was because firstly, with China-ASEAN rapprochement and the down-grading of the ASEAN countries' relations with Taiwan, China had obviously defeated Taiwan in the diplomatic struggle in the ASEAN area. Secondly, with the improvement of China-US relations, came a decoupling of the US threat from ASEAN-Taiwan relations in China's perception, if China had ever really suspected US manipulation of these relations. Thirdly, after 1971 China began to perceive the ASEAN countries as strategically useful in its anti-Soviet regional policy, hence its unwillingness to let such minor issues as Taiwan hamper the improvement of its relations with these countries. This could explain why China kept remarkably silent on occasions which would usually incur its public criticism. For example, the then Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik stressed in September-October 1971 that if Taiwan could change its name into "Republic of Taiwan," Indonesia would recognise it.[16] This serious gesture towards "two Chinas", however, went noticeably uncommented on by China. And during the Thanin regime period (October 1976 - October 1977), certain leading figures in the Thai government attempted to upgrade Thai relations

16 Djakarta Times, September 24, October 27 and 28, 1971.

with Taiwan. China tried to obstruct such a move, but only in a quiet manner.[17]

During the period from 1981 till 1988, China saw ASEAN-Taiwan relations as experiencing two rounds of "climax". The first happened in 1981-82, when China observed an advance in ASEAN-Taiwan relations from its nadir of the 1970s. China believed that by that point the ASEAN countries' "underground diplomacy" with Taiwan - manifested in reciprocal senior official visits and the increased activities of Taiwan's ostensibly commercial offices in the ASEAN capitals - was by and large fully functioning.[18] The second climax in ASEAN-Taiwan relations started from around 1986.[19] This new climax, which was more significant than the first, was seen most clearly in two developments.

The first was increased visits by officials at or above ministerial level between Taiwan and the ASEAN countries, particularly the Philippines and Singapore. Only Thailand's record - at least the public one - stood clear in this regard. Chinese observers noted that these visits were characterised by unprecedented frequency, increasingly high ranking of the officials involved, and ASEAN officials' decreasing sensitivity to China's feelings about Taiwan.[20] During Mrs Aquino's first year as President of the Philippines, five

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17 China in Thai Perspective (Asian Studies Monographs no. 027, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, April 1980), p52.

18 Wong Wenzhang, "Dongmeng guojia he Taiwan guanxi de xin fazhang yu zhangwang (Developments in and prospects of recent ASEAN-Taiwan relations)", SJYZ, December, 1987, pp46-48.

19 Ibid., p46.

20 Ibid., p46, p48.

of her ministers, one deputy minister, and the Vice-President visited Taiwan, and two of Taiwan's ministers visited Manila. Singapore's Prime Minister paid three visits to Taiwan in 1985. In 1987 Taiwan's Prime Minister and Economics Minister visited Singapore, and Singapore's Minister of Trade and Industry visited Taiwan. In 1986 the Taiwanese Chief of General Staff visited Indonesia, and an Indonesian deputy minister visited Taiwan. In 1987, Malaysia's Trade and Industry Minister visited Taiwan.[21] Although these visits were described by the parties involved as "private trips", China was convinced, from the substance of the talks during the visits, that these exchanges were no different from official visits between governments having diplomatic relations.[22]

The second development was the significant growth of investment and trade relations between the ASEAN countries and Taiwan after 1986. The former sought new sources of foreign capital and new export markets in order to lessen their economic problems caused by Western protectionism and declining commodities prices. On its part, Taiwan's expanded business relations with the ASEAN countries were pushed by a series of internal economic structural readjustments including the relaxation of foreign exchange controls and restrictions on investment abroad, the appreciation of the New Taiwan Dollar, rising labour costs, and trade liberalisation.[23]

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21 For detailed reports of these visits, see ibid., p46; Reuter News Service (hereafter Reuter), Taipei, November 26, 1987; and "An Eye on Bulging Taiwan Coffers," Asiaweek, June 17, 1988, p61.

22 Wong Wenzhang, op.cit., p46.

23 For Taiwan's structural economic readjustments, see Xiao Yi Qing, "1980 niandai de Zhong Fei guanxi (China-Philippine relations in the 1980s)", Wen-t'i Yu Yen-chiu (Issues and Studies, Taiwan, hereafter WYY), Vol.30, no. 10, October 1991, p59; Liang Guoshu, Xue Qi, "Zhonghuaminguo zai Yatai

With the new developments in ASEAN-Taiwan relations after 1981, China finally broke its silence. In mid-December 1981, China protested to Indonesia about the visit by Taiwan's Prime Minister Sun Yun-suan, saying that this was an act of creating "two Chinas".[24] In March 1982 China released two statements saying that it opposed the establishment or maintenance of commercial offices, press offices, and various "centres" of an official or de facto official nature, between Taiwan and other countries which had already established diplomatic relations with China.[25] This may have been intended as an indirect warning to the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.[26] However, Taiwan was still not a serious problem in China's relations with the ASEAN countries. There were two reasons for this.

Firstly, China was not unduly worried by the nature of the new developments in ASEAN-Taiwan relations. China perceived the first

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jingji shidai suo banyan de jiaose (The role of the Republic of China in Asia-Pacific economic upsurge)", WYY, Vol. 28, No. 11, August 1989, pp5-9; and Zeng Xueru, "Dongxie jingji qingshi jiqi yu Zhonghuaminguo jien zhi jingmao guanxi (ASEAN's economic situation and its economic and trade relations with the Republic of China)", WYY, Vol. 27, No. 5, February 1988, p63.

24 RR, December 13, 1981, p6.

25 RR, March 19, 1982, p1. RR, March 23, 1982, p6.

26 For a list of Taiwan representative offices in the ASEAN countries, see "Zhonghuaminguo Zhuwai jigou mincheng (Titles of representative organizations abroad of the Republic of China)", WYY, Vol. 30, No. 10, October, 1991, pp136-137. For the activities of these offices, see David Jenkins, "Trade on the QT," FEER, October 27, 1983, pp29-32; and Lee Lai To, "Taiwan and Southeast Asia: Realpolitik Par Excellence?" Contemporary Southeast Asia (Singapore, hereafter CSA), Vol. 7, No. 3, December 1985, pp212-213.

"climax" as pushed largely by an external force, unlikely to develop strong momentum on its own. According to Chinese observers, the Reagan administration attempted to rig up an anti-communist alignment in the Asia-Pacific to contain the communist influence represented by both Beijing and Moscow. To that end, the US pushed the ASEAN countries to improve their relations with the anti-(Chinese) communist Taiwan, and the ASEAN countries, Indonesia in particular, did so.[27] China believed, however, that the major US strategic interest in Southeast Asia lay in containing Moscow-Hanoi expansion. For this purpose the US had a high stake in maintaining the ASEAN countries' political alignment with China over the Cambodian issue. Thus there were limits to the extent the US would push the ASEAN countries to improve their relations with Taiwan.[28]

The major progress in ASEAN-Taiwan relations in the period from 1981 till 1988 as a whole was clearly in the economic field. Relations with political overtones did not see significant development, despite increased mutual visits by senior officials. This was because the ASEAN countries had to take into account the major interest of the USA in Southeast Asia, and also because they themselves considered China as a useful element with respect to the Cambodian issue, the focus of ASEAN's regional strategy. This made them reluctant to irritate China on the issue of Taiwan. The mutual economic interests between the ASEAN countries and Taiwan shown by their expanded business relations from 1986 probably made China realise that the development of ASEAN-

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27 Wong Wenzhang, op.cit., p47.

28 Ibid.

Taiwan relations was based on the national interests of both sides, rather than pushed by external forces, even if that had ever been the case in the early 1980s. Thus these relations could develop strong momentum. However, China was not concerned with Taiwan's economic relations with other countries, unless they were seen to have serious political significance.

Secondly, the focus in China's concern with its "Taiwan problem" from 1981 till 1988 was US-Taiwan relations under the Reagan administration. Judging from the timing, China's protest to Indonesia in 1981 and other assertions in 1982 were probably meant for Washington's ears. In that period, Taiwan became a serious issue in China's relations with the United States, largely because of the Reagan administration's arms sales to Taiwan. Noises made by China to the ASEAN countries regarding their Taiwan connections, at a time when China was strongly criticising US Taiwan policy, helped China to show Washington its sensitivity about Taiwan. This interpretation is supported by the fact that after Beijing and Washington basically resolved their differences over arms sales to Taiwan in August 1982, China made no more public complaints about ASEAN-Taiwan relations, even though leadership visits between Taiwan and ASEAN became increasingly significant after 1983. The most "protestable" of these was the Taiwanese Foreign Minister Chu Fu-sung's visit to Indonesia in 1983 and the Philippine Vice-President Salvador Laurel's visit to Taiwan in 1987.[29] China's public silence over such high-level visits stood

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29 China's acquiescence in the leadership visits between Singapore and Taiwan, and indeed in other aspects of Singapore-Taiwan relations, is a special case as discussed later.

in sharp contrast to its approach in the period after 1988, when it even protested a Taiwanese deputy-Foreign Minister's visit to Indonesia and the Philippine Foreign Minister's visit to Taiwan.

China's generally low-key and selective posture on ASEAN-Taiwan relations was also influenced by its own regional strategic priorities. Before mid-1982, China earnestly needed the ASEAN countries' support for its regional goal of countering Moscow-Hanoi expansion. Thus China was neither in a strong position to confront the ASEAN countries on their Taiwan relations, nor willing to interfere with its own regional priorities by undue assertiveness about such relations. After mid-1982, although its interest in Soviet hegemonism declined, China still concentrated its regional attention on the superpower relations until 1988.

The "Taiwan problem" since 1988

Since 1988, the "Taiwan problem" has become a serious concern in China's ASEAN policy. While Taiwan caused only sporadic irritations in China's foreign relations before 1988, its "Taiwan problem" has now qualitatively intensified as a result of a series of deep and systemic changes in both Taiwan's domestic politics and its international relations. Before 1988, while seeing a need to launch protests and warnings on an on-and-off basis, China had not regarded Taiwan as fundamental to its relations with the ASEAN countries. Now, however, the "Taiwan problem" is perceived as a trouble-causing factor in the process of becoming systematically entrenched in the very fabric of China-ASEAN relations.

On its front page on November 14, 1988, the People's Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, reported Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng as emphasising China's "solemn" stand on Taiwan during his visit to Bangkok.[30] Judging from the venue and the ranking of the statement maker, China had obviously become aware that something was going fundamentally wrong. In fact, ASEAN-Taiwan relations have expanded to such a degree since 1988 that when a senior Chinese government delegation observed Taiwan's influence in the ASEAN countries at first hand in October 1989, its members sounded the alarm, claiming that Taiwan had now become "the most acute issue" in China-ASEAN relations.[31]

Apparently, visits by officials at or above ministerial-level between Taiwan and the ASEAN countries have become most frequent since China defeated Taiwan in winning diplomatic recognition in this region in the 1970s. Even Thailand, whose "reputation" in this regard had been the "best" since 1975, has also climbed on the bandwagon, by exchanging ministerial visits with Taiwan.

From 1988 to early 1992, officials visiting Taiwan from Singapore included the Prime Minister (four times), Foreign Minister, three Deputy Prime Ministers, and the Senior Cabinet Minister. The Philippine officials visiting Taiwan included the Foreign Minister, three ministers in charge of economic affairs, and the Vice-President. Other ASEAN officials visiting Taiwan included Indonesia's Energy Minister, Malaysia's Prime Minister and Trade

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30 RR, November 14, 1988, p1.

31 Cheng Bifan, "Dongmeng jingji kaocha baogao (a fact-finding report of the ASEAN economies)", SJYZ, April, 1990, p11.

and Industry Minister, and the Thai Commerce Minister. From Taiwan's side, the President, Prime Minister, and Chief of General Staff visited Singapore, the Foreign Minister visited the Philippines and Singapore, and the Economics Minister visited the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. A Deputy President of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (parliament) visited the Philippines, a deputy Foreign Minister visited Indonesia, and the Economics Minister visited Indonesia and Malaysia (December 1992).

Business relations between the ASEAN countries and Taiwan have expanded more substantially than in any previous period. While trade relations have maintained the momentum started in 1986, Taiwan's investment in the ASEAN countries has expanded at a most staggering pace. By 1988 Taiwan had become the second largest foreign investor in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, and by the first half of 1989, it had become the largest foreign investor in Malaysia and the Philippines.[32] In 1991 Taiwan maintained its position as either the first or second largest foreign investor in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia.[33] Apart from the effects of the above-mentioned structural readjustments in its economy, Taiwan's investment in ASEAN has also been pushed forward by the ASEAN countries' provision of preferable treatment and facilities to Taiwanese investors. The Philippines has even opened export-processing zones solely to

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32 Chen Ning, "Taiwan dui Zhongguo Dongmeng guanxi de yingxiang (The impact of Taiwan on China-ASEAN relations)", SJYZ, September, 1990, pp60-61.

33 Gary Klintworth, Taiwan's New Role in the Asia-Pacific Region (Working Paper No. 255, Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Canberra, The Australian National University, July 1992), p15.

attract Taiwanese investment.[34] Close investment relations have contributed to the emergence of a new aspect of ASEAN-Taiwan economic relations, i.e., institutional construction. For example, Singapore and Indonesia signed investment guarantee agreements with Taiwan in 1990 and 1991 respectively, the Philippines did so in early 1992, and Malaysia followed in February 1993. Singapore and Taiwan had even established a system of annual economic conferences chaired by the Economics and Trade ministers,[35] long before China itself started to seek such a forum with Singapore.[36]

China has particularly noted that since 1988, its own overall economic relations with the ASEAN countries have lagged far behind those of Taiwan. In terms of trade volume, the gap - in Taiwan's favour - between China's and Taiwan's trade with Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines continued to widen in 1987 and 1988, while the gap - in China's favour - between China's and Taiwan's trade with Singapore and Thailand fell drastically (see Table One). By 1989 Singapore was the only ASEAN country which traded more with China than with Taiwan (see Table One). In 1990 Taiwan's trade with all five ASEAN countries surpassed that of China, for the first time since 1949. Specifically, in 1990, the volume of China-Indonesia trade was about 55% of that of Taiwan-Indonesia trade, of China-Malaysia trade 56%, of China-Singapore

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34 Wang Jin, "Taiwan zai Dongnanya de zhijie touzi (Taiwan's direct investment in Southeast Asia)", DY, No. 2, 1990, pp66-67. For a case study of Malaysia's policy of luring Taiwan's investment, see "An Eye on Bulging Taiwan Coffers," p61.

35 Business Times (hereafter BT), October 16, 1990, p19.

36 For China's suggestion to set up a joint committee with Singapore to promote bilateral trade and investment as well as third-country investment, see BT, October 22, 1990, p1.

trade 78%, China-Thailand trade 64%, and China-Philippines trade as low as 28% (based on Table One). This gloomy picture of comparison is ironical for China, because its own trade with the ASEAN countries has by and large seen steady growth since 1987, China-Philippine trade being the only exception. The volume of China-ASEAN annual trade rose from US$4376.44 million in 1987 to US$5845.34 million in 1988, to US$6637.73 million in 1989, and US$6680.16 million in 1990 (based on Table One). In fact China's efforts to promote its trade relations with the ASEAN countries in recent years have been partially aimed at balancing Taiwan's increasing economic influence in the ASEAN region.

Table One **A comparison between China-ASEAN and Taiwan-ASEAN trade volume: 1983-1991** (US$ million)

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Thailand									
China	653.38	1007.40	378.85	445.08	709.75	1142.28	1256.16	1194.46	1269.47
Taiwan	345.74	384.83	383.13	441.28	625.02	1095.57	1500.32	1871.60	1444.86
Singapore									
China	1350.12	3262.93	2322.88	1759.30	1945.34	2503.45	3191.73	2825.24	3076.73
Taiwan	877.80	1146.43	1161.05	1270.50	1872.60	2422.74	2865.05	3609.70	2403.48
Philippines									
China	372.87	745.95	414.21	293.43	385.50	404.57	340.02	295.13	383.97
Taiwan	337.04	325.02	343.36	481.21	654.18	843.68	1016.55	1047.68	848.02
Malaysia									
China	794.78	926.94	388.34	383.01	556.63	877.08	1044.60	1183.07	1331.89
Taiwan	717.44	782.85	676.32	706.49	1001.18	1394.39	1582.25	2106.60	1464.85

Indonesia									
China	392.99	687.44	457.05	466.71	779.22	917.96	805.22	1182.26	1884.48
Taiwan	773.59	769.18	694.70	743.18	1012.75	1246.07	1640.29	2167.40	1207.20

Sources: Taiwan Statistical Data Book 1987 (Council for Economic Planning and Development, Republic of China, 1987), pp 216-218. Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of China 1991 (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, Republic of China), pp310-313. Ibid., 1992, pp240-241. Guojia Tongji Ju (State Statistics Bureau), ed., Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1985 (China's Statistical Yearbook, 1985) (China Statistics Press, 1985, Beijing), pp496-497. Ibid., 1986, p566. Ibid., 1987, p594. Ibid., 1988, p724. Ibid., 1989, p636. Ibid., 1990, p644. Ibid., 1992, p632.

In terms of investment in ASEAN, an area where China has not been in a position to compete with Taiwan in the first place (with a limited exception in the Philippines in 1987 as pointed out below), the comparison between China and Taiwan shows a gap which far outweighs that in the case of trade. China, which started to invest in the ASEAN countries since the early 1980s, had invested US$150 million in these countries by June 1992.[37] However, by June 1992, Taiwan's investment in ASEAN totaled US$13.8 billion.[38] Of this total, a massive US$12.2 billion was made in the six-year period 1986-1991, and in January-June 1992 period alone, Taiwan invested $800 million in the region.[39] On incomplete figures, Taiwan invested in about 2600 undertakings in the ASEAN region, and China in only about 100.[40] Taiwan has also begun to exert its economic leverage in the ASEAN countries in another area where

37 RR, August 10, 1992, p6.

38 The Jakarta Post (hereafter JP), October 10, 1992, p9.

39 Industry and Commerce Times (Taiwan), February 19, 1992, p9. Industry and Commerce Times, October 19, 1992, p9.

40 Ibid. RR, August 10, 1992, p6.

China can not afford to compete, that of financial aid. While previously Taiwan's economic assistance to the ASEAN countries consisted largely of "agricultural cultivation teams" sent to the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia,[41] Taiwan is now ready to finance development projects in the ASEAN countries by grants or long-term low-interest loans, through its US$1 billion Overseas Economic Cooperation and Development Fund, established in 1988.[42] ASEAN's acknowledgement of Taiwan's financial and economic strength is symbolised by the unprecedented invitation to Taiwan's Central Bank of China Governor Samuel Shieh to attend the annual meeting of central bank chiefs of ASEAN as an observer in 1992. The governor has also become a formal member of the Association of Central Bank Chiefs of ASEAN. The Philippines even proposed at the 25th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila in July 1992 that Taiwan become one of ASEAN's dialogue partners.[43] That Taiwan has become more important to ASEAN economically than China has obvious long-term political ramifications for China. It had been believed in China before 1988 that the ASEAN countries, attracted by China's huge market, would always put their business emphasis on China rather than Taiwan, and thus could not afford to risk antagonising China by upgrading their ties with Taiwan.[44]

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41 Kuo-hsiung Lee, "The Republic of China and Southeast Asia: More Than Economy", in Yu San Wang, ed., Foreign Policy of the Republic of China on Taiwan: An Unorthodox Approach (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1990), p81.

42 China Economic News Service, Taipei, 30 July 1991. Reuter, Taipei, September 24, 1991.

43 Chen Hurng-yu, "Taiwan's Economic Relations With Southeast Asia", paper presented at the "Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s" conference, held at The Australian National University, 1-2 April 1993, pp10-11.

44 Wong Wenzhang, op. cit., p49.

What is worrisome to China is not so much the unprecedented high degree of apparent development in ASEAN-Taiwan relations as such, but Taiwan's new diplomatic strategy and the new regional environment amenable to its implementation, which has made China's "Taiwan problem" qualitatively different compared to the pre-1988 situation.

Since 1988, when Lee Teng-hui became President, Taiwan has adopted a new diplomatic strategy, i.e., the so-called "Tanxing Waijiao (flexible diplomacy)".[45] In this strategy, Taiwan seeks to modify its formula for diplomatic recognition in order to obtain a bigger diplomatic space for itself and play a more important international role. Before 1988, Taiwan's precondition for establishing diplomatic relations with a foreign country was that the country should first sever its diplomatic relations with China, if it had them, and recognise Taiwan as representing the whole of China. Now, however, Taiwan has for the first time accepted the fait accompli of the division of China. Taking advantage of its newly acquired economic clout, Taiwan has begun to seek international recognition as a political entity separate from mainland China, and its government as the legitimate government ruling Taiwan rather than the whole of China. As a corollary to this, Taiwan is ready to establish diplomatic relations with other countries without asking

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45 In Taiwan, there is debate on whether Lee's new strategy should be called "flexible diplomacy". See, for example, Zhang Linzheng, " 'Wushi waijiao' - zhengce yu lilun zhi jiexi ('Pragmatic diplomacy' - explanation of its policy and theory)", WYY, Vol. 29, No. 12, September, 1990, p63. However, the term "flexible diplomacy" is used in this chapter since it has been widely accepted in both official and academic circles in China.

them first to sever their diplomatic relations with China, thus presenting them with a possibility of "dual recognition". Armed with this "flexible diplomacy" strategy, Taiwan has become increasingly active and thrusting in its foreign relations since 1988, particularly in its relations with developing countries, changing or ex-communist countries, and international organisations.

From China's point of view, the whole point of "flexible diplomacy" is that, in defiance of the interest of the Chinese nation as a whole, the Taiwan regime has officially endorsed the creation of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and has outrageously used cash as a diplomatic weapon in creating this situation.[46] Ironically, Taiwan's new diplomatic strategy has made China nostalgic for Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, the two previous Presidents of Taiwan. The two Chiangs, while deadly enemies of the communist regime in mainland China, had never deviated from the "one China" principle, even when Taiwan was most isolated in the international community. Thus in its protests and warnings before 1988 regarding foreign countries' substantive relations with Taiwan, China had always blamed the creation of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" on outside influences, and had never pointed an accusing finger at Taiwan under either of the two Chiangs.

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46 RR, March 28, 1989, p1. Yuan Yang, "Ping Taiwan de yindan waijiao (Taiwan's 'silver bomb' diplomacy)", LW, No. 44, October 30, 1989, p46. Hua Qiang, "Ping Taiwan danqu jiajing tuixin 'tanxing waijiao' (Taiwan regime has stepped up its 'flexible diplomacy')", LW, No. 34, August 21, 1989, pp45-46.

There are both domestic and international catalysts for Taiwan's "flexible diplomacy".[47] The Taiwanese people have become increasingly dissatisfied with their country's long-standing international isolation, both self-inflicted and imposed, and the government has felt mounting popular pressure to return to the international community. With strengthened self-confidence gained from its economic achievements, Taiwan is eager to play an international role commensurate with its economic power. By 1992, Taiwan had achieved the world's 25th-highest per capita income, 20th-largest gross national product, 15th-biggest overseas trade volume, and largest foreign-exchange reserve holdings.[48] At a more technical level, with its drastically expanded bilateral and multi-lateral commercial, legal, and technological relations, Taiwan has found it increasingly essential to involve governmental and diplomatic channels in solving a host of issues arising from these relations. The post-Chiang Ching-kuo leadership of Lee Teng-hui and his associates is less burdened by the historical and ideological legacy of the Chinese Civil War. As a result it is in a stronger position to adopt a realistic foreign policy, so that Taiwan can effectively break out of its diplomatic isolation and find its own legitimate place in international relations. The young and Western-educated officials especially, who have begun to play an important part in Taiwan's foreign affairs in recent years, are particularly

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47 This outline of the background of "flexible diplomacy" is based on Liu Guofen, "Taiwan dangju de tanxing waijiao paoxi (An analysis of Taiwan authorities' 'flexible diplomacy')", Taiwan yanjiu jikan (Taiwan Studies Quarterly, Beijing), No. 4, 1989, pp18-22; Liu Ji, "Taiwan dangju de jingqian waijiao qianxi (A tentative analysis of Taiwan regime's money diplomacy)," Tai sheng (Voice of Taiwan, Beijing), No. 3, 1990, pp4-7; and Zhang Linzheng, op.cit., p63.

48 Fredrick F. Chien, "UN Should Welcome Taiwan", FEER, 5 August 1993, p23

anxious to design a new identity for their country in the international community. With the coming of detente and the end of the East-West Cold War, the focus of international relations has shifted from geo-strategic to economic issues. The developing countries, in particular, have put more stress on economic development, hence the stronger desire for increased capital and expanded export markets. These developments have given a significant prominence to Taiwan in international relations, by virtue of its economic prowess, presenting an opportunity that Taiwan believes it must seize in order to play a meaningful international role, and leading it to see its economic power as a useful weapon in seeking international recognition.

China's concern about Taiwan's "flexible diplomacy" has been aggravated by the state of the Chinese reunification issue, the domestic and international impact of the June 4 event, and probably also the implications of Taiwan's strengthened international links for the on-going China-Taiwan economic integration.

The process of Chinese reunification has seen some inauspicious developments since 1988. China has worried that the expanded influence of pro-independence forces in post-Chiang Ching-kuo Taiwan could have a disruptive impact on the Chinese reunification process. These forces, especially that represented by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), have become increasingly active since 1988. In that year, the DPP passed a resolution claiming that Taiwan did not belong to China. In 1990, another DPP resolution was passed, stating that Taiwan's sovereignty extended neither to China nor to the People's Republic of Mongolia. During

1991, with the DPP's direct and indirect involvement, the pro-independence activists further stepped up their separatist activities. In mid-January the Taiwan Independence Alliance held a meeting in San Francisco to discuss relocating its headquarters to Taiwan. Later in the month, some pro-independence activists announced that they would establish a Foundation for Establishing a Taiwanese State. Also in the same month, a Committee on Taiwan's Sovereignty and Independence was organized. In March the committee held its first working conference, at which it advocated that Taiwan's future should be decided by all of Taiwan's residents. In the same month, all the pro-independence groups held a conference, and agreed to establish a centre for coordination and contact between themselves. In April a Committee for Taiwan's Defense came into being. And in May an Organization for the Movement of Founding the Taiwanese State was formed. More disturbing events were to come in the preparations leading up to Taiwan's parliamentary elections in December 1991. With the support of the DPP, pro-independence activists moved their activities from underground to the surface and from abroad to Taiwan itself. They hoisted the banner of the "Taiwan Republic", produced a Draft Constitution of Taiwan, and staged public demonstrations demanding that the Taiwan authorities apply for UN membership. In concert with their activities in Taiwan, the proponents of independence launched a lobbying campaign in the US, in the hope of publicizing their demand for UN membership and winning US support for their cause. These activities rose to a new pitch when the DPP in October 1991 passed a resolution formally including the Taiwan independence clause in the party's program.[49]

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49 This description of pro-independence movement is based on Qingguo Jia,

The DPP's strong showing in the December 1992 election for the Legislative Yuan, through which the party won control of about one-third of the seats, particularly heightened Beijing's worries.

The "nativization" of the KMT leadership and the Taiwan government has done nothing to alleviate China's concern about Taiwanese independence. More and more Taiwan natives are assuming political and military leadership on the island. President Lee Teng-hui is himself a native, as are many of his cabinet, many members of the KMT Central Committee and of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, and a rapidly increasing proportion of military officers of all ranks.[50] Unlike the older generation of KMT leaders such as the two Chiangs, who were strongly attached to mainland China, these new faces represent people about whom China knows very little and whose behaviour it finds highly unpredictable.[51] To China's further concern, the Lee Teng-hui government's political liberalisation policy has created a complicated situation in favour of the independence cause. On the one hand, the KMT leadership has lost its absolute political authority and control in Taiwan. On the other hand, the independence movement has been emboldened and offered more room to manoeuvre.[52] While the Taiwan government has claimed that it still stands for the "one China" principle and is determined to work for Chinese reunification, China is troubled by

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"Changing Relations Across the Taiwan Strait: Beijing's Perceptions", AS, Vol. XXXII, No. 3, March 1992, pp282-284.

50 Ibid., p284.

51 Ibid. See also George W. Tsai, "An Analysis of Current Relations Between Taiwan and Mainland China: A Political Perspective", IS, Vol. 27, No. 9, September 1991, p33.

52 Qingguo Jia, op.cit., pp283-284. See also George W. Tsai, op.cit., p34.

what it has seen as the Taiwan government's tolerance of or even acquiescence in Taiwan independence activities. For example, the Lee government has acquiesced in the DPP's pro-independence activities. In its National Affairs Conference in 1990, the Lee government not only avoided the question of reunification, but also invited some pro-independence activists to participate, providing them with a convenient forum for preaching Taiwanese independence. All this has led China to question Lee's real position on the issue of reunification versus independence.[53]

It has been particularly charged in China that "flexible diplomacy", which stands for "dual recognition", has gone a long way in encouraging separatist feeling in Taiwanese society in general and the independence movement in particular. Should Taiwan achieve its goal of recognition as a political entity separate from mainland China, the dream of reunification would be more distant than ever.[54] In fact, it has even been suspected in China that "dual recognition" is itself a disguised way of seeking Taiwan's independence, and that this officially approved independence cause would ultimately collaborate with that charted by the DPP.

From Taiwan's point of view, however, while both sides of the Taiwan Strait should work for the eventual reunification of China,

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53 Qingguo Jia, op.cit., pp285-286.

54 Yuan Yang, "sunhai lianan renmin liyi de you yi yanzhong buzhou (Another serious step aimed at disserving the interests of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait)", LW, No. 42, October 16, 1989, p42. Press Bureau, Office of Taiwan Affairs, State Council, ed., Lianan Guanxi Yu Heping Tongyi (Relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and peaceful reunification) (Hua Yi Publishing Agency, Beijing, 1992), passim.

"dual recognition" should be accepted by Beijing and Taipei as a realistic formula for international recognition before the currently impossible reunification. Some Taiwanese observers have argued that a major purpose in adopting "flexible diplomacy" is precisely to obstruct the independence movement by pre-empting it in a way which does not stand for Taiwanese independence as such.[55] It has been further pointed out in Taiwan that "dual recognition" can create a favourable climate for reunification by creating a situation of peaceful co-existence between Beijing and Taipei, thus reducing the tension between them.[56] On the other hand, if Beijing continues to protest against the upgrading or expansion of Taiwan's foreign contacts, this will only serve to increase distrust between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and postpone eventual reunification.[57] Lee Teng-hui has bluntly charged that Beijing's strategy of isolating Taiwan is in some degree responsible for the development of the Taiwan independence movement.[58] However, these arguments cannot be heeded seriously by the current Chinese leadership, whose legitimacy is closely linked with the Chinese Civil War, and which has chosen the motherland's as-early-as-possible reunification as a major goal for the Chinese revolution.[59] The

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55 Zhang Linzheng, op.cit., p63, p65.

56 Zhao Guo Cai, "lun 'yi ge Zhongguo lian ge duideng zhengfu' wenti (The possibility of 'one China, two equal governments')", WYY, Vol 28, No. 8, May 1989, pp2-4. See also Fredrick F. Chien, op.cit., p23.

57 Bih-jaw Lin, "Current Situation in Mainland China and Cross-Strait Relations", IS, Vol. 27, No. 3, March 1991, p20.

58 George W. Tsai, op.cit., p37. For such views from Taiwanese Foreign Minister Fredrick Chien, see Julian Baum, "Chinese hurdle", FEER, November 14, 1991, p30.

59 For China's rejection of these arguments of Taiwan, see Lianan Guanxi Yu Heping Tongyi, passim.

current Chinese leadership has provided Taiwan with one choice only, to accept as soon as possible Beijing's authority as the central government of all China, and be treated as a so-called "Special Administrative Zone (SAZ)" in a reunified China, enjoying a high degree of economic, political, and even military autonomy as long as it admits itself to be a local unit.

When discussing China's concern over "flexible diplomacy", mention has also to be made of the June 4 event. Against this event, "flexible diplomacy" could not have come at a worse time for China. Both in mainland China and in the international community, the crack-down in Tiananmen Square has marred the Chinese communist regime's legitimacy, and at the same time has further improved the image of Taiwan. The mainland Chinese have admired Taiwan's economic achievement and political liberalisation particularly since 1987, when they for the first time personally observed the "Taiwan miracle" in the form of large groups of Taiwanese tourists. China is aware that the international repercussions of the June 4 event have created an ideal psychological climate for Taiwan to push its "flexible diplomacy".[60] And the already-existing threat to the communist regime's legitimacy, created by the mainlanders' admiration of Taiwan, could become even stronger if Taiwan should be seen to be playing a proud international role.

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60 Yuan Yang, op.cit., p42. For the progress of "flexible diplomacy" against the happening of the June 4 event, see Zhao Jianmin, "Zhonghuaminguo waijiao tuozhang zhi Zhonggong yinsu fenxi (An analysis of the mainland China factor in the diplomatic expansion of the Republic of China)", WYY, Vol. 29, No. 13, October 1990, pp80-81.

China's concern about "flexible diplomacy" is probably also heightened by its worry that Taiwan's strengthened international links could help to expand its foreign economic relations and thus slow down its on-going economic integration with mainland China. China has not only benefited economically from this integration, particularly in terms of absorbing Taiwan's investment and technology, and learning from its modernisation experience, but has also counted on it as a means to push the reunification process. With relaxation of the political atmosphere across the Taiwan Strait since late 1987, economic relations between China and Taiwan have expanded rapidly, though still limited by Taiwan authorities to an indirect and unofficial channel for political and security considerations. The value of two-way trade via Hong Kong increased from US$46.8 million in 1978 to US$3.48 billion in 1989, exceeded US$4 billion in 1990, and reached US$5.79 billion in 1991.[61] It could easily top US$ 7 billion in 1992.[62] By mid-1991, Beijing claimed that the number of Taiwan-funded companies in China was near 3,000 and that agreed-upon investment amounted to around US$3 billion. Taiwan businessmen in 1991 alone invested US$1.5 billion in China.[63] However, in terms of enhancing economic integration across the Taiwan Strait, China has faced a paradox. Taiwan has insisted that the major precondition for its more direct and systematic economic relations with China, including Taiwan's

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61 Qingguo Jia, op.cit., p279.

62 Carl Goldstein, "The bottom line: Taiwan capital, factories pour into China", FEER, September 17, 1992, p23.

63 Qingguo Jia, op.cit., p279. Cai Zimin, "Zhuyuan liangan guanxi you xin fazhan (A wish for new development of relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait)", LW, No. 6-7, February 17, 1992, p5. The Australian, October 14, 1992, p11.

financial aid to China, is that the two regimes should recognise each other as equal political bodies before the reunification of China.

In China's eyes, the development of ASEAN-Taiwan relations since 1988, despite its economic raison d'etre, has been mainly manipulated by Taiwan's "flexible diplomacy". It has been strongly argued in China that the main feature of ASEAN-Taiwan relations since 1988 is that Taiwan has been dangling economic bait to lure the ASEAN countries into recognising itself as a political entity separate from mainland China.[64] And China has been aware that the objective conditions in ASEAN are very amenable to "flexible diplomacy". With the international detente, marked by the waning of the Cambodian issue in Southeast Asia, economic development has become a top priority for the ASEAN countries. This, plus Taiwan's economic importance to ASEAN, has put Taiwan in a strong bargaining position to extract maximum political and diplomatic advantage from its economic prowess. As well, major politicians in the ASEAN countries are either leading businessmen themselves strongly interested in Taiwan or the people having close connections with, and supported by, prominent businessmen with strong Taiwan connections. Indeed, China has believed that the favourable situation in ASEAN has led Taiwan to select this region as a major target for its "flexible diplomacy".[65]

The impact of the new regional situation was exemplified most conspicuously in Thailand-Taiwan relations. Thailand had long been

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64 Chen Ning, op.cit., p60. Zhu Zhenming, "Jiushi niandai de Zhongguo yu Dongnanya: qianjing zhangwang (China's relations with Southeast Asia in the 1990s: a prediction)", SJYZ, September, 1990, pp57-58.

65 Liu Guofen, op.cit., pp20-21.

aware of the great potential in its business relations with Taiwan as compared to those with China. For example, a Thai observer pointed out in 1987 that the Thailand-China economic relationship was mainly stimulated by security interests. There was a lack of complementarity in bilateral trade, and China's investment in Thailand took the form of "bits and pieces," distributed over a wide range of enterprises, which were by no means central to Thailand's pattern of development. On the other hand, he said, the Thai and Taiwan economies were complementary to each other. By 1987, Taiwan ranked third as a source of foreign investment in Thailand. Taiwan-invested enterprises in Thailand ranged from agroindustries, metallurgical industries, ceramics, chemicals, and electrical appliances to construction and services, all of which could be considered part and parcel of the "core" of Thailand's development drive.[66] However, the Cambodia-based alliance between Beijing and Bangkok had made Thailand hesitant in promoting relations with Taiwan. This has changed since 1988. Barely two years after Chatichai Choonhavan became Prime Minister in August 1988 and adopted a pragmatic foreign policy, ministerial visits began between Thailand and Taiwan.

When Liberia established diplomatic relations with Taiwan in October 1989 - something believed in China to be the result of Taiwan's money game - China issued a statement warning that, when facing Taiwan's "silver bomb", leaders in other countries should not adopt a short-sighted foreign policy for short-term economic benefit.[67] This warning was also directed to the ASEAN

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66 Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "Dictates of Security", pp314-320.

67 RR, October 11, 1989, p1.

countries, since it has been alleged in China that "some" of them usually care about immediate economic benefit at the expense of their "long-term interests".[68]

However, it must be pointed out that China is obviously not worried that the ASEAN countries would really establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan, thus officially recognising it as a political entity separate from mainland China. Taiwan may have changed the rules of the game, China still sees the struggle for international recognition as a zero-sum game, because even if the Lee Teng-hui government is recognised as representing only Taiwan, Beijing's claim to legitimacy as the sole central government of all China would still be denigrated. With the pressure from China, "dual recognition" is a dead-end endeavour. China's severing of official relations with Grenada and Liberia after they established diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1989 was clearly intended to show the ASEAN countries what would happen if they established diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The ASEAN countries can not afford to follow the examples of two small countries half a globe away from Beijing. What has worried China, however, is that with Taiwan's new diplomatic strategy and the ASEAN countries' economic priorities, the ASEAN countries' semi-official or de facto official relations with Taiwan are bound to be pushed forward, and the situation of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" will become more of a fait accompli.

The Chinese media hailed the normalisation of China's relations with Indonesia and Singapore as "a heavy blow" to Taiwan's "flexible

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68 Zhu Zhenming, op.cit., p58.

diplomacy".[69] However, this blow remains only on paper. The normalisation had long been foreseen. And as said previously, the core of China's "Taiwan problem" in its relations with the ASEAN countries lies in the semi-official or de facto official relations between Taiwan and these countries, which nominally abide by the "one China" principle. Judged by this yardstick, China's "Taiwan problem" in its relations with Indonesia and Singapore has obviously intensified since 1988, despite the normalisation drive. On the very eve of normalisation, both Indonesian and Singaporean leaders repeatedly assured the Taiwanese that their new ties with China would absolutely not affect their existing substantive relations with Taiwan.[70] Taiwan heard no such encouraging words from Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand when they established diplomatic relations with China in 1974-75. Within two months after Singapore signed its agreement with China on establishment of diplomatic ties, the Prime Ministers of Singapore and Taiwan exchanged visits. And less than one year after Indonesia reiterated its "one China" principle in its agreement with China on restoration of official relations, it received China's protest for inviting a Taiwan deputy Foreign Minister.

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69 Zhang Xunchang, "Yiyi zhongda, yingxiang shenyuan (An event of enormous significance and far-reaching influence)", Ban Yue Tan (Biweekly Forum, Beijing), No. 15, 1990, p61. Benkan pinglunyuan, "Jiaqiang fazhanzhong guojia de tuanjie hezuo (Strengthen the solidarity and cooperation between the developing countries)," LW, No.32, August 6, 1990, p3.

70 Reuter, Jakarta, March 16, 1990. South China Morning Post (hereafter SCMP), July 5, 1990, p10. BT, October 16, 1990, p19. Reuter, Taipei, October 1, 1990. Reuter, Singapore, August 10, 1990.

Over the next ten years, it is likely that China's Taiwan problem in its foreign relations in general and its relations with ASEAN in particular will change. Since the problem is fundamentally an effect of the existence of two Chinese regimes, no prediction of its future can begin without first calculating the process of Chinese reunification. This cannot possibly be achieved over the next ten years, despite the encouraging development of relations across the Taiwan Strait since late 1987, and the promising prospect that this trend will continue. Realistically, reunification will be attainable only with the end of the current political system in mainland China, something which cannot be guaranteed within the next ten years. On the other hand, indications are that Taiwan will intensify its pursuit of dual recognition, and continue to be a crucial economic partner to ASEAN. In this situation, if the post-Deng Xiaoping leadership does not fundamentally change Beijing's existing Taiwan policy, then its Taiwan problem will continue and intensify. However, another scenario appears more likely. The post-Deng Chinese leadership will probably see its legitimacy as more and more dependent on delivering economic goods to the people. Thus increasing pragmatism will be the trend in China, with economics going ahead of politics. On the other hand, unlike the current power-holding octogenarians in Beijing, who consider Taiwan as a kind of threat to their legitimacy, the new Chinese leaders will be members of a younger generation with little personal interest in the Chinese Civil War. As a result, they will be in a better position to adopt a flexible and realistic policy toward Taiwan. It is possible that the focus of any new Chinese leadership's Taiwan policy will not be on quick reunification. Instead, it may well be on establishing a stable working relationship with Taipei so that

Beijing, for its own development, can most effectively capitalize on Taiwan's investment, technology, and its modernization experience. It is likely that in realistically readjusting its Taiwan policy, China under new leadership will accept Taipei's demand for recognition as an equal before reunification, mainly because of Taipei's insistence on such acceptance as the major precondition for more direct and systematic economic relations with China, including aid. Once it accepts that demand, China's Taiwan problem will cease to exist.

Taipei-Manila relations: the centre of China's attention

Judging from its reactions, China has been particularly sensitive to the development of the Taiwan-Philippines relationship since 1988.[71] Seven of the nine publicly reported Chinese protests and warnings (June 1987 - July 1991) regarding ASEAN-Taiwan relations have gone to the Philippines, and so far China's harshest reactions to these relations have been visited upon Manila. They include the recalling of the Chinese Ambassador, a threat to downgrade the bilateral relationship from ambassadorial to

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71 For recent Philippine-Taiwan relations, see Theresa C. Carino, "Dragon's Play: Philippine Policy Towards Taiwan and the People's Republic of China", pdrc Currents, March-April 1991, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1991(published by the Philippine-China Development Resource Centre, Manila), pp7-9, p23; Aileen San Pablo-Baviera, "Philippine-Taiwan Relations", in Theresa C. Carino, ed., China ASEAN Relations: Political, Economic and Ethnic Dimensions (The China Studies Program, De La Salle University, Manila, 1991), pp112-125; and He Anju, "Weilai Zhong Fei guanxi zhong de Taiwan yinsu taolun (A discussion of the Taiwan factor in future Sino-Philippine relations)", in Zhongshan University, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, ed., 2000 nian qianhou Zhongguo yu Dongnanya guanxi zhanwang (Prospects for China-Southeast Asia relations around 2000) (Zhongshan University Press, Guangzhou, July 1991), pp77-83, p99.

consular level, and reportedly even a threat to cut diplomatic ties altogether.[72]

Apparently, as compared with other ASEAN countries' relations with Taiwan, two developments in Philippine-Taiwan relations with political overtones stand out prominently to China's chagrin. Firstly, Taiwan's encouragement of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines to make laws modelled on America's Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which treats Taiwan as a de facto entity with international personality, thus legalising the semi-official bilateral relations,[73] has made most headway in the Philippines. A pro-Taiwan Philippine Representative Rodolfo Albano introduced a "RP-Taiwan Relations Act" in August 1988, granting semi-official recognition to Taiwan. After the bill was rejected, eleven Representatives led by Gualberto Lumauig filed in February 1989 a "Philippine-Taiwan Beneficial Relations Act", changed in form but not in essence from the previous one. The publicly announced reason for tabling these bills was that the two countries needed a law which could resolve commercial disputes and protect Taiwan's investment in the Philippines. However, a spokesman of the Chinese Embassy in Manila stated firmly that "it is not investment protection the Taiwanese authorities are seeking. Their genuine motive is to try to upgrade the present Taiwan-Philippine relations and push forward their so-called 'flexible diplomacy' by creating

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72 BBC Monitoring Service: Far East, November 22, 1990. Reuter, Manila, March 14, 1989. Chen Hong Yu, "Zhonghuaminguo yu Feilubin guanxi zhi fazhang (Development of relations between the Philippines and the Republic of China)", WYY, Vol 27, No. 5, February 1988, pp27-28.

73 Ji Guoxing, "Prospect of China-ASEAN relations after Cambodia", pp1-2.

various pretexts and using economic means".[74] Fearing that the passing of these bills may set a precedent for the whole region, China, while continuing to make protests,[75] launched a strong Congressional offensive. From January 1989 to October 1990, four Philippine Congressional delegations visited China at the invitation of the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC),[76] and at least two NPC delegations visited the Philippines.[77] While the NPC delegations were headed by the officials influential in China's Taiwan policy, the Philippine delegations were invariably lectured by senior Chinese leaders about China's stand on Taiwan.

Secondly, Taiwan has long bargained for an upgrading of the level of its representative offices in the ASEAN countries, seeking several preferential diplomatic treatment for them, and has had some success in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.[78] However, it is the Philippines which has been most generous to Taiwan. Normally, there are thirteen categories of privileges and immunities that a country gives to foreign diplomatic officials. While the Taiwan representative offices in other ASEAN countries are still denied some of these privileges, the Taiwan representative office in Manila has been treated most favourably, without any restriction on any of the thirteen categories. There is no effective distinction

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74 Reuter, Manila, March 14, 1989.

75 RR, March 14, 1989, p1. RR, March 28, 1989, p1.

76 Xinhua, Beijing, June 7, 1990. Xinhua, Beijing, June 16, 1990. Xinhua, Beijing, June 18, 1990. Xinhua, Manila, June 22, 1990. Xinhua, Beijing, September 19, 1990.

77 RR, January 27, 1989, p6. RR, October 25 and 26, 1990, p6.

78 Wong Wenzhang, op.cit, p46, p48. Ji Guoxing, "Prospect of China-ASEAN relations after Cambodia", pp1-2.

between this and formal diplomatic recognition.[79] It is also noteworthy that in 1991 the Philippines changed the name of its own representative office in Taiwan from "Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei" to "Representative Office of the Philippines". This is the most official title among all the representative offices established by the ASEAN countries in Taiwan.[80]

As Beijing must be aware, the two above-mentioned developments are only consequences of some more fundamental factors peculiar and conducive to the Manila-Taipei relationship. These factors include, firstly and most importantly, the economic distress in the Philippines which has increased Taiwan's attractiveness. Facing a huge external debt, the Philippine government has been desperately trying to encourage foreign investment and other sources for an influx of foreign capital. Possessing the world's biggest foreign currency reserves, Taiwan is in a good position to meet the urgent needs of the Philippines. Apart from the complementary relationship between the Philippines' abundant labour and natural resources and Taiwan's capital and appropriate technological know-how, Taiwan is Manila's closest neighbour.[81] Taiwan's economic importance to the Philippines has been enhanced even more with Filipino workers displaced by the Gulf War setting

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79 This is claimed in Kuo-hsiung Lee, op.cit., p97.

80 Xiao Yi Qing, op.cit., p54.

81 For a more detailed study of economic complementarity between the Philippines and Taiwan, see "Redefining our Taiwan Policy", in Leticia Ramos Shahani, Towards The Pacific Century: Essays on Philippine Foreign Policy (Second Edition, University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, the Philippines, 1991), pp54-55.

their sights on non-traditional job markets such as Taiwan.[82] For its part, Taiwan regards the Philippines as a touchstone for its new diplomatic strategy, and has been making special efforts there, characterised by an adroit mixture of semi-diplomatic contacts and economic incentives in order to transform its economic muscle into a more official relationship.[83] When President Ramos visited Beijing in April 1993, the Chinese President Jiang Zemin politely warned him: while the Chinese government understood the economic relationship between the Philippines and Taiwan, Taiwan should not be allowed to use this relationship for its political purposes.[84]

It should be mentioned that China too has been giving economic favours to the Philippines. If those conferred before 1986 were aimed at helping the struggling regime of Marcos, then those given after 1986 were clearly calculated with the "Taiwan problem" in mind. When Imelda Marcos visited China in November 1984, she obtained US$60 million in economic assistance and a US$500 million trade agreement.[85] In May 1986 China agreed to restructure a payment of US$11.2 million in rice import credit, granted to the Marcos government in 1985, and to renew a Bank of China credit line of US$20 million.[86] In June 1986, China sent a large trade

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82 "A Formula for the Taiwan Issue", in Leticia Ramos Shahani, op.cit., pp60-61.

83 Kuo-hsiung Lee, op.cit., pp88-89.

84 The Manila Chronicle (hereafter MC), April 27, 1993, p7.

85 The Straits Times (hereafter ST), April 4, 1985.

86 Benito Lim, "China Under Deng Xiaoping and Its Commercial Relations with the Philippines", in Bernardita Reyes Churchill, ed., Philippine-China Relations,1975-1988: An Assessment (the De La Salle University Press, Manila, the Philippines, 1990), pp46-47.

delegation to the Philippines, and signed contracts to purchase at one time US$40 million worth of goods.[87] In July 1986, China extended US$20 million in trade facility and 430,000 Tonnes of crude oil worth US$25.4 million on a deferred payment basis.[88] When Chinese deputy Prime Minister Tian Jiyun visited Manila in October 1986, China donated 100 mini-tractors and agreed to renew US$40 million worth of trade credit.[89] During his visit to Manila in December 1990, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng donated 100 buses and extended on credit 2.1 million barrels of oil.[90] However, all this pales by comparison with what Taiwan can now possibly offer.

In 1987, China was among the top ten foreign investors in the Philippines,[91] investing P169,425,000 (about US$8.4 million), equivalent to 10.45%, not far behind Taiwan's 11.47%, of all investment from Asian countries.[92] However, Taiwan's investment in the Philippines has spiralled since 1987, jumping to P2.8 billion in 1988 and P2.6 billion in the first half of 1989.[93] Taiwan was the leading investor in the Philippines in 1989, and during the first half of 1990 was second only to Japan with P3.2 billion (US$125 million). In comparison, investment from China in that period was only P32.9

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87 Yu Mingsheng, "Keynote Address", in Bernardita Reyes Churchill, ed., op.cit., p11.

88 Benito Lim, op.cit., pp46-47.

89 ST, October 19, 1986.

90 RR, December 15, 1990, p1.

91 Jesus P. Estanislao, "Philippines-China Trade Relations", in Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Trends and Patterns, p181

92 Rizal C. K. Yuyitung, "Philippine Perceptions of the People's Republic of China as a World Power", paper prepared for "China-ASEAN Relations Conference", p2.

93 John McBeth, "A lesson in diplomacy," FEER, November 16, 1989, p25.

million.[94] The Philippines' bilateral trade with Taiwan in 1988 was US$843.68 million against US$404.57 million with China, in 1989 US$1.02 billion against US$340.02 million, in 1990 US$1.05 billion against US$295 million, and in 1991 US$848.02 million against 383.97 million (see Table One).

Secondly, China is aware that historically, pro-Taiwan forces were powerful in Philippine politics and Manila-Taipei ties closer than those between other ASEAN countries and Taiwan. This has become an important element in the new development of the Manila-Taipei relationship.[95] For example, the first country to confer formal recognition on the newborn Philippine Republic in 1946 was Chiang Kai-shek's China, and in 1947 a Treaty of Amity and Friendship was concluded between the two countries. There was a de facto alliance among the US, Taiwan and the Philippines in opposition to China at the height of the Cold War in Asia, and most members of the influential Filipino Chinese community were sympathizers of the KMT.[96] The record of United Nations' voting on the "China seat" shows that the Philippines was the only ASEAN country which voted for Taiwan's cause consistently to the last.[97] The intimate Manila-Taipei relations were also manifest during the negotiations for normalisation of Beijing-Manila relations. When President

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94 Frank Jiang, "China trading," FEER, December 27, 1990, p9.

95 Chen Ning, op.cit., pp61-62.

96 For a comprehensive, though descriptive, study of Taiwan-Philippine relations before China established diplomatic relations with the Philippines, see Hsiao Shi-Ching, Chinese-Philippines Diplomatic Relations: 1946 - 1975 (Bookman Printing House, Quezon City, 1975).

97 Purification C. Valera Quisumbing, Beijing-Manila Detente: Major Issues, A Study In China-ASEAN Relations (University of Philippines Law Centre & Foreign Service Institute, Manila, 1983), p266.

Marcos sent Governor Romualdez on a special mission to Beijing in February 1972, he instructed him to ascertain Beijing's views on "whether it would agree to the establishment of diplomatic relations without disturbing our present relations with the Government of Taiwan". It was reported that Manila abandoned its attempt only after Beijing expressed its position "with such deep emotion".[98] In contrast, neither Thailand nor Malaysia raised such "outrageous" demands when negotiating with China about establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974-75. China also knew that Mrs. Aquino and her family had a long and close relationship with Taiwan, and with pro-Taiwan businessmen in the Philippines,[99] and that the major members of her cabinet, including her successor President Ramos, were all old friends of Taiwan. Naturally the Aquino government, soon after its establishment, sent out strong signals that it was ready to strengthen its relations with Taiwan.[100] Reportedly it would have readily abandoned the "one China" policy but for restraints exercised by the US.[101]

Why special treatment for Singapore?

An interesting phenomenon in China's approach to Taiwan-ASEAN relations is that it has all along turned a blind eye to Singapore's relationship with Taiwan, while complaining about the generally less substantive relations of the other ASEAN countries. This can be

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98 Ibid., p50.

99 Ma Xiaojun, "dui Feilubin xingshi fazhang de yuce (Predicting the development of the Philippine situation)", SJYZN., July, 1986, p52. Wu Xiuhui, "Feilubin Xinzongtong Kelasong Ajinuo (Philippine's new President Corazon Aquino)", SJYZN., August, 1986, pp60-61.

100 Xiao Yi Qing, op.cit., pp47-50.

101 Rizal C. K. Yuyitung, op.cit., p2.

seen, for example, in China's differentiated reactions to visits by high-level officials since the mid-1970s.[102] As said above, these visits are seen in China as of de facto official nature, contributing to the creation of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan". Thus China has not found Singapore any different from other ASEAN countries, but its reactions to the visits have been glaringly discriminatory. One only needs to look at the most prominent example - China's reactions to visits at and above Prime Ministerial level between the ASEAN countries and Taiwan. China protested at Indonesia's invitation to the Taiwanese Prime Minister in 1981 and Taiwanese President in 1994,[103] at Thailand's and the Philippines' invitation to the Taiwanese President in 1994,[104] and to Malaysia for dispatching its own Prime Minister to Taiwan in 1988.[105] And despite her repeated expressions of interest in visiting Taiwan, ostensibly to receive her honorary Ph.D degree from Fu Jen Catholic University, President Aquino was never able to go, because of warnings from China.[106] China also nipped in the bud her idea of inviting Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to the Philippines, ostensibly to receive his honorary Ph.D degree from St. Tomas University.[107] However, Singapore has always been exempt from China's complaints, although its record of leadership visits to and from Taiwan is the most impressive of all the ASEAN countries.

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102 To be on an equal footing in making comparison, the period before the mid-1970s is not considered here. In that period, the Philippines and Thailand had diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

103 RR, December 13, 1981, p6. Julian Baum, John McBeth, and Rodney Tasker, "In His Private Capacity", FEER, February 24, 1994, p18.

104 Julian Baum, John McBeth, and Rodney Tasker, op.cit., pp18-19.

105 RR, September 9 1988, p4.

106 Xiao Yi Qing, op.cit., p53.

107 Ibid.

Between 1973 and the end of 1990, Lee Kuan Yew visited Taiwan twenty times including seven times since 1985 (he also visited Taiwan in February 1992 as Senior Cabinet Minister). As if to test China's tolerance, he changed the "style" of his visits after 1985 from relative discretion and quietness to a higher profile, characterised by, for example, public statements and large delegations. Two Taiwanese Prime Ministers have visited Singapore (Yu Kuo-hua in 1987 and Hau Pei-tsun in 1990), and most significantly, President Lee Teng-hui did so in 1989. The wider significance of Lee Teng-hui's trip was that it was the first Presidential visit to a country having no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and also the first time the President left Taiwan in twelve years. As if to pre-empt any questions about the glaring absence of a Chinese complaint over such an epoch-making visit, a comment was made in World Knowledge, a leading Chinese magazine on foreign affairs, in the immediate aftermath of the visit. However, like the absence of a protest, the comment by all criteria represented an exception to China's usual policy on Taiwan. Instead of expressing concern at the visit, the commentator joyfully claimed that the Singapore government had poured cold water on Lee Teng-hui. He alleged that on the eve of Lee's arrival, it embarrassed him by announcing that it would soon establish diplomatic relations with China, and that during the visit, Singapore's acting President had "ridiculed" Lee by addressing him as "the president from Taiwan" rather than "the president from the Republic of China".[108] A conspicuous abnormality can be seen in

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108 Xu Wen Yi, "Li Deng Hui fang Xin yu Taiwan de 'tanxing waijiao' (Lee Teng-hui's visit to Singapore and Taiwan's 'flexible diplomacy')", SZ, No. 9, 1989, p16.

this comment. Normally, China would try hard to prevent a visit at such a level (whether from ASEAN to Taiwan, or vice versa), and launch strong protest should the visit go ahead. China knows that however the visiting leader is addressed or treated apparently, the visit means substantive business. When the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand received Lee Teng-hui in his private capacity as a golfer in February 1994, they received strong protest from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, which stated firmly "this is something the Chinese Government and people strongly oppose and can never accept".[109] China forced Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai to cancel plans to meet with Lee and postponed a planned visit to Manila by Chinese parliamentarians.[110] Indeed, "president from Taiwan" is not ridicule at all. The Lee Teng-hui government had already acknowledged that its "the Republic of China" comprised only Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. And the term "president" has a clear official connotation. Not surprisingly, Lee Teng-hui expressed willingness to accept the title,[111] something unimaginable to the two Chiangs. It is against common sense that Lee Teng-hui should be forbidden to visit the Philippines as an honorary Ph.D degree awardee and invoke strong Chinese protest to the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand when he visited these countries as a golfer, but be given the green light to visit Singapore in his political capacity as the "president from Taiwan". A biography of Lee Kuan Yew published in 1990 in Beijing told the obvious: despite the title game, Lee Teng-

109 Julian Baum, John McBeth, and Rodney Tasker, op.cit., p18.

110 Ibid.

111 Zhao Jianmin, op.cit., p79.

hui received the full diplomatic treatment of a head of state in Singapore.[112]

China's acquiescence in these top-level visits between Singapore and Taiwan is even more baffling if one also notes that it protested to Indonesia for inviting a Taiwan vice Foreign Minister,[113] and to the Philippines for dispatching its own Foreign Minister to Taiwan,[114] and even for inviting the deputy President of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan to visit Manila.[115]

Another example of China's relaxed approach to Singapore-Taiwan relations is that China has not objected to Singapore's maintaining its long-standing military ties with Taiwan. Under a "Star Light Project" based on agreements reached in 1973-74, about 800 Singaporean soldiers at a time go to Taiwan for three-to six-month stints, to train at Hukou army base in Northern Taiwan and at another base near Kao-hsiung.[116] In fact Taiwan has become the most-used overseas training ground for Singapore's military forces.[117] Before the talks between China and Singapore about the establishment of diplomatic relations, many diplomats had predicted that these military ties could be a contentious issue. After all, when it protested at Indonesia's reception of the Taiwanese Prime Minister in 1981, China particularly criticised the

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112 Chen Yue and Chen Cuihua, Li Guangyao, Xinjiapo de dianjiren (Lee Kuan Yew, the founding person of Singapore) (Current Affairs Press, Beijing, August, 1990), p204.

113 Reuter, Jakarta, July 12, 1991.

114 Reuter, Manila, January 18, 1990.

115 Xiao Yi Qing, op.cit., p56.

116 Kuo-hsiung Lee, op.cit., p94.

117 Chen Yue and Chen Cuihua, op.cit., p204.

discussion of the possibility of Indonesian troops training in Taiwan.[118] However, during his visit to Singapore in August 1990, Li Peng stated that Singapore-Taiwan military ties "is a fact and we should not mind too much".[119] China's tolerance of this relationship contrasts vividly with its protest at the signing by Taiwan and the Philippines of a memorandum on agricultural and fishing cooperation in 1991.[120]

In trying to explain China's discriminatory policy, two guesses are easily arrived at. One is that China's tolerance may be because Singapore had no diplomatic relations with China until as late as October 1990. Another one is that Lee Kuan Yew may have been asked by the Chinese - and probably also the Taiwanese - leaders to play the role of a bridge between Beijing and Taipei. However, these two guesses are superficial. So far as the first is concerned, Malaysia was harshly criticised by China in 1964 for attempting to create "two Chinas", when it had no diplomatic relations with China. And Indonesia was warned and protested against by China for the same reason in 1968 and 1981, after it had already suspended diplomatic relations with China. It is true that before 1975, when the Philippines and Thailand had no diplomatic relations with China, it did not accuse them of creating "two Chinas" when they exchanged leadership visits with Taiwan among which the most prominent were visits to the Philippines by President Chiang Kai-shek and vice-President Chen Cheng, and the visit to Thailand by

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118 RR, December 13, 1981, p6.

119 Reuter, Singapore, August 12, 1990. See also BT, August 13, 1990, p26; SCMP, October 4, 1990, p8; and "A Kinder, Gentler China?" Asiaweek, August 24, 1990, p27.

120 RR, July 12, 1991, p4.

Prime Minister Chiang Ching-kuo. This, however, was because Thailand and the Philippines had diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Such relations, in the theories of both sides of the Taiwan Strait, could only mean that Thailand and the Philippines officially recognised Taiwan as representing all China, so their visits were not related to the "two Chinas" question. Singapore, on the one hand, has never had diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and on the other, since Lee Kuan Yew visited Beijing in 1976, and particularly since Singapore and China established commercial offices in 1981, both sides had clearly established an official relationship in everything but name. Furthermore, the Prime Ministers of Singapore and Taiwan exchanged visits in late 1990 in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Singapore and China, and Singapore's Senior Cabinet Minister and Prime Minister (Goh Chok Tong) visited Taiwan in 1992 and 1993 respectively.

As for the second guess, even if true, it does not explain why China has tolerated an overall Singapore-Taiwan relationship of a de facto official nature. The truth may well be that China's acquiescence in Lee Kuan Yew's visits is based only on the considerations which have led China to acquiesce in the overall Singapore-Taiwan relations in the first place. This assumption, however, does not rule out the possibility that the Chinese leaders may have indeed asked Lee to play the role of a bridge.

In the existing literature, only two works have touched on China's special policy towards Singapore, and both have offered somewhat simplistic explanations. A Chinese observer pointed out that China's tolerance of the Singapore-Taiwan relationship is actually a return

for what the Singapore government has done for China,[121] and listed briefly three "good things" it had done. Firstly, when its neighbours were hostile to China, Singapore did not toe their line. Instead, it asked them not to see China as a bad communist country, and suggested they improve relations with it. Secondly, the Singapore government has been deeply involved in developing commercial relations with China. Thirdly, when China was isolated internationally after the June 4 event, Lee Kuan Yew stood out for warning other countries not to isolate China or take a short-sighted view of China's reform.

A Taiwanese observer offered a brief explanation, saying that Singapore has been welcome in both Beijing and Taipei because of its Chinese culture, economic achievement, Lee Kuan Yew's outstanding leadership, and, most importantly, Lee's judicious "balance of power" play.[122]

These two explanations, however, are lacking in both depth and breadth. This writer believes that what are involved in China's policy are some fundamental and sophisticated calculations. China has three long-term interests in Singapore (as illustrated below), and for this reason has a great stake in Singapore's survival as an independent sovereign state. This is quite unique in China's foreign relations. Put in the context of Singapore-Taiwan relations, China

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121 Cao Yunhua, "Zhong Xing guanxi: Xinjiapo xiaoguo wushi waijiao de yige shili (Sino-Singapore relations: a good example of Singapore's pragmatic diplomacy as a small country)", DY, No. 2, 1991, p54.

122 Gu Changyong, "Xinjiapo yu Zhonggong zhi zhengzhi jingji guanxi (Singapore's political and economic relations with Communist China", WYY, Vol 30, No. 12, December 1991, pp71-72.

has probably believed that Singapore's relations with Taiwan - a corollary of Singapore's dual relations with Beijing and Taipei - are useful not only to Singapore's survival as an independent sovereign state, but also to China's own interests in Singapore. This has determined that China has all along acquiesced in the development of Singapore's de facto official ties with Taiwan, and will continue to do so, as long as Singapore and Taiwan do not open diplomatic relations (this limitation would be removed only if China accepted the "dual recognition" formula).

Specifically, China's interests in Singapore and the ways in which they can be helped by Singapore-Taiwan relations are as follows.[123]

Firstly, China believes that Singapore's foreign policy provides China with more favourable conditions than those of other regional countries to expand its political influence in Southeast Asia. Singapore advocates a balance of big powers in the region, and seeks big powers' "multi-sustaining" of regional security. In its regional formula, China is regarded as a positive factor and has a positive, though not a dominating, role to play in regional politics. Therefore, the more Singapore's right to a say in regional affairs is strengthened, the more favourable the regional situation will be to China, and the bigger the regional role it can expect to play. That Singapore has good relations with both China and Taiwan, and Lee Kuan Yew is seen to be playing a meaningful role as a bridge -

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123 This outline of China's interests in Singapore is based on the writer's interview, done in China in 1987, with an adviser to Chinese government on Southeast Asia policy.

whether he has really been given such a mandate is irrelevant - could strengthen Singapore's international status and heighten Lee's own international profile. This, in turn, can enhance Singapore's regional influence.

Secondly, China has regarded Singapore as a base for maintaining and promoting Chinese culture among the Chinese community in Southeast Asia.[124] From China's point of view, other ASEAN countries have been to varying degrees conducting a forced assimilation of their local Chinese. However, the very existence of Singapore as an independent Chinese state has been objectively useful in containing this trend, and will continue to be so. The Singaporean Chinese still identify in one way or another with Chinese culture and traditions, and the government has encouraged this identification. In order to strengthen Singapore's Chineseness and its role as "a bastion of Chinese culture" in Southeast Asia, China has been managing some active cultural exchange programs with Singapore in such areas as art, language and especially Confucian studies.[125] Meanwhile, China has been certainly aware that Singapore's Chineseness could also be strengthened by its

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124 The most recent expression of China's intention to promote Chinese culture in Southeast Asia is seen in the idea of "Grand Chinese cultural rim" raised in "Sulian zhengbian hou Zhongguo de xianshi yingdui yu zhanlue xuanze (After the Coup in the Soviet Union: China's realistic strategic choice)", Zhongguo Qingnian Bao (China Youth Daily), September 9, 1991, reprinted in Zhongguo Zhichun(China Spring, New York, hereafter ZZ), No. 1, 1992, p38. This was a major document on PRC's future after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and it has been widely believed to represent the political programme of the coming post-Deng leadership.

125 For China's enthusiasm in establishing close ties with Singapore on the study of Confucianism, see RR, May 29, 1986, p4.

Taiwan connection. In fact, using the Taiwan connection to strengthen Singapore's Chineseness is more effective in the sense that it is less sensitive in the eyes of Singapore's Malay neighbours than China itself trying its hands, at least at the current stage.[126]

Thirdly, China has considered Singapore as uniquely placed to provide China with a business springboard not only to Southeast Asia but also to the whole world, including the prosperous Taiwan, because of Singapore's geographical location and its links to the Western transnationals. A strengthened Taiwan connection could only enhance Singapore's role as a hub of international economics and its contribution to China-Taiwan economic relations. Taiwan has already made it clear that it would promote Singapore rather than Hong Kong as its main channel for investment into China. As Taiwan Economics Minister Vincent Siew said in 1991, Singapore, which had investment guarantee pacts with both Taipei and Beijing, was a better base than Hong Kong for Taiwan companies setting up subsidiaries to invest in mainland China.[127]

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126 It is possible that in the long run, Taiwan will also become a factor touching nerves of ethnic tension in Malaysia and Indonesia with its expanding economic influence. See Ross Garnut, "The Emerging role of Taiwan In the Western Pacific and World Economy", in Gary Klintworth, ed., Modern Taiwan in the 1990s (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 75, Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Canberra, The Australian National University, 1991), p128.

127 Reuter, Singapore, May 2, 1991. See also Rao Mei Jiao, "Dongmeng guojia yu Zhongguo zhi jingji guanxi: tansuo haiwai huaren banyan de jiaose (ASEAN-China economic relations: roles of the overseas Chinese)", Huaren (Life Overseas, Hong Kong), No. 4, 1992, p23.

China's interests in Singapore can be secured only if Singapore can survive and prosper as an independent sovereign state. Being aware that Singapore is "a Chinese shrimp in a Malay sea", China has been concerned with Singapore's survival. Having good relations with both China and Taiwan could give Singapore more "diplomatic space" and international exposure, thus projecting Singapore's existence in international relations. The Taiwan connection is useful to Singapore's survival also by strengthening Singapore's defence force, boosting its economic prosperity, enhancing its role as an international economic centre, and maintaining its Chinese cultural identity.

That there is a risk in China's approach to Singapore-Taiwan relations is obvious. In order to open a more official and political relationship with Taiwan, other countries (including other ASEAN members) may use the Singapore case as a bargaining instrument vis-a-vis Beijing. They could remind China of its special treatment of Singapore's relations with Taiwan, and thus the unequal treatment of their own relations with Taiwan. This could be done when, for example, China launches protests at such events as their senior leaders' visits to Taiwan, visits by the Taiwanese Prime Minister and President, and other moves aimed at establishing a more official and political relationship with Taiwan. It does not make much difference whether China protests before or after these events. A persistent and public bargaining based on the Singapore case would put the Chinese government in a very difficult position. China could not base its explanation of its special treatment of Singapore-Taiwan relations on the ground that it has some long-term and important interests in Singapore, because this would

strain relations with other ASEAN countries by strengthening their suspicions of China's long-term objectives in Southeast Asia, and also cast Singapore in an embarrassing light in the eyes of its ASEAN neighbours, given the nature of these interests. Improvement of relations with the peripheral countries including the ASEAN members has become a major foreign policy goal of China. However, it is very difficult for China to put forward any other plausible explanations about its tolerance of Singapore-Taiwan relations - this is probably why China has never given any explanations.

Conclusion

The "Taiwan problem" can be defined as a situation where foreign countries, particularly those already having diplomatic relations with China, deal with Taiwan in a way which treats it as a political entity separate from mainland China. China's concern is that this situation represents a creation of "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan", to the detriment of the Chinese government's own claim to legitimacy as the sole central government of all China.

The Taiwan factor, in the two forms of the "Taiwan problem" and of Taiwan enjoying full diplomatic recognition, was only a peripheral concern in China's ASEAN policy before 1988. This was because firstly, China was preoccupied with other more important foreign policy issues mainly related to its relations with the superpowers, and secondly, the diplomatic relations between Thailand and Taiwan, and between the Philippines and Taiwan, were an established fact that China had to face realistically ever since the communist government was founded in 1949. Thirdly, semi-official

relations between the ASEAN countries (including post-1975 Thailand and the Philippines) and Taiwan had not developed to a degree or in a way alarming to China.

Since 1988, the "Taiwan problem" has become a serious concern in China's ASEAN policy. It has qualitatively intensified as a result of a series of deep systemic changes in both Taiwan's domestic politics and the regional situation. The rapid expansion of ASEAN-Taiwan relations since 1988 is apparently manifested firstly in the reciprocal visits by officials at or above ministerial-level, which have been the most frequent since the early 1970s. Secondly, business relations have expanded more substantially than in any previous period, and China's own overall economic relations with the ASEAN countries have lagged far behind those of Taiwan. However, what is worrisome to China is less the unprecedented high degree of the apparent development in ASEAN-Taiwan relations than Taiwan's new diplomatic strategy and the new regional environment amenable to its implementation.

Since 1988, Taiwan has adopted a so-called "flexible diplomacy" in order to obtain a larger diplomatic space and play a more important international role. Taking advantage of its newly acquired economic clout, Taiwan has begun to seek international recognition as a political entity separate from mainland China, a fundamental change from its foreign policy under the two Chiangs. From China's point of view, the danger of "flexible diplomacy" is that the Taiwan regime has officially endorsed the creation of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and that Taiwan has blatantly used cash as a diplomatic weapon to create the situation. China's concern has been

aggravated by the state of the Chinese reunification issue, the domestic and international impact of the June 4 event, and probably also the implications of Taiwan's strengthened international links for the on-going China-Taiwan economic integration. In China's eyes, the development of ASEAN-Taiwan relations since 1988 has been mainly manipulated by Taiwan's "flexible diplomacy". And China has been aware that the objective conditions in ASEAN are very amenable to "flexible diplomacy", considering ASEAN's new priority on economic development and Taiwan's economic importance to ASEAN. Although the ASEAN countries are not likely to establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan on the basis of the latter's new rules of the game, China is worried that with Taiwan's new strategy and the ASEAN countries' economic priorities, the ASEAN countries' semi-official relations with Taiwan are bound to be pushed forward. China has been particularly sensitive to the development of the Taiwan-Philippine relationship. This is because firstly economic distress in the Philippines has increased Taiwan's attractiveness, and secondly, historically pro-Taiwan forces were powerful in Philippine politics, and Manila's ties with Taipei closer than those of the other ASEAN countries.

An interesting phenomenon in China's approach to ASEAN-Taiwan relations is that China has all along tolerated Singapore's relationship with Taiwan, while complaining about the generally less substantive relations between other ASEAN countries and Taiwan. This can be seen in China's differentiated reactions to visits by high-level officials between ASEAN and Taiwan, and its acquiescence in Singapore's long-standing military ties with Taiwan. Behind China's special treatment of Singapore are some well-

calculated considerations. China has long-term geo-strategic, cultural and economic interests in Singapore, and therefore a great stake in its survival as an independent sovereign state. China has believed that Singapore's relations with Taiwan - a corollary of Singapore's dual relations with Beijing and Taipei - are useful not only to Singapore's survival, but also to China's own interests in Singapore. This has determined that China has always acquiesced in the development of Singapore's de facto official ties with Taiwan.

Chapter Three

Human rights: ASEAN's new importance to China

In 1981, an undeclared political campaign was launched in China in order to suppress the increasing Western political influence among the Chinese intellectual community. A major step in the campaign was to indoctrinate young intellectuals with "patriotism" by strengthening the teaching of Chinese history in tertiary institutions. Prominent foreign leaders' statements about the importance of studying history were propagated to assist the campaign, but those of Lee Kuan Yew appeared to be the favourite of the Chinese government. He was quoted in the People's Daily as strongly urging the youth of Singapore to study history so as to strengthen themselves to face the "storms and crises" of the future.[1] Then in February 1987, the People's Daily gave prominent coverage to, and expressed China's strong support for, the Singapore government's accusation that the US government and the Voice of America (VOA) had interfered in Singapore's domestic affairs by criticising its decision to restrict the circulation of an American journal.[2] The purpose of the People's Daily was to give a timely boost to China's own condemnation of the interference in its internal affairs by the US government and VOA, both of which criticised human rights violations in Tibet and the harsh way the Chinese government dealt with a nation-wide student movement from late

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[1] RR, April 3, 1981, p6.

[2] RR, February 17, 1987, p6.

1986 to early 1987. When the People's Daily published the statements of Lee and his government, it appeared no more than an isolated episode in China-Singapore relations. However, in hindsight, it seemed to foreshadow a fundamental interest by China in the ASEAN countries in general and in Singapore in particular after the event of June 1989 and with the end of the Cold War.

Since the bloody crack-down on the student movement in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, China has become a chief target for Western condemnation of human rights violations. As a result, a major item on the foreign policy agenda of post-Tiananmen China is containment of the pressure being exerted by Western nations regarding its abuses of human rights. An interesting development here is that China has found the ASEAN countries helpful and useful in boosting its position on the human rights issue both at home and in facing Western pressure. China has actively canvassed the possibility of establishing a cooperative relationship with the ASEAN countries in resisting Western assertiveness over human rights in the post-Cold War world.

This chapter examines this unprecedented development in China-ASEAN relations. The first section focuses on ASEAN's role in moderating China's isolation during the first two years after the June 4 event. The second section examines the apparently similar views and priorities of China and ASEAN on the concept of human rights and the way it is promoted by the Western nations in international relations. The third outlines China's policy of establishing a cooperative relationship with ASEAN on the issue of human rights, and the fourth section points out the fundamental

dilemma and irony in China's associating with ASEAN on the issue of human rights.

ASEAN's role in moderating China's isolation

During the two years following the June 4 event (from mid-June 1989 to around September 1991), while most Western nations imposed sanctions against China over human rights violations, the ASEAN countries continued to promote their political and economic relations with China. By so doing, they played no small role in moderating China's isolation and repairing China's image in the international community. Their policies contributed to the Chinese government's task in shoring up its legitimacy, both in the eyes of the Chinese people and in the international community, and were seen by the Chinese government as timely help in alleviating domestic and Western pressure.

In some respects the June 4 event served the interests of the ASEAN countries. First, it disenchanted the US and other Western nations which had been maintaining a close relationship with China. ASEAN countries like Malaysia and Indonesia had long warned the West of the serious implications for regional security and economies of its military and economic assistance to China. In the aftermath of the June 4 killing, Western nations withheld weapons and military technology exports to China, and suspended major loans and credits to it. Second, the violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement further discredited the remaining ASEAN-based communist movements. International isolation after June 1989 prompted China to improve relations with ASEAN, giving Malaysia and Thailand a stronger position in their negotiations with China

about the surrender of the Malayan Communist Party insurgents which started in 1988 and ended in December 1989. Third, the event of June 4 damaged China's image among the ASEAN-based overseas Chinese communities and promoted the virtue of the local social systems, perhaps strengthening the communities' identification with their local societies.

However, the ASEAN countries did not want to see China isolated in international community mainly for two reasons. First, they had learned an important lesson from dealing with China in the past, that an internationally ostracised China was the chief trouble-maker in Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s. China's revolutionary regional policy, marked by its support for communist insurgents, constituted a threat to the local governments. However, the strengthened ties between China and the outside world since 1978 had gone a long way in ensuring pragmatism in China's external behaviour. The ASEAN countries believed that any attempt to isolate China again could lead to a reversal of its open-door policy and increase the uncertainties in its regional policy, and that they, rather than the Western nations, would be the first to bear the brunt. Thus the ASEAN countries were anxious to see China re-integrated into the mainstream international system.

Second, at a more specific level, China was a major force to be reckoned with in the process of solving regional problems regarding Cambodia and the Spratlys. Compared with Western nations, the ASEAN countries had a more direct stake in the solution of these problems, and were concerned that radicalization of China's regional policy, a possible result of isolation, would adversely affect

progress towards solutions, and threaten regional security. By June 1989, China had already made clear its pragmatic attitude towards the future of Cambodia after Vietnam's withdrawal, with respect to power sharing among the four warring factions, free elections, and an international guarantee of Cambodia's non-aligned status. If China were to go back on this commitment as a way of registering resentment against its isolation, progress towards a solution would be hindered, just when Vietnam's January 1989 decision to withdraw its troops had created a favourable climate. The Spratly dispute had increasingly become another regional flashpoint since 1988 against the background of world-wide East-West detente. By June 1989, China's proclaimed Spratly policy towards Malaysia and the Philippines had been one of joint exploitation of resources while shelving the dispute over sovereignty. The June 4 event made the Chinese government focus increasingly on nationalistic appeals as a major means to shore up its legitimacy. If this indicated that China's Spratly policy would be hardened, international isolation would only push China further in that direction. The ASEAN countries believed that a major way to pacify China's assertive Spratly policy and constrain its expanding military build-up was to co-opt China into a regional security structure.

Western reactions to the June 4 event once again convinced the ASEAN countries that the Western world was fundamentally naive and emotional in dealing with China. The West's policies had been too often characterised by either hostility or honeymoon, and the ASEAN countries hoped that it could adopt a balanced China policy,

which would also take into account the concerns of other countries in the region.

That China-ASEAN relations were not adversely affected by, and actually developed significantly after, the June 4 event was evident in the following aspects.

In stark contrast to the Western governments, the ASEAN governments did not condemn the suppression, and made it clear that their existing friendly policies towards China would not change.[3] To be sure, beyond this commonality, public pronouncements were made in Singapore and Manila which were not in favour of the Chinese government. The Singaporean government expressed its sorrow and shock over the violent way the students were dealt with, stating that the fire-power and violence "were totally disproportionate to the resistance unarmed civilians offered".[4] The government of the Philippines also expressed its sadness over the killing, announcing a ban on visits to China by Filipinos and suspending civil air links with China; these measures were revoked within a month.[5] However, in general the Chinese government was impressed by what it called "reasonable"

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[3] Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan: 1990 (Yearbook of Chinese Diplomacy:1990)(World Knowledge Press, Beijing, 1990), pp57-58, p61. Xinhua, Manila, June 13, 1989. Jiji Press Newswire, Wellington, June 22, 1989. RR, June 23, 1989, p3. Reuter, Singapore, July 5, 1989. The Star, August 9, 1989, p17. ST, November 1, 1989, p15. ST, November 24, 1989, p1.

[4] Lee Kuan Yew on China and Hongkong after Tiananmen(compiled by Lianhe Zaobao, Singapore, 1991), p1.

[5] Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan: 1990 , p65.

reactions from the ASEAN governments.[6] These reactions stood in striking contrast to the strong condemnations of China's suppression of the Tibetan rebellion by Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines in 1959.[7]

While the Western nations suspended high-level official visits between themselves and China (largely until September 1991), the ASEAN countries did not. The busy two-way visits of Chinese and ASEAN leaders were characterised by a cordial atmosphere, clearly showing the world that China was anything but isolated at least in its own backyard.

To illuminate this point, official visits from July 1989, that is, one month after the June 4 event, till the end of that year should be examined first. According to Chinese statistics, Chinese officials who visited Thailand during that period included one Deputy Foreign Minister, the Minister for Public Security, two State Councillors (equal to Deputy Prime Ministers), the Minister for Mechanical and Electronic Industries, the Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the Commander in Chief of the PLA Navy, while the Thai Prime Minister, one Deputy Prime Minister, two ministers, and two groups of parliamentarians visited China. The Chinese Commercial Minister and Chairman of the All-

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6 Ibid., p58, pp61-62, pp64-65. For the ASEAN countries' reactions to the June 4 event, see also Lee Lai To, "Domestic Changes in China since the 4 June Incident and Their Implications for Southeast Asia", CSA, Vol. 13, No. 1, June 1991, p37, p39.

7 For those condemnations, see RR, April 23, 1959, p4, p5. RR, April 28, 1959, p5. RR, May 2, 1959, p3.

China Sports Association visited Malaysia, and two Malaysian ministers visited China. The Chinese Commercial Minister, Minister for Aviation and Aerospace, and Acting Chairman of the Chinese Commission for Promoting International Trade (CCPIT) visited Singapore. The President of the Chinese Supreme Court visited the Philippines, and two delegations of Philippine parliamentarians visited China. As well, a Chinese assistant Foreign Minister and Acting Head of CCPIT visited Indonesia.[8]

While the Chinese government was highly satisfied with ASEAN's pragmatism, it particularly appreciated Thailand's actions. First, the Thai reception of PLA leaders in Bangkok was an urgently needed symbolic boost to the image of the PLA, which was widely snubbed for its involvement in the Tiananmen killing. Second, the Thai Prime Minister and deputy Prime Minister - both of whom visited Beijing in October 1989 - represented the highest-level foreign leaders Beijing received for over half a year following the June 4 event. On meeting Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, the top Chinese leaders, including paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, President Yang Shangkun, and Prime Minister Li Peng, could hardly conceal their happiness, and all heartily claimed that friendly relations between China and Thailand "have successfully passed a historic test".[9] Playing up the significance of the meeting, the Chinese propaganda machine advocated Sino-Thai relations as a good model for relations between countries with different political systems.[10]

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8 Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan: 1990, pp58-62, pp64-65, p67.

9 RR, October 26, 1989, p1. RR, October 27, 1989, p1.

10 RR, October 26, 1989, p1. RR, October 27, 1989, p1.

The reciprocal leadership visits in 1990-91 went further in projecting ASEAN's role in helping to break China's isolation and repairing its image. In fact they were record-breaking in the history of China-ASEAN relations not only in their frequency but also in the ranking of the visiting leaders. Thus Li Peng visited the five ASEAN countries within a mere four months (August-December 1990). Yang Shangkun visited Thailand, Indonesia (June 1991), Singapore and Malaysia (January 1992) within half a year. He was the first Chinese Head of State to visit Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, and was the first to visit Indonesia since then President Liu Shaoqi in 1963. These visits were useful not only in maintaining China's international legitimacy, but also in improving the tattered reputations of Li and Yang both in domestic and international politics. This was particularly true for Li Peng, reviled both at home and abroad as the "butcher of Tiananmen Square". However, Li appeared elated with his whirlwind sweep through Southeast Asia in 1990. A major achievement during his visits - the resumption of diplomatic ties with Indonesia and establishment of diplomatic relations with Singapore - was also a diplomatic breakthrough sorely needed by an internationally ostracised China.

The visits to China by the top leaders of the ASEAN countries in 1990-91 were even more heartening to the Chinese government. In this period China was visited by the Singaporean Prime Minister (October 1990) and President (September 1991), Indonesian President (November 1990), Thai Prime Minister (September 1991), and Malaysian Sultan (September 1991). The visits by the Singaporean President and Malaysian Sultan were both the first of

their kind, and the visit by the Indonesian President was the first since November 1964. For China the visits of these three heads of state, whom it had not had the honour of receiving even when it was most popular internationally, could not have come at a better time. ASEAN's special friendship was symbolised by a series of official occasions around mid-September 1991, when China played host to Prime Ministers Toshiki Kaifu of Japan, John Major of Britain and Giulio Andreotti of Italy, as well as Sultan Azlan Shah of Malaysia and President Wee Kim Wee of Singapore. While the tone of the meetings with the Western guests was frostily correct, and reciprocal invitations were not extended to the Chinese leaders, his Majesty and Wee warmly invited Yang Shangkun to visit their countries.[11]

Unlike business relations between China and the Western nations, those between China and the ASEAN countries were not only little affected by the June 4 event, but also developed significantly despite it, a result of the pragmatic attitudes adopted by both the governments and private-sectors of the ASEAN countries. In fact, 1989 was hailed by China as witnessing the raising of China-ASEAN economic relations to "a new level".[12] The volume of two-way trade increased by more than 8.5% over that of 1988, and ASEAN investment in China in 1989 was even more encouraging: funds

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11 Lincoln Kaye, "Not in the party spirit," FEER, September 26, 1991, p22. The Straits Times Weekly Overseas Edition, September 14, 1991, p5. New Sunday Times, September 8, 1991, p2.

12 Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1990-1991(Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, Beijing, 1990), pp270-271.

promised increased by 76%, and funds actually invested were 2.5 times more, compared to 1988.[13] Although promotion of business relations was not a matter of political principle for the ASEAN countries, it objectively assisted the efforts of the post-Tiananmen Chinese leadership in maintaining at least the appearance of economic reform and an open-door policy, which, following the June 4 crack-down, had become more important as a means of maintaining the Chinese government's legitimacy at home and abroad.

It is relevant to examine Singapore's investment in China, as Singapore had always been China's leading business partner in ASEAN, and foreign investment in China was severely harmed by the June 4 event. The Singapore government announced that it would continue to promote economic exchanges with China including investment in China's export-oriented industries.[14] This deep-seated sense of pragmatism was not lost on the private sector. While Western companies scaled back business in China, the Singapore business community proceeded essentially as usual.[15] Indeed, barely two weeks after the event the Chinese government particularly singled out Singapore as a good example to convince Western investors that the situation in China had reverted to normal and they could go ahead with their investment projects.[16] Singapore's example was persuasive in boosting foreign investors'

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13 Ibid.

14 Clyde D. Stoltenberg, "China's Links to Southeast Asia," The China Business Review, May-June, 1990, p35.

15 Wu-Shan Lim, "Pragmatic Partners," ibid., July-August, 1990, p22, p26.

16 RR, June 18, 1989, p1.

confidence in China: during the period 1979-88 Singapore ranked fourth on the list of foreign investors in China[17] and was the fifth largest foreign investor in 1989.[18]

Apart from insulating their own bilateral relations with China from the adverse impacts of the June 4 event, the ASEAN leaders also cautioned their Western counterparts against closing their doors on China. In July 1989, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers went to great lengths to tell their Western dialogue partners in the annual Post-Ministerial Meeting (PMM) that the Western policy of isolating China was unwise.[19] And although the United States expressed strong reservations about a role for China in dialogue with ASEAN, China was invited by ASEAN for the first time to attend the PMM in July 1991, and to attend again in 1992.[20]

Singapore occupied a special place in China's view of the ASEAN countries' assistance following the June 4 event. In addition to its active part in the above-mentioned developments, Singapore was also seen to be helpful and useful in other aspects. This was mainly a result of Lee Kuan Yew's propensity to lecture other countries on how to deal with China by using his intimate knowledge of Chinese affairs, and the political system and culture peculiar to Singapore as a Chinese state.

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17 Wu-Shan Lim, op.cit., pp23-24.

18 BT, October 22, 1990, p1.

19 Jiji Press Newswire, Bandar Seri Begawan, July 6, 1989.

20 SCMP, July 25, 1991, p11.

First, in order to minimize the negative effects of the June 4 event on foreign business confidence, the Chinese government reassured the outside world that the reform process and open-door policy would not be reversed. As if to assist China's confidence-building task, Lee Kuan Yew repeatedly maintained to the international community that, despite its short-term political problems, China's modernisation program would surely continue and should be supported by the rest of the world. He stressed that other countries should not be too emotional about current political problems in China, and should instead look at China from a long-term perspective.[21]

Second, the June 4 suppression gave an overnight impetus to the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and strengthened the local struggle for establishment of a representative administration through direct elections. In the eyes of the beleaguered leaders in Beijing, this only indicated the increased possibility of the colony being used by the West as a base to subvert the communist system in China.[22] To their delight, Lee Kuan Yew went out of his way to lecture the people of Hong Hong to take account of realities and abandon what he called the orthodox idea of having direct elections and building up a representative government. According to him, the only way for Hong Kong to survive both before and after 1997 was to strengthen Hong Kong's economic usefulness to China, without making political trouble for China by asking for a one-

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21 RR, July 8, 1989, p3.

22 RR, July 17, 1989, p1.

person-one-vote system.[23] He also warned Hong Kong-based members of the Western press not to crusade for their own vision of democracy in Hong Kong and, indirectly, in China.[24] These remarks perfectly represented Beijing's basic political demands on Hong Kong in its transitional period. Given his enormous influence in the overseas Chinese community, and his reputation as the architect of a successful economic tiger, Lee's lecturing at this time in Hong Kong's history was appreciated in Beijing.

Third, the Chinese government found in Singapore's development experience some factors useful to its own political propaganda aimed at justifying tightened political and cultural control. The Chinese government was convinced by the June 4 event that economic reform required a stable social and political environment free from challenges to the legitimacy of the current political system. Consequently, a campaign was launched to convince the people that "stability should prevail over everything else" if they wanted to see their country prosperous and strong. To assist this campaign, the Chinese media increased their reports about how social and political stability had been prerequisites for economic miracles in other Asian societies, and selected the "Singapore model" as the best to "educate" the people of China, who had admired Singapore's economic success as a Chinese state and wished to know the key to it. The People's Daily argued that the Singaporean Chinese could not have achieved economic success without political

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[23] SCMP, November 2, 1990, p23. The Daily Telegraph (hereafter DT), October 16, 1990, p10. Lee Kuan Yew on China and Hongkong after Tiananmen, pp19-24, pp48-50, pp76-77, pp95-96, pp147-148.

[24] Reuter, Hong Kong, October 15, 1990.

and social stability, and quoted Lee Kuan Yew as emphasising that political openness should not become the precondition for economic reform, but instead pointing out that the fundamental prerequisite for economic reform should be social and political stability, otherwise a country would have insufficient time to develop and consolidate economic reform.[25]

Believing that a long-term catalyst of the student movement was "bourgeois liberalisation" or so-called "spiritual pollution" (defined in Beijing as unhealthy Western cultures and ideologies), the Chinese government also launched a campaign to promote Chinese culture and traditions, aiming to contain Western cultural and ideological influence which had been spreading throughout China's coastal provinces and among Chinese youth, adding to existing challenges to the legitimacy of the ruling political doctrines. For the purpose of this campaign, the Chinese government also made use of the "Singapore model". Thus the people, the youth in particular, were told that an important lesson taught by Singapore's economic success was that in the process of economic development, it was essential that Chinese traditions and culture be maintained and promoted and Western influences severely limited. Lee Kuan Yew, in the People's Daily, stressed that the Chinese culture was a strong factor contributing to Singapore's success and urged young people to value the cultural heritage of being willing to sacrifice for their society.[26]

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[25] RR, September 24, 1991, p7.

[26] RR, February 20, 1991, p6. For Chinese reports of calls for promoting Chinese culture made by other leading political figures in Singapore, see RR, July 29, 1991, p7.

Clearly the Chinese government was deliberately telling only half the story when preaching the "Singapore model". In Singapore, political control and Chinese culture co-exist with a free market economy and a certain degree of parliamentary democracy. Thus the "Singapore model" in its full sense was a nightmare to the Chinese communist system rather than a useful propaganda tool. In 1987-88, some Chinese avant garde intellectuals suggested that given its culture and history, China needed a "neo-authoritarian" political system based on such examples as Singapore so that under an "enlightened dictator" like Lee Kuan Yew, China could gain rapid economic growth while retaining political stability and Chinese traditional values. This, however, was firmly rejected by the top Chinese leadership. It saw Lee Kuan Yew's political leadership, which allowed opposition parties to function legally and take part in open elections, as dangerously "enlightened" if applied to China, because it would threaten the communist dictatorship. It is not surprising that while upholding the so-called "Singapore model" after the June 4 event, the Chinese government has found it necessary to vehemently condemn advocation of "democratic socialism" - an ideology long said by Chinese theoreticians to characterise regimes like Lee Kuan Yew's. The "Singapore model" would be a convenient weapon against communist rule, should pro-democracy activists decide to use it.

China-ASEAN Human Rights Priorities

Since July 1991 an apparently similar language has emerged between China and ASEAN about human rights including its content and the way it is promoted by Western nations internationally. To

understand why China has chosen to make common cause with ASEAN against Western pressure on human rights, one needs to first follow this development, particularly the background against which China's human rights theory has been formulated.

As a counter-measure to Western human rights campaigns, the Chinese government began to propagate its own human rights theory from September 1989. Its major points can be summarized as follows.[27]

1) Human rights, though having a universal character, are each country's domestic affair, involving national sovereignty which is the precondition for human rights protection. Thus international application of human rights should be based on friendly cooperation and consultation and not violate the individual country's sovereignty. Western countries, whose own human rights problems are far from being solved, should not use the human

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27 This summary is based on RR, September 24, 1989, p1; RR, January 19, 1990, p7; RR, November 2, 1991, p1, p4; Human Rights in China (published by Information Office of the State Council of The People's Republic of China, November 1991, Beijing, China), especially, p1, pp7-8; "China's View on the Final Document - a statement made by Ambassador Jin Yongjian, head of the Chinese delegation, at the Fourth Session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights, April 21, 1993", Beijing Review (hereafter BR), May 31-June 6, 1993, pp8-9; "Asia's Major Human Rights Concerns"(excerpts from a speech made by Ambassador Jin Yongjian, head of the Chinese delegation at the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference on Human Rights in Bangkok on March 30, 1993), BR, April 19-25, pp10-11; and "Proposals for Human Rights Protection and Promotion"(speech by Vice-Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu, head of the Chinese delegation to the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, on June 15), BR, June 28-July 4, pp8-11.

rights issue to interfere in the developing countries' internal affairs. Otherwise it is disguised power politics.

2) Human rights issues should not become a monopoly of the West. Different countries have different criteria of human rights in terms of theory and practice. This is because of differences from one country to another in history, cultural traditions and the level of economic development. When judging a particular country's human rights situation, one should not ignore its specific national context by narrowly using one model or criterion. On the issue of human rights, Western countries should not, as they have always done, impose their own cultural values on the developing countries.

3) While the Western countries stress individual political rights and civil rights, the developing countries including China focus on economic, social and cultural rights and rights to subsistence and development, without which political rights would be meaningless and without foundation. Certain limits on political freedom are necessary for the sake of economic development and prosperity. It is also important to China and other developing countries that emphasis should be laid on people's collective rights, and that the democratic rights of the individual should not be at the expense of stability and peace of the society as a whole.

4) Economic relations should not become a means for imposing political pressure and interfering in other countries' internal affairs. It is economic hegemonism to impose certain economic systems and development models on the developing countries, interfere in their

economic policies and link economic cooperation to the human rights issue.

The major weapons in China's theory to defend its human rights record are cultural relativism and China's status as a developing country in dire need of further economic development. However, human rights abuses in China occur fundamentally because individual freedoms are subordinated to the interests of the Communist Party dictatorship rather than the government's considerations of Chinese economic, social and cultural conditions. The sovereignty argument is put forward as an ultimate argument in order to conceal these abuses. China's human rights theory is designed to protect the prevailing communist political structure rather than addressing the issue of human rights. This, however, does not mean that the theory does not reflect China's concerns as a developing country with its own unique Asian culture.

The very concept of human rights, particularly the political pluralism it represents, is anathema to communism. Should human rights be promoted in earnest in a communist country, the result would be the erosion and collapse of the ruling political system. China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping pointed out, "If we lose the battle on the human rights front, everything will be meaningless to us. Therefore the human rights issue, in substance, is the crux of the struggle between the world's two social systems."[28] Both

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28 "CPC Takes Offensive on Human Rights Issue", Tang Tai (Modern Times, Hong Kong), July 15, 1992, pp39-41, translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: China (hereafter FBIS/DR/C), July 22, 1992, p16.

before and after the June 4 event, the Chinese government has upheld the view that the Western crusade for human rights in China is nothing but a continuation of the classical war between communism and capitalism, reflecting efforts by international imperialist forces headed by the USA to use human rights as a weapon to cause the disintegration of the Chinese communist system. Chinese communists have always claimed that ever since the birth of the first communist state with the Russian October Revolution in 1917, there has been the question of which side would win in the confrontation between the old (capitalist) and new (communist) systems. They have argued that in its crusade against the new system, the old system has been scheming all along to strangle the new system by using various weapons. After repeatedly failing to eliminate the new system by military force, the old system has started to use a more effective and dangerous political weapon, namely the strategy of "peaceful evolution". This strategy aims at instigating the so-called pro-democracy movement in a communist country by using such soft instruments as cultural exchanges and economic relations to disseminate bourgeois ideas of human rights, private ownership, free markets and parliamentary democracy in that country, particularly amongst the younger generation. According to Chinese communist theorists, by using this vicious political weapon, the old system seeks to erode and ultimately overthrow the communist system from within.[29] In his

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29 Fong Tejun, Zhang Xinxu, eds., Shijie zhengzhi jingji yu guojiguanxi xuexi shouce (Handbook of world politics and economics and international relations) (People's University Press, Beijing, October 1989), pp199-200. For an authoritative review of "peaceful evolution" against the background of the June 4 event, see RR, August 23, 1991, p3.

speech in July 1991 at the 70th anniversary conference marking the CCP birthday, the CCP Secretary General Jian Zemin made it clear that the most important lesson to be learnt from the June 4 "riot" and subsequent Western condemnations was that for decades, the international imperialists in collusion with the domestic reactionary elements in China had not for one day slackened their conspiratorial efforts to overthrow the Chinese communist system. He added that these anti-communist forces had believed more and more in the effectiveness of waging a war against the Chinese communist system without using guns.[30]

However, although China's concern with the "peaceful evolution" strategy has remained consistent, its approach to human rights has changed fundamentally in the post-Tiananmen era in order to better cope with that strategy. Prior to the June 4 event, China did not publicly recognise the concept of human rights. The official Chinese line on human rights - which had not quite been formulated as a theory - was that it represented a Western bourgeois concept not applicable to the Chinese situation. Advocation of human rights was censured in Chinese domestic politics, and people who did so were jailed. China also brooked no international intervention in its problems defined in the West as human rights violations. As well, China paid little attention to the international discussions over human rights, such as those on the attitudinal differences on human rights between the developed and developing countries. This is not to deny that a tentative change might have been brewing from around 1988, when Western pressure on China about human rights

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[30] RR, August 16, 1991, p1.

abuses was already mounting with East-West detente following the signing of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in late 1987 and the concomitant decline of China's prestigious role in superpower relations. In September 1988, the Chinese Foreign Minister paid warm tribute to the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" at the 43rd session of the UN General Assembly, and the Chinese government arranged a week long celebration of the Declaration anniversary in Beijing.[31] A commentary on human rights was published in Studies of International Issues, an authoritative Chinese journal on that subject run by the Foreign Ministry, in January 1989. Although it focused on the relatively safe topic of international human rights activities without referring to China, the significance of the commentary was that, unlike most of other officially approved writings on human rights before the June 4 event, it treated human rights as a concept with a certain degree of universal applicability.[32]

In its relations with West, the Chinese government had easily got away with its hard line on, and actual suppression of, human rights. During the 1950s-60s, the US' China policy stressed open hostility and military threat, and human rights was not on its agenda. Since the early 1970s the US and other Western nations needed China as a strategic partner in East-West confrontation. Under the circumstances, Western nations generally took a lukewarm attitude

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31 Human Rights in China, p80.

32 Liang Jin, "Guoji renquan huodong de fazhan he cunzai zhengyi de wenti (Development of and controversial issues in the international human rights activities)", Guoji Wenti Yanjiu (Studies of International Issues, Beijing, hereafter GWY), No. 1, 1989, pp6-7.

towards human rights violations in China, and did not regard it as a priority to foster pro-democracy movements in China by disseminating "bourgeois" theories of human rights. Human rights abuses in Tibet were occasionally criticised and it was charged that some Chinese export goods were produced by prisoners under inhumane conditions. This caused only a minor nuisance to the Chinese government. Just two months before the June 4 event, China published its hitherto most authoritative book on international relations, Fundamental Issues in Modern World Politics and Economics, edited by Huan Xian, one of the architects of China's foreign policy. Significantly, when the book came to address the fundamental issues faced by communist countries including China since the Second World War, "peaceful evolution" was not even mentioned.[33]

The domestic and international situation after the June 4 event has forced the Chinese government to face the issue of human rights squarely. Domestically, because of the June 4 suppression and the impact of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Chinese communist regime has lost its original legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people. Under these new conditions, the regime has had to develop a new tactic in justifying its own legitimacy while adopting more tightened political controls to suppress "counter-revolutionary" forces. Internationally, as a

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33 Yu Sui, "Dangdai shehuizhuyi shijian he guoji gongyun (Modern socialist practice and international communist movement)", in Huan Xian, ed., Dangdai shijie zhengzhi jingji jiben wenti (Fundamental issues in modern world politics and economics) (World Knowledge Press, Beijing, April 1989), pp198-238.

result of the June 4 crack-down, the collapse of communism and the Western victory over Iraq in the Gulf, Western pressure on China regarding its human rights violations has increasingly become a systemic and long-term element in China's foreign relations which will hardly diminish along with the waning of the international anger over the June 4 suppression. A Chinese commentator pointed out that with the end of Cold War, the United States has cast away its old Asia policy which smacked overwhelmingly of the balance of power politics and adopted a new policy, a major pillar of which is to push the Asian democratization process.[34] An immediate problem for China is that without being seen to improve its human rights record, it will continue to find it difficult to attract Western economic assistance. For example, the Clinton administration has made the annual renewal of China's Most Favoured Nation trade status conditional on the improvement of China's human rights record. With the progressive collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the CCP has perceived itself as having become the major target of the strategy of "peaceful evolution".

It is doubtful that the US and other Western countries really attempt to overthrow the Chinese communist rule through their human rights campaign. As Peter Van Ness has argued,

> . . . following the end of the Cold War, the old West vs. East ideological issues are no longer paramount for Western

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34 Guo Xian Gang, "Meiguo dui Yatai zhanlue de tiaozheng (Readjustment of America's Asia policy)", GWY, No. 2, 1992, p43. See also Chen Qimao, "Guanyu zai Yatai diqu jianli zhengzhi xin zhixu de tansuo (Establishing new political order in the Asia-Pacific region)", GWY, No. 1, 1992, p6.

leaders. For most of them, economic competitiveness has become their foremost preoccupation. Rather than conspiring to subvert China by means of a struggle for the "hearts and minds" of the Chinese people, most Western leaders want to encourage political stability in order to enhance their opportunities to sell export products to that market of 1 billion Chinese consumers.[35]

In fact the CCP's paranoia about US intentions has subsided somewhat as a consequence of Secretary of State James Baker's reassurances to Chinese leaders during his November 1991 visit to Beijing and the growing appreciation in China of the limits on US power created by chronic US domestic problems.[36] The majority view among Chinese specialists since 1992 is that, although it would like to see China peacefully evolve into a capitalist country, the US has neither the capability nor the intention to subvert China's current government. Moreover, the US is reluctant to see internal turmoil develop in China, which would disturb the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and would be detrimental to the interests of the US itself and China's neighbouring countries.[37] However, all this has brought little comfort to the CCP in terms of what is at stake for it on the issue of human rights. Even if in raising their demands to improve the human rights situation in

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35 Peter Van Ness, "China And The World: The Transnational Challenge", Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly (Hong Kong), Autumn Volume, Nov. 15, 1992, p140.

36 Bonnie S. Glaser, "China's Security Perceptions: Interests and Ambitions", AS, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, March 1993, p260.

37 Qimao Chen, "New Approaches In China's Foreign Policy: The Post-Cold War Era", AS, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, March 1993, p240.

China, Western nations are motivated by a genuine concern about China's human rights issue and do not mean to subvert the Chinese communism through a "peaceful evolution" conspiracy, the result would still be the same for the CCP should these demands be accepted. In a similar vein, whether or not the Chinese people's demand for a greater respect for human rights are instigated by "international imperialists", the result would also be the same if their demands are satisfied. As previously pointed out, if human rights were promoted in real earnest in a communist country, the result would be the erosion and collapse of the ruling political system itself. So far as the CCP is concerned, while a peaceful evolution "conspiracy" may have turned out to be an exaggerated imagination, the concept of "peaceful evolution" is not, if it refers to an objective development which will follow "if we lose the battle on the human rights front". It is significant that while the People's Republic has finally reached the point at which it no longer faces major threats to its national security, never before has the security of communist rule in China been more under threat which, however, does not arise from any foreign armies amassed around China's borders as there have been so many times before.[38]

Under the circumstances obtaining with the June 4 suppression and the beginning of the post-Cold War era, the Chinese government has seen the disadvantage of dodging the issue of human rights and being pushed by the situation as a result. It has instead decided to take the initiative and take the offensive as a means of defence. Thus it has recognised human rights as a legitimate international

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38 Peter Van Ness, "China And The World", p137.

concern and as an acceptable term of reference for Chinese politics, rather than continuing to insist that China does not have human rights problems. It has also declared that the Chinese human rights situation may be discussed both at home and abroad. For example, it had received two Australian Human Rights Delegations by November 1992. The Chinese government has even allowed the establishment of a "non-governmental" human rights organisation, "The Chinese Society for the Study of Human Rights", headed by the former Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Youth League. In addition, and most significantly, the Chinese government has drawn up an elaborate human rights theory of its own. As illustrated above, the line of argumentation in this theory is based on cultural relativism and China's status as a developing country. It portrays China's human rights situation as one of a developing country with its own unique culture and identifies China as only one of those developing countries facing the Western nations' unfair treatment on the issue of human rights. China's image, as created in the theory, is far from one of a communist country confronting the bourgeois West in a life-and-death ideological battle.

As far as China is concerned, it is indeed a clever move to base its human rights theory on its status as a developing country with its own unique culture. The Chinese communist regime is aware that it would be only further isolated should it fight "peaceful evolution" by resorting to traditional communist doctrines,[39] and/or by

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39 In the process of formulating Chinese official theory of human rights, traditional communist doctrines about human rights were proposed, but did not prevail. See Guangming Ribao (Enlightenment Daily, hereafter GR), November 17, 1989.

forging outright ideological alliance(s) with whatever is left of the communist world to confront the "old system" head-on. Ideological isolation could reinforce China's isolation in international relations caused by the end of its critical role in superpower relations. The regime has instead seen the wisdom of turning an otherwise holy war between the two social systems into part of the open-ended wrangling between the developing and developed countries over human rights. By so doing, it intends to strengthen its position in its encounters with the West and distract the Chinese people's attention away from the existing political system. Indeed, since early 1992 the Chinese government has behaved as if it is a leading spokesman for the whole developing world on the issue of human rights, sparing no energy in criticising Western nations' unfair policies towards human rights issues in the developing countries.[40]

China's realism in its anti-"peaceful evolution" strategy has determined that in Southeast Asia, China would rather enthusiastically associate itself with capitalist ASEAN on the issue of human rights, as to be seen in the following section, than ally itself with the communist regime in Vietnam to put up a last-ditch ideological fight against "international imperialists". With the end of the Cold War, Vietnam has also had to fight "peaceful evolution". Calling China's attention to their ideological commonality, Vietnam had suggested that bilateral relations be improved quickly on this

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40 See the Chinese representatives' speeches at international forums on human rights, as reported in RR, February 7, 1992, p7. See also RR, February 3, 1992, p7; and RR, June 5, 1992, p5.

basis.[41] Indeed, some of Vietnam's leaders had even counted on this commonality to give Vietnam some respite in the Spratly dispute.[42] However, the Chinese communist regime has neither publicly emphasised this commonality, nor tried to forge an ideological partnership with its former comrade-cum-brother, with whom China formed an alliance "as close as lips and teeth" - in Mao's words - in fighting the American imperialists, to counter "peaceful evolution". In fact, the process of normalisation of Sino-Vietnam relations started to gain strong momentum from as late as the end of 1991. During the negotiations on normalisation, China repeatedly demanded that Vietnam become "reasonable" in its attitudes towards the Cambodian and Spratly issues. Michael Yahuda observed that when Vietnamese Party and State leaders Do Muoi and Vo Van Kiet visited China in November 1991, the Vietnamese media sought to identify common ground with China on the basis of resistance to "peaceful evolution". However, the Chinese side studiously refrained from mentioning the issue in public. The tone of the Chinese media on the visit was strictly business-like, with the communique on restoring relations describing the atmosphere of their talks as no more than "friendly and candid".[43] At least until the end of 1992, among all the regional countries having sovereignty claims over the Spratlys, it was Vietnam, rather than Malaysia and the Philippines, which suffered most under China's assertive Spratly policy, as described in Chapter Four.

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41 Zhu Zhenming, "Yuenan duiwai zhengce de tiaozhen he duiwai guanxi de bianhua (Readjustment of Vietnam's foreign policy and changes of Vietnam's foreign relations)", DY, No. 1, 1991, p29, p31.

42 Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", FEER, 13 August 1992, p17.

43 Michael Yahuda, "China: Will It Strengthen or Weaken the Region?" p38.

There is a serious risk for the CCP in its human rights theory. Previously, the CCP claimed that its one-party dictatorship, or the system of "socialist democratic centralism", represented the ultimately best form of democracy for the people, and was far superior to Western democracy. Thus there was absolutely no need to change "downward". For example, when the Carter administration embarked on a human rights foreign policy, Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua claimed at a gathering of senior Chinese diplomats in 1977 that China's socialist system granted maximum democratic rights to over ninety percent of the populace while necessarily denying a handful of class enemies political freedom, whereas Western governments, representing the interests of the bourgeoisie, could not possibly vest rights in the people.[44] However, the CCP's new human rights theory has dangerously broadened the scope of theoretical manoeuvrability for pro-democracy activists both at home and in the West. They can now argue, for example, that Chinese culture is not incompatible with liberal democracy, as seen in Taiwan's political democratisation, that current human rights policy in China does not represent a good balance between international standards and Chinese realities, and even that universal human rights standards should not be compromised by China's cultural and economic conditions. This reminds one of the process of democratization of Taiwanese politics. When the KMT imposed its one-party dictatorship in Taiwan, it claimed that this was compelled by certain necessities, especially

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44 "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation", IS, Vol. XIV, No. 2, February 1978, pp81-82.

that of dealing with the communist threat from China. Thus KMT itself laid a theoretical foundation for future bargaining from pro-democracy forces both within and outside KMT. The problem for the CCP is that it has no better option.

So far as ASEAN is concerned, since early 1991 human rights has become a more irritating issue in its relations with the West. During the Cold War, wider political and strategic interests shaped the objectives of Western diplomacy in Southeast Asia. The governments of the ASEAN countries aligned themselves squarely with, or at least supported, the USA against the Soviet expansion in the region. The problem between ASEAN and the West on the issue of human rights was manifested largely in occasional criticisms made by the US Congress and State Department of some aspects of the authoritarian politics of some ASEAN members, such as the arbitrary arrest and detention of political opponents in Marcos' Philippines and Indonesia. A telling example of the West's lukewarm attitude towards human rights abuses committed by an ASEAN country was its indifference towards the massacres of alleged Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members following the abortive September 30 coup of 1965 in Indonesia. Another example was Australia's remarkably ambiguous approach toward the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1976, which violated the principle of self-determination of the people of East Timor and saw indiscriminate violations of human rights committed by the occupying Indonesian armed forces.[45]

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45 Ian Russell, "Australia's Human Rights Policy: From Evatt to Evans", in Ian Russell, Peter Van Ness, Beng-Huat Chua, eds., Australia's Human Rights

With the end of the Cold War, the ASEAN countries have borne the brunt of Western assertiveness on the issue of human rights. As one Malaysian scholar has pointed out, with the triumph of liberal democracy over communism and the victory of Western forces against Iraq in the Gulf, Western nations have been convinced even more of the superiority and morality of their values and systems, and have now sought to more aggressively assert them over the rest of the world.[46] Western nations have increased their criticism of human rights situations in the ASEAN countries and attempted to conditionalise their economic assistance to observance of human rights. For example, Indonesia has been condemned by Western nations for human rights violations in East Timor. In response to the Dili killings in November 1991, the US Congress in October 1992 forced suspension of US aid to Indonesia for military education and training, the Netherlands cut its economic aid to Indonesia, and Portugal vetoed a new ASEAN-EC economic cooperation agreement. In March 1993, the Clinton administration joined Portugal in a UN Human Rights Commission resolution condemning Indonesia's human rights violations in East Timor. The USA has also started to consider whether Indonesia, accused by Western critics of violating

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Diplomacy (Department of International Relations, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1992), pp24-25.

46 Mohamed Jawhar, "Southeast Asia in the nineties: Challenges and Response", paper submitted to the Asian Peace Research Association Conference 1992 on Peace and Security in the Asia Pacific Region: post cold war problems and prospects (University of Canterbury: Christchurch, New Zealand, January 31 1991 - February 4, 1992), pp10-12.

workers' rights, should be deprived of preferential tariff treatment under the US generalised scheme of preferences.[47]

Amongst the ASEAN countries, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore feel most vulnerable to the Western human rights crusade. Generally, into the 1990s, human rights violations - by Western standards - in these three countries are more serious than in the Philippines and Thailand, with Indonesia representing the worst case of human rights abuses in non-communist East Asia. In Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, severe restrictions on individual political freedoms are a function of the ruling doctrines, and the governments themselves are the major violators of basic human rights. However, in the Philippines and Thailand, particularly in the former, human rights violations are not justified by the governing doctrines per se and in most cases are not committed by governments. Human rights have strong constituencies and various non-governmental human rights organisations are allowed to function legally in the two countries. Thus while the short-lived Thai junta was toppled immediately after it brutally suppressed student protesters in 1992, the Suharto regime has easily got away with the Dili massacre.

Clearly, in the post-Cold War era, the issue of human rights has become one that Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore cannot avoid. There has emerged an urgent need for them to articulate their policy approaches and responses to human rights. Without a pro-

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47 Susumu Awanohara, "Hard Labour", FEER, 13 May 1993, p13.

active policy, they will be defendants in a new world order conceived and led by the Western countries.

Resentment against Western human rights assertiveness by the three ASEAN countries was clearly expressed at the Twenty-fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and the PMM in its aftermath in Kuala Lumpur in July 1991. At these meetings, officials from these countries for the first time systematically and concertedly attacked the Western approach to the issue of human rights in developing countries. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir turned out to be the most outspoken in attacking the West. In his opening speech, he said that the West should not preach to the East about human rights, that nobody had the monopoly of wisdom to determine what was right and proper for all countries and peoples, and that the norms and precepts for the observance of human rights varied from society to society and from one period to another within the same society.[48] He added that in the developing countries, individual human rights should be balanced with the level of national economic development, otherwise social stability and economic growth would be damaged.[49]

A significant development at the AMM was that an ASEAN consensus on human rights was formulated. This was seen in the meeting's joint communique, which stated:

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48 The Nation, July 21, 1991, pA3.

49 RR, January 12, 1992, p1.

> The Foreign Ministers exchanged views on the issue of human rights and noted with concern its tendentious application in inter-state relations. They agreed that while human rights is universal in character, implementation in the national context should remain within the competence and responsibility of each country, having regard for the complex variety of economic, social and cultural realities. They emphasised that the international application of human rights cannot be narrow and selective nor should it violate the sovereignty of nations. . . . The Ministers noted with concern the increasing tendencies to link the issues of environmental protection and human rights to development and commercial cooperation. They stressed that these issues should not be used as conditionality for aid and development financing.[50]

This consensus on the human rights issue, determined largely by the views of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, was formulated at the insistence of the three countries. The Philippines and Thailand, though not feeling so strongly about the issue, went along with their ASEAN partners with ASEAN's cohesion in mind. This was reminiscent of the way the ASEAN countries reached their consensus on the Cambodian issue, which was determined by the policy of the frontline state Thailand.

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[50] Joint Communique of the Twenty-fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 19-20 July 1991, p7, pp23-24.

At the PMM in 1991, ASEAN's Western dialogue partners called for a tougher stance against Myanmar and urged its military junta to transfer power to the elected government because of the junta's violations of human rights and its refusal to acknowledge the people's choice of government elected in 1990. However, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers claimed that such action would be an inappropriate interference in Myanmar's internal affairs. They advocated a policy of "constructive engagement" with Myanmar.[51]

Since the AMM and PMM in July 1991, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have continued to make enunciations and pronouncements critical of the West on the issue of human rights. For example, at the ASEAN Summit in January 1992, Mahathir reiterated that on the issue of democracy, one could not see the wood for the trees, and that democracy was not a panacea for the developing countries.[52] Lee Kuan Yew put it more bluntly, claiming that, compared with American-style individualism, the value concept which put community interests above individual interests was undoubtedly more suitable to the Asian countries.[53] In February 1992, on receiving the credentials of the new Ambassador from the Netherlands, which had cut aid to Indonesia after the Dili event, Indonesian President Suharto strongly proclaimed that there was not a single nation obliged to apply values of life which were incompatible with its own fundamental values, and that if they were imposed it would be equal to negating human rights itself and

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51 Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter (Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand), August, 1991, p13.

52 RR, January 29, 1992, p7.

53 RR, June 5, 1992, p5.

the fundamental rights of a sovereign state.[54] During the racial riots in Los Angeles in April-May 1992 after the acquittal of four police officers charged with using excessive force in a video-taped brutal beating of a black motorist, the government-controlled media in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, as if to parrot the People's Daily, were quick to point out that the US itself was, after all, a country where human rights abuses were rampant and thus was in no position to lecture other countries on human rights.[55] In the joint communique issued at the Twenty-fifth AMM in July 1992, the ASEAN countries reaffirmed the consensus on human rights reached in the last AMM.[56] At the following PMM, the ASEAN countries again rejected the calls by their Western dialogue partners to bring pressure to bear on Myanmar for its human rights abuses.[57] The most significant event was Suharto's opening speech at the Tenth Non-aligned Movement Summit held in Jakarta on September 1, 1992. As the new Chairman of the Movement, he denounced Western attempts to exploit human rights by linking them to economic aid. He made it clear that the rights of individuals had to be balanced with the rights of the community. "Such a balance is critical", he pointed out, "for its absence can lead to a denial of the rights of the society as a whole and can lead to instability and anarchy".[58] At the Asian Preparatory Meeting for the Second World Conference on Human Rights from March 29 to 2 April 1993 in

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54 The Australian, February 14, 1992.

55 See, for example, RR, May 4, 1992, p6; and RR, May 6, 1992, p6.

56 Joint Communique of the Twenty-fifth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Manila, 21-22 July 1992, p6.

57 The Australian, July 23, 1992, p8. The Australian, July 27, 1992, p7.

58 The Australian, September 2, 1992, p7.

Bangkok, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore strongly advocated an approach to the concept of human rights that would take into account Asia's cultural and social specificities, and strike a symmetry between respect for the fundamental freedom of individuals and the individual's responsibilities to society. They stressed that they would aim to ensure a right to development for their people as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and that they emphasised economic, social and cultural rights over civil and political rights because progress in the former would facilitate the growing trend towards political democracy.[59] These views were also expressed at the Second World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna on 14-25 June 1993.[60] At the 26th AMM in July 1993, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers repeated their consensus on human rights reached in the last two AMMs, and at the following PMM they once again declined to make any comment on the human rights abuses in Myanmar.[61]

It appears that on the issue of human rights, capitalist Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore - where opposition parties and open elections have, at least in appearance, become part of the political systems - have in principle spoken with a language apparently similar to that of communist China, where political pluralism

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59 Summary based on Reuter reports from Bangkok at these dates.

60 For the three countries' views at Vienna, see Sydney Morning Herald, June 18, 93, p9; The Canberra Times (hereafter CT), June 21, 1993, p14; The Australian, June 16, 1993, p9; The Australian, June 21, 1993, p10; and New Straits Times (hereafter NST), June 22, 1993, p4, p14.

61 The Australian, July 26, 1993, p5.

remains absolutely taboo. However, there exists a lowest common denominator on this issue between China and Malaysia/Indonesia/Singapore: they are all Asian developing countries confronting the same Western standard. The perceptions of Malaysia/Indonesia/Singapore, while attempting to serve the partisan interests of the ruling political regimes - after all, when he led the People's Action Party opposition from 1955 to 1959 and when Singapore was part of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965, Lee Kuan Yew was happy to have the freedom of vehemently attacking the ruling parties, also reflect some concerns of these countries as developing countries with Asian cultures. China's human rights theory, though developed as a way of resisting "peaceful evolution", also reflects some of China's concerns as an Asian developing country.

As victims of Western imperialism and colonialism in the past, both China and Malaysia/Indonesia/Singapore have borne resentment against a renewal of Western political domination through a human rights crusade, and have seen blatant hypocrisy in former conquerors turning sanctimonious critics. Until 1945 China was repeatedly invaded and bullied by the Western nations which, through force, gained decision-making powers about some critical areas of Chinese domestic affairs. These three ASEAN countries, having achieved their independence from Western colonial control less than half a century ago, are still fighting to build viable nations within state boundaries determined more by previous Western spheres of influence rather than shared historical traditions or ethnic homogeneity. It is understandable that for these countries

and China, *their* sovereignty and non-interference in *their* internal affairs are crucial principles to be upheld by *other* countries.

The governments of both China and Malaysia/Indonesia/Singapore have felt that the human rights preaching of the West reflects a strong sense of self-righteousness and a self-serving philosophy. Lee Kuan Yew said, "The history of democracy in developed countries themselves shows it to be a slow, almost glacial process. . . . what the UK and US and France took 200 years to evolve, these new countries were expected to make work upon independence".[62] What the US itself did in some developing countries during the heyday of the Cold War - such as CIA's activities in Indonesia (1965), Chile (1973), Cuba (early 1960s), and South Vietnam (early 1970s) - was anything but a respect for human rights or even human lives. When the US perceived that the whole Western civilization and security was at stake, it conveniently justified the means with ends. In 1965, CIA provided long list of names of communist suspects to the newly arising Suharto regime, even though it was more than clear that these people would be beheaded, yet today the US government is criticising the same old man in Jakarta for not respecting human rights. In 1973, CIA got involved in overthrowing the popularly elected Salvador Allende government in Chilli, yet the US is now deploring the sad fact that Chinese people do not even have the freedom of electing their own government. So far the US government has not even seen the need to come to terms with or "explain away" its policies during those years. The US treats the human rights issue in international

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62 The Australian, April 24-25, 1993, p20.

relations as if the history of world politics starts with the end of the Cold War.

As carriers of Asian authoritarian political cultures, the governments of China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore find it difficult to recognise the legitimacy of Western-style human rights. Instead, they believe that social harmony and control should prevail over individual political freedom. They are afraid that Western-style individualism can translate into an absence of familial and social responsibilities, thus diminishing national identity and cultural uniqueness. China has led the non-Western countries in terms of having to constantly face the dilemma of modernisation versus Westernisation, past versus present, East versus West. Harbouring an ethnocentric cultural pride and at the same time recognising the nation's relative backwardness in terms of economic and technological development, successive regimes have searched for an acceptable synthesis of the Chinese past and Western present ever since the Opium War in the 1840s.

The governments of both China and Malaysia/Indonesia/Singapore have considered economic prosperity as the first priority in the task of nation-building and as the major means of maintaining their legitimacy. From their perspective, social and political stability, rather than individual political rights, are a prerequisite for economic growth and effective implementation of economic policies. They have all experienced social instability and political chaos in the past. They may see the widespread violence and crime in major US cities as a sign that the Western political systems have gone too far in protecting self-serving individualism. Being racially fragile

polities, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore may have felt particularly strongly that certain restrictions on individual freedom are essential for the sake of forging a cohesive, integrated and prosperous nation.

The Chinese government has been greatly encouraged by the apparent similarity between itself and ASEAN on the issue of human rights. Compared with the policies of the ASEAN countries in direct relation to the June 4 event, this similarity is seen by China as a more substantive boost to its own position on this issue. Being aware of its own weakness on the issue, the Chinese government has regarded human rights assertions from the ASEAN circles as having objectively boosted China's own theory in the eyes of the Western nations. Mahathir, Lee Kuan Yew and Suharto are all well-respected and weighty figures in international relations as leading spokesmen for the developing world. With such leaders actively preaching an "Asian version" of human rights in international forums, Chinese leaders could rest assured. China has also been served well by the prestige competition between Mahathir and Suharto in speaking for the developing world on issues including, among other things, human rights. China has lost no time in adroitly playing up this similarity, not least by giving swift and wide publicity to ASEAN's human rights consensus and statements by leaders of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.[63] By linking its

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63 This can be seen in China's wide and quick publication of ASEAN's assertions on human rights in RR, July 20, 1991, p20; Ding Baozhong, Qi Deliang, "Dongmeng guojia zhili fazhang yu hezuo (The ASEAN countries striving to enhance economic development and cooperation)", LW, No.31, August 5, 1991, p43; RR, January 12, 1992, p1; RR, January 29, 1992, p7; RR,

own view to those of ASEAN, a group of successful developing countries, the Chinese government hopes to further strengthen its own position on the issue of human rights both at home and abroad.

China has indeed been conceptually grouped together with Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore by the Western media, some leading international human rights non-governmental organisations and occasionally even Western governments as developing countries having the same views on human rights. For example, this was the case with some reports by Asia Watch and Amnesty International.[64] At the Vienna conference, the US delegates ranked China, Indonesia and Singapore among the "worst" group and placed Malaysia in the "unhelpful" category.[65] They accused Malaysia, China and Singapore of obstructing the progress of the conference.[66] The Western media reported that the arguments advanced by China at Vienna attracted support from the rapidly developing countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and several other Southeast Asian nations.[67] China is still isolated internationally on the human rights front, yet it is isolated with the right group. Given its political system, China should have been viewed as a group of its

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February 3, 1992, p7; RR, May 4, 1992, p6; RR, May 6, 1992, p6; RR, June 5, 1992, p5; and RR, September 2, 1992, p6.

64 See, for example, Sydney Jones, "Culture Clash in Bangkok", China Rights Forum (Human Rights in China, New York), Summer, 1993, p9; and Our World, Our Rights: An Amnesty International Briefing (an AI Australia pamphlet, non-dated, received in May 1993).

65 Susumu Awanohara and Michael Vatikiotis, and Shada Islam, "Vienna Showdown", FEER, 17 June 1993, p17.

66 NST, June 22, 1993, p4, p14.

67 CT, June 21, 1993, p14.

own, or been classified with North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam on the issue of human rights. However, with its timely change of tactics, China is now grouped with such economic tigers and potential tigers as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, thus achieving "splendid isolation".

China has again been particularly impressed with Singapore, whose leaders have not only made systematic assertions on human rights in general, but have also continued to admonish the West on how to deal "reasonably" with the human rights situation in China. The Singapore leaders, particularly Lee Kuan Yew, have spared no pains in warning the West against pushing China, through such means as economic sanctions, to adopt the Western model of democracy and human rights. They have emphasised that the historical and cultural pre-conditions for representative government do not exist in China, and that the habits and values of Chinese governance of over 4000 years can not be changed overnight by the Western nations' arm-twisting.[68] They have repeatedly argued that continuous and clumsy human rights campaigns against China would risk their giant neighbour's slide into disorder, and sharpen a xenophobic edge in its nationalism, with enormous consequences for regional countries including Singapore.[69] Lee Kuan Yew has even found time to personally advise Hong Kong's reform-minded

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68 For Lee's and other Singapore leaders' warnings, see Reuter, Singapore, August 10, 1991; Reuter, Singapore, April 13, 1992; The Australian, June 27-28, 1992, p23; The Australian, 23-24 January, 1993, p14; The Australian, March 26 1993, p13; and The Australian, April 24-25, 1993, p20.

69 The Australian, April 24-25, 1993, p20. JP, October 3, 1992, p1. CT, May 14, 1993, p6.

governor Chris Patten to reconcile the interests of Hong Kong and China.[70] Apart from its concern about implications of Western human rights campaign against China for regional security and legitimacy of Singapore's own political system in the eyes of the West, Singapore's active admonishment of the West also reflects its business interest in mainland China and Hong Kong. Having started to worry that its economic edge over neighbouring countries could be diminished by the rapid economic development in these countries, Singapore has now regarded its Chinese connection as a crucial element in its equation of national security and survival. Singapore has not only been most enthusiastic in the ASEAN region in promoting general economic and trade relations with China, but also actively moved to reproduce Singapore's economic miracle in several coastal spots of China, in the hope of significantly benefiting Singapore's economy in terms of exports of services and products. Such grand projects and general business relations depend on political stability and stable economic growth in China which, the Singaporean leadership believes, can be endangered by implementation of liberal democracy.

Cooperating with ASEAN on human rights

The Chinese government has not stopped at being pleased by ASEAN's "reasonable" policies in relation to the June 4 event and its criticism of the West with respect to human rights. It also believes that China and ASEAN should cooperate in resisting Western assertiveness on human rights in the post-Cold War world. It is also aware of the usefulness to its own domestic legitimacy of being seen

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70 Reuter, Singapore, July 7, 1992.

by the Chinese people to be working with ASEAN on this issue. ASEAN's policies towards China in relation to the June 4 event made it clear that ASEAN stood for the principle of non-interference in the human rights situation in other countries. ASEAN's encounters with the West on human rights and its systematic assertions on this issue since July 1991 have further convinced China that it is practical for China and ASEAN to collaborate in resisting Western human rights pressures. Such a collaboration is also necessary and timely to shore up China's regional influence, which has rapidly declined due to the progress in solving the Cambodian conflict and the regional concentration on economic diplomacy. Given its weak economic position in ASEAN compared with those of Japan, Taiwan and other major Western countries, China's influence in the region will be negative if it does not seize the opportunity created by ASEAN-West conflict on human rights to make a common cause with ASEAN, because in that case an assertive Spratly policy can be China's major diplomatic instrument in the region.

Since mid-1990 China has made increasingly vigorous efforts to collaborate with ASEAN on human rights. Two developments are most notable. First, in its foreign policy statements since late 1989, the Chinese government has claimed that the world situation is undergoing dramatic changes. The old world system has broken down, but the new one has not yet been established. The world is seen to be experiencing a new hegemonism and a new power politics which have brought complex influences to bear on

international relations.[71] A major concern of China embodied in its rhetoric is that an international regime with respect to human rights has been emerging in the West as part of the post-Cold War world order. A characteristic of this regime is that national sovereignty should not be an obstacle to international activity concerning human rights violations. As a counter-measure, China has launched its own campaign for the creation of what it has called the New International Order (NIO) whose core political principle is "non-interference with internal affairs" and whose core economic principle is "economic equality (no linkage between economic relations and human rights)".[72] China has taken a series of initiatives since mid-1990 to solicit the ASEAN countries' cooperation on the creation of NIO.[73] According to China, the ASEAN countries have agreed with the two core principles, and have also agreed to work with China in the creation of NIO.[74] Their responsiveness to China's call is probably a major reason for claims by commentators in China that NIO, while being difficult to establish globally, can be created in the Asia-Pacific region.[75]

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[71] RR, August 8, 1990, p1. RR, August 9, 1990, p6. RR, August 12, 1990, p1. RR, August 13, 1990, p6. RR, August 17, 1990, p1. RR, December 11, 1990, p6.

[72] RR, August 9, 1990, p6. RR, November 20, 1991, p6. For some significant debates on NIO among Chinese scholars and officials in Beijing, see RR, July 17, 1991, p7; RR, August 19, 1991, p7; RR, September 19, 1991, p7; and Du Gong and Ni Liyu, eds., Zhuanhuan zhong de shijie geju (World pattern in transformation) (World Knowledge Press, Beijing, 1992).

[73] RR, August 9, 1990, p6. RR, June 6, 1991. RR, September 23, 1991, p4. RR, January 11, 1992, p6. RR, January 15, 1992, p1.

[74] RR, November 20, 1991, p6. RR, January 15, 1992, p1.

[75] For such claims, see Chen Qimao, "guanyu zai Yatai diqu jianli zhengzhi xin zhixu de tansuo", pp3-5.

Second, China has, since July 1991, tried to reinforce its new-found similar language with ASEAN on the issue of human rights. For example, when President Yang Shangkun visited Malaysia in January 1992, he won Kuala Lumpur's support for China's stand on human rights. Yang and Mahathir made a joint statement that the rights of individuals should not violate the rights of the majority and destabilize the country, that the application of human rights should be balanced by taking into account each country's particular values, and that the two basic elements of human rights for the developing countries are rights of economic subsistence and development.[76] Yang warmly praised Mahathir's statements made at various international forums on human rights.[77] This consensus was reaffirmed by Mahathir and Li Peng during the former's visit to China in June 1993 which coincided with the opening of the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.[78] Like Yang, Li paid tribute to Mahathir's repeated theory.[79] The People's Daily joyfully proclaimed on its front page that Mahathir declared that "foreign forces always seek to impose their social systems and concepts of values upon us so as to disrupt our country and control us".[80] The Chinese leaders obviously could not care less about ex-Malayan Communist Party brothers still languishing in isolated rehabilitation camps on the Malaysia-Thailand border. After all, Malaysians have not made a fuss about the suppression of Muslims in China.

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76 Reuter, Kuala Lumpur, January 11, 1992. Reuter, Kuala Lumpur, January 14, 1992. RR, January 12, 1992, p1.

77 RR, January 12, 1992, p1.

78 RR, June 15, 1993, p1. NST, June 15, 1993, p2.

79 RR, June 15, 1993, p1.

80 Ibid.

There has emerged a tacit cooperation between China and Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia at international forums on human rights. For example, a spirit of solidarity between these countries was demonstrated at both the Bangkok and Vienna meetings. Even more significant is the tacit cooperation between China and Indonesia at various meetings of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva since 1992, with Indonesia voting to shelve Western-proposed resolutions on human rights abuses in Tibet, and China blocking similar resolutions on East Timor. Largely because of the combined efforts of China and Indonesia, the paragraph of the Bangkok Declaration addressing the issue of self-determination leaves aside the issues of Tibet and East Timor. While describing the denial of the principle of self-determination as a grave violation of human rights, the Declaration stressed that the right to self-determination is applicable to peoples under alien or colonial domination or foreign occupation, and should not be used to undermine the territorial integrity, national sovereignty and political independence of states.

Fundamental dilemma and irony

The Chinese leadership must have had mixed feelings about associating itself with ASEAN, whether by playing up the similar rhetoric or cooperating with ASEAN on the issue of human rights. On one hand, it hopes that this can enhance its own stand on human rights. On the other hand, China is aware of the fundamental dilemma and irony in this tactic of association.

First, there is a historical irony. In its own relations with the ASEAN countries, China's record of abiding by the fundamental principle of national sovereignty and non-interference was dubious at best. For a long time China had interfered in the ASEAN countries' domestic politics by supporting communist insurgents and making use of overseas Chinese communities to serve China's own domestic and external policies. In its revolutionary regional policy, China paid lip-service to the principle that because countries differed from each other for historical, cultural and economic reasons, one's judgement of other countries' systems should not ignore their specific national contexts by narrowly using one model or criterion. The way China used to seek to influence the social systems of the ASEAN countries was far more brutal than the devices of the Western nations. Western human rights campaigns against the ASEAN countries and China are pale in comparison with China's policy of imposing armed-evolution on these countries. China is virtually using the countries formerly targeted for its armed revolution strategy to help itself fight "peaceful evolution". Indeed, if it did succeed in overthrowing these "lackeys of international imperialists", as the ASEAN governments were called by China in the 1960s, China would have no valuable friends in fighting "international imperialists" today. On the other hand, the Western human rights campaign should help China to better understand how the ASEAN governments, at the receiving end of China's revolutionary regional policy, had felt about this policy, thus increasing China's awareness of regional sensitivities. Since China is now seriously concerned about the Western nations' support for China's unarmed pro-democracy activists, and about the counter-revolutionary messages broadcast to China by VOA and Voice of

Democratic China/Voice of Free China established by Chinese pro-democracy activists and located in America, it should now know better how the ASEAN governments were worried about China's support for armed communist fighters in the region, and about the revolutionary messages broadcast to Southeast Asia by Radio Beijing and Voice of the People of Thailand/Voice of the Malayan Revolution established by the Thai and Malaysian communist insurgents, and located in southern Chinese provinces close to the ASEAN borders. And since China is now seriously concerned about the Western nations' support for Tibetan self-determination, it should now know better how the Malaysian government was worried about China's long-term support for the armed struggle by the North Kalimantan Communist Party for independence of "North Kalimantan", which referred to the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah.

Second, the forms of political democracy in the ASEAN countries represent a challenge to the cultural relativism in China's human rights theory. This is so despite the fact that Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia are using cultural relativism to justify their own actions. Both China and the ASEAN countries are Asian cultures allegedly not suited to Western standards of human rights and democracy. However, there are more political freedoms and individual rights in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, let alone the Philippines and Thailand, than in China. This has indicated to the Chinese people that the lack of democracy in their country derives not from the government's concern to preserve Chinese culture, but from its determination to preserve communism. They may argue that if Chinese cultural uniqueness meant that Western-style

democracy did not suit China, then China should at least have an ASEAN-style democracy, which, of course, would still finish the communist dictatorship.

Third, and most importantly, as already suggested, the bottom line in China's overall human rights policy is anything but human rights as such. The policy has been worked out as a means to shore up Chinese communism suffering from an ever decreasing legitimacy. In essence, the human rights element in China's ASEAN policy is a function of China's classical war with the menace of "peaceful evolution". However, according to basic Chinese communist theory, people's support for the communist system depends on whether it can improve their living standards in a way seen by them as adequate. In that sense, among the threats to the legitimacy of Chinese communist rule, no less, if not more, ominous than the "peaceful evolution" conspiracy, is the Chinese people's ever increasing awareness of the fact that living standards have been higher and rising more quickly in such non-communist developing countries in Asia as the ASEAN members. The Chinese people have been particularly impressed with the high living standards of the ethnic Chinese communities in the ASEAN region. Like China, the ASEAN countries started their economic take-off from a low base. The economic achievements of these countries, especially the ethnic Chinese communities, have clearly demonstrated to the educated people in China the insufficiency of rights of "subsistence" and "development" in China - the two major rights which the Chinese government boasts it has secured for the people - under their current political and economic systems. When facing the challenge to its legitimacy posed by the Western human rights crusade, the

Chinese government can defend itself by resorting to cultural relativism and appealing to people's nationalist feelings about past Western imperialist bullying. In this case it may be able to distract the people's attention from the fundamental flaws in the current political system, and may even improve the CCP's image because, after all, it was the champion of the overthrow of international imperialist oppression and achieved the independence of the Chinese nation. However, comparison between the living standards of China and the ASEAN countries, especially the ASEAN-based Chinese communities, may lead the Chinese people to question the virtue of the very ideology which rules China.

No one knows this danger better than the Chinese leaders themselves. During his much touted southward trip to the Special Economic Zones in Guangdong Province in January 1992, Deng Xiaoping warned "The economies of our peripheral countries and regions have been developing more quickly than ours. If our economy does not develop or develops not as quickly, *we will have troubles* if the people make a comparison."[81] This is a public expression of what has been in the minds of the Chinese leaders since the beginning of reform and the open-door policy. Since late 1978, numerous Chinese leaders at and above ministerial level, including Deng himself and the current CCP Secretary General Jiang Zemin, have visited the ASEAN countries. They have found that, in Deng's own honest words, spelled out during his visit to Singapore,

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81 "Deng Xiaoping nanxun shi de jianghua (Deng's speech during his southward trip)", ZZ, No. 4, 1992, p15. Emphasis added. For an official description of the background against which Deng talked about peripheral countries in his speech, see RR, 1992, August 10, 1992, p5.

Malaysia and Thailand as early as November 1978, "the ASEAN countries are more developed than us, and (people's) living standard in China is not as high as in the ASEAN countries".[82] If the ASEAN countries are now concerned about a Chinese threat to regional security because of its military build-up, the Chinese government is worried about an "ASEAN threat" to its legitimacy because the Chinese people may "make a comparison". It is interesting to recall that during the mid-1950s, because of the success of the first Five-Year Development Plan and the strengthening of popular support by this success, the Chinese government boasted that their system was superior to those in the non-communist Asian developing nations. In fact, China believed at that time that the most effective way to influence political leaders in such nations in Southeast Asia was to invite them to visit China, and witness the virtues of communism by seeing China's achievements with their own eyes.[83] It was claimed in a series of books about Huang Zhen (China's Ambassador to Indonesia from 1954 to 1961) published in 1992 that Indonesia's former Vice-President Mohammad Hatta, a staunch anti-communist figure in Indonesian politics, no longer held a hostile attitude towards Chinese communism from 1957 because, during his visit to China in that year at the invitation of Mao and Zhou, he was deeply

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82 RR, November 9, 1978, p1.

83 See, for example, Yin Jiamin, Jiangjun buru shiming (A General successful in fulfilling his missions) (People's Liberation Army Literature and Art Publishing Agency, Beijing, June 1992), p136, pp144-145.

impressed with China's economic achievements under communist system.[84]

If Singapore has appeared especially useful and helpful to China on the issue of human rights, the Chinese government would seem to be aware that Singapore represents at the same time an especially potent challenge to the legitimacy of the communist system. Singapore's political system has disproven, though to a limited extent, the dogma that Chinese cultural values are incompatible with either multi-party system or a free market economy. Its economic success as a Chinese-majority state is the most convincing among ASEAN countries in showing the Chinese people that they may have done better under a different political environment. In fact Singapore's challenge on these two points is second only to that of Taiwan. In 1991 Lee Kuan Yew told a global convention of Chinese businessmen that the Chinese of Singapore had a role to play in transforming China by showing their success to their fellow Chinese there. He claimed, "We are living examples of Chinese people, imbued with Chinese culture, doing immensely better because we work under a different system. . . . People in China know it can be done because it has been done by Chinese people in . . . different environments."[85] Lee has strongly opposed the Western human rights campaign against China, and has also alleged that the Tiananmen students were too impulsive and radical, mistakenly

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84 See, for example, ibid; and Yao Zhongming, Xie Wusheng, Pei Jianzhang, eds., Jiangjun, waijiaojia, yishujia: Huang Zhen jinian wenji (General, diplomat and artist: collected articles in memory of Huang Zhen) (People's Liberation Army Press, Beijing, June 1992), pp343-344.

85 Reuter, Singapore, August 10, 1991.

believing that they could change China in one stroke.[86] However, this is because he is convinced that, considering China's historical, cultural and political realities, a more productive way to get rid of Chinese communism is to strengthen China's economic integration with the world, and tie its prosperity increasingly to the economic systems of the major trading nations.[87] This is a major reason why this "old friend of the Chinese people", as Lee has been called by the Deng leadership, has been so keen since the early 1980s to give advice to the Chinese leaders, including officials in the coastal provinces, how to deepen China's economic reform and carry forward its open-door policy.

Conclusion

With the June 4 suppression and the world-wide collapse of communism, Western nations have strengthened their crusade for human rights in China. From the Chinese government's perspective, this is a continuation of the classical war mounted by the world's old system (capitalism) against the new system (communism), with the very survival of the current Chinese political system at stake. Specifically, this crusade is defined in Beijing as a long-standing Western strategy of "peaceful evolution" aimed at overthrowing a communist system from within.

In coping with this strategy, the post-Tiananmen Chinese government has adopted a less rigid approach than before. It has

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86 Reuter, Hong Kong, October 15, 1990. Lee Kuan Yew on China and Hongkong after Tiananmen, pp32-33, p111, p117, p136.

87 Reuter, Singapore, August 10, 1991. Christian Science Monitor, October 25, 1990, P4. Lee Kuan Yew on China and Hongkong after Tiananmen, pp8-9, p62.

recognised human rights as a legitimate international concern, and as a term of reference applicable to Chinese politics. More significantly, it has drawn up an elaborate human rights theory of its own, based on cultural relativism and China's status as a developing country.

On the issue of human rights, China has found the ASEAN countries useful in boosting its own position. First, largely during the two years following the June 4 event, the ASEAN countries, out of their own geo-strategic calculations, made great contributions to moderating China's isolation and repairing China's image. Their policies assisted the Chinese government in shoring up its legitimacy both in the eyes of the Chinese people and in the international community.

Second, evidenced by ASEAN's systematic assertions about human rights since July 1991, China and ASEAN have adopted a similar language about the content of human rights and the way it should be promoted in international relations. Both sides emphasise that the criteria of human rights vary from one country to another, that for the developing countries, rights to economic subsistence and development should precede political and civil rights, that the international application of human rights should not violate the target country's national sovereignty, and that the issue of human rights should not be linked to economic cooperation. The Chinese government has seen the similarity as objectively supporting its own position, and has eagerly exploited it.

Third, since mid-1990 China has made increasingly active efforts to establish a cooperative relationship with ASEAN against Western assertiveness over human rights in the post-Cold War world. It has taken a series of initiatives to solicit the ASEAN countries' cooperation in creating a New International Order, as a counter-measure against an emerging international human rights regime largely based on Western values. China has also tried to reinforce its new-found similar language with ASEAN on the issue of human rights.

The Chinese government is aware of the fundamental dilemma and irony in the policy of associating itself with ASEAN over human rights. In essence, the human rights element in China's ASEAN policy is a function of China's war against a perceived Western "peaceful evolution" conspiracy. However, among the threats to the legitimacy of the Chinese communist rule, no less, if not more, ominous than this alleged conspiracy is the Chinese people's ever increasing awareness that living standards are higher than their own, and are rising more quickly, in ASEAN countries, where economic success, especially that of Singapore as a Chinese state, has clearly demonstrated to the Chinese people the insufficiency of their rights of economic "subsistence" and "development" - the two major rights which the Chinese government boasts it has secured for them - under their current political system.

Chapter Four

The Spratly dispute

Four ASEAN countries have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei lay claim to parts of the Spratly archipelago, while China lays claim to its entirety. Indonesia is alleged by China to have annexed 50,000 square kilometres of China's territorial sea near the archipelago under an agreement with Malaysia (signed in October 1969) demarcating their areas of seabed.[1] In the Spratlys, the Philippines has stationed troops on eight islands and reefs, and Malaysia on three,[2] while Brunei is yet to establish a military presence. While three ASEAN countries have disputes with China over the Spratlys, China's policy has wider ramifications for its relations with the ASEAN countries as a whole. This chapter looks into China's changing policy on the Spratlys, with special reference to its approach to the Philippines and Malaysia. The first section outlines

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1 Ding Chuanying, "Woguo de baodao - Nansha qundao (Motherland's archipelago of treasure - the Spratly archipelago)", Guoji ziliao xinxi (International Information, Beijing), No. 1, 1988, p27.

2 Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", p15. According to Chinese Place Name Committee, the total number of the Spratly islands, reefs, shoals and cays is 189. See Zan Zhaoxuan, ed., Nanhai zhu dao (Islands in the South Sea) (Guangdong People's Press, 1986, Guangzhou), p3. Outside China it has been variously reported, ranging from 26 to more than 200. See Steven Kuan-Tsyh Yu, "Who owns the Paracels and Spratlys? An evaluation of the nature and legal basis of the conflicting territorial claims", in R.D. Hill, Norman G. Owen, and E.V. Roberts, eds., Fishing In Troubled Waters: Proceedings of an academic conference on territorial claims in the South China Sea (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1991), p68.

Chinese feeling about the nature of the sovereignty dispute. The second and third sections examine China's past and present policies, focusing particularly on its policy since late 1987, when the Spratly dispute became a major issue in China's regional policy.

Nature of the Spratly dispute: Chinese feeling

Foreign studies of China's Spratly policy do not fully convey the deep-seatedness and intensity of Chinese feeling about the sovereignty dispute in the South China Sea. In the international community the validity of China's exclusive sovereignty claim over almost all of the South China Sea including the Spratlys, based on historical discovery and ad hoc prior occupation, is open to legal challenge.[3] However, it is embedded in the Chinese national psyche that the Spratly archipelago has been part of the motherland's territory since ancient Chinese dynasties. Systematic education and energetic propaganda under both nationalist and especially communist governments since the 1910s have all contributed to entrenching this concept among the Chinese population. The self-righteous Chinese mind-set is typically reflected in a speech to senior foreign affairs and military cadres in 1977 by the then Foreign Minister Huang Hua, referring to the Vietnamese claim to the Spratlys and Paracels. He said,

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3 For China's claim, see Chang Hongzheng, "Cong guojifa kan Zhongguo dui Xishaqundao he Nanshaqundao de zhuquan (China's sovereignty over the Xisha Islands and the Nansha Islands: from the perspective of international law)", Hongqi (Red Flag, Beijing), No.4, 1980, pp19-24; and Yin Zhiping, "China's sovereignty over the Nansha Islands indisputable", BR, May 23-29, 1988, pp4-5. For a comprehensive examination of each claimant country's claim, see Steven Kuan-Tsyh Yu, op.cit., pp49-65.

> All these archipelagos (the Paracels, Spratlys, and Pratas) have been China's territory since ancient times. I remember when I studied a geography textbook *in my boyhood* I read of all this. . . . Although we refrain from dealing with the problem of the Spratlys for the time being, their jurisdiction is still ours. . . . *There is no need* for us to talk about the jurisdiction of these islands for it has been established by history and they are ours.[4]

The Chinese do not see themselves as "joining" the claim to or "scrambling" for the Spratlys with the end of the Cold War. In their eyes, the nature of the Spratly dispute is crystal clear: initially taking advantage of China's turbulent domestic politics and its preoccupation with superpower threats in foreign policy, regional countries have occupied China's islands and reefs, carved up its sea areas, looted its marine resources, and violated its national sovereignty.[5] China's view of its own Spratly policy can not be more different from regional views. While other countries in the region perceive China as aggressive and provocative in the South China Sea in recent years, China intrinsically sees its assertive policy as a long-overdue and legitimate action to protect its own territorial integrity. Conceptually and theoretically, until its sovereignty over the entire Spratly archipelago is recognised, China regards itself as a victim of other regional countries' aggression and encroachment.

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4 "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation", IS, Vol. 13, No. 12, December 1977, pp80-81. Emphasis added.

5 For China's emotional view of the cause of the Spratly dispute, see, for example, Li Ning, op.cit., p4. For a Chinese chronology of what it regards as Philippine's, Malaysia's and Brunei's "encroachment" of China's territory in the South China Sea, see Ding Chuanying, op.cit., p15, p27.

For China, any policy goal short of international recognition of its exclusive claim is of a transitional nature, and its occupation of an increasing number of islands and reefs in the archipelago since 1988 is not a question of making territorial gains, but of minimising territorial loss. In the eyes of some foreign commentators, China's recent perception of the South China Sea as a "survival space" for China because of its rich natural resources is reminiscent of an earlier imperial power - Germany.[6] In Chinese logic, however, for the analogy to make sense, the Third Reich should have genuinely believed that all the European territories it wanted to conquer were not only necessary "Lebensraum" but also parts of German *territory* long occupied illegally by others.

China's emotion over the Spratlys is compounded by its consciousness of, and sensitivity to, matters of national sovereignty in general, largely a result of China's previous experience of losing territories to Western imperialist powers. Knowledge of that experience has been passed on to generation after generation in China as a reminder of the humiliations of the past and to promote patriotism. The Chinese communists' claim, which has become ever more strenuous since the June 4 event, that they are the true champions of China's nationalism and guardians of China's national sovereignty, as opposed to the nationalists now ruling Taiwan, has only added to the symbolic value for them of even the smallest reef in the Spratlys. If, after losing territories to the Western powers a century ago, China should now lose territories to regional countries, not only Chinese national pride, but also the legitimacy of the communist regime would be devastated. Compared with Malaysia

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6 Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", pp14-15.

and the Philippines, to which the importance of the claims is mainly strategic and economic, China's stakes in the Spratly dispute are substantially higher.

To be sure, strong feelings of violation of its national sovereignty are not the only basis for China's policy on the Spratlys. Other considerations have also played a role in the development of China's policy, as discussed in the following sections.

Corollary to its exclusive mind-set regarding the Spratlys, China does not recognise any legitimacy in claim-related actions of regional countries, even those in reaction to China's own policy. For example, if a regional claimant country occupies, or strengthens its occupation of, a reef in the Spratlys in reaction to what China has done elsewhere in the archipelago, China still regards it as an act of trespass. On the other hand, the Chinese have always claimed in all seriousness that they have all along shown self-restraint on the Spratly issue.

China's policy before late 1987

From 1949 until late 1987, the Spratly dispute was a minor issue in China's regional policy, though China gradually increased its attention to it. First, China's attention in the South China Sea was, as in Southeast Asia as a whole, focused on the presence of the two superpowers. China was more concerned about the strategic significance of the area in the superpowers' rivalries in Southeast Asia and their policies on China than about the sovereignty dispute. Second, although the countries concerned, particularly Vietnam, progressively strengthened their claims on the Spratlys, territorial

disputes did not show signs of becoming a potential regional flashpoint. Dynamics of inherent intra-regional problems such as territorial disputes in Southeast Asia were overwhelmingly overlaid by East-West rivalries. China's chief concern about these disputes was that the superpowers might use them to advance their own hegemonic strategies, thus complicating the regional strategic configuration.[7] China claimed that problems between third world countries such as territorial disputes could be easily managed if the superpowers were prevented from meddling.[8]

During the period from 1949 until mid-1982 as a whole, the way China dealt with the Spratly dispute was largely a function of its approach to the US threat and then its united front diplomacy against Soviet hegemonism. Thus before 1971, China's reactions to the Philippines' Spratly claim were framed by its larger concern about US policy towards China. For example, in 1950 and 1956, China condemned the Philippine government's attempt to claim some of the islands and reefs in the Spratly archipelago, emphasising what China alleged to be US instigation, meant to serve the US-led encirclement of China.[9] No evidence was presented for the allegation, which was probably less a matter of belief than a way of expressing China's anger at the pro-US foreign policy of the Philippines, accused by China of having become America's

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[7] RR, March 27, 1981, p7. Ji Guoxing, "ASEAN countries in political and economic perspectives," Asian Affairs, Vol. XVIII, Part 2, June 1987, pp157-165. Ma Zong-shi, Yu Bin, and Xu Guo-xong, "Alternatives to Militarisation", in Yoshikazu Sakamoto, ed., Asia: Militarization and Regional Conflict (The United Nations University, Tokyo, 1988), p214.

[8] RR, January 5, 1983, p6.

[9] RR, May 20, 1950, p1. RR, May 30, 1956, p1. RR, June 5, 1956, p3.

springboard for aggression in Southeast Asia, particularly Indochina (Chapter Two). On the other hand, China may have believed in such a connection, considering that its perception of the situation in Southeast Asia was overshadowed by its own confrontation, and the regional countries' relations, with the USA. China may have suspected that the Philippines' Spratly claim, like its behaviour in other foreign policy areas, was an effect of its alliance with the USA.

During the period from 1971 until mid-1982 as a whole, China's policy towards Southeast Asia was overshadowed by its preoccupation with Soviet hegemonism. It saw the Philippines and Malaysia, like other ASEAN members, as countries to be won over to its own anti-hegemonism united front. China felt worried that the Soviet Union, and, since 1978 Vietnam, were using the Spratly dispute, as well as other issues such as China's support for communist insurgents and its relations with the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, to strengthen the ASEAN countries' suspicions of China's regional intention and thus disrupt its united front policy. As part of its efforts to make the ASEAN countries partners in this front, China took a conciliatory attitude towards the activities of the Philippines and Malaysia regarding the Spratlys, by keeping silent about them, or expressing its concerns only in private. On some serious occasions when China was forced to reiterate its stand in public, it chose to reaffirm its claim to sovereignty, without naming either the Philippines or Malaysia. This stood in sharp contrast to China's reactions to Saigon's moves in the Spratlys and Hanoi's since 1978. It publicly protested every Vietnamese step, and denounced Vietnam in the most specific

terms,[10] even though of all the Spratly claimant countries the Philippines occupied most of islands and reefs and was most active in military fortification and economic exploitation before the 1980s.[11] China's harsh attitude to Vietnam was also a function of China's Soviet policy. Behind its strong reactions to South Vietnam's occupation of some of the islands in 1974 was China's worry that once Vietnam was united, these Saigon-occupied islands could fall into the hands of Hanoi, which Beijing by that time had already recognised as a pro-Moscow force. Similarly China castigated Hanoi for its Spratly policy from 1978 onwards, because of its alliance with Moscow.

In July 1971, the Philippines for the first time articulated an official claim to part of the Spratlys. President Marcos declared that the Spratlys were derelict and disputed, and therefore subject to occupation and control.[12] No complaint was heard from the Chinese government, though Huang Yongsheng, the PLA Chief of General Staff, widely known in Beijing as Lin Biao's "running dog", condemned the claim in his speech at a banquet in honour of a North Korean delegation. His action was understood as part of the Lin Biao group's effort to stall Sino-US rapprochement by fiercely attacking a US ally.[13] Shortly after the Beijing-Saigon battle for the Paracels in January 1974, the South Vietnamese government occupied six islands in the Spratly group, and the Philippines sent

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10 See, for example, RR, January 8, 1979, p5; RR, March 23, 1979, p1; and Chang Hongzheng, op.cit., pp19-24.

11 See, for example, Rodney Tasker, "Stake-out in the Spratlys", FEER, February 24, 1978, pp11-12.

12 Ibid., p12.

13 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., p146.

troops to occupy three islands. China issued a strongly worded protest at the South Vietnamese action, but made no comment on that of the Philippines.[14] In fact, Sino-Philippines rapprochement went apace in 1974, as manifested in Mrs Marcos' visit to Beijing and the normalisation of diplomatic ties between the two countries, the Spratly issue posing no obstacle. The bilateral communique, signed during Marcos' visit to Beijing in 1975, made no mention of the dispute, and during his visit Marcos reached an agreement with Deng Xiaoping, then Vice-Prime Minister, that "any conflicts that we may have in any of the islands of the South China Sea will be settled through diplomatic channels by negotiations and in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation."[15] In early 1976, the Philippines stationed troops on seven islands, built a military airstrip on one, explored oil in the Reed Bank area and increased fishing activities around the occupied islands. China expressed only general disapproval of any foreign country's claim to and/or occupation of the Spratly islands, and made no further complaint, even though Manila's oil exploration in the Reed Bank area continued during the late 1970s.[16] In March 1978, on the eve of the visit by China's Vice-Prime Minister Li Xiannian to the Philippines - the first senior visit from Beijing to Manila, news broke that Philippines troops had recently occupied Panata Island in the Spratly group. However, despite China's delayed verbal criticism, Li's visit was not marred

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14 Ibid., p147.

15 ST, March 16, 1978.

16 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., p152. See also Roderick O'Brien, South China Sea Oil: Two Problems of Ownership and Development (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, Occasional Paper, No. 47, August 1977), p29.

by the incident.[17] Li reassured his hosts that no trouble would ensue over the Spratlys between China and the Philippines,[18] and reiterated the Marcos-Deng agreement.[19] In 1978 a Malaysian contingent visited the southern region of the Spratlys, claimed seven islands and reefs, and planted a monument stone on Amboyna Cay.[20] China did not make any response. In September 1979 it became known that Marcos had signed Presidential Decree No. 1596 in June 1978, proclaiming sovereignty over 57 islands and reefs of the Spratly group "by reason of history, indispensable need, and effective occupation and control".[21] China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed China's own claim, without mentioning the name of any country.[22] In December 1979 Malaysia for the first time publicised its claim, by publishing a new map of its continental shelf on which a number of islands and reefs in the Spratly group were marked as Malaysian territory. China made no public comment then,[23] nor in April 1980, when Malaysia formally proclaimed its

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17 Lim Joo-Jock, Geo-Strategy and the South China Sea Basin: Regional Balance, Maritime Issues (Singapore University Press, 1979), p51.

18 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., p152.

19 ST, March 16, 1978.

20 Khadijah Muhamed, Tunku Shamsul Bahrin, "Scramble for the South China Sea: The Malaysian Perspective", in R.D. Hill, Norman G. Owen, and E.V. Roberts, eds., op.cit., p238.

21 ST, September 6, 1979.

22 RR, September 27, 1979, p4.

23 Lu Zhijian, "Zhongguo dui Nansa Qundao zhuquan joufen de lican (China's stand on the sovereignty conflict over the Spratlys)," in Cheng Yu Suo, ed., Zhongguo yu Yazhou (China and Asia) (Sanwu Publishing House, Hong Kong, 1990), pp141-142.

sovereign rights and jurisdiction,[24] and remained silent when Philippine troops landed on Commodore Reef in August 1980.[25]

The necessity of forging an international anti-hegemony united front also led China to express strong general support during the 1970s for the developing countries' struggle to secure 200 nautical miles of jurisdiction based on the continental shelf or an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). China claimed that this was the third world's "anti-hegemony struggle in economic field", and condemned various United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as conducive only to the superpowers' attempts to seek maritime hegemony and plunder the developing countries' resources.[26] Given that the Chinese-claimed area in the South China Sea extends to the doorstep of every coastal state in the area, China should have been the last country to support such a struggle, even in general terms. However, in its preoccupation with Soviet hegemonism, China was happy to support any moves by the developing countries which it believed could cause problems for Moscow's global naval activities. China may believe that as long as it made clear its exclusive claim on the Spratlys to the outside world, it could afford to pay lip service in general terms to international efforts to secure extended territorial waters and a right to an EEZ.

From 1983 until late 1987, China paid greater attention to the Spratly dispute. In May 1983, China unprecedentedly sent a naval flotilla to visit James Shoal, the southernmost reef in the

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24 Khadijah Muhamed, Tunku Shamsul Bahrin, op.cit., pp237-238.

25 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., p152.

26 RR, September 1, 1973, p2. RR, December 23, 1974, p6. RR, January 3, 1976, p5.

archipelago, not far from the coast of Malaysia. The Chinese media gave prominence to this voyage and reported that the flotilla, after anchoring, "sounded sirens to greet the *southern frontier of the motherland*".[27] This incident sent an important signal to the region. With the decline of its interest in Soviet hegemonism and a military stalemate reached in Cambodia, China began to be more concerned with inherently regional security problems like territorial disputes, even though its attention in the region in general continued to be focused on the superpowers' contention. No longer needing to use the ASEAN countries to contain the Soviet threat, China started to face more squarely its territorial disputes with Malaysia and the Philippines. In his Government Work Report tabled at the Second Plenary Session of the Sixth National People's Congress (NPC) in May 1984, the then Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang made it clear that problems in the Asia-Pacific region were more than those caused by the superpowers' hegemonism. He stated that China would make efforts to "settle problems with some of the neighbouring countries", and "remove some of their suspicions of us".[28] This was the first Government Work Report which touched on inherent problems between China and the ASEAN countries.

Domestic economic construction since 1984 driven by massive urban economic reform and the open-door policy led to China's reassessment of the strategic importance of the South China Sea and the crucial value of marine resources, particularly oil, in the area. Hence China's greater attention to overlapping sovereignty claims in the area. The reform and open-door policy started in late 1978, but

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[27] RR, July 19, 1983, p4. Emphasis added.

[28] RR, June 2, 1984.

began to be fully implemented only from 1984, when ambitious coastal development programmes and far-reaching urban reform measures were announced. In 1984 fourteen coastal cities were declared Open Cities. In 1985 the Yangtze and Zhujian River deltas and Xia-Zhan-Quan triangle in Fujian province were set up as Open Areas. Like China's four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) set up in 1979-80, these Open Cities and Open Areas were designed to promote foreign trade and attract overseas investment. All four SEZs, three Open Cities and two Open Areas are in the south, bordering the South China Sea, so its strategic importance to China's coastal development is obvious, and is reinforced by use of the South China Sea as a major channel for China's expanding foreign trade. The area had become a crucial conduit for the development of China's outward-looking economic policies.

Natural resources, oil in particular, were another crucial aspect of the new importance attached by China to the South China Sea. Before the 1980s, there was no economic imperative for China to undertake exploration in the South China Sea, for China had abundant onshore oil resources, producing the petroleum required domestically, with a surplus for export. In fact China provided oil to the Philippines and Thailand at a "friendship price" in the hope of improving relations with the two countries. However, a growing discrepancy between China's energy demand and supply emerged in the 1980s, particularly after 1984. While enormous energy demands arose from the broadening reform scale and ambitious coastal development programmes, maintenance even of existing production of energy looked increasingly problematic. China's main source of energy, coal, was found mainly in the north-west and

north, far from the concentration of industries in the south and east, and though in 1986-87 one-third of rail freight was transport of coal, limited transport capacity caused a shortfall in coal supplies to the eastern coastal provinces.[29] The output of the existing oil-fields of Daqing, Shengli, North China and Liaohe - all in the north, with the same problems of transportation as coal resources - was decreasing.[30] Other major areas believed rich in oil, such as the Junggar, Tarim and Qaidam basins, were in north-western China, in areas sparsely populated and with poor communications facilities, thus making resource development difficult.[31] In brief, shortage of energy became one of the most important factors retarding the growth of the Chinese economy. In 1987 about 20-30 percent of China's industrial production capacity was idle because of insufficient power.[32] In these circumstances, the Chinese turned their attention increasingly to off-shore areas, including the South China Sea, which they believed offered excellent geological conditions for abundant oil and natural gas resources.[33] Between 1982 and 1986, China held two rounds of international bidding for contracts to explore for oil in this area. Particular emphasis on off-

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29 "6. Energy resources and the energy industry", Information China: The Comprehensive and Authoritative Reference Source of New China (compiled by Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published by Pergamon Press, Beijing, 1989), No. 2, p577.

30 Ibid., p581.

31 Ibid., pp569-570.

32 Shao Zuze, Guo Peixing, and Li Yong, "Development of China's Petroleum Industry and Its Effect on China-ASEAN Economic Relations," in Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Developments in ASEAN and China, p120.

33 "6. Energy resources and the energy industry", p570.

shore petroleum exploration and development was laid in the 1986-1990 Seventh Five-Year Plan.[34]

China accelerated the modernisation programs for its naval and air forces, especially the South (China) Sea fleet, and increased its military profile in the South China Sea,[35] but maintained its low-profile diplomatic approach towards Malaysia and the Philippines to minimise the effects of the Spratlys dispute upon its relations with them. With expanded reform and open-door programs, it became more important for China to construct a good-neighbourly relationship with the ASEAN countries in order to maintain a peaceful regional environment. Malaysian commandos occupied Terumbu Layang Layang atoll in June 1983, but China's response was delayed until September, when a Chinese spokesman, without mentioning Malaysia specifically, complained that "a foreign country has illegally occupied China's Dan Wan Jiao atoll".[36] During the visits to China by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in November 1985 and Philippine Vice-President Laurel in June 1986, their Chinese hosts did not raise the Spratly issue. In November 1986, Malaysia dispatched troops to two more atolls, namely Matanani and Ubi, but China did not react publicly, and began to seek a way to tackle the dispute which would not be an obstacle to better

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34 Ibid., pp579-582.

35 For Chinese efforts at upgrading their naval and air force since the early 1980s, see RR, August 3, 1983, p4; RR, November 24, 1984, p4; Ai Hongren, Zhonggong haijun toushi - mai xiang yuanyang de tiaozhang (A view of Chinese navy - oceangoing challenge)(Guang Jiao Jing Publishing House, Hong Kong, October 1988), passim; and Tai Ming Cheung, Growth of Chinese Naval Power (Pacific Strategic Papers 1, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1990), pp4-44.

36 RR, September 15, 1983, p1.

relations with the Philippines and Malaysia. In 1984, it suggested to the Philippines that the dispute could be treated in the same way as rival Sino-Japanese claims to Diao Yu Dao (Sengaku Island), namely to shelve the sovereignty dispute and conduct joint development schemes pending a settlement by a future generation of leaders.[37] China saw this formula as a lofty and generous policy towards trespassers, which however did not indicate readiness to soften its exclusive claim to the Spratlys or recognise legitimacy of claims by others. Regional understandings and academic researchers outside China may have overlooked this critical point in China's proposal.

China's policy since late 1987

China's view of the Spratly dispute started to change qualitatively from late 1987. With the signing of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty between Moscow and Washington there emerged a new round of East-West detente which China believed was more solid than that of the 1970s, mainly because of the enormous economic difficulties the two superpowers faced.[38] Global detente and concomitant loss of China's influential role in superpower strategic relations substantially shifted the attention of Chinese strategists to China's own peripheral region and to the factors that could lead to what they called "local" and "limited" wars in the region.[39] In Southeast Asia, with the subsiding of US-Soviet

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37 Michael Yahuda, "China and the Region", p61.

38 RR, December 31, 1987, p6.

39 People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Science, ed., Zhanzheng yu zhanlue wenti yanjiu (Studies on the issues of war and strategy) (Military Science Press, Beijing, 1988), pp65-88; Li Longxiang, et al., eds., Zhoubian fangwu jinxi (The present and the past of peripheral defence) (Defence

rivalries, retrenchment of their military presence, and the stronger momentum in the process of solving the Cambodian conflict, the Spratly dispute as a regional security issue has become prominent and is no longer restrained by disciplines formerly imposed by the contending superpowers. With the end of the Cold War and increased economic interdependence, the world has entered a new era, in which economic strength is the major factor deciding a nation's status and future. This has intensified international competition for the control of natural resources, with the South China Sea an important ground for such competition.

Commenting on the world situation in 1988, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen pointed out that "an international detente does not mean that problems in this world can be solved more easily". He said instead that "old problems originally overshadowed by superpower contention have now come to the surface".[40] Reviewing the situation in Southeast Asia in the same year, a People's Daily editorial said, "the overall situation in Southeast Asia is changing in a more favourable direction, but there are still many problems and difficulties in the way ahead".[41] By 1989-90 it had been widely agreed in China that the Spratly dispute was likely to become a new

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University Press, Beijing, 1989), p158; and Defence University, ed., Dangde junshizhanglue zhuanbian yu renminjundui jianshe (The Party's military strategic shift and construction of the People's Army) (Defence University Press, Beijing, 1990), pp181-218.

40 Interview with Qian in SZ, No. 7, 1989, p2.

41 RR, February 10, 1989. For China's assessment of Southeast Asian security situation with superpower detente and the end of the Cold War, see also Bai Yulin, "Post-Cold War China-Southeast Asia Political Cooperation", Contemporary International Relations (Beijing) Vol. 2, No. 10, October 1992, p12.

hot spot in post-Cambodian Southeast Asia and a source of more friction between China and ASEAN.[42]

This coincided with the upgrading in strategic and economic importance for China of the South China Sea. China unveiled its hitherto most ambitious coastal development strategy, the "big international circle theory", in the wake of the 13th Party Congress held in October 1987. The aim of this strategy was to integrate all of China's coastal provinces into the global economy. In early 1988, Hainan Province, an island in the South China Sea, was separated from Guangdong Province and promoted as an Economic Development Zone intended to attract foreign investment. The Chinese government pinned its hope of success of its "big international circle theory" largely on the coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, bordering the South China Sea. Since 1989, based on a review of social and economic problems confronted during the first ten years of reform and the progress of surveys of resources in the South China Sea, the Chinese have started to view the area in terms of the nation's future survival. They have stressed that the rich natural resources of the Sea are crucial to the future survival and prosperity of an over-populated mainland suffering from ever declining resources. Loss of the Spratlys is now said to amount to the loss of China's "second survival space".[43] In a major document on China's future published in September 1991, it was stated:

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42 See, for example, Zhu Zhenming, "China's relations with Southeast Asia in the 1990s", p57.

43 Li Ning, op.cit., p10.

> The resource in the South China Sea is worth US$1 trillion. Once Xinjiang has been developed this will be the sole area for replacement of resources, and it is a main fallback position for the Chinese nation's survival space in the coming century. Therefore "development southward" is probably a strategic orientation that we will have to choose.[44]

For China, regional violations of its territorial integrity in the Spratlys have developed to a new stage. Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have strengthened their claims by increasing military occupation and exploitation of natural resources. China has been particularly concerned about some largely unprecedented developments surrounding the Spratly dispute. First, the process of military modernisation in Malaysia and the Philippines has not slackened with diminution of superpower contention and the Cambodian conflict. On the contrary, like their ASEAN partners, they have accelerated the enhancement of air and naval capabilities. While recognising that there are some legitimate reasons for this military build-up in an uncertain regional situation, China has been wary of the ramifications for the Spratly dispute. Despite having little to worry in pure military terms, China is concerned that once naval and air forces of Malaysia and the

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44 "Sulian zhengbian hou Zhongguo de xianshi yingdui yu zhanlue xuanze", p39. This document has been sensationalised by Nayan Chanda, who described the document as an "internal Chinese document" "obtained ... by the US Government" (Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", p13, p16.). In fact, the document can not be more "external". It was published in China Youth Daily, one of the nation's widest-circulated newspaper.

Philippines are substantially enhanced, their attitudes and bargaining positions over the Spratlys will be stronger.[45]

Second, the ASEAN countries have started to "internationalise" - in China's words - the Spratly dispute. There has been an enhanced trend of establishing dialogues on regional security issues - a major one among which is the Spratly dispute - at the annual AMM and PMM. Meanwhile ASEAN has attempted to discuss the dispute at other international forums. For example, with ASEAN's collective support, Indonesia organised three workshops on the Spratlys in Bali in 1990, Bandung in 1991 and Yogyakarta in 1992. At the 25th AMM in July 1992, the Philippine President Ramos called for UN intervention in the dispute, and ASEAN collectively proposed to hold an international conference to settle it. In September the same year, ASEAN successfully managed to persuade other Non-aligned Movement members to discuss the dispute at the Movement's 10th summit in Jakarta, and it was addressed in the Final Document of the Movement's Political Committee. "Internationalisation" would only enhance the positions of the smaller regional claimant countries in relation to China and strengthen international sympathy for them, if not only because of the "big power syndrome" in international perceptions of China-Southeast Asia relations. Discussion of the sovereignty issue would imply that it is still to be decided, which China contends is not the case.

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45 See, for example, Rong Xing, "Malaixiya fanwu zhengce zhongxing zhuanxian haiyan (Malaysia's defence focus shifting off-shore)", DY, No. 3, 1990, p15.

Third, the ASEAN countries have tried to involve the Western powers, the United States and Japan in particular, in the South China Sea security. They have discussed the Spratly issue with their Western dialogue partners at PMM, and established new security links with the United States. For example, in 1989 Singapore offered to provide new air and naval facilities for the US navy for refuelling and ship repair, and this was formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries in 1990. Malaysia has offered Subang airport since 1989 for servicing US aircraft and allowed US warships access to Lumut port and ship repair facility since 1992. Indonesia has permitted US warships to use repair facilities at PAL shipyards at Surabaya. Brunei has planned to join the Five Power Defence Arrangement, and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding on defence with the USA to provide for training and access for US naval vessels. The Philippine government has expressed an intention to seek a review of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the USA to ensure that the section of the Spratlys claimed by Manila is covered by the pact, and has also indicated that it would probably allow US troops temporary use of an air base after US departure from its last permanent military installation in the country. At the 25th AMM in July 1992, for the first time the ASEAN countries displayed public unanimity in favour of a continued US military presence in the region.[46] China is concerned that involvement by extra-regional

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46 For these developments, see International Herald Tribune, December 19, 1990, p5; Muthiah Alagappa, "Security in South-East Asia: Beyond a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN)", Disarmament: Topical Papers 6, 1991(United Nations, Department for Disarmament Affairs), August 1991, pp108-109; "Worries about China", Asiaweek, August 7, 1992, p24; and Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", p14.

powers would further complicate the situation in the South China Sea, and limit its own room for manoeuvre. In fact China believes that it is the main target of the ASEAN countries' policies of involving the US and Japan in the Spratly issue,[47] and is also concerned that Japan will exploit its invited involvement to enlarge its role in regional security arrangements in general. A continued US military presence in Southeast Asia and a higher security role for Japan would thwart China's ambition to expand its own regional influence in the post-Cold War era.

Fourth, there has been a significant development of what China perceives as collusion between regional claimants at the expense of China's interests. Despite their conflicting claims in the Spratlys, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have tacit understandings aimed at dealing with China with collective diplomatic strength. Seeking a regional solution of the Spratly issue excluding China has been Hanoi's approach since as early as 1974.[48] Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguygen Duy Trinh visited Manila in 1978, and signed a statement with Marcos that any differences or disagreements between the two countries over sovereignty of the Spratly Islands should be discussed and settled "in the spirit of conciliation and friendship,"[49] something not unlike Deng-Marcos agreement. On its own initiative, Vietnam reached similar understandings with Malaysia in 1980 and 1983.[50] Since 1988, with the Cambodian issue becoming increasingly less of a barrier

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47 Wang Lanying, "Fanzhi chongtu, gongtong kaifa (Prevent conflict, and pursue common exploitation)", LW, No.31, August 5, 1991, p46.

48 Lim Joo-Jock, op.cit., p48, p60.

49 NST, January 9, 1978. See also Rodney Tasker, op.cit., p12.

50 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., pp175-176.

between ASEAN and Vietnam, the process of collusion has accelerated. The three countries have actively held discussions about the Spratly dispute, excluding China. China sees this development as attempt by these countries to cut a deal between themselves, in order to pressure China into accepting a fait accompli.[51] In 1988 the Philippine and Vietnamese Foreign Ministers signed a joint communique on the Spratlys which said that they would solve the problem peacefully.[52] Meanwhile, the Philippines and Malaysia reached tentative agreement to submit their dispute to the International Court of Justice.[53] In January 1992, the Malaysian government agreed to develop some of the islands jointly during talks with visiting Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet.[54] Vo also discussed the dispute with the Philippine government during his visit to Manila the following month.[55] Along with cooperation between the three countries, there has also emerged an ASEAN-Vietnam and intra-ASEAN cooperation. This can be seen in the ASEAN countries' consensus on involving extra-regional major powers in the Spratly issue, their collective efforts to "internationalise" the issue, and Vietnam's full support for such efforts. China is also worried that ASEAN-Vietnam cooperation on the Spratly issue may pave the way for a kind of ASEAN-Vietnam entente cordiale against China in broader regional relations with the solution of the Cambodian conflict. Since late 1988 Vietnam has

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51 Tian Zhongqing, op.cit., p10.

52 RR, December 2, 1988, p1.

53 Bradford L. Thomas, The Spratly Islands Imbroglio: A Tangled Web of Conflict (Working Paper No. 74, Peace Research Centre, The Australian National University, April 1990), p9.

54 Reuter, Singapore, January 24, 1992.

55 Reuter, Manila, January 30, 1992.

improved its relations with the ASEAN countries, signing the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and obtaining observer status at AMM, as a prelude to full membership of ASEAN.

Undoubtedly there is an interaction between China's own Spratly policy and the aforementioned regional activities. With the new significance it has attached to the South China Sea, and perceiving the Spratly dispute as poised to intensify with the superpower military drawdown and solution of the Cambodian conflict, China has become determined to take steps to avoid emergence as a net loser in terms of territory, resources and face. The Tiananmen suppression in June 1989 and the world-wide collapse of communist regimes have also strengthened the Chinese government's resolve to do something, because it needs nationalistic appeal to shore up its legitimacy among the people. Given the weakening of China's international and regional position with the end of the Cold War, a more assertive gesture over the Spratlys is needed to increase its influence in the Asia-Pacific region, and enable it to enter the burgeoning new regional and world order as a stronger player. However, there are serious constraints on China. Apart from the technical weakness of its naval and air forces, China needs to maintain a long-term peaceful environment in Southeast Asia for its own modernisation, and to that end China has put emphasis on improving relations with the ASEAN countries. China's imperative since 1987-88 of dealing with Tibetan unrest and the resurgence of Islam, especially militant fundamentalism, in Xinjiang, where over 60% of the population is Muslim, has added to its wish to maintain a stable situation near its southern border. As influences prompting China to adopt a harsher Spratly policy, the

Tiananmen suppression and the world-wide collapse of communism have their limits. China needs cooperation from the ASEAN countries in breaking the international isolation caused by the 1989 event and in confronting Western pressure on the issue of human rights (Chapter Three). In its attempt to shore up its international influence in the post-Cold War era, China has focused on strengthening relations with neighbouring countries, as seen in Chinese leaders' frequent visits to those countries including the ASEAN members since 1990. As well, with the end of the Cold War, it is increasingly unlikely that China could take drastic action in the Spratlys without risking strong unfavourable Western reaction and further international isolation. Such action would push Japan, for which the South China Sea is a vital conduit for shipping between itself and the Middle East oil-fields, to assume a major political and security role in Southeast Asia at the expense of China's regional influence. As a result, while making efforts to strengthen its claims and recover national sovereignty, China must limit its actions so that they do not damage its relations with the ASEAN countries and/or unduly exacerbate the Spratly dispute. Herein lies China's dilemma. In China's Spratly policy since late 1987, the following aspects are conspicuous.

China has become more vigorous in diplomatically and legally defending its Spratly claim. While reiterating this position in statements or maps before, the NPC adopted a "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone" in February 1992, laying down China's exclusive claim over the entire Spratly archipelago and authorising the Chinese navy to evict

"trespassers" by force.[56] China's diplomatic posture towards Malaysia and the Philippines has hardened. When a bill was tabled before the Philippine Congress to formally redefine the country's maritime boundaries to include about sixty islets in the Spratly archipelago in late November 1987, China immediately expressed its criticism, and made three public protests, one of them on the front page of the People's Daily, within one week.[57] There were two unprecedented aspects in China's reaction. First, China, for the first time since the early 1970s, mentioned the offending ASEAN country by name in a public protest relating to the Spratly dispute. This "naming" style of official complaint has been maintained ever since, in relation to both Malaysia and the Philippines.[58] Second, China expressed its protest in strong and even threatening terms such as "this (Manila's claim) would hurt the Chinese people's feeling, obstruct Sino-Philippines relations, and defy the trend (towards detente) of the current era",[59] the strongest used in Chinese criticism of an ASEAN country on the Spratly issue since 1971.

Facing the trend towards "internationalisation" of the Spratly issue, China on the one hand has expressed disapproval of multilateral discussions of the Spratlys in general, and on the other has gone out of its way to block any discussion of the sovereignty aspect. It has insisted that official and public discussion of the Spratlys should only cover such technical aspects as resource management, shipping

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56 RR, 26 January 1992, p4.

57 RR, November 26, 1987, p6. RR, November 27, 1987, p6. RR, December 3, 1987, p1.

58 See, for instance, RR, December 2, 1988, p1; and RR, September 15, 1991, p4.

59 RR, November 26 and 27, 1987, p6. RR, December 3, 1987, p1.

and the environment. For example, when a Hong Kong conference on the Spratlys was arranged in December 1990, China brought pressure to bear to make sure that others' conflicting claims were not discussed.[60] In June 1991, President Yan Shankun reached a tacit understanding with Indonesia during his visit that the Bandung meeting on the Spratly dispute to be held in the following month would be successful only if the sovereignty question was not raised.[61] To bring home this point, the Chinese Foreign Ministry emphasised that China's decision to attend the Bandung talks in no way signalled a change of its claim to exclusive sovereignty over the area. At the conference the head of the Chinese delegation Wang Lanying expressed dissatisfaction when the sovereignty issue was added to the agenda.[62] China has made particularly clear its opposition to extra-regional major powers' participation in discussions concerning resolution of the territorial disputes.[63] It approves their involvement only in some aspects of the cooperation mechanism to be established between the disputing countries, such as pollution control and the funding of exploration for oil and natural gas.[64]

China has become more active in suggesting to Malaysia and the Philippines that they could conduct co-exploration of the resources,

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60 SCMP, December 30, 1990, p4.

61 SCMP, July 14, 1991, p11.

62 Wang Lanying, op.cit., pp45-46.

63 At the Yogyakarta conference on the Spratlys in July 1992, Zhao Weihong, deputy head of the Department of Law and Treaty at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, strongly warned that "any intervention by any state outside the region will certainly complicate the problem". Reuter, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, July 2, 1992.

64 Wang Lanying, op.cit., p46. Reuter, Indonesia, July 17, 1991.

temporarily setting aside their dispute over sovereignty.[65] At the Bandung conference, China made specific proposals for cooperation in areas including division and regulation of navigational channels, exchange of meteorological data, and sea rescue.[66] In August 1992 China formally suggested to Malaysia joint agreement on development of oil and gas resources in the disputed area.[67] During a visit to China in April 1993, President Ramos and Chinese President Jiang Zemin agreed in principle to explore and develop the disputed territory jointly, and to shelve the issue of sovereignty.[68]

China has continued to accelerate the process of modernising its naval and air forces, purchasing state-of-the-art weapons from Russia.[69] This is to deter regional claimant countries from further "illegal" actions and enable China to respond effectively to any unexpected armed clashes in the South China Sea. China has established and reinforced its own foothold in the archipelago by occupying islands and reefs, but without risking a large-scale war. China is aware that the fruits of joint exploitation may well be divided according to the numbers of the occupied islands and the strength of a claimant country's long-term military presence in the Spratlys. Meanwhile, only by military occupation can China effectively obstruct regional claimant countries' efforts at joint

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65 See Chinese leaders statements reported in RR, April 17, 1988, p1, p5; RR, December 14, 1990, p1; and RR, December 16, 1990, p1.

66 Wang Lanying, op.cit., p46

67 Reuter, Kuala Lumpur, August 25, 1992.

68 MC, April 27, 1993, p1.

69 For China's efforts at naval modernisation in recent years, see, for example, Tai Ming Cheung, "Fangs of the dragon", FEER, August 13, 1992, p20.

exploitation to the exclusion of China. Even if it has been apparently energetic in advocating the policy of conducting joint exploitation and shelving the sovereignty dispute, China has not stopped occupying islands and reefs across the Spratlys. Hence a conspicuous contradiction in China's behaviour emerges in the eyes of regional countries. For example, in June 1992 China landed troops on the Vietnamese-claimed Da Lac reef and set up a sovereignty post there, but at the 25th AMM in July Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen repeated the offer to shelve the sovereignty dispute.[70]

After clashing with Vietnamese troops in March 1988 near Sinh Cow Island, Chinese naval forces occupied eight reefs and islands and by early 1990 held seven of them.[71] By August 1992, China was believed to have occupied nine islands and reefs.[72] To demonstrate its effective control of the islands, China has built small concrete fortresses on them. In late July 1988, China's permanent base on Yongshu Jiao Reef was completed, thereby significantly strengthening its military capability in the Spratlys. The base includes an oceanographic observation station, a helipad and a 300-metre pier capable of handling 4,000-tonne ships. Direct postal and telecommunication links with the mainland have been

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70 Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", p15.

71 Mark Valencia, "Solving the Spratlys", Pacific Research, May 1990, p10. See also Nayan Chanda, "Security Issues and Potential Conflict in Indochina: a Perspective for the Nineties", in Tai Ming Cheung, ed., Changing Patterns of East Asian Security (Centre for Asian Pacific Studies, Lingnan College, December 1991), p94.

72 Nayan Chanda, "Treacherous shoals", p15.

established.[73] To enhance the legitimacy of China's newly established sphere of influence in the Spratlys, Beijing has dispatched government delegations to visit the islands and reefs it has occupied and erect sovereignty markers there.

The regional countries have produced some formulas aimed at preventing escalation of conflict in the South China Sea by creating transparence concerning troop exercises and movements so that eventually a zone of demilitarisation would be established around the Spratlys.[74] For the regional countries, such frameworks with China's full engagement could deter China from activities that could threaten the security of the region. However, given its mind-set regarding the Spratly dispute, China may well believe that the regional claimant countries' enthusiasm for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM) in the South China Sea is due to their awareness that they are already winners in the status quo, and be reluctant to have its hands tied by CSBM.

China has stepped up its scientific investigation of the Spratlys in order to assist the exploitation of resources and for various military purposes. As already indicated, one of the priority projects of the Seventh Five-Year Plan was a comprehensive scientific survey of

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73 Chang Pao-min, "A New Scramble for the South China Sea Islands", CSA, Vol. 12, No. 1, June 1990, p27. See also Wang Jingsheng, "Nansha Yongshu Jiao haiyan guancezhan (Yongshu Jiao Reef oceanographic observation station in the Spratlys)", Zhongguo Jianshe (China Construction), January, 1989, pp46-47.

74 See, for example, Mark Valencia, "The regional imperative", FEER, 13 August 1992, p20; and Muthiah Alagappa, "Confidence-and Security-building in South-East Asia (working group II)", Disarmament: Topical Papers 6, 1991, pp159-160.

the Spratly archipelago and surrounding waters. The project, led by the prestigious Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), was strengthened in the process of considering the new situation surrounding the Spratlys. By the end of 1990, more than forty top-level institutions and three hundred scientists had participated in the project.[75] The period from late April to early June 1989 saw the climax of the project. During that period, CAS launched a large-scale, 35-day intensive scientific survey of the entire northeastern section of the Spratlys, clearly with a view to perfecting its knowledge of the geological and navigational conditions of the archipelago.[76] In May 1992 the China National Off-shore Oil Corporation signed an agreement with the US-based Crestone Energy Corporation, allowing that company to explore for oil in 9,700 square miles in the Vanguard Bank area of the western Spratlys. This was China's first concession to a foreign company in the Spratlys. While negotiating, the Chinese leaders assured Crestone's Chairman that China was prepared to use all necessary military force to protect the company's operations.[77]

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75 RR, December 29, 1991, p4. For China's intensified scientific research on the South China Sea in general, see Zhou Renlin, "Zhongguo Kexueyuan Nanhai Haiyang Yanjiusuo dui Nanhai de kexue yanjiu (scientific research on the South China Sea conducted by the South China Sea Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Science)", paper presented at the conference "Yataiqu haiyang jingji hezuo: nan Zhongguo hai de xianzhuang yu zhangwang (maritime economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: current situation and future of the South China Sea)", organised by Lingnan College, Hong Kong, May 26-30, 1991, passim.

76 Chang Pao-min, op.cit., p36.

77 John W. Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea: the Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests", CQ, December 1992, p1017.

China has expressed its willingness to cooperate with Taiwan on the Spratly dispute. Beijing and Taipei once condemned each other for selling out national sovereignty to foreign powers. China possibly hopes that its assertive Spratly policy in recent years would also help its nationalism contest with Taipei, which has become increasingly popular both in the international community and among mainland Chinese since 1987 because of its economic success, political liberalisation, and the June 4 crack-down in Beijing, thus creating a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the communist government. As early as the 1970s the dispute had become an issue that China attempted to exploit to appeal for unity with Taiwan on a nationalist theme. Thus from time to time, the mutuality of interests between the two rival Chinese governments over the islands had been stressed in China's statements and documents.[78] Chinese leaders also gave credit to Taiwan's sustained military occupation of Taiping Island, the largest island in the Spratlys.[79] However, since 1989-90 Beijing has called for coordination with Taipei on the Spratly issue in its own right rather than exploiting the issue to push the process of the reunification of the motherland.

China appeals to Taiwan by stressing that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are "Yanhuangzisun (descendants of Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang)", hence having common interests in issues relating to Chinese territorial integrity. As a Chinese delegate stressed to Taiwanese representatives in a Hong Kong conference on the South China Sea in mid-1991, "being Yanhuangzisun, we should regard it

78 Chi-Kin Lo, op.cit., p38.

79 "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation", pp80-81.

as our common unshakable obligation to complete the historic task of returning the Spratlys to the motherland. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait should cooperate hand in hand in solving this issue, doing something of historic significance to our country, nation, and our descendants."[80] So far, however, the cooperation is still tacit, largely at a people-to-people level. Though proposals have been raised in Chinese academic circles to coordinate China's Spratly policy with Taiwan's in a more formal political and even military way,[81] coordination at this level is not likely until major problems concerning Beijing-Taiwan relations, particularly that of Taiwan's international status, are solved.

In many essays and papers delivered at international seminars or presented by their respective governments, the nationalists and the communists have freely quoted each other's archives and research conclusions, and in many ways have supported each other in their arguments against Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.[82] In 1991 alone, representatives from China and Taiwan met three times in international conferences on the Spratly issue. At the first, in Hong Kong in May 1991, academics from the two sides of the Taiwan Strait for the first time held discussions between themselves about the Spratly issue. The mainland Chinese hailed these discussions as having long-term and far-reaching

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80 Chen Guangqi, "Hanwei Nansha zhuquan shi yanhuangzisun de gongtong zhize (It is the common responsibility of the descendants of Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang to protect China's sovereignty over the Spratlys)", paper presented at the conference "Yataiqu haiyang jingji hezuo", p7.

81 Tian Zhongqing, op.cit., p13.

82 SCMP, June 9, 1991, p13

significance.[83] The second conference was in Bandung in July 1991. The Chinese chief delegate praised the fact that Chinese and Taiwanese officials had taken the same stand on a series of issues discussed, especially on protecting China's sovereignty, and had cooperated well. He emphasised that this cooperation should continue because "it is in the interest of the Chinese nation as a whole".[84] The Chinese and Taiwanese delegations formed an alliance to oppose attempts by Singapore and Indonesia to enlarge the conference by including Japan, and to let Japan play a political role in settling conflicting claims to the Spratlys.[85] The third meeting was the most significant. It was organised by China itself in September 1991, called "Islands in the South China Sea Conference", and held in Haikou, the capital city of Hainan Island Province, whose territory is supposed to include the Spratlys. The noteworthy side of the meeting was that it was attended only by "Yanhuangzisun". At the meeting, representatives from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao focused their discussions on the historical, geographical and legal basis for a claim to sovereignty over the Spratlys by the "whole Chinese nation".[86]

Until late 1992, China had continued to deal with Malaysia and the Philippines less heavy-handedly than with Vietnam. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the March 1988 clash, China issued a long statement, demanding solemnly that Hanoi withdraw immediately from all the "illegally occupied islands and reefs of

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83 Chen Guanqi, op.cit., p7.

84 Wang Lanying, op.cit., p46.

85 Reuter, Bandung, July 17, 1991. Reuter, Bandung, July 18, 1991.

86 RR, September 19, 1991, p4

China's Nansha Islands".[87] A senior naval officer reiterated China's vow to recover all the twenty-one islands and reefs held by Vietnam "at an appropriate time".[88] Hanoi's request for ministerial-level talks with China was turned down by the Chinese as no more than an empty gesture.[89] Meanwhile however, Chinese officials assured the Philippines and Malaysia that China meant no unfriendly gesture towards them, and declared that China's dispute with them over the Spratlys could be resolved through friendly discussions.[90] In April 1988, when Prime Minister Li Peng pointed out in his Government Work Report to the First Plenary Session of the 7th NPC that collusion had emerged among regional claimant countries at China's expense, he criticised only Vietnam directly, alleging that Vietnam was "going out of its way to use the dispute to drive wedges" between China and ASEAN.[91] In May 1989, when the Vietnamese Chief of General Staff and Vice-President of the Council of State made inspection tours of Vietnamese-held Spratlys, China sternly condemned this "flagrant provocation of China's territorial integrity" and once again demanded that Vietnam immediately get out of all the islands and reefs it had "illegally" occupied.[92] However, when the Philippines' air force Commander-in-Chief toured its occupied area in November 1990, China did not make any comment. More significantly, China remained silent over the visit to the Malaysia-occupied atoll of Terumbu Layang-Layang

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87 RR, March 25, 1988, p4.

88 Chang Pao-min, op.cit., p27.

89 Hurng-yu Chen, "The Prospects for Joint Development in the South China Sea", IS, Vol. 27, No. 12, December 1991, p119.

90 RR, April 16, 1988.

91 GR, April 15, 1988, p1.

92 Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan: 1990, p48.

by Malaysia's King Sultan Azlan Shah and Queen Bainun in May 1992. In August 1989, China launched a strong protest against Vietnam's "illegal" construction of a "science, technology and economic zone" on some of the islands and reefs in the Spratlys,[93] but when Malaysia started to develop Terumbu Layang-Layang into a tourist resort from 1991, thus becoming the first country to use the disputed islands for tourism, China's reaction was conspicuously moderate. China complained about Malaysia's building of an airstrip on the atoll,[94] but failed to comment on the whole project and remained silent even when the construction of a tourist resort was well under way in 1992. In 1989, China repeatedly condemned Vietnam's "illegal" capture of Chinese fishermen near Vietnamese-occupied islands,[95] but made no comment when the Philippine navy detained in March 1992 seven Chinese fishermen near one of the eight isles it had occupied. It was reported that the fishermen were eventually freed after quiet and "friendly consultations and arrangements" between Beijing and Manila.[96] As well, the much-publicised Crestone deal only covered the area claimed by Vietnam and China. In fact China's occupation of islands and atolls in the Spratlys since 1988 has all been at Vietnam's expense.

From the Chinese point of view, Vietnam stands out on three counts as compared with Malaysia and the Philippines in terms of the Spratly dispute. First, Vietnam's maritime "expansion" into the South China Sea has deep-rooted economic, political and strategic reasons. With a large population, a small landmass, poor inland

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93 RR, August 20, 1989, p1.

94 RR, September 15, 1991, p4.

95 Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan: 1990, p48.

96 Reuter, Manila, April 1, 1992. Reuter, Manila, April 13, 1992

resources (especially petroleum), and its attempt at "regional 'hegemonism", Vietnam has a long-term ambition in the Spratlys.[97] Second, among all the regional claimant countries, Vietnam has occupied most islands and reefs and has been most active in "plundering" China's oil and gas resources in the Spratlys.[98] Third, Vietnam until 1974 officially recognised in all its government statements and formal diplomatic notes that both the Paracels and Spratlys had been Chinese territory since ancient times.[99]

The timing of China's harsher Spratly policy towards Vietnam was decided by the state of Vietnam's relations with the superpowers and China. Moscow's greatly reduced alliance commitment to Hanoi and normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations convinced China that Moscow was highly unlikely to come to Hanoi's help if China attacked in the Spratlys. Nor would the USA help Vietnam to resist a coercive approach by China since Vietnam-US official relations had still not been restored. As well, the less than warm Sino-Vietnam relations, and the fact that Vietnam had more to gain from normalisation than China, meant that China had little to lose in bilateral relations with a heavy-handed policy towards Vietnam in the Spratlys. China may have seen the virtue of maximising its area of occupation and operation by seizing islands and reefs

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97 Li Ning, op.cit., pp12-15.

98 Dai Ke Lai, "Nanhai jiqi zhudao yanjiu gongzuo jidai jiajiang (We should urgently strengthen research on the South China Sea and its islands)", circulated by History Department of Zhengzhou University, China, 1990, pp3-5.

99 Zhan Mingwen, "Zhongguo Nansha Jundao de lishi yu xianshi (History and current situation of China's Spratly Islands)", Youlianhui Zhiliao (Reading materials from the Committee of External Friendship and Liaison, Beijing), January-February, 1990, pp23-25.

claimed by Vietnam before the full normalisation of Vietnam's relations with the United States, China and ASEAN.

It is uncertain whether China feels sure that it has balanced its quests for a peaceful peripheral environment and recovering of national sovereignty. The results of its policy are mixed. It has obviously strengthened its claim, but its policy has cast a cloud over relations with the ASEAN countries and helped to intensify the Spratly dispute. It is possible that China's assertive military activities in the Spratlys mainly reflect the navy's bureaucratic interests aimed at building a modern and blue-water force. As John W. Garver has suggested, the Chinese navy has tried to use missions in the South China Sea to justify acquisition of more advanced weaponry.[100] In other words, while both the Chinese foreign policy establishment and the military have seen the necessity of striking a balance between maintaining a stable peripheral environment and recovering national sovereignty, the navy's pursuit of its bureaucratic interests may have meant that the assertiveness of China's Spratly policy has gone beyond the limit thought by foreign affairs officials as desirable.

Deep-seated suspicions among the ASEAN countries, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, of China's long-term intentions in the region, which had been to some extent reduced by China's cooperative policy over the Cambodian issue and historical problems concerning ethnic Chinese and communist insurgencies, have been rekindled by China's assertive Spratly policy. Regional perception of China as a potentially destabilising force in pursuit of

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100 John W. Garver, op.cit., p1017.

a hegemonic scheme in Southeast Asia has been reinforced by China's readiness to use force in asserting its claims, as seen in the clash with Vietnam in March 1988, and its growing "blue water" navy.[101] For example, B. A. Hamzah has alleged that against the end of the Cold War, characterised by the withdrawal of former Soviet forces from Vietnam and of United States forces from the Philippines, China has seen a power vacuum that it has found hard to resist filling. Thus China has strengthened its profile in the Spratlys to replace a "reluctant Pax Americana" and an "impotent Russia" in the region.[102] Bilveer Singh has pointed out that a regional strategic consensus has emerged, in which China is viewed as the greatest threat to the region.[103] China's clash with Vietnam had even affected its normalising relations with Indonesia. Shortly before the clash, Indonesia may have been softening its stand on terms for normalisation. Visiting Indonesia in April 1988, Chinese deputy Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing assured Jakarta that China wanted to restore full relations with Indonesia based on the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and that China would not allow Indonesian communists in exile in China to engage in any anti-Indonesian activities. However, China's

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101 Kusuma Snitwongse, "Strategic Developments in Southeast Asia", a paper prepared for Strategic and Defence Studies Centre 25th Anniversary Conference "Strategic Studies in a Changing World", Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 29 July - 1 August 1991, p8. See also "Worries about China", p23; B.A. Hamzah, "Jurisdiction Issues and the Conflicting Claims in the Spratlys", The Indonesian Quarterly (hereafter IQ), Vol. XVIII, No. 2, Second Quarter, 1990, p145; and Mark Valencia, "The regional imperative", p20.

102 B. A. Hamzah, "China's strategy", FEER, 13 August 1992, p22.

103 Bilveer Singh, "China gives S-E Asia two causes for anxiety", BT, 9 June 1993, contained in PacNet, July 2, 1993, Number 22, p2.

actions in the Spratlys a month before had caused concern in Indonesia and raised questions about the sincerity of Chinese pledges. A Chinese proposal for the two countries to open trade offices in each other's capital was also put on hold following the event.[104]

China's assertiveness has strengthened regional claimant countries' efforts to reinforce their military occupations and expand their naval-air forces, contributed to ASEAN's policy of "internationalising" the dispute and involving extra-regional major powers in the South China Sea security arrangement, and added to regional unity against China. For example, because of the March 1988 clash between China and Vietnam, Filipino troops on the islets they occupied were put on full alert and additional marines and artillery were deployed.[105] Meanwhile, Malaysia decided to build a major naval base at Sandakan on the northern cost of Sabah within one year.[106] The Crestone deal also made all the regional claimant countries send troops to reinforce their positions.[107] China's enhanced naval presence contributed to Malaysia's order of two frigates from Britain, its tentative agreement with a Swedish shipyard for two submarines, and the Philippines' order of three fast attack boats equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles from Spain.[108] The Declaration on the South China Sea issued at the

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104 ST, September 4, 1988.

105 Chang Pao-min, op.cit., p28.

106 Ibid. See also Lee Lai To, "Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea: Political and Security Issues", IQ, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, Second Quarter, 1990, p157.

107 The Age, July 7, 1992, p8. Reuter, Kuala Lumpur, July 6, 1992.

108 Tai Ming Cheung, "Fangs of the dragon", p20. For China as a contributing factor to the regional countries' policies of accelerating the expansion of

25th AMM in 1992, seen by China as an attempt to "internationalise" the issue, and ASEAN's proposal at that meeting to hold an international conference to settle the issue were prompted by China's increasingly assertive actions in the area since early 1992.[109] These actions also led to cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN at the 25th AMM in dealing with China about the Spratly dispute, reflected particularly in Vietnam's full support for the Declaration,[110] and caused ASEAN to insert a paragraph on the dispute into the final document of the Non-aligned Movement's Political Committee in September the same year.[111] Because of the territorial law passed in Beijing in February 1992, the ASEAN countries reaffirmed in the same month their desire to see the US military presence in the region maintained.[112] It has been argued that, given China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, the worst-case scenario for China could be a Southeast Asia united against China and backed implicitly by the USA and even Japan.[113] China's assertive Spratly policy has contributed significantly to the fact that compared with China, ASEAN has shown more readiness to involve Japan to play a positive political role not only in resolving the Spratly dispute but also in regional affairs in general, if not only to contain the perceived China threat. Japan's role in the resolution of the Cambodian conflict has been welcomed in ASEAN. Suggestions have been heard in the ASEAN countries that Japan gradually

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their naval and air forces, see also Julius Caesar Parrenas, "China and Japan in ASEAN's Strategic Perceptions", CSA, Vol. 12, No. 3, December 1990, p216.

109 Reuter, Manila, July 14, 1992.

110 Reuter, Hanoi, July 20, 1992. See also DT, July 21, 1992, p12.

111 Mark J. Valencia, "Spratly Solution Still at Sea", The Pacific Review, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993, p157.

112 Reuter, Singapore, March 1, 1992.

113 Mark J. Valencia, "Spratly Solution Still at Sea", p162.

participate more actively in collective security actions under UN auspices,[114] and even that defence cooperation between Japan and ASEAN could take place outside formal arrangement.[115] China was strongly opposed to Japan's proposal raised at the PMM in July 1991 that this conference be turned into a forum for high-level political and security consultations. However, the progress in that direction as shown in the ASEAN Summit in January 1992 and the 25th AMM has indicated that China's sentiment has not been heeded in ASEAN.

Chinese political and military leaders have repeatedly assured their ASEAN counterparts since 1990 that China's military modernisation is for self defense.[116] They have dismissed the idea of a "China threat" and China "filling the vacuum" as "unfounded allegations", since China has no expansionist and hegemonistic motives in the region "for now and in the future".[117] It has been emphasised to the ASEAN countries that after all China has long needed to expand and modernise its obsolete naval and air forces which were largely neglected in the 1960s-70s due to an obsession with the land-based Soviet threat. Even so, China has been cutting down the share of military spending in its budget and Gross Domestic Product, with a military expenditure figure lower than those of major Western powers, and by Western standards the level of technology of China's

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114 Jusuf Wanandi, "Peace and Security in Southeast Asia", IQ, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Fourth Quarter, 1991, p316.

115 B.A. Hamzah, "ASEAN and the Remilitarization of Japan: Challenges or Opportunities?" IQ, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Second, Quarter, 1991, p162.

116 RR, December 14, 1990, p1. RR, December 16, 1990, p1. JP, October 10, 1992, p1.

117 RR, February 2, 1992, p1. RR, June 11, 1993, p4. NST, June 15, 1993, p1. RR, June 16, 1993, p1.

naval and air systems remains obsolete.[118] These assurances could hardly remove regional apprehensions about China's defense modernisation, whether in the light of China's actual military activities in the South China Sea, or in conceptual terms. Since China claims the entire Spratly archipelago, what it regards as "self-defense" includes military eviction of regional "trespassers" from occupied areas, which it claims should not be seen as expansionist or hegemonistic since these actions protect China's national sovereignty. China's emphasis on the technological obsolescence of its weaponry as compared with major Western powers shows that China still has some way to go in understanding its own strategic prominence in the regional context and in appreciating the Southeast Asian countries' traditional suspicions of its long-term intentions in the region.

Conclusion

When they claim that the Spratly archipelago has been part of China's territory since ancient times, and that China has long been a victim of regional trespassing, the Chinese do so in all seriousness. Before late 1987, the Spratly dispute was a minor issue for China, whose attention to the South China Sea was focused on the two superpowers' presence. Although the countries concerned progressively strengthened their claims on the Spratlys, the territorial dispute did not show signs of becoming a flashpoint. However, China's view of the Spratly dispute has changed substantially since late 1987. Global East-West detente and the

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118 Bai Yulin, "Post-Cold War China-Southeast Asia Political Cooperation", p16. Yan Xuetong, "Yumei de pianjian yu lenzhan duikang de yifeng (Ignorant prejudice and legacy of the Cold War confrontation)", LW, No. 12, March 22, 1993, p41.

concomitant loss of the influential role China enjoyed in the superpowers' strategic relations substantially shifted the attention of Chinese strategists to China's own peripheral region and to factors that could lead to limited military conflicts in the region. With the subsiding of the US-Soviet rivalries in Southeast Asia and the stronger momentum in the solution process of the Cambodian conflict, the Spratly dispute as a regional security issue has become prominent and is no longer restrained by the kind of disciplines formerly imposed by the contending superpowers. This has coincided with China attaching greater strategic and economic importance to the South China Sea for its expanding modernisation programs. The Chinese have started to approach the area from the high plane of the nation's future survival. In the eyes of China, regional violations of its territorial integrity in the Spratlys have seen a new development. However, there is an interaction between this and China's own Spratly policy. With new significance attached to the South China Sea, and perceiving the Spratly dispute as poised to intensify, China has become determined to take steps to correct the situation in which it has found itself a net loser in terms of territory, resources and face. However, there are serious constraints on China. The most important one is that China needs to maintain a long-term peaceful environment in Southeast Asia for its own modernisation construction. For that purpose China has put emphasis on improving relations with the ASEAN countries. Thus while making efforts to strengthen its claims and recover national sovereignty, China must limit its actions so that they do not damage its relations with the ASEAN countries and/or unduly exacerbate the Spratly dispute.

There are seven aspects to China's Spratly policy since late 1987. First, China has become more vigorous in diplomatically and legally defending its Spratly claim. Second, China has fought hard against regional claimants' efforts to internationalise discussion of the Spratly issue. Third, China has actively sought agreement from Malaysia and the Philippines to conduct joint exploration of resources with their dispute over sovereignty set aside temporarily. Fourth, China has continued to accelerate the process of modernising its naval and air forces, and has established and reinforced its own foothold in the archipelago by occupying islands and reefs. Fifth, China has stepped up its scientific investigations of the Spratlys. Sixth, China has sought to cooperate with Taiwan on the Spratly dispute. Seventh, China had until late 1992 dealt with Malaysia and the Philippines in a way less heavy-handed than its approach to Vietnam. While it has obviously strengthened China's claim, China's Spratly policy has cast a cloud over its relations with the ASEAN countries and helped to intensify the dispute.

Chapter Five

Shaking off a historical burden: China's relations with regional communist insurgency

A major legacy from the Maoist era was the ASEAN governments' deep-rooted suspicions of China's objectives in the region. One of the major reasons for these was China's support for local communist insurgencies which threatened the ASEAN countries' political stability.[1] This chapter looks into China's efforts to improve relations with the ASEAN countries in the Deng era by readjusting China's relations with the local insurgents. The first section summarises the theory justifying China's support for the regional communist movement. The second section examines Dengist China's approach to its ties with the movement. The third section investigates the theoretical backing for that approach, and the fourth section looks at the regional reactions to China's policy.

Theory of National Democratic Revolution

In order to appreciate the extent to which Deng's China had gone in readjusting its relations with the ASEAN-based communist movement, and to see an important characteristic of the CCP culture - namely to constantly reinterpret, revise and discard fundamentalist ideological bibles to suit new imperatives - as manifested in China's changing relations with this movement, it is necessary to have a basic idea of Mao's theory of National

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1 For major works on China's support for regional communist insurgency in Mao's era, see Note 13 in Introduction.

Democratic Revolution (hereafter NDR). This theory was China's ideological justification for supporting communist revolutions in countries like the ASEAN nations, although whether China's support was in fact motivated by ideology was another question. The theory was based on Lenin's theory of imperialism and the background of the Chinese communist revolution. Basic points of Lenin's theory are as follows.

1) The second half of the 19th century was the last stage of bourgeois revolution. The beginning of the 20th century started the era of imperialism and proletarian communist revolution. Imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism. It was decadent and struggling, creating economic and political disaster and bankruptcy. Due to imbalances in economic and political development, imperialist countries were engaged in world-wide competition for markets, raw materials, investment zones and spheres of influence. Thus imperialist war was inevitable and would break out one after another. Domestic decadence and imperialist war would lead to proletarian revolution and the collapse of capitalist systems all over the world.

2) Since this revolution was a world-wide one, working classes in all countries should unify into an alliance and conduct coordinated revolutionary activities. The countries where the working classes had already achieved victory should shoulder the maximum national sacrifice to help their counterparts in other countries in the cause of overthrowing international capitalism, otherwise their victory could not be sustained.

3) World proletarian revolution was fast maturing. The world was on the eve of a complete victory of this revolution and complete defeat for international imperialism.[2]

Mao's NDR theory, most systematically elaborated in his book On New Democracy published in mid-1949, was an expanded application of Lenin's theory to colonial and semi-colonial nations including the pre-1949 China itself. It includes the following arguments.

1) In the post-(Russian) October Revolution period, any anti-imperialist revolutions in any colonial and semi-colonial nations were component parts of a new world revolution, i.e., the world proletarian socialist revolution rather than of the old bourgeois world democratic revolution.

2) All parties, classes or individuals participating in this revolution were allies of the world proletarian socialist revolution. This revolution should be strongly supported by all the countries where proletarian revolution had been victorious, and the international proletariat.

3) The realization of communism was the major task and ultimate goal of this revolution. However, the first phase of the revolution

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2 Liening (Lenin), "Diguozhuyi shi zibenzhuyi de zuigao jieduan (Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism)", in Bureau of Translation and Compilation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, ed., Liening Xuanji (Collected Words of Lenin), Vol. 2 (People's Press, Beijing, 1960), pp739-845. He Fan, 'Women suochu de niandai (The era in which we are)", in Huan Xian, ed., op.cit., pp13-14.

was to completely eliminate imperialist and feudal exploitation and oppression, and achieve true national independence. Once this aim was achieved, which could only be done with the coming to power of a communist force or a joint force of all the revolutionary groups dominated by the communist force, the nation should engage in socialist transformation of its political and economic structure leading to a truly socialist system.[3]

China's policy under Deng

In Deng's era, the CCP focuses its work on economic modernisation instead of the class struggle which dominated Chinese politics in Mao's era. China's reform and open-door policy calls for tranquillity in its neighbourhood including Southeast Asia and friendly relations with the neighbouring countries including the ASEAN members. Communist revolution, however, caused instability in the region, and China's relations with the revolution aroused deep fears of China on the part of regional governments. China learnt two bitter lessons in Indonesia. First, trouble made by a local communist party having relations with China could easily destroy China's relations with the local government. Second, China was in no position to control or influence the events following such trouble. The Beijing-Jakarta alliance from the early 1960s represented China's most striking diplomatic breakthrough in a decade since the

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3 Mao Zedong, Xin minzhu zhuyi lun (On new democracy) (New China Press, Shandong, June 1949), pp3-4, pp7-8, p11, p33. Zhong Su luzhan wenxuan (Selected articles published during Sino-Soviet polemic) (compiled by Hong Kong Provisioning Agency of Cultural Materials, 1977), pp13-17, pp25-26, pp92-93, pp52-53, p222. For a Maoist analysis of Southeast Asia through NDR angle, see Zhu Yu Liang, ed., Zhandou zhong de Dongnanya (The fighting Southeast Asia) (World Knowledge Press, Beijing, 1950).

Bandung Conference, and a success in breaking out from the encirclement imposed on China by the USA. However, China's fortunes were reversed overnight by the ill-fated September 30 Coup plotted by the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) in 1965. In the aftermath of the coup, the ever increasing incidents of maltreatment of local Chinese, ousting Chinese journalists, and attacking Chinese diplomatic missions, and the new Suharto government's deep suspicion of China's direct involvement in planning the coup not only toppled the alliance but also put an end to Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations for more than two decades.

Dengist China's policy of securing stability in Southeast Asia and befriending any incumbent regime in the region was most vividly manifested in China's reactions to radical regime change and the subsequent chaos in the Philippines. Following the assassination of the country's leading political dissident Benigno Aquino in 1983, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) issued a stern anti-Marcos statement,[4] but China tried hard to support the Marcos regime by giving generous economic assistance (Chapter Two). However, when Mrs. Aquino assumed the Presidency following the February 1986 election boycotted by the CPP and the overthrow of Marcos, an old friend of the Chinese people as he was always called by the Chinese government, both Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang and President Li Xiannian lost no time in sending messages of congratulations which were published on the front page of the People's Daily (hereafter RR, for Renmin Ribao) and expressed China's wish to continue

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[4] The CCP Central External Liaison Department, ed., Dangdai guoji gongyuan dashiji: 1979-84 (Major events in contemporary international communist movement: 1979-84) (People's Press, Beijing, 1987), p175

friendly relations with Manila.[5] In March, Cultural Minister Zhu Muzhi led a delegation to the Philippines according to a schedule planned with the Marcos government and signed with Vice-President Laurel the Executive Program of the Sino-Philippine Cultural Agreement for 1986-87. It was the first foreign delegation to visit Manila after installation of the new government,[6] and China was the first foreign country to invite President Aquino to visit.[7] China continued to give the Philippines economic assistance (Chapter Two). Throughout the new government's struggle against both right wing military rebels and the communist New People's Army (NPA), the military wing of the CPP, the Chinese Foreign Ministry frequently made statements that the Aquino government enjoyed the support of the people, and that China wished for the Philippine situation to be stable.[8] When Rudy Salas, NPA chief and CPP chairman, who urged to fight the Aquino government, was captured in September 1986, China paid little attention to the event. Instead, China was interested in the negotiations after the event between the Aquino government and the CPP-NPA for political settlement, something advocated by his opponents in the CPP Politburo. And the tone of RR reports on these negotiations were clearly biased in favour of the Aquino government.[9] After the CPP's humiliating loss in the May 1987 elections for the House and the Senate, the NPA went on a killing spree in several cities.[10]

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5 RR, February 27 and 28, 1986, p1.

6 RR, March 6, 1986, p1.

7 RR, April 11, 1988, p6.

8 RR, May 3, 1986, p6. RR, November 27, 1986, p1. RR, February 5, 1987, p1. RR, August 30, 1987, p4.

9 RR, November 20, 1986, p6. RR, November 27, 1986, p6. RR, November 28, 1986, p1. RR, December 21, 1986, p6. RR, January 8, 1987, p6.

10 Antonio Lopez, "Running a Revolution", Asiaweek, March 9, 1994, p40.

Asked whether China planned to ship weapons to the NPA against this background, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman firmly declared that China did not interfere in other countries' internal affairs. And this statement was put out on the front page of RR.[11] For every achievement in stabilising the domestic situation, Aquino received congratulatory messages from the Chinese government.[12] When she visited China in April 1988, Mrs. Aquino was told by China's newly appointed President Yang Shangkun that "the development of a long-lasting, stable, friendly, and good-neighbourly relationship with the Philippines is China's steadfast and unchangeable stand".[13] This was a word-by-word repetition of the Chinese leaders' remarks made to Marcos Jr. in 1985, when he, representing President Marcos, visited Beijing to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Philippine diplomatic relationship.[14] Also during the meeting Deng unambiguously pledged that the CCP supported President Aquino's government rather than the trouble-making NPA, to the surprise of Aquino and her colleagues.[15]

China's efforts to prevent its relations with the ASEAN-based communist insurgents from obstructing China-ASEAN relations were seen mainly in three areas: RR coverage of the regional communist insurgencies, all along a weather-vane of China's relations with the

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11 RR, November 19, 1987, p1.

12 RR, August 30, 1987, p1. RR, December 5, 1989, p1.

13 RR, April 16, 1988.

14 RR, June 9, 1985, p4.

15 ST, April 17, 1988. For study of China's attitudes towards democratization movement in the Philippines after the assassination of Aquino, see also Wayne Bert, "Chinese policy toward Democratization Movements: Burma and the Philippines", AS, Vol. XXX, No. 11, November 1990, p1068, p1082.

insurgency; Chinese leaders' rhetorical reassurances to their ASEAN counterparts; and China's actions in readjusting its relations with the local communists.

Significant changes can be noted through a survey of RR coverage from 1978 to 1989 (the last year when RR covered regional communist activities) as shown in Table Two, and a comparison with the coverage during the period from 1971 to 1977 as shown in Table Three. The latter period saw detente between China and ASEAN and was marked by, among other things, China's reduced support for the ASEAN-based communist insurgents.

Table Two **People's Daily coverage of ASEAN-based communist insurgency since 1978**

1978

Total number of items: 11

3 January	New year statement of Malayan Communist Party (MCP), lauding the great victory of the people's revolution in the world.
	Voice of Malayan Revolution (VOMR) report on armed struggle in "Malaya"(p6).
3 January	Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT) report on the armed struggle in Thailand(p6).
11 January	VOPT anti-(Soviet) hegemony statement(p6).
4 February	VOMR statement commemorating the 29th anniversary of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA)(p5).
24 February	armed struggle in "North Kalimantan"(p5).
17 March	greetings from MCP and PKI to the First Session of the 5th National People's Congress (NPC) (p5).
24 March	greeting from North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP) to the First Session of the 5th NPC (p5).
25 March	greeting from VOPT to the First Session of the 5th NPC(p5).
6 June	VOPT anti-hegemony statement (p5).

23 June condolence message from PKI on the death of Guo Moruo, a Chinese Vice-Prime Minister (p5).

5 October greeting from VOMR on Chinese National Day (p5).

1979

Total number of items: 2

2 October greetings from the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), MCP, and PKI on Chinese National Day (p5).

6 October greeting from NKCP on Chinese National Day (p5).

1980 - no coverage

1981

Total number of items: 2

5 July greetings from CPT, PKI, MCP and NKCP on the CCP's 60th anniversary (p6).

11 July congratulatory message from PKI on Hu Yaobang's election as CCP Chairman (p6).

1982

Total number of items: 2

5 September greetings from PKI and MCP to CCP's 12th Congress (p6).

18 September greeting from CPT to CCP's 12th Congress (p6).

1983 - no coverage

1984

Total number of items: 1

1 October greetings from MCP, CPT, PKI, and the CPP on Chinese National Day (p3).

1985 - no coverage

1986

Total number of items: 5

1 October the arrest of the leader of CPP-NPA Rudy Salas (p3).

20 November negotiation between CPP and the Aquino government (p6).

27 November negotiation between CPP and the Aquino government (p6).

28 November negotiation between CPP and the Aquino government (p1).

21 December negotiation between CPP and the Aquino government (p6).

1987

Total number of items: 1

8 January negotiation between CPP and the Aquino government (p6).

1988 - no coverage

1989

Total number of items: 1

7 December agreement reached between the MCP and the governments of Malaysia and Thailand for an end to its armed revolution (p4).

Table Three **People's Daily coverage of the ASEAN-based communist insurgency: 1971-77**

1971 - total number of items: 47

coverage of armed struggle: 37 items

- 8 items about NPA[16]
- 8 items about MCP[17]
- 17 items about CPT[18]
- 3 items about NKCP[19]
- 1 item about armed revolution in Southeast Asia in general[20]

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16 RR in 1971: January 5, p6; March 30, p6; April 11 and 23, p6; June 29, p6; December 27, p6; and September 5, p6.

17 RR in 1971: January 9, p6; February 1 and 28, p6; July 29, p5; August 16 and 27, p6; September 5, p6; and October 25, p6.

18 RR in 1971: January 1, 4, 9 and 27, p6; February 1, p6; February 9, 22 and 24, p5; March 10, p6; April 8, p5; July 29, p5; August 7, p5; August 10 and 27, p6; September 5, p6; October 25, p6; and December 25, p6.

19 RR in 1971: March 10, p6; September 5, p6; and July 29, p5.

20 RR, May 19, 1971, p5.

coverage of statements: 4 items

- VOMR statement celebrating MCP's 41st anniversary[21]
- VOMR statement commemorating 23rd anniversary of anti-British war[22]
- VOPT statement calling for an overthrow of the government[23]
- VOPT statement celebrating CPT's 29th anniversary[24]

coverage of messages to the CCP: 6 items

- CPT's greeting on CCP's 50th anniversary[25]
- MCP's greeting on CCP's 50th anniversary[26]
- PKI's greeting on CCP's 50th anniversary[27]
- CPT's greeting on Chinese National Day[28]
- MCP's greeting on Chinese National Day[29]
- PKI's greeting on Chinese National Day[30]

1972 - total number of items: 35

coverage of armed struggle: 28 items

- 5 items about NPA[31]
- 2 items about MCP[32]
- 19 items about CPT[33]

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21 RR, May 2, 1971, p7.

22 RR, June 21, 1971, p6.

23 RR, November 23, 1971, p5.

24 RR, December 3, 1971, p5.

25 RR, July 3, 1971, p5.

26 Ibid.

27 RR, July 14, 1971, p5.

28 RR, November 3, 1971, p6.

29 RR, November 20, 1971, p6.

30 RR, November 18, 1971, p1.

31 RR in 1972: January 4, p6; February 20, p6; March 5, p6; April 1, p6; and December 19, p6.

32 RR in 1972: January 4, p6; and February 20, p6.

33 RR in 1972: January 4, p6; January 14, p5; January 17, p5; February 12, p5; February 20, 23 and 28, p6; March 9, p5; March 9, 13, 16, and 25, p6; May 19, p6; June 3, p6; July 22, p6; August 7 and 9, p6; and November 14, p5.

- 2 items about NKCP[34]

coverage of statements: 5 items

- VOMR statement celebrating the 23rd anniversary of MNLA[35]
- NPA statement celebrating its 3rd anniversary[36]
- PKI statement celebrating its 52nd anniversary[37]
- MCP statement celebrating its 42nd anniversary[38]
- VOPT statement celebrating the 30th anniversary of CPT[39]

coverage of messages to CCP: 2

- VOMR's greeting on Chinese National Day[40]
- VOPT's greeting on Chinese National Day[41]

1973 - total number of items: 12

coverage of armed struggle: 4 items

- all about CPT[42]

coverage of statements: 1 item

- VOMR statement commemorating MNLA's 24th anniversary[43]

coverage of messages to CCP: 7 items

- MCP's greeting to the 5th Plenary Session of the 3rd NPC[44]
- CPT's greeting to the 5th Plenary Session of the 3rd NPC[45]

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34 RR in 1972: February 24, p6; and March 30, p6.

35 RR, February 3, 1972, p5.

36 RR, May 9, 1972, p6.

37 RR, May 24, 1972, p6.

38 RR, May 8, 1972, p6.

39 RR, December 3, 1972, p6.

40 RR, October 7, 1972, p5.

41 Ibid.

42 RR in 1973: February 28, p6; March 22, p6; April 15 and 24, p6.

43 RR, February 6, 1973, p6.

44 RR, September 6, 1973, p4.

45 RR, September 8, 1973, p4.

- PKI's greeting to the 5th Plenary Session of the 3rd NPC[46]
- CPP's greeting CCP's 10th Congress[47]
- CPP's greeting on Chinese National Day[48]
- VOPT's greeting on Chinese National Day[49]
- VOMR's greeting on Chinese National Day[50]

1974 - total number of items: 15

coverage of armed struggle: 6 items

- VOMR report on armed struggle in "North Kalimantan"[51]
- five items about CPT[52]

coverage of statements: 5 items

- CPP statement celebrating the 5th anniversary of its re-organisation[53]
- VOMR statement celebrating the 25th anniversary of MNLA[54]
- NKCP statement calling for the continuation of the armed revolution[55]
- VOPT statement calling for the continuation of the armed revolution[56]
- CPT statement carried via VOPT celebrating the party's 32nd anniversary[57]

coverage of messages to CCP: 4 items

- MCP's greeting on Chinese National Day[58]

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46 RR, September 9, 1973, p4.

47 RR, October 31, 1973, p5.

48 RR, October 12, 1973, p6.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 RR, March 20, 1974, p5.

52 RR in 1974: March 21, p6; April 24, p5; June 15, p5; July 29, p5; and September 11, p6

53 RR, February 10, 1974, p6.

54 RR, February 4, 1974, p6.

55 RR, April 9, 1974, p6.

56 RR, August 11, 1974, p5.

57 RR, December 10, 1974, p5.

58 RR, October 4, 1974, p5.

- CPT's greeting on Chinese National Day[59]
- PKI's greeting on Chinese National Day[60]
- NKCP's greeting on Chinese National Day[61]

1975 - total number of items: 29

coverage of armed struggle: 2 items

- both items about CPT[62]

coverage of statements: 12 items

- 3 items of VOPT anti-hegemony statements[63]
- 1 item of VOMR and VOPT anti-hegemony statements[64]
- VOMR anti-hegemony statement[65]
- PKI statement hailing the victory of Indochinese people[66]
- VOPT statement hailing the victory of the Cambodian people[67]
- MCP statement hailing the victory of the Cambodian people[68]
- PKI statement calling for the continuation of the national struggle for liberation[69]
- MCP statement commemorating its 45th anniversary[70]
- Thai People's Liberation Army statement commemorating the 10th anniversary of armed struggle[71]
- VOPT statement celebrating CPT's 33rd anniversary[72]

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59 Ibid.

60 RR, October 9, 1974, p5.

61 Ibid.

62 RR in 1975: January 4, p5; and May 14, p5.

63 RR in 1975: January 11, p6; July 25, p6; and November 14, p6.

64 RR, May 22, 1975, p5.

65 RR, August 15, 1975, p6.

66 RR, May 15, 1975, p5.

67 RR, April 30, 1975, p5.

68 Ibid.

69 RR, May 24, 1975, p5.

70 RR, May 2, 1975, p5.

71 RR, August 16, 1975, p5.

72 RR, December 7, 1975, p5.

coverage of messages to CCP: 13 items

- CPT's greeting to the 1st Plenary Session of the 4th NPC[73],
- MCP's greeting to the 1st Plenary Session of the 4th NPC[74]
- NKCP's greeting to the 1st Plenary Session of the 4th NPC[75]
- CPP's greeting to the 1st Plenary Session of the 4th NPC[76]
- 5 items of condolences from MCP, CPT, PKI, CPP and NKCP on the death of CCP's Vice-Chairman Kang Sen[77]
- 4 items of condolences from MCP, CPT, PKI, and NKCP on the death of China's Vice-President Dong Biwu[78]

coverage of messages from CCP: 2 items

- CCP's greeting to MCP on its 45th anniversary[79]
- CCP's greeting to PKI on its 55th anniversary[80]

1976 - total number of items: 38

coverage of armed struggle: 2 items

- 1 item about CPT[81]
- 1 item of VOPT reports on armed revolution in Thailand[82]

coverage of statements: 6 items

- 2 items of VOMR anti-hegemony statements[83]
- 2 items of VOPT anti-hegemony statements[84]

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73 RR, January 28, 1975, p5.

74 RR, February 2, 1975, p5.

75 RR, February 13, 1975, p5.

76 RR, February 23, 1975, p5.

77 RR in 1975: December 22, 24 and 28, p5.

78 RR in 1975: April 8, p5; and April 10, 12 and 13, p4.

79 RR, April 30, 1975, p1.

80 RR, May 23, 1975, p1.

81 RR, August 10, 1976, p5.

82 RR, July 7, 1976, p5.

83 RR in 1976: January 3, p5; and March 9, p5.

84 RR in 1976: January 2, p5; and December 31, p6.

- PKI new year statement, calling for unity in marching forward on the revolutionary road[85]
- VOMR statement commemorating MCP's 46th anniversary[86]

coverage of messages to CCP: 30 items

- CPT's greeting on CCP's 55th anniversary[87]
- PKI's greeting on CCP's 55th anniversary[88]
- MCP's greeting on CCP's 55th anniversary[89]
- CPP's greeting on CCP's 55th anniversary[90]
- NKCP's greeting on CCP's 55th anniversary[91]
- 5 items of greetings from CPT, NKCP, MCP, CPP, and PKI on Hua Guofeng's election as Prime Minister[92]
- 5 items of greetings from CPT, NKCP, MCP, CPP, and PKI on Chinese National Day[93]
- 5 items of condolences from NKCP, PKI, CPT, MCP and CPP on the death of Zhou Enlai[94]
- 5 items of condolences from NKCP, PKI, CPT, MCP and CPP on the death of Mao Zedong[95]
- 5 items of condolences from NKCP, PKI, CPT, MCP and CPP on the death of Zhu De, NPC President[96]

1977 - total number of items: 32

coverage of armed struggle: 5 items

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85 RR, January 30, 1976, p5.

86 RR, May 9, 1976, p5.

87 RR, July 2, 1976, p5.

88 Ibid.

89 RR, July 3, 1976, p5.

90 RR, July 21, 1976, p5.

91 Ibid.

92 RR in 1976: October 29, p6; and November 1, 2, 12 and 18, p5.

93 RR in 1976: October 3, 4 and 6, p6; and October 13, p5.

94 RR in 1976: January 11, 12 and 14, p5; and January 13, p1.

95 RR in 1976: September 12 and 19, p10; September 13 and 15, p9; September 15 and 16, p7; and September 15, 18 and 20, p8.

96 RR in 1976: July 11, p4; July 10, 11, 12 and 19, p5; July 12, p6.

- 2 items about MCP[97]
- 1 item about CPT[98]
- 2 items of VOPT reports on armed revolution in Thailand[99]

coverage of statements: 18 items

- MCP new year statement, lauding Mao Zedong Thought and the smashing of the Gang of Four[100]
- VOMR statement lauding Mao's work On Ten Relationships[101]
- VOPT statement hailing the publication of the 5th volume of Selected Words of Mao Zedong[102]
- VOMR statement hailing the publication of the 5th volume of Selected Words of Mao Zedong[103]
- VOMR statement about a major speech by Hua[104]
- VOPT statement commemorating Mao's death
- MCP statement commemorating Mao's death[105]
- VOMR statement lauding the enrichment of Marxism-Leninism by Mao Zedong Thought[106]
- VOMR statement lauding Zhou's contribution to world revolution[107]
- VOPT statement calling on people to unite and struggle[108]
- CPP statement celebrating the 8th anniversary of the party's re-organisation[109]
- VOMR statement commemorating the 29th anniversary of the national liberation war[110]

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97 RR in 1977: June 10, p5; and September 3, p6.

98 RR, August 9, 1977, p5.

99 RR in 1977: April 21, p5; August 12, p5.

100 RR, January 7, 1977, p5.

101 RR, February 24, 1977, p5.

102 RR, April 19, 1977, p4.

103 RR, April 23, 1977, p5.

104 RR, June 4, 1977, p5.

105 RR, September 12 and 22, 1977, p5.

106 RR, December 30, 1977, p5.

107 RR, January 19, 1977, p5.

108 RR, January 12, 1977, p5.

109 RR, April 10, 1977, p4.

110 RR, June 25, 1977, p5.

- VOPT statement hailing the "excellent situation" in world revolution[111]
- 2 items of VOPT's anti-hegemony statements [112]
- VOMR statement calling on the party to persist in marching on the "October Revolution road" and carry forward the anti-revisionist struggle[113]
- PKI statement condemning the Soviet Union and its "running dogs" for sabotaging PKI and Indonesian revolution[114]
- PKI statement condemning the Soviet Union for selling out world revolution[115]

coverage of activities in China: 2 items

- Hua's meeting with a PKI leader based in Beijing[116]
- a PKI delegation visits the Memorial Hall of Mao[117]

coverage of messages to CCP: 6 items

- VOMR's greeting to the 3rd Plenary session of 10th CCP Congress[118]
- MCP's greeting to the 11th CCP Congress[119]
- CPT's greeting to the 11th CCP Congress[120]
- NKCP's greeting to the 11th CCP Congress[121]
- PKI's greeting to the 11th CCP Congress[122]
- CPP's greeting to the 11th CCP Congress[123]

coverage of messages from CCP: 1 item

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111 RR, December 31, 1977, p6.

112 RR in 1977: October 20, p6; and November 12, p5.

113 RR, November 10, 1977, p5.

114 RR, April 26, 1977, p6.

115 RR, March 26, 1977, p6.

116 RR, May 19, 1977, p1.

117 RR, September 11, 1977, p3.

118 RR, July 30, 1977, p5.

119 RR, August 27, 1977, p5.

120 RR, August 28, 1977, p5.

121 RR, September 1, 1977, p5.

122 RR, September 3, 1977, p5.

123 RR, September 18, 1977, p5.

- CCP's greeting to CPT on its 35th anniversary[124]

Comparing the two tables, one can ascertain three significant changes. Firstly, there were 208 items of coverage in 1971-77, and only 25 in 1978-89. In fact, except in 1973 (12 items) and 1974 (15 items), all the other years in the former period had more items of coverage in a single year than the latter period as a whole. The years 1980, 1983, 1985 and 1988 saw no coverage at all. Secondly, the bulk of items in RR coverage during the 1971-77 period were reports of armed struggle and the regional parties' policy statements, two aspects that most infuriated the local governments. There were 84 items on armed struggle and 51 statements during the period. However, during the 1978-89 period, there were only 3 items on armed struggle, all of them appearing before March 1978, and 4 statements, all in 1978. Among the 84 items on armed struggle from 1971 to 1977, only four were citations of regional communist broadcasts, yet two of the three items on armed struggle since 1978 were such citations. Thirdly, compared with the 1971-77 period, coverage of two categories was conspicuously missing from 1978, namely the CCP's fraternal greetings to regional communist parties and the latters' activities in China itself. Three such greetings were put out by RR from 1971 to 1977, and all of them - two in 1975 and one in 1977 - appeared on the front page. There were two items on regional communist leaders' activities in China in 1977, and one appeared on the front page.

Checking further details of the RR coverage, one could also see another two developments. First, the length of the items during the

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[124] RR, December 1, 1977, p1

1971-77 period ranged from five lines to several paragraphs. Since 1978, however, the number of items having more than two lines was only 8, 7 of them in 1978, and none was longer than 4 lines. Second, among the 8 items having more than two lines since 1978, 4 still had a revolutionary flavour, namely the MCP's new year message in January 1978, reports by VOMR and VOPT of armed struggle in the same month, VOMR statement commemorating the 29th birthday of MNLA in February 1978, and armed struggle in "North Kalimantan" in the same month. However, the revolutionary flavour of these items was far more moderate than those of similar nature in the 1971-77 period.[125]

RR's loss of interest in the ASEAN-based communist parties in the Deng era can also be seen by viewing the whole picture of its collective coverage of foreign communist parties from 1978 to 1989. Such coverage was about these parties' reactions to important events in Chinese domestic politics (especially the CCP Congress, Chinese National Day, and the First Plenary Session of every term of NPC, the most important Plenary Session of NPC) and foreign relations.

In January-February 1979, RR made no mention of the ASEAN-based communist parties in its voluminous reports on "Marxist-Leninist parties" condemning Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, supporting the Cambodian people's "just struggle" and supporting

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125 Compare the above four items, for example, with PKI's New Year message in 1976, two reports by VOPT of armed struggle in Thailand in 1977, VOMR report of armed struggle in "North Kalimantan" in 1974, VOMR statements celebrating the 23rd, 24th and 25th anniversaries of MNLA in 1972, 1973 and 1974, and armed struggle in "North Kalimantan" in various years.

China's "self-defense" against Vietnam,[126] although the communist parties in the ASEAN countries all made strong statements to that effect during the period.[127] In fact, except for two VOPT anti-Soviet statements in January 1978, none of their anti-Soviet and anti-Vietnamese statements ever appeared in RR since 1978 (see Table Two), whereas their anti-hegemonism statements were frequently published in RR before 1978. Five such statements were published in RR in 1974, six in 1975, four in 1976, and three in 1977 (see Table Three). The years from 1979 to 1981 were the period when RR's propaganda against Soviet/Vietnam "hegemonism" was most rampant, and given that Southeast Asia was a crucial area both for "hegemonism" and anti-hegemonism, and that the ASEAN-based communist parties made their own equally rampant propaganda of the same kind,[128] the absence of anti-hegemonism statements from these parties in RR during this period was particularly eye-catching.

In RR's coverage of foreign communist parties' greetings on the CCP's 60th birthday in 1981, while even the negligible Australian Communist Party (ACP) enjoyed the treatment of having its greeting message printed in eight lines and two paragraphs,[129] the ASEAN-based communist parties only saw their names printed in a long list

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126 RR, January 14, 1979, p4. RR, January 20, 1979, p5. RR, February 10, 1979, p5. RR, February 25, 1979, p4. RR, February 27, 1979, p5.

127 See, for example, the CCP Central External Liaison Department, ed., op.cit., p2. For MCP's and NKCP's propaganda against Soviet-Vietnam hegemonism, see also North Kalimantan Independence (published by the North Kalimantan Independence News Service, Victoria, Australia), No. 3, 1980, pp2-3, pp14-p15.

128 The CCP Central External Liaison Department, ed., op.cit., p2, p39, p77, p91.

129 RR, July 1, 1981, p7.

of fraternal parties which were said to have sent greeting messages to the CCP. Thus RR treated a small bunch of leftists paying rhetorical tributes to communism in comfortable Western suburbs more generously than thousands of communist guerillas literally fighting for Maoist goals in harsh jungle conditions. In RR's coverage of foreign communist parties' greetings to the CCP's important 13th Congress in 1987, the ASEAN-based parties were simply not mentioned, whereas the ACP and even the Burmese Communist Party still had their names listed.[130]

In RR's coverage of foreign communist parties' greetings to China's National Day in 1978, while many parties either had their names listed or had part of their greeting messages cited,[131] the ASEAN-based communist parties were not mentioned except that part of the greeting message from the VOMR, not MCP per se, was cited.[132] The National Day of 1989 saw the CCP attempting to create an impression that it enjoyed international support despite the June 4 suppression by publishing in RR a long list of names of foreign communist parties which were said to have sent greeting messages to the CCP for China's National Day. While the ACP and even the Sri Lankan Communist Party appeared in the list,[133] the ASEAN-based communist parties did not. Their greetings on Chinese National Day appeared in RR only in 1979 and 1984 (see Table Two), when they managed to have their names listed. In terms of RR's coverage of fraternal parties' greetings to the First Plenary Session of every term of NPC, only one such greeting from the ASEAN parties has

130 RR, October 31, 1987, p6.

131 RR, October 2, 11 and 12, 1978, p5.

132 RR, October 5, 1978, p5.

133 RR, October 1 and 3, 1989, p3.

appeared in RR since 1978, namely their greetings to the First Session of the 5th NPC in 1978 (see Table Two).

Chinese leaders' rhetorical reassurances to their ASEAN counterparts about China's policy towards communist insurgencies from 1978 to 1990, the last year when such reassurances were made, saw an evolution of increasing substance. In his visit to Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia in November 1978, Deng said that state relations should be distinguished from party relations, and that China would not let party relations interfere with improvement in state relations.[134] In his visit to Thailand in January 1981, Zhao Ziyang stated that China's support for regional communist parties was only "political and moral."[135] In his visit to the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia in August, Zhao provided a more systematic explanation of China's lingering links to these parties. Beside reaffirming the principle of political and moral support only, he declared that for every country, the local communist party and its relationship with the government were its own internal issue free from external interference, and that likewise, China would not interfere with the policies and activities of other communist parties.[136] He added that China's connection with the regional communists was a "question left over from history".[137] This, at least at the rhetorical level, signalled a stronger commitment to solve the problems caused by this connection. At his stop-over in Bangkok on his way home, Zhao emphasised that China did not want to use the regional parties as instruments for opposing their

134 Xinhua, November 8, 1978, in FBIS/DR/C, November 9, 1978, p. A14.

135 R K Jain, ed., China and Thailand, p311.

136 RR, August 10 and 13, 1981, p6.

137 Ibid.

legitimate governments.[138] He repeated this reassurance to Thai Prime Minister Prem during his visit to China in November 1982.[139]

When making reassurances after 1983, Chinese leaders dropped the theme of moral and political support without ever articulating the shift of position. When asked about China's relations with the CPT during his visit to Thailand in August 1983, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqien made it clear that China was guided by four principles in handling relations with other communist parties, namely independence, equality, mutual respect, and non-interference.[140] Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qi Huaiyuan also raised the four principles when touching on China's relations with the PKI at a press conference in December 1983.[141] Wu again stressed them when pushed on China's relations with the MCP during his visit to Singapore in January 1985.[142] Compared with political and moral support, the four principles were of a more compromising nature to the ASEAN governments, because they emphasised "independence", not "support".

When making reassurances after January 1985, a significant development occurred. China abandoned the four principles, again without ever articulating the shift of position. The only theme stressed by the Chinese leaders was that China had no relations with regional communist parties. In his trip to Indonesia in May

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138 R K Jain, ed., China and Thailand, pp321-322.

139 Ibid., p343. The Nation, November 27, 1982.

140 RR, August 2, 1983, p6. Interview with Wu in SZ, No.8, 1984, p3.

141 RR, December 8, 1983, p4.

142 RR, January 31, 1985, p6.

1985, Wu emphasised that PKI members in Beijing were treated as individuals, not members of a fraternal communist party. "They are former members of PKI," he said," they do not constitute a party."[143] He particularly emphasized that China played no role in planning the September 30 Coup in 1965.[144] As if treatment of members of a regional party as individuals still smacked of harbouring individual terrorists, Deng told Laurel during his visit to China in June 1986 that China had cut off all contact with the communists in the Philippines.[145] During his visit to Malaysia in October 1986, Chinese Vice-Prime Minister Tian Jiyun assured his Malaysian counterpart Ghafar Baba that China simply had no relations at all with the MCP.[146] Visiting Indonesia in April 1988, Chinese deputy Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing assured Jakarta that China would not allow Indonesian communists in exile in China to engage in any anti-Indonesian activities.[147] During talks with

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143 Richard Nations and Lincoln Kaye, "Repeat performance," FEER, May 2, 1985, p12.

144 Interview with Wu in SZ, No. 11, 1985, pp2-5. Cheng Bifan, a leading Chinese expert on ASEAN, pointed out three evidences to show that China was not involved in planning the coup. First, Red Guards seized top-secret archives in the Foreign Ministry during the Cultural Revolution in the hope of finding evidence to prove that Liu Shaoqi first prematurely instigated the PKI to launch the coup and then abandoned the party when the coup failed, only to find that the Chinese government knew the coup after it happened. Second, reports about the coup by leading Western intelligence organisations, particularly the CIA, did not approve the accusation by the Indonesian military that Beijing was behind the coup. Third, in all her statements and publications about her personal experience in relation to the coup, Sukarno's Japanese wife Dewi totally rejected this accusation. Personal communication with Cheng in 1987.

145 BBC Monitoring Service: Far East, 19 June 1986.

146 Ibid., 16 October 1986.

147 ST, September 4, 1988.

President Suharto in Tokyo in 1989, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made it clear that former PKI members in China had not been engaging in any political activities, nor were they allowed to do so.[148] Li Peng made the same remarks to Suharto during his visit to Indonesia in August 1990. As if to calm Indonesia's lingering anger about suspected Chinese involvement in the September 30 Coup, Li laid a wreath at the National Heroes' Cemetery in Jakarta, where seven generals killed in the 1965 Coup were buried. This was a stark contrast to Deng's refusal in November 1978 to visit the National Monument in Kuala Lumpur to honour the police and soldiers killed in smashing the MCP during the Emergency period (1948-60).

As for China's actions in readjusting its relations with the regional communist parties, many former Thai students who joined the CPT after the 1976 military suppression left the jungle for studies abroad from mid-1978, under an official amnesty arranged with the help of China.[149] The VOPT, located in southern China, was shut down in July 1979. The VOMR, which was located in central China and also transmitted statements from the PKI, CPP, NKCP and CPT (after July 1979, when VOPT was closed), was shut down in mid-1981. With China's permission and technical help, Musa Ahmad, Chairman of the MCP since late 1955, surrendered to the Malaysian government in November 1980.[150] By the time of Zhao's visit to ASEAN in August 1981, China had already suspended its material

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148 Michael Vatikiotis, Robert Delfs, "Burying the past," FEER, July 12, 1990, p10. "A Kinder, Gentler China?" p26.

149 ST, December 16, 1989, p32.

150 ST, January 13, 1981. NST, December 5, 1989, p10.

support for the regional communists.[151] After that month, China persuaded the Thai communists and left-wing activists taking refuge in China to return to Thailand under an amnesty granted by the Thai government.[152] After negotiating for more than a year, the MCP signed a peace accord with the governments of Thailand and Malaysia on December 2 1989 to end its insurgency. China was directly involved in the MCP's decision and in arranging for the appearance of its Secretary General Chin Peng on the Thai-Malaysian border, the venue of the signing.[153] On December 8 the same year, the NKCP leader Wen Min Chuan, who was in China, sent a representative to Thailand to express his willingness to end the party's armed struggle in Sarawak.[154] It is most unlikely that the NKCP leadership made the decision without Beijing's blessing.

Before the initiation of the four principles, rhetorical reassurances from China in Deng's era were in fact the same as those made in Mao's era.[155] However, the actual form of China's relations with the regional communist parties was vastly different between the

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151 Interviews of researchers in the Institute of Contemporary International Relations in Beijing, 1987.

152 R K Jain, ed., China and Thailand, p321. NST, November 22, 1982. The Nation, November 27, 1982.

153 For China's involvement in the deal, see, for example, Luo Shipu, "Malaiya gongdang jiesan zhi yanxi (Analysis of MCP's disbandment)", WYY, Vol. 29, No. 5, February 1990, pp32-34.

154 NST, December 17, 1989, p2.

155 For the Chinese government's reassurances from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, see Pei Jianzhan, ed., Yanjiu Zhou Enlai waijiao sixian yu shijian (A study of Zhou Enlai's diplomatic thoughts and practice) (World Knowledge Press, Beijing, 1989), pp65-66; Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry and Documentary Research Section of the CCP, eds., op.cit, pp130-132, pp428-429; and Li Rongde, op.cit., pp306-307.

two eras. For example, when China claimed to give only political and moral support to these regional parties in 1974-75 in its efforts to bring about Sino-ASEAN rapprochement, its support took various declaratory forms, such as RR's publication of the two-way congratulatory messages and the regional parties' various statements, and the two communist radio stations in China were actively broadcasting, not to speak of the fact that China maintained certain material support. However, the Deng leadership not only made the same claim, but followed it to the letter, and also cut down the declaratory forms of support, as can be seen clearly by comparison of Table Two with Table Three. The two radio stations were shut down, and CPT activists taking refuge in China were persuaded to go home. Ironically, Mao and Zhou Enlai used to declare that to let the ASEAN communist activists based in China stay and do their work was precisely a form of political and moral support.[156] Deng's political and moral support was only reflected in letting the names of regional parties be inserted by RR in a long list of fraternal parties on certain symbolic occasions. This could hardly be called "support".

Judging from what it was actually doing, Dengist China's statements on separating state-to-state and party-to-party relations, giving political and moral support and upholding the four principles were not so much a way to legitimise its links with the local communists on a new basis as a sign that China was trying to reduce whatever relations it still had with the regional parties in order to improve state relations. The four principles obviously had different meanings for the CCP's relations with ruling communist parties and

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156 Li Rongde, op,cit., pp306-307.

other legal communist parties, mostly in the West, on one hand and for CCP's relations with the ASEAN-based guerrilla communist parties on the other.

Clearly Dengist China's approach to the ASEAN-based communist parties gradually deviated from Mao's teaching that victorious communist countries should support National Democratic Revolution (NDR) in other nations. Common sense would have it that political and moral support should be China's lowest level of support within Mao's NDR framework, and therefore be the best China could do to help the ASEAN governments without being accused of betraying the revolution. However, as pointed out above, when China raised the principle of giving only moral and political support, what it actually gave was even less, and the principle was dropped almost as soon as it was enunciated. It was not moral and political support to treat members of the PKI as individuals (this amounted to refusing to recognise the party altogether), to forbid its members living in China to get involved in politics (this amounted to depriving them of their rights as communists and terminating their political lives), to pledge that China had no relations with CPP and MCP, and to declare unambiguously to Aquino that China supported her government rather than the NPA. China's treatment of communist dissidents from the ASEAN countries living in China was far less benign than US, British or Dutch treatment of political dissidents from the ASEAN countries and China in exile. Given that major Western countries have all admitted, and given legally and/or ideologically guaranteed freedom to, political dissidents from even friendly developing nations, it can be seen that not all of

China's international behaviour has become more "internationalised" in Deng's era.

Theoretical work

Various elaborations were put forward by Chinese theoreticians and leaders about revolution, war and era in Deng's China, in order to pave the ideological way for expanding reform and the open-door policy, and to justify some major foreign policy changes, including China's approach to foreign communist parties and its efforts to promote friendly relations with ruling regimes in the developing world. What unfolded in the process was first a metamorphosis of Mao's NDR theory, and then a discarding of the theory altogether. This was one of the most evident aspects of the de-Maoification efforts in Deng's China.

On party-to-party relations, Chinese theoreticians since 1978 have launched systematic attacks on China's support for world revolution during the Cultural Revolution. The policy has been conveniently labelled a "reactionary ultra-left line" of the disgraced Lin Biao group and the Gang of Four, thus disassociating Mao himself from it.[157] This is reminiscent of the fact that the Deng leadership attributed many radical domestic policies during the Cultural Revolution to the Lin group and the Gang. Lin and the Gang were accused of exaggerating the influence of Chinese revolution in the world, ridiculously labelling China as the centre of world revolution, imposing China's own ideas on some fraternal parties, and judging

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157 See, for example, Zhang Mingyan, "Lin Biao he Sirenbang jizuo waijiao luxian paoxi" (an analysis of the ultra-left diplomatic line of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four), Fudan xuebao (Fudan University Journal, Shanghai), No. 2, 1980, pp81-86.

other parties' affairs according to China's own revolutionary experience.[158] The resolution passed at the 6th Plenary Session of the 11th Party Congress in June 1981, the most important political event in China since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Congress in November 1978, pronounced:

> Proletarian revolution is an international cause. It is necessary for the proletarian class in every country to support each other. However, to complete the cause of revolution the proletariat of each country needs to first have their feet firmly planted in their own country, relying on their own country's revolutionary forces and efforts of the people and masses there, combining Marxist-Leninist universal theories with the specific practice of their own country's revolution, and do good work on their own country's revolution. . . . the revolution road which suits a particular country can only be found out, invented

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158 See, for example, ibid.; Fu Ping, "Luelun dang he guojia de duiwaizhengce zhi dulizizhu yuanze de yunyong he fazhan (Practice and development of the principle of independence in the foreign policy of the party and state)", Dangshi yanjiu (Studies of Party History, Beijing), No. 4, 1986, pp9-14; and Beijing College of Economic Studies, Political Teaching Section, ed., Dangdai shijie zhengzhi jingji he guojiguanxi (Contemporary world politics, economics and international relations) (Beijing College of Economic Studies Press, August 1988), p55. For Mao's instructions during the Cultural Revolution which could be regarded as the origin of all these "reactionary ultra-left" policies, see, for example, Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo yao chengwei shijie gemin de binggongchang (China must become a munitions factory for world revolution)", in Mao Zedong tongzhi shi dangdai zui weida de Makesi Liening zhuyi zhe (Comrade Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist and Leninist in the current era), a propaganda book edited and published by People's Press, Beijing, August 1969, p681.

> and decided by the country's own people themselves. No one has the right to impose his own will on other people.[159]

At the 12th Party Congress in September 1982, CCP Secretary General Hu Yaobang pointed out:

> For a country's revolution to succeed, one must rely on the ripeness of his own country's conditions, and rely on the masses' support for the lines and policies of his country's communist party. Of course, each country's communist party should help each other, but any external imposition and taking on what ought to be done by others should not be allowed. Imposing one's own will on others and interfering with other parties' internal affairs could only lead to frustration and failure of other countries' revolutionary cause.[160]

Based on such thinking, Hu pronounced at the gathering the four principles of independence, complete equality, mutual respect, and non-interference. In fact, at a more subtle level, things had gone much further. Since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Party Congress, the Deng leadership had quickly though quietly erased all the lines in the Party Platform and China's Constitution which could be interpreted as intended to support domestic revolutionary

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159 RR, July 1, 1981, p5. See also Hu's speech commemorating the CCP's 60th birthday reported in RR, July 2, 1981, p3.

160 RR, September 8, 1982, p4.

struggle in other countries.[161] In the versions of encyclopedias published in China since 1979, the concept of "external support" was dropped in the definition of NDR.[162] An authoritative commentary on the contemporary significance of Zhou's diplomatic style published in RR in July 1981 emphasised that Zhou had always stood on the side of the oppressed countries and supported their struggle for, and their efforts to safeguard, national independence and sovereignty. The commentary made it clear that this was "proletarian internationalism".[163] The concepts of "people" and "party" were missing. This had gone much further than the party-people-(oppressed) country formula used by the Chinese propaganda machine since 1969 to signal China's readiness to deal with the bourgeois regimes in the third world countries with the end of the most turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution when the propaganda machine only mentioned "party" and "people" when enunciating China's foreign policy. All these subtle changes showed that so far as the Deng leadership was concerned, China should not simply avoid carrying Mao's teaching too far, as Lin and the Gang had been accused of doing, but should not follow it at all.

Following the clarification of the desirable nature of party-to-party relations was the clarification of the principle regarding the nature of China's diplomatic objectives. Lin and the Gang were accused in China's theoretical circles of "wrongly believing" that diplomatic

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161 Xie Yixian, "Zhongguo waijiao he guojiguanxi lilun (Chinese diplomacy and theory on international relations)", Waijiao Xueyuan xuebao (College of Diplomatic Studies Journal, Beijing), No. 2, 1988, p17.

162 Cihai (Encyclopedia) (Shanghai Cishu Press, 1979), p4137. Cihai (Encyclopedia) (Shanghai Cishu Press, 1980), p(4).

163 RR, July 11, 1981, p7.

work should focus on the masses in foreign countries rather than the people in power, and of interfering in other countries' internal affairs by attempting to mobilise the masses to rise up against their governments.[164] Allegedly, they intertwined normal diplomatic work and world revolution and wishfully thought that the former should facilitate the latter, only to see that the latter disturbed the former.[165] Qian Qichen wrote in 1988 in all seriousness that diplomatic work was a sovereign state's move to fulfil its national interest by dealing with whoever were in power in other countries and developing state-to-state relations.[166]

On the issue of periodisation of NDR, a new line of thought emerged in late July 1977, based on Mao's Three Worlds Theory. In the context of China's relations with the ASEAN-based communist movement, the then Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua said in an inner-circle meeting on foreign affairs in late 1977 that independence achieved by non-communist forces in the third world countries was formalistic since they relied on their former suzerains politically and economically to varying degrees, thus world revolution was still in the initial period, the task being to achieve "true national independence".[167] However, he stressed that to achieve true national independence meant "to centre on bringing to a head the struggle against Soviet revisionist social-imperialism",

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164 Zhang Mingyan, op.cit., pp81-86.

165 Xie Yixian, Zhechong yu gongchu: xin Zhongguo duiwai guanxi sishinian (Repulsion and co-existence: forty years of new China's foreign relations) (Henan People's Press, June 1990), pp151-154.

166 Qian Qichen, "Preface", in Pei Jianzhan, ed., op.cit.

167 "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation", IS, Vol. 13, No. 12, December 1977, pp87-89.

because the Soviet Union was "the newly-emerging, biggest, and most despicable colonialist, more and more flagrant in replacing old-line imperialism and colonialism".[168] Given that NDR now included anti-Soviet struggle, and that the ruling regimes in the ASEAN countries were also against Soviet expansion in the region, these regimes' foreign policies had now become a legitimate part of NDR and they had in fact become allies of world revolution, according to Mao's NDR theory. However, the "comfort" for the ASEAN governments did not stop there. Though stressing that the achievement of "true national independence" would lay foundations for later socialist transformation, the new theory emphasised that proletarian parties should seize government power only *after* this achievement.[169] This meant that "true national independence" could be achieved without overthrowing the bourgeois governments, a clear break-away from Mao's teaching. Apart from realpolitik calculations, this ideological change may have something to do with the ASEAN countries' reorientation of their foreign policies since the early 1970s. Their stand on the issue of internationalisation of the Malacca Straits, declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, and their loosening of ties with the USA may have made Chinese ideologues feel that they had somewhat underestimated the desire for "true national independence" of the rulers in these countries.

If Huang Hua's line had only partially breached Mao's NDR theory, since it still categorised as temporary and tactical China's and regional communist parties' relations with the local governments

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168 Ibid., p89.

169 Ibid.

which would have to be overthrown once "true national independence" was achieved, the theory was totally discarded in 1984 with the announcement of China's international relations philosophy of peace and development. This philosophy removed the foundation stone of Mao's NDR theory, namely Lenin's theory of imperialism and proletarian revolution. The philosophy, which has been upheld ever since 1984, proclaimed that today's world had entered an era of development and peace characterised by countries with various social systems becoming increasingly interdependent within the context of a single world market. Specifically, it made the following points.

First, the capitalist system still had a fairly strong adaptability and vitality, as seen in its scientific and technological revolution, and could greatly improve the economic production force and people's welfare. In the capitalist world, because their life had become better, people did not want revolution. Meanwhile, imperialist war had become impossible in the nuclear age of economic interdependence and internationalisation. Thus Lenin's theory on the relation between war and revolution no longer made sense.[170]

Second, given the above circumstances, it made no sense to claim that the world was at the eve of victory of proletarian revolution. The confrontation between socialism and capitalism could proceed only through peaceful competition in areas of economic and technological achievement, and the two systems should coexist

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170 "Huan Xiang lun guoji waijiao geju zhanlue geju (Huan Xiang on international diplomatic and strategic patterns)," Shijie jingji daobao (World Economic Tribune, Shanghai), July 9, 1984, p3.

peacefully. Socialist countries should not push world revolution, but should strive to secure world peace and focus on their own economic development so as to win the peaceful competition with capitalism.[171]

Third, the developing nations were no longer oppressed nations, because they had already achieved "true national independence". Thus they were no longer at the stage of anti-imperialist struggle and world revolution.[172] Instead, they had entered a new historical period with the emphasis on the development of national economy. For this purpose, they must safeguard domestic and world peace and stability.[173]

That the peace and development line totally discarded Mao's NDR theory and granted full ideological recognition to the legitimacy of the existing social systems in developing countries such as the ASEAN members could be seen in several aspects. First, since socialist countries should not push for world revolution and should instead compete peacefully with the capitalist system for economic and technological achievement, there was no longer any need to support communist revolution in other countries. This presented a somewhat socialist "peaceful evolution" strategy vis-a-vis capitalism, more benign than the Western "peaceful evolution" strategy against communism since it did not even require

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171 He Fan, op.cit., pp18-23.

172 Beijing College of Economic Studies, Political Teaching Section, ed., op.cit., pp6-8.

173 RR, April 24, 1985. See also Zheng Wei Zhi, "Wuoguo dulizizhu de heping waijiao zhengce (Our country's independent foreign policy of peace)", GWY, No. 4, 1984, p8.

subversion, as was clearly needed in the Western strategy to spread "spiritual pollution" into the socialist countries. Second, since the developing countries should concentrate on economic development after achieving "true national independence", and since people did not want revolution, it was no longer justifiable to see the achievement of "true national independence" as the right time for proletarian parties to overthrow the governments. In fact, the theory's emphasis on defeating capitalism through peaceful competition rather than through communist revolution even delegitimised any armed communist revolution after sufficient - from whatever standard - development of a national economy in the developing world. The new theory left the ASEAN-based communist guerilla fighters with no legitimate right to make their revolution now or in future. It was no longer a question of "the revolution road which suits a particular country can only be found out, invented and decided by the country's own people themselves", since it appeared now that the only correct revolution road was to make no revolution. In accordance with the new theory, the 1986 version of China's encyclopedia gave a new definition of the goal of NDR. It defined it as to achieve "political democracy" (not socialism) and liberate productive forces (not the socialist transformation of economic structure). It added that *historically*, in *some* colonial and semi-colonial nations like China, North Korea and Vietnam, the proletarian class played the leading role in NDR, and not only achieved national independence but also carried the revolution one step further by turning it into socialist revolution.[174]

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[174] Zhongguo da baikekuanshu (Chinese Encyclopedia) (Chinese Encyclopedia Publishing Agency, Beijing, 1986), p309.

The announcement of the new line was largely motivated by the necessities of China's own expanding reform and open-door programs, which had brought about China's complex and multi-faceted international relations and demanded increasing acceptance of and adjustment to the systemic constraints and opportunities of the capitalist world economy. For example, a major piece of "evidence" used in Maoist-era propaganda to "prove" that non-Western nations like the ASEAN countries were not truly independent was that they invited Western investment and funds from IMF and other West-controlled international organisations, an approach condemned as "selling out the national interest".[175] However, since Dengist China itself had been doing the same and in fact actively competing with ASEAN in "selling out the national interest", it would be self-defeating for China still to claim that developing countries such as the ASEAN members had not achieved "true national independence" because they accepted capital from the developed nations. To ideologically serve China's own open-door policy, Chinese experts on ASEAN reached a consensus in a series of articles in 1982 that the ASEAN countries' policies of attracting foreign investment and seeking Western aid had nothing to do with colonialism. They argued that the ASEAN countries had already shaken off the colonial and semi-colonial political and economic structures, and that their policies of gaining foreign capital were purely aimed to solve problems resulting from lack of domestic funds and other weak points in domestic economies.[176]

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175 RR, October 29, 1949, p3. RR, December 28, 1960, p6. RR, March 26, 1967, p6. RR, June 19, 1968, p6. RR, July 19, 1968, p6. RR, October 31, 1968, p6. RR, June 4, 1969, p6. RR, June 21, 1969, p6. RR, January 29, 1970, p5.

176 See for example, Wang Shuhai, op.cit., pp45-46.

The new theory also manifested China's new attitudes as a result of unprecedented first-hand observations of the contemporary capitalist world. Deng's and other Chinese leaders' trips to the developed countries and successful developing economies, especially the ASEAN nations, since late 1978 impressed them with the economic achievements of the capitalist world. As mentioned in Chapter Three, during his visit to three ASEAN countries in November 1978, Deng acknowledged that "the ASEAN countries are more developed than us, and (people's) living standard in China is not as high as in the ASEAN countries". In August 1981 RR most unusually quoted Lee Kuan Yew in a positive light as saying in his speech welcoming Zhao's visit to Singapore that "no ASEAN country needs communism or a communist party to bring a better social system and better economic life for the people".[177] Judging from RR's usual style, Lee obviously spelled out what the Chinese leaders themselves wanted to but could not say. Impressed by the economic progress of Singapore and Indonesia, Chinese leaders have repeatedly admitted to their Singaporean counterparts since 1985 and to their Indonesian counterparts since 1990 that since 1965, under the leadership of Suharto and Lee Kuan Yew, the Indonesian and Singaporean peoples "have chosen a development road suiting their own national conditions".[178] This amounted to acknowledging that China itself had been all along promoting a "wrong road" by supporting communist guerrillas' efforts to overthrow them.

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[177] RR, August 13, 1981, p6.

[178] RR, September 20, 1985, p1. RR, October 22, 1988, p1. RR, August 13, 1990, p6. RR, August 9, 1990, p6.

In a practical sense the impact on China's relations with the ASEAN-based communist insurgents of the revision and burial of Mao's NDR theory should not be underestimated. In Chinese political culture, without justification and rationalization by a coherent theory, things either cannot be done straightforwardly or cannot be done at all. Without the official line of "focusing on planning with market regulation as a supplement", initial reform and open-door measures could hardly go ahead. And without the theories of "initial stage of socialism" and "socialist market economy", bold reform steps like the establishment of stock exchange centres could not proceed comfortably. Foreign policy initiatives are governed by the same law. While international relations theory in the West is generally defined as a set of propositions that tries to describe, predict and explain international political reality, its Chinese counterpart is expected to be ideologically correct and to provide theoretical guidance for Chinese foreign policy. Thus it might not be a coincidence that only after the pronouncement of the peace and development theory in 1984 did RR drop the names of the ASEAN-based communist parties from its collective coverage of fraternal parties' reactions to important political events in China as shown in Table Two, Chinese leaders pledge that China had no relations with MCP and CPP at all, Deng promise that CCP would support the Aquino government rather than NPA, Chinese leaders cease to mention even the benign four principles, and openly declare that China forbade PKI members in Beijing to get involved in politics. Chinese leaders felt that they could do all these things in a safe ideological environment only after proclamation of the peace and development theory.

Regional reactions to China's policy

To Chinese leaders' chagrin and amazement, their efforts did not entirely satisfy the ASEAN governments. The problem was that at no time had China definitively and officially declared itself willing to renounce relations with the regional communist insurgents both for the present and future. One example is that as indicated above, although China has abandoned the principle of "political and moral support" since 1983 and the four principles since February 1985 when making reassurances to the ASEAN governments, China has never articulated this shift of position. The ASEAN governments and some Chinese scholars had suggested that the Chinese government should definitively and formally declare to renounce its relations with the regional communists once and for all. For example, a Chinese expert on Sino-ASEAN relations suggested in mid-1989 that in order to defuse ASEAN's suspicions of China's regional intentions and to strip some political leaders in ASEAN countries of an always-ready excuse to justify policies which were not in China's interest, more was needed than simply to cease mentioning political and moral support. He suggested an unambiguous diplomatic declaration that the CCP was not even giving moral and political support to regional communists, and that China would give moral and political support only to the ASEAN governments in "their struggle for Southeast Asian peace and development".[179] Until late 1989, when the communist guerrillas (except the NPA) had either surrendered or been decimated, it was all along suspected and argued in the ASEAN countries that since it had not definitively and officially renounced its relations with the insurgents, China would revert to its former policy of directly aiding

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179 Tian Zhongqing, op.cit., p13.

and reactivating them as "punishment", should the policies of the ASEAN governments conflict with those of China.[180] This worry, as well as the memories of China's past policy, cast a shadow over China's political relations with the ASEAN countries, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, contributed to their unwillingness to follow too closely China's line on Soviet/Vietnam "hegemonism", made Malaysia and Indonesia adopt serious restrictions on business and people-to-people relations with China, and led these two countries and Thailand to reject the opening of meaningful cultural exchanges with China.

However, these views may have been unfair to China's policy on the whole in Deng's era, except perhaps for the period until the early 1980s. In May 1980, the CPT broke ten months of silence to attack the Prem government in a communique carried through VOMR. Thai officials took this as possibly a warning from China that the CPT might be reactivated if Thailand deviated too much from China's interests in Cambodia. However China denied such

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180 For such suspicions and arguments, see Sarasin Viraphol, "National Threat Perceptions: Explaining the Thai Case," in Charles E. Morrison, ed., op.cit., p150; Robert O. Tilman, op.cit., p95; Yos Santasombat, "Leadership and Security in Modern Thai Politics", in Mohammed Ayoob, Chai-Anan Samudavanija, eds., Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asian Experience (Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1989), pp92-93; A. James Gregor, In the Shadow of Giants: The Major Powers and Security of Southeast Asia (Hoover Institution Press, Standford University, Standford, California, 1989), pp70-73; and Lillian Craig Harris, "China's Support for People's War in the 1980s," in Lillian Craig Harris, Robert L. Worden, eds., China and The Third World: Champion or Challenger? (Auburn House Publishing Company: Dover, Massachusetts, 1986), p124, p130.

intent,[181] and it is most unlikely that it still harboured ideas of this sort. The reason why China could not definitively and officially renounce relations with regional communists lay in domestic political complexity and the CCP leaders' habitual political sensitivity. The crucial problem for the Deng regime has been that it can not go too far in overt de-Maoification without throwing the legitimacy of the whole Chinese communist system itself into crisis. In this sense, veteran Chinese communist leaders like Deng would not fail to see fundamental difference between reducing China's relations with regional communist parties as mentioned above, and definitively renouncing relations with them. In domestic politics, although the Deng regime has constantly used new theories to replace Mao's teachings or reinterpreted these teachings so that, for example, Mao's idea of self-reliance does not contradict designation of the whole of Hainan province as a free zone for foreign investment, it has never definitively renounced so-called "Mao Zedong Thought" except for some particular theories which could be conveniently attributed to Lin and the Gang. In fact, typically of the CCP politics, it was the staunch capitalist-roader Deng who initiated an unprecedented move in CCP history by writing "adherence to Mao Zedong Thought" into the Chinese Constitution in 1978, while abolishing the people's communes, a brain-child of Mao, and seeking capitalist investment, something Mao was proud to have wiped out. In the case of China's support for ASEAN-based communists, Cultural Revolution-style support could be comfortably denounced because it could be conveniently labelled as the "reactionary ultra-left line" of Lin and the Gang. However, the NDR concept itself and certain relationships with fraternal communist

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[181] Richard Nations, "Revolving door diplomacy," FEER, May 16, 1980, p13.

parties supposedly fighting for Maoist NDR goals had to be handled more subtly, as they were a part of Mao Zedong Thought not associated with any of the disgraced CCP leaders. It is typical of CCP politics that proclamation of the peace and development theory has by no means silenced CCP propaganda about NDR, which is now described as having entered a new stage in the third world nations, where the major task is now to develop the national economy.[182] Although since 1984 China has already turned the very concept of NDR into Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, it is important for the CCP to be seen to believe that there is still such a thing as NDR in the developing world. "Capitalist policies are for implementation not declaration", a popular Chinese saying describing the delicate mind-set of the Deng regime in its reform and open-door policy, can also be used to describe its equally delicate mind-set regarding its approach to its relations with the ASEAN-based communist parties.

One might never be wrong in arguing that since China has not definitively and officially renounced its relations with the regional communist insurgents, it could revert to its former policy of directly aiding them and reactivating them should the policies of the ASEAN governments conflict with those of China. Firstly, this is because of the academic flexibility in defining what may constitute a conflict of interests with China, and in clarifying to what degree such a conflict may antagonize China. Secondly, such an argument makes simple logical sense. If the US and other Western governments could provide material support for the genocidal communist Khmer Rouge

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182 Tan Hua Liang, "Weihu disanshijie guojia quanyi shi wuoguo yingjin de guoji yiwu (To safeguard the rights and interests of the third world countries is an international commitment that our country should carry out)," Hongqi, No. 16, 1984, p13.

to serve their own interests in Southeast Asia, then it should be much less unimaginable for China to support fellow communists in the region in one way or another. However, there have been occasions since the late 1980s when an ASEAN country has seriously violated some of China's major interests, and yet China has refrained from supporting the local communist party. For example, as pointed out in Chapter Two, the rapidly developing Manila-Taipei de facto official relationship has become the centre of China's attention in ASEAN-Taiwan relations, and China has even threatened to suspend diplomatic relations with the Philippines. In terms of the Spratly dispute, the Philippines has all along occupied more islands and reefs than any other ASEAN claimant. It has been actively involved in collusion with Vietnam at the expense of China's sovereignty claim and in the internationalisation of the dispute, and has been most active in involving the USA in the security of the South China Sea. Manila's reaction to the June 4 suppression was the most hostile among all the ASEAN countries. It not only expressed sadness over the killings, but also announced a ban on visiting China by Filipinos and a suspension of civil air links with China, which other ASEAN governments did not. Meanwhile, from the mid-1980s, the Philippines has become the only ASEAN country where communist fighting machine is still functioning well. It was reported in mid-1987 that except the Philippines, all the ASEAN countries had managed to reduce the domestic communist threat in their respective countries to manageable proportions. Communist activity in Singapore had been so small-scale and sporadic as to be negligible. The communist threat in Indonesia had by and large receded. As for Malaysia, the MCP was faction-ridden and weak as a consequence. In the large jungle areas at the Thai-

Malaysia border, which was the MCP's main stronghold, fewer than 1,000 guerillas remained. In Thailand, the CPT had been virtually defeated on the battlefield by 1982. The number of armed CPT men dwindled from a high of about 3,000 in 1980-81 to some 200 in 1986.[183] In the Philippines, however, communist insurgency was a serious force to reckon with. Under the capable leadership of Rudy Salas, the number of NPA's guerrillas and non-fighting cadres had grown from less than 1,300 in 1976 to about 24,430 in 1986. During the same period, the number of provinces where the NPA was operating expanded from fewer than 20 to 60 of the country's 73 provinces.[184] Despite a series of set-backs since 1987, the NPA still had more than 22,500 guerrillas and cadres in 1988, about 17,500 in 1989 and 1990, 15,000 in 1991, and 12,500 in 1992.[185] However, despite all these violations of China's interests, China has not moved to support the NPA at all. Instead, in the midst of China's tension with Manila over Taiwan and the Spratlys, Deng pledged to President Aquino that the CCP supported her government rather than the NPA. Furthermore, in late 1989, despite these troubles and Manila's unfriendly reaction to the June 4 suppression, President Yang sent a message to Aquino, which was published on the front page of RR, congratulating her on suppressing a military coup and praising her general efforts to stabilise the domestic situation, which certainly included crack-down on the NPA.[186]

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183 "Communist Insurgencies In The ASEAN Countries", ASEAN Forecast (Singapore), Vol. 7, No. 6, June 1987, p1.

184 Antonio Lopez, op.cit., p29, p38.

185 Ibid., p36.

186 RR, December 5, 1989, p1.

ASEAN's suspicions and worries, however, were understandable, since they had suffered enormously from China's past policy. Thus while the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia have accused Western governments of ignoring Asian-style cultural, political and diplomatic subtleties and niceties on the issue of human rights, they understandably wanted to push the biggest Asian country to the wall without giving it the benefit of such indulgences, when it came to the issue of its relations with the communist parties in their countries.

Conclusion

In Deng's era, the CCP has focused its work on modernisation instead of the class struggle which dominated Chinese politics in Mao's era. China's reform and open-door policy calls for tranquillity in its neighbourhood including Southeast Asia and friendly relations with neighbouring countries including the ASEAN members. Against this background, China has tried hard to prevent its relations with the ASEAN-based communist insurgents from obstructing its relations with the ASEAN governments. Evidences of China's efforts were seen mainly in three areas: RR coverage of the communist insurgencies; Chinese leaders' rhetorical reassurances to their ASEAN counterparts; and China's actions in readjusting its relations with the local communists. In all these areas, China's efforts had become increasingly substantial. Meanwhile, various theoretical elaborations were put forward in Deng's China about revolution, war and the current era in order to pave the ideological way for expanding the reform and open-door policy and to justify some major foreign policies, including China's changing approach to foreign communist parties and its efforts to promote friendly

relations with ruling regimes in the developing world. In the process, Mao's NDR theory, the ideological justification for China's support for the ASEAN-based communist insurgencies, was revised and finally discarded. This had had a significant impact on China's approach to its relations with the regional parties since in Chinese political culture, without justification and rationalization by a coherent theory, it would be hard to go ahead with the existing policy or to adopt a new policy.

China's efforts did not entirely satisfy ASEAN governments, because China had not definitively and officially renounced its relations with the regional communist insurgents once and for all. However, in Deng's era as a whole, China may well feel that it did the best it could to solve the problems arising from such relations. The Deng regime could not go too far in overt de-Maoification without throwing the legitimacy of the whole Chinese communist system itself into crisis.

Chapter Six

China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era: a comprehensive view of general trends

Since 1978 China has embarked on a modernisation drive under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Meanwhile, international relations and the regional situation in Southeast Asia have undergone dramatic transformations. These transformations and China's own expanding ambitions and progress in modernisation have in turn affected China's ASEAN policy which has seen five general trends of evolution in the Deng era. These trends represent a significant departure from the major characteristics of China's regional policy in the Mao era. This chapter looks into Dengist China's ASEAN policy by examining these trends in separate sections.

Demise of a single issue - centred policy theme

As a function of its political culture, China often presents a clear-cut theme in its declaratory policy towards a major power and region, and the theme is expressed by an elaborately designed set of rhetorics. Once a theme is established, the same set of rhetorics will be consistently emphasised in policy statements and press editorials. Change of critical words in the set of rhetorics, let alone a playing down or abandonment of the whole set, signifies change of policy. From 1978 until mid-1982, the theme of China's declaratory ASEAN policy was centred on a single issue, namely the forging of a China-ASEAN united front against both Soviet "global hegemonism" and Vietnam, accused by China of acting as Moscow's "hatchet man"

in the region. As illustrated in Chapter One, while China had reason to be concerned about the threat to its national security posed by Soviet expansion in Southeast Asia, China's vigorous united front campaign in the ASEAN region, based on deliberate exaggeration of the Soviet threat to China itself, the Western interests in the region, and the ASEAN countries, was motivated by China's intention to create a favourable atmosphere for China to extract maximum economic and technological assistance for its modernisation program from the US-led Western nations, to improve political relations with the ASEAN nations so as to secure a tranquil regional environment, and to fully mobilise the technical and financial resources of the ASEAN-based ethnic Chinese communities to contribute to China's economic development. Due to its failure, the anti-hegemonism call was dropped in mid-1982, and China's proclaimed ASEAN policy ceased to be centred on a single issue. Ever since then China's ASEAN policy has been characterised by a balanced and low-key approach, and no single issue is permitted to dominate its theme. China has obviously not seen an issue serious and imminent enough for it to do otherwise, nor has it seen an issue which it can let dominate its policy theme in order to serve other interests in a way not counter-productive as China's anti-hegemonic campaign in ASEAN. If anything has dominated in Chinese leaders' statements and press editorials regarding China-ASEAN relations, it is assertions made consistently since late 1984 that China seeks to "establish and develop a long-lasting, stable, good-neighbourly, and friendly relationship with the ASEAN countries", and that this represents a "steadfast and unchangeable decision of China".[1] This

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[1] RR, December 16, 1984, p1. RR, March 13, 1985, p4. RR, November 21, 1985, p1. RR, November 21 and 22, 1986, p4. RR, February 25, 1987, p1. RR, April

reflects China's new determination to create a friendly neighbourhood with the expansion of its reform and open-door programs since 1984.

The significance of the end of single issue domination of China's ASEAN policy theme is highlighted by an overall view of China's regional policy since 1949. The dropping of China's call for an anti-hegemony united front means that China's ASEAN policy theme for the first time since the founding of the People's Republic is no longer governed by a single issue. China's policy towards Southeast Asia from 1949 to the eve of Deng's rise to political dominance in 1978 was all along centred on the single issue of dealing with either the USA (until the late 1960s) or the Soviet Union (since then), based on Mao's genuine concern about a superpower threat to China's national security.

Demise of ideological legacy

China-ASEAN relations in Mao's era were plagued by China's support for regional communist insurgents. Since 1978, as elaborated in the last chapter, China has tried hard to prevent its relations with those insurgents from obstructing its relations with the ASEAN governments. China's efforts were seen mainly in three areas: the People's Daily coverage of the communist insurgencies; Chinese leaders' rhetorical reassurances to their ASEAN counterparts; and China's actions in readjusting its relations with the local communists. In all these areas, China's efforts had become increasingly substantive. Meanwhile, various theoretical elaborations were put forward in China about revolution, war and

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16, 1988, p1. RR, January 11, 1992, p6.

era in the Deng era in order to pave the ideological way for expanding the reform and open-door policy and to justify some major foreign policy actions including China's changing approach to foreign communist parties and its efforts to promote friendly relations with ruling regimes in the developing world. In the process Mao's theory of National Democratic Revolution (NDR), the ideological justification for China's support for the ASEAN-based communist insurgencies, was revised and finally discarded. This had a significant impact on China's approach to its relations with the regional parties since in China, without justification and rationalization by a coherent theory, it would be hard to go ahead with an existing policy or to adopt a new one. China's approach to the ASEAN-based communist insurgencies since 1978 was a significant reflection of the de-Maoification efforts in China under Deng's leadership.

It would be interesting to compare China's support for NDR in the ASEAN region and the Western world's support for human rights in the developing countries before the end of the Cold War. There was a clear similarity between them in Mao's era in the sense that both were more often than not used to achieve realpolitik goals, for which noble principles could be sacrificed when necessary. In Western diplomacy, human rights abuses committed by friendly governments were typically ignored, while abuses by Moscow's allies were forcefully condemned. Western nations also adopted a flexible policy towards the human rights issue of the same developing country, depending on its policy towards the West. Mao's attitude towards supporting NDR in the ASEAN region was no different. However, China's approach in Deng's era as a whole

showed some difference. Firstly, it was based on China's long-term security and economic interests arising from its own modernisation drive, hence not of a tactical nature. China had moved to solve the problem caused by its relations with regional communists. Secondly, and more significantly, even when they least emphasised human rights in their policies towards some friendly countries, the Western governments did not theoretically discard the principle that human rights was a universal concept, and one country's human rights problem should be a legitimate concern of the whole world. However, China in Deng's era discarded all aspects of Mao's world revolution theory and its foundation stone, Lenin's theory of imperialism and proletarian revolution.

China's efforts in cutting down its relations with regional communist insurgents in 1989-90 showed that in order to improve relations with the ASEAN governments, China was willing to do what was self-defeating to its own general propaganda during the same period concerning communism versus capitalism. The post-Tiananmen Chinese leadership adamantly rejected the view that political changes sweeping through Eastern Europe indicated that communism had lost to capitalism. However, China's involvement in the surrender of the Malayan Communist Party and North Kalimantan Communist Party in 1989, and Li Peng's reassurance to Suharto in 1990 that the Indonesian Communist Party members in China were not permitted to engage in political activities, could only strengthen the notion that communism was indeed on its deathbed.

If there had been a Sino-ASEAN version of confrontation between communism and capitalism, ASEAN would obviously have been the

winner. Communist guerrillas in the ASEAN countries except the Philippines had either surrendered or been decimated by the late 1980s. China's major open-door measures, the success of which has become an increasingly important factor in determining the legitimacy of the Chinese political system, are what the ASEAN countries have been implementing since the 1950s-60s. In other words, the strengthening of popular support for Deng's regime since 1978 is at least partially due to the regime's adoption of some features of the ASEAN systems. Some of the policies on attracting foreign investment and running the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the early years of the open-door policy were in fact a result of direct learning from the ASEAN experience. When Jian Zemin, the current CCP Secretary General, was a vice-minister in charge of the Foreign Investments Commission, he led a delegation to Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines in October 1980 to study the free trade zone concept and implementation, stating during his visits that China would like to learn the ASEAN experience in managing its own newly established SEZs.[2] As pointed out in Chapter Three, from the very beginning of the Deng regime, Chinese leaders have been concerned that the masses may come to doubt the virtue of communism as they become increasingly aware that living standards, especially of the ethnic Chinese communities, are higher and rising faster in such non-communist Asian developing countries as the ASEAN members. In fact first-hand experience with prosperity of the capitalist world through trips to the ASEAN region as well as the USA and Japan in 1978-79 was a critical factor making Deng determined to push forward reform and open-door policy.

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[2] NST, October 3, 1980.

Increasingly strenuous diplomacy of amity

A major characteristic of China's ASEAN policy since 1978 has been China's efforts to improve and strengthen relations with the ASEAN countries. China's efforts have become ever more strenuous from 1984 for the following reasons.

First, since 1984 China has launched a host of new and increasingly more ambitious coastal development policies and urban reform programs. As a result, China has acquired more vested interests in a tranquil environment in the Asia-Pacific in which it can focus on its own economic construction. Hence its increased stake in having cordial relations with neighbouring countries including the ASEAN members. In fact, to create a peaceful and tranquil peripheral environment has become China's foremost objective in its ASEAN policy. The new theme in this policy since 1984, as mentioned above, should not be taken as insignificant propaganda.

Second, China needs improved political relations with the ASEAN countries to facilitate bilateral economic relations which have become a major emphasis in China's ASEAN policy since 1984, as discussed in the last section of this chapter. Motivated by their worries about China's regional intentions, the ASEAN governments imposed various restrictions on economic exchanges with China, especially on non-governmental business contacts. For example, as pointed out in Chapter One, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore imposed severe restrictions on their citizens, including ethnic Chinese, in traveling to China, seriously obstructing China's efforts to mobilise ethnic Chinese technical and financial resources to

contribute to China's economic construction. Other measures to restrict economic exchanges with China were also enforced to varying degrees among the ASEAN countries, with Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore applying fewer restrictions.[3] Indonesia did not even allow for direct trade with China until 1985. China's efforts to improve political relations with ASEAN were also intended to make some ASEAN countries give up their attempts to slow down Western economic and technological assistance to China. As mentioned in Chapter One, for most of the 1980s, because of their suspicions of China's regional intentions, Malaysian and Indonesian leaders repeatedly expressed concern to their US and Japanese counterparts that Western assistance to China's modernisation programs could jeopardise regional security.

Third, China needs to strengthen relations with the ASEAN countries to shore up its international and regional influence, an imperative which has arisen mainly since late 1987. With the collapse of the "strategic triangle" due to the relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers, and as merely a regional power in terms of economic, technological and military strength, China found its influence in international relations significantly diminished, and even more vulnerable and marginalized in world affairs with the total collapse of the Cold War order. This has been compounded by international isolation brought on by the June 4 suppression and the collapse of world communism. China's efforts to secure and strengthen its position in this adverse and fluid international

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3 Cheng Bifan, Zhang Nansheng, "Institutional Factors in China-ASEAN Economic Relations" in Chia Siow-Yue, Chen Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Trends and Patterns, pp32-33, p36. See also Fu Zhengluo, "Sino-Malaysian Economic Relations" in ibid., pp159-p160.

situation have concentrated on enhancing its relations with the countries on its own periphery, particularly the ASEAN countries and the organisation of ASEAN, which China now sees as playing an increasingly important political and economic role in regional and international affairs, with rapid economic growth and the "world-wide trend of multi-polarization".[4] The new emphasis on enhancing relations with the ASEAN countries has been also determined by the decline of China's influence in Southeast Asia, where breakthrough in solving the Cambodian issue has removed a bridge into ASEAN for China, Taiwan and Japan have rapidly expanded their influence by taking advantage of regional focus on economic diplomacy, and China's compromising policies towards ASEAN regarding its relations with regional communist insurgents and Chinese communities (discussed below) meant that it was losing two traditional instruments of regional influence. As elaborated in Chapter Two, under the Lee Teng-hui government's "flexible diplomacy", Taiwan's semi-official relations with the ASEAN countries have developed rapidly, and its economic presence in the region has become stronger than ever, stronger than China's own. From the early 1970s to mid-1982, in its policy of forging an international anti-Soviet united front, China supported Japan's defence build-up and expressed its willingness to see Japan playing a bigger political role in Asia and strengthening its economic and political relations with ASEAN. With the decline of Soviet threat from mid-1982, however, China showed concern with Japan's regional intention. China perceived Japan to be attempting to create its own economic sphere of influence in the Western Pacific by

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[4] RR, November 12, 13 and 25, 1988. RR, August 9, December 14, 1990. RR, July 23, 1991.

forging a Japan-centred Western Pacific economic rim,[5] and intending to turn itself into a major political and even military power with the backing of its economic strength.[6] With the reduction in US-Soviet rivalries and force deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan has moved faster to seek a larger political and security role in the region. The Chinese watched closely the debate of "Peace Keeping Operation Bills" in the Japanese Diet and Japanese involvement in the peace-keeping mission in Cambodia.[7] China has believed that the ASEAN countries also worry about Japan's military role in the region,[8] and about Japan's regional economic dominance.[9] On unofficial occasions the Chinese have suggested

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5 Li Xiangwen, "Taipingyang gongtongti wenti taolunhui zai Jing juxing (Conference on the 'Pacific Economic Community' held in Beijing)", SJYZN, January, 1983, p61.

6 Xu Dan, Liu Xinzhang, "Riben jingying 'zhengzhi daguo' de dong xiang (Trend in Japan's efforts at turning itself into a 'big political power')", SJYZN, April, 1983, pp6-9. Zhang Bei, "Riben anquan zhanlue de zhongda zhuanzhe (A significant readjustment of Japan's security strategy)", SJYZN, November, 1983, pp34-36.

7 For China's view of Japan's policy towards the Asia-Pacific region with the end of the Cold War, see Robert Delfs, "A two-front threat," FEER, 13 December 1990, p28, p30; Jin Dexiang, "China and Southeast Asia in a changing security environment", paper presented at the first Sino-Indonesia Conference, Shanghai, April 28-29, 1991, pp3-4; and Zhang Da Lin, "Riben de 'Lianheguo weichi heping xingdong hezuo faan' (On Japan's 'Peace Keeping Operation Bills')", GWY, No. 2, 1992, pp18-19, p24.

8 Zhang Biqing, "Cong Zhongzenggenkanhong chufang kan Riben he Dongmeng de guanxi (Looking at Japan-ASEAN relations from Yasuhiro Nakasone's visit to ASEAN)", GWY, No. 4, 1983, pp55-56, p58. Zhan Yaohua, "Riben yu Dongmeng guanxi de fazhan (Development of Japan-ASEAN relations)", GWY, No. 4, 1991, pp35-36.

9 Cheng Bifan, "Jingji hezuo de gouxiang, huodong yu qianjing (Ideas, activities and future of economic cooperation)", in Institute of World Economics and Politics (Beijing), ed., Yatai Diqu De Jueqi (Revitalisation of the Asia-Pacific region) (Chongqing Press, Sichuan, 1989), p322, pp324-325, p334, pp345-346.

that guarding against Japan's regional ambition is in the common interest of both China and ASEAN.[10] From Chinese point of view, ASEAN is crucial to Japan in terms of raw materials, overseas investment, export market, and strategic sea-lanes.[11] Therefore, the ASEAN countries occupy an indispensable position in Japan's concept concerning Pacific rim economic cooperation, and if the ASEAN countries express disapproval, any such concept from Japan would be a futile one.[12] It has also been argued in China that Japan has to win ASEAN's support before it can become a major political power in the Asia-Pacific region.[13]

The crucial element in China's efforts to improve relations with the ASEAN countries has been to deflate what it has always regarded as their exaggerated fears of the "China threat". China has been trying to defuse such fears in general terms, usually by proclaiming that China would "never" harbour any hegemonistic intention in the region.[14] Chinese leaders have also been strongly refuting the theory of the "China threat" with respect to specific issues. For example, they repeatedly stressed to their ASEAN counterparts that

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10 See, for example, Ji Guoxing, "Sino-Indonesian Political Relations: Prospects for the 1990s", paper presented at the first Sino-Indonesia Conference, p4; and Zhu Chun, "Southeast Asia-China Relations", paper presented at the conference "The PRC and Southeast Asia", p6.

11 Zhang Jialin, "The interests and rivalry of the major powers in Southeast Asia: implications for the ASEAN countries," in Frances F. W. Lai, ed., op.cit., pp19-20.

12 Pei Monong, Yazhou Taipingyang Diqu De Xingshi He Wenti (Situation and Problems In The Asia-Pacific Region) (Chinese Translation Press, Beijing, 1986), pp61-62.

13 Zhang Bi Qing, op.cit., p58. Zhan Yaohua, op.cit, p35.

14 RR, July 31, 1983, p6. RR, October 10, 1983, p1. RR, December 14, 1990, p1. RR, December 16, 1990, p1.

China sought no sphere of influence in Cambodia through its strong support for the Khmer Rouge.[15] On the Spratly dispute, as illustrated in Chapter Four, China has tried to limit its assertive posture in the South China Sea to minimise damage to relations with the ASEAN countries, and to quell regional fears arising from its rapid defence modernisation. China made active efforts to solve the problems caused by its relations with the regional communist insurgents and with the ASEAN-based overseas Chinese communities. Before 1984, while reaffirming its stand on the issue of dual nationality and refraining from commenting on racial issues in the ASEAN countries, China ignored the differences in nationalities of the ASEAN-based overseas Chinese in its vigorous campaign to mobilise them to contribute to China's modernisation. Both huaqiao (Chinese nationals living abroad) and huaren (foreign citizens of Chinese origin) were treated as compatriots, asked to show their "patriotism" for the "motherland" by making economic contributions to China and their ancestral home towns. For example, when Chinese leaders praised investment and donations by some ethnic Chinese tycoons from some ASEAN countries who were actually not Chinese nationals, their contributions were praised as reflecting their "national heart", "spirit of patriotism", and love for the "motherland",[16] words usually reserved for old returnees from the ASEAN countries and huaqiao. China's policy

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15 RR, February, 21, 1982, p6. RR, December 25, 1982, p1. RR, August 18 and 27, 1988, p1. RR, November 12, 1988, p1, p6.

16 See, for example, L W (Overseas Edition) Editorial Office, ed., Yanhuangzisun Zhai haiwai (Overseas descendants of Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang) (New China Press, Beijing, 1989), p1, p152, p226, p377; and Cheng Chiyan, "Mao Zedong qushi hou zhi qiaowu zhengce"(Overseas Chinese policy after Mao), in Cheng Yu Suo, ed., op.cit., p216.

aroused suspicions among the ASEAN countries of China's intentions and fears of its impact on the allegiance of their citizens of Chinese descent. They felt that China was at best insensitive to their feelings by disregarding local policies, and at worst interfering in their domestic affairs. The problem was most serious in Sino-Malaysian relations. China's active encouragement of traditional feelings among ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, and reluctance to deal directly with Malay entrepreneurs and Pernas Trading, Malaysia's official China trade agency, caused the Malaysian government to suspect that China was deliberately obstructing the New Economic Policy, aimed at equalizing the distribution of wealth among the different racial groups by seeking a greater economic role for ethnic Malays.[17] Malaysia, where racial relations were always fragile, was concerned that pursuit of an indiscriminate overseas Chinese policy would revive Chinese-oriented tendencies among the local Chinese, enhance communalism, and disrupt national integration and unity.[18] Since the mid-1980s, however, China has adopted a cautious approach in dealing with the overseas Chinese communities in the region. The previously ubiquitous fanfare has disappeared, and China has made clearer distinctions in treating huaqiao and huaren from ASEAN. In Malaysia, China has also been prepared to deal directly with ethnic Malay businessmen and Pernas.[19] There has been no "patriotism" rhetoric from the Chinese leaders when they

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17 Stephen Leong, "Malaysia and the People's Republic of China in the 1980s", p1114. The Star, June 27, 1984.

18 Stephen Leong, op.cit., p1113.

19 The Star, June 27, 1984. Zainuddin A. Bahari, "Malaysia-China bilateral relations", in Joyce K. Kallgren, Noordin Sopiee, Soedjati Djiwandono, eds., op.cit., pp 246-247.

meet ethnic Chinese business leaders from the ASEAN region.[20] When he visited Thailand in November 1988, Li Peng emphasised to the local Chinese community that "our demand of you is no more than merely wishing you to contribute, with the Thai people, to Thailand's prosperity and social stability", and that "this is also a contribution to China."[21] A People's Daily editorial on Li's visit confirmed this principle as China's attitude to the Chinese communities in all the ASEAN countries.[22] In his visit to Malaysia and the Philippines in December 1990, Li stressed that China welcomed the ethnic Chinese in the ASEAN region to do business with China on the basis of "equality and mutual benefit",[23] manifesting China's policy of not applying the special treatment of huaqiao to huaren. During the summer of 1991, the Chinese communities in the ASEAN region made donations for China's flood rescue operations incomparably more generous than those by overseas Chinese communities elsewhere except Hong Kong, or those of any foreign government or international organisation. However, China did not widely publicise the fact, nor did it claim that the donations reflected a "patriotic" love for the "motherland".[24]

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20 For such meetings, see RR, September 15, 1988, p1; RR, March 30, 1990, p2; RR, September 16, 1990, p1; RR, August 15, 1990, p4; RR, September 26, 1990, p4; RR, September 14, 1990, p6; RR, August 9, 1990, p1; RR, September 24, 1990, p4; RR, September 25, 1990, p1; and RR, September 28, 1990, p4.

21 RR, November 13, 1988, p6.

22 RR, November 25, 1988, p1.

23 RR, December 14, 1990, p1. RR, December 16, 1990, p6.

24 For China's reactions to the donations from the ASEAN-based Chinese communities, see RR, July 20 and 22, 1991, p6; RR, August 4 and 17, 1991, p6; and RR, August 24, 1991, p1.

Another area where China has made strong efforts to defuse ASEAN governments' fears is in assuaging their doubts about the continuity of the reform and open-door policy, which became particularly strong when a pro-reform Chinese leader was disgraced. The feeling in the ASEAN countries is that China's modernization drive will integrate it more into the regional and international economy, and give it a greater stake in the stability and peace of the region. This would strengthen its commitment to the existing regional and international order, whereas a reversal of the policy may cause serious security problems to the region. Chinese leaders have repeatedly reassured their ASEAN counterparts that China's reform and open-door policy will remain unchanged. Such reassurances were made most emphatically in early 1987,[25] when the pro-reform CCP Secretary General Hu Yaobang was purged, in the autumn of 1988 against the background of tightened economic control,[26] and in the aftermath of the June 4 suppression in 1989.[27]

Deng's era represents the longest consecutive period since 1949 in which China has striven to improve relations with the ASEAN countries. China's efforts have finally born fruit since the late 1980s. By October 1990, China finally had diplomatic relations with all the original five ASEAN countries. Regular consultations between Chinese Foreign Ministry officials and their Thai, Philippine and Indonesian counterparts began in April 1991. China's official dialogue with ASEAN as an organization also began from the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July 1991. By the end of

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25 RR, April 23, 1987, p6. RR, May 30, 1987, p1.

26 RR, September 16, 17 and 18, 1988, P1.

27 RR, October 26, 1989, p1.

1991, China was claiming that its relations with the ASEAN countries were the best in history.[28] People-to-people contact also expanded. The governments of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia started to relax immigration restrictions on their citizens including ethnic Chinese travelling to China from 1985. Since 1990 Malaysians have been able to travel to China without any restrictions. In the following year, Indonesia and Singapore lifted all restrictions on travel to China, and the Philippines delisted Chinese citizens from the restricted category created under a foreign service code of 1983. Also in 1991, with Bangkok's long-delayed approval, China opened its first consulate in Thailand in the northern resort of Chiang Mai. In mid-1993, China and Malaysia agreed to establish a Malaysian consulate in south China and a Chinese consulate in Sarawak as a result of growing exchanges through tourism, and to twin Penang with Xiamen as sister cities. These two developments were the first of their kind in Sino-Malaysian relations. The ASEAN governments' relaxed attitudes towards promoting people-to-people contact were largely brought about by the decimation of regional communist insurgents, by China's new approach to its relations with regional ethnic Chinese communities and by the ASEAN governments' own perception of benefits to be derived from economic relations with China. The demise of the regional communist movement and China's new overseas Chinese policy have reduced the ASEAN countries' worries about China's intention to subvert the legitimate local governments.

Strenuous diplomacy of amity has surely benefited China in maintaining a peaceful regional environment, facilitating bilateral

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[28] RR, November 20, 1991, p6.

economic relations with ASEAN and shoring up China's influence in Southeast Asia. Having diplomatic relations with all the ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, the biggest and most influential member of ASEAN, and conducting official dialogue with ASEAN as an organization have enabled China to enjoy a more prominent regional profile now than in 1988-89, when it witnessed the rapid decline of this profile. China's trade and investment relations with ASEAN have seen steady growth from the mid-1980s (see Tables One and Four), and almost all the major business treaties with the ASEAN countries like investment protection treaties and double taxation avoidance treaties were singed during the period after 1984, as to be mentioned later, when political relations were improved significantly.

The achievement of China's diplomacy has been qualified by various problems in China's attitude towards ASEAN, such as China's lingering insensitivity to regional concerns and perceptions regarding itself, as to be discussed in the next section. However, the most conspicuous problem affecting China's amity diplomacy is the intrinsical contradiction in China's Spratly policy as discussed in Chapter Four. As pointed out in that chapter, China's assertive Spratly policy has not only led to tension between China and ASEAN about the Spratly issue per se, but also rekindled deep-seated regional suspicions of China's long-term intentions in the region, which had been to some extent reduced by China's cooperative policy over the Cambodian issue and historical problems concerning ethnic Chinese and communist insurgencies. Regional perception of China as a potentially destabilising force in pursuit of a hegemonic scheme in Southeast Asia has been reinforced by China's readiness

to use force in asserting its claim and its growing "blue water" navy. China's hardened posture in the South China Sea has contributed to ASEAN's increased willingness to involve Japan to play a larger political and security role not only in resolving the Spratly dispute but also in general regional affairs. This has effectively offset China's policy of containing Japan's regional ambition by capitalising on the ASEAN countries' fear of Japan's economic dominance and their memory of Japanese militarism.

"Regionalising" of China's ASEAN policy

Here there have been three developments. First, the major focus of attention in China's ASEAN policy has shifted from the superpowers to intra-regional issues and developments, and bilateral problems between China and the ASEAN countries. Second, China has begun to view intra-regional and bilateral problems increasingly in their own right. Third, China's policy has become more responsive to regional concerns about its own intentions.

In the Maoist era, because of its perceived threat from one or both superpowers, China's policy towards Southeast Asia was characterized by an overriding emphasis on containing them. In the initial years of the Deng regime, as pointed out in Chapter One, though he abandoned Mao's insistence on the imminence and scope of the Soviet threat to China's national security, the Soviet threat remained a major concern both in general and in Southeast Asia. However, from mid-1982, the demise of the Soviet threat led to the decline of the Soviet Union as a major focus of attention in China's ASEAN policy. China increased its attention to intra-regional issues and developments, particularly those arising from historical

experience and religious and ethnic differences, both at inter-state and state levels, and regional territorial disputes, and to bilateral problems between China and the ASEAN countries. This trend of "regionalisation" has developed particularly fast since 1984 because firstly, as mentioned above, with its more ambitious reform programs and coastal development strategy since then, China has found more vested interests in a tranquil Asia-Pacific environment and a friendly relationship with the ASEAN countries. Hence China's increased attention to the inherent challenges to peace and stability in Southeast Asia and to its own relations with the ASEAN countries. As mentioned in Chapter Four, in his Government Work Report of May 1984, the then Chinese Prime Minster Zhao Ziyang talked about problems in the Asia-Pacific region other than the superpowers' hegemonism, and this was the first such Report which touched on inherent problems between China and the ASEAN countries. When reviewing the Asia-Pacific situation in early 1985, Han Nianlong, former Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister in charge of Asia-Pacific affairs, alluded to domestic political, economic and social factors in some ASEAN countries as potential sources of instability in Southeast Asia.[29] Secondly, the inter-state and domestic political, racial and religious problems in Southeast Asia, particularly the Spratly dispute, have become prominent since late 1987 now that they are no longer overlaid by East-West rivalries.

In the first few years of the Deng era, the Soviet threat was a major factor not only determining China's approach to its relations with the ASEAN countries in general and the specific problems in these relations in particular, but also shadowing China's concern about

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[29] RR, January 2, 1985.

intra-regional problems. For example, China felt worried that the Soviet Union was using the Spratly dispute, as well as other historical issues such as China's support for ASEAN-based communist insurgents and its relations with the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, to strengthen the ASEAN countries' suspicions of China's regional intentions. Meanwhile, as part of its efforts to make the ASEAN countries partners in containing Soviet expansion, China made some conciliatory gestures to them in these areas. So far as intra-regional problems were concerned, China was worried that the Soviet Union may use them to advance its own regional expansion.[30] Since mid-1982, however, with the decline of the Soviet threat, China started to look at bilateral relations and their problems in their own right rather than as influenced by the Soviet threat, though remaining concerned that the superpowers may meddle in intra-regional problems for their own confrontational purposes, thus threatening peace and stability in Southeast Asia.[31] This worry was diluted from the end of 1987 with the decline of superpower rivalry in the region. China has had to develop a view of Southeast Asia - the opportunities and challenges it confronts in the region - from a regional perspective.

China's delinking of bilateral relations and intra-regional problems from superpower politics is a radical departure from its post-1949 approach. In Mao's era, both at declaratory and substantive levels, China's ASEAN policy was part of its broader efforts to counter the threat from the USA or Soviet Union. China approached its relations

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30 RR, March 27, 1981, p7.

31 Ji Guoxing, "ASEAN countries in political and economic perspectives," pp157-165. Ma Zong-shi, Yu Bin, and Xu Guo-xong, op.cit., p214. Zhang Jialin, op.cit., pp23-24.

with regional countries in general and problems in those relations in particular not in bilateral or regional terms, but in such a way as to serve its larger strategic calculations. For example, China's policies towards Thailand in the 1950s-60s did not vary in accordance with the character of successive governments or with those governments' attitudes towards China per se. They varied in accordance with those governments' willingness to provide forward air bases to the USA from which its planes could not only threaten and bomb Indo-China but from which China itself could be threatened.[32] Both Bandung-style friendly posturing and revolutionary subversive tactics served the same goal of constructing a united front against a superpower. And as mentioned in Chapters Two and Four, decisions whether to adopt a harsh or soft approach to the ASEAN countries over Taiwan or the Spratlys depended on the role China envisioned for these countries vis-a-vis the superpowers. Before the late 1960s, China always saw US "manipulation" in major political events in and between the ASEAN countries, and their economic relations with the Western countries, in anti-Chinese riots and policies designed to control local Chinese communities, in the establishment of ASA and ASEAN, in the ASEAN countries' relations with Taiwan, in the Philippines' claim on the Spratlys, and in the ASEAN countries' decisions to send troops abroad and to host Western troops and bases. These were all alleged to be instigated by the USA to directly serve its strategic encirclement of China. From the early 1970s, China imposed its own third world theoretical framework on events in the ASEAN countries, claiming that ASEAN's proposal of ZOPFAN represented "Southeast Asian peoples' anti-hegemony spirit" and their "counter-poise" to the Soviet-sponsored

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32 Michael Yahuda, "China and the Region", p56.

Asian Collective Security System,[33] and their objection to internationalisation of the Malacca Strait as aimed at obstructing Moscow's maritime expansion.[34] More interestingly, their efforts to enhance economic independence, strengthen regional economic cooperation and seek more favourable prices for their export commodities were interpreted by China as examples of the Third World's "anti-hegemony struggle in the economic field".[35]

China's ever strengthening need to improve relations with the ASEAN countries and increased attention to regional developments and issues have made China increasingly sensitive to, and heedful of, the ASEAN countries' anxieties and fears about itself. China's increased understanding of regional affairs because of enhanced Southeast Asia research and leadership exchanges has also contributed to this positive development. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Southeast Asia research in China was strong, mainly because most of the researchers were Chinese returnees from the region with first-hand knowledge of their birth countries. In fact Southeast Asia research was more solid than US research in the major research institutions at the central level, such as the Eighth

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33 RR, July 29, 1975, p5. RR, July 30, 1975, p6. RR, July 13, 1977, p5.

34 RR, November 29, 1971, p6. RR, March 16, 1972, p4. RR, April 7, 1973, p6. RR, December 11, 1973, p6. RR, February 16, 1974, p5. RR, June 16, 1974, p6. RR, July 12, 1974, p6. RR, June 3, 1975, p6. RR, July 4, 1975, p6. RR, August 15, 1975, p6. RR, January 2, 1976, p6. RR, January 19, 1976, p6. RR, March 25, 1976, p8.

35 RR, December 25, 1973, p6. RR, April 14, 1974, p6. RR, April 16, 1974, p6. RR, April 20, 1974, p5. RR, May 25, 1974, p6. RR, December 23, 1974, p6. RR, February 22, 1975, p6. RR, June 10, 1975, p5. RR, August 26, 1975, p5. RR, September 10, 1975, p6. RR, October 20, 1975, p6. RR, December 2, 1975, p6. RR, January 5, 1976, p5. RR, January 31, 1976, p6. RR, March 12, 1976, p5. RR, May 17, 1976, p6. RR, January 4, 1977, p6.

Bureau (renamed as the Institute of Contemporary International Relations in 1982) of the CCP Investigation Department (called the Ministry of State Security since 1983), the Institute of International Issues in the Foreign Ministry and various research sections in the CCP External Liaison Department. However, during the chaotic Cultural Revolution years, research activities were suspended, and hard-collected valuable materials were destroyed.[36] The dismal state of China's Southeast Asia research had hardly been overcome during the initial years of Deng's leadership.[37] As a result, China was not well informed about the contemporary Southeast Asia. However, since the mid-1980s, China's Southeast Asia research has not only recovered from the legacy of the Cultural Revolution, but has also developed with unprecedented width and depth.[38]

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36 For a good example of the difficult situation faced by Chinese institutions conducting research on Southeast Asia during the Cultural Revolution, see the description of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies of Jinan University (Guangzhou) during that period in Jinan Daxue Dongnanya Yanjiusuo sanshi zhounian jinian tekan:1960-1990 (Special memorial bulletin for the 30th anniversary of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies of Jinan University:1960-1990) (Jinan University Press, Guangzhou, 1990).

37 For the state of Southeast Asia research in China by the early 1980s, see Wang Gengwu, et al., eds., Southeast Asian Studies in China: A Report (Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1981), pp1-44

38 For the rapid advancement of China's ASEAN research in the Deng era, see Chen Qiaozhi, Huang Zisheng and Chen Senhai, eds., China's Southeast Asian Research: the Status Quo and Prospect (Jinan University Press, Guangzhou, 1992), passim; and Frances Lai, ed., State of East and Southeast Asian Studies Since 1979 in China, Hong Kong and Singapore (Centre for Asian Pacific Studies, Lingnan College, Hong Kong, 1987), pp3-19, pp21-31, pp35-41, pp43-65, pp67-75.

That enhanced Southeast Asia research and leadership exchanges have made China become increasingly sensitive to, and heedful of, the ASEAN countries' anxieties and fears regarding China has been most clearly manifested in China's policy towards the regional Chinese communities. A deep-seated cultural belief in China is that overseas Chinese, including those who have renounced Chinese nationality, are China's "overseas compatriots" who are expected, and should be encouraged, to contribute to China's domestic and foreign policy goals. However, from 1984-85, first-hand observations and scholarly research have led to greater Chinese awareness of local sensitivities about the ethnic Chinese and greater recognition of the fundamental changes in overseas Chinese communities in the ASEAN region since the end of the Second World War brought about by transformations in the international situation and in the domestic scenes in China and the regional countries, and the latters' policies towards local Chinese communities. The consensus reached is that emotionally, the overwhelming majority of overseas Chinese in the ASEAN region actually have neither loyalty to nor interest in China as "motherland".[39] This process of perceptional change was facilitated by the death of Liao Chengzhi, who was in charge of China's overseas Chinese policy from 1949 to 1966 and from mid-1977, in mid-1983. With his strong emotional ties with overseas Chinese developed during long years abroad

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[39] Chinese Research Association of Huaqiao History, Chinese Institute of Huaren History, eds., Huaqiao yanjiu shinian: 1981-91 (Ten years of huaqiao research: 1981-91) (Chinese Huaqiao Press, Beijing, November 1991), pp60-69. Huang Zhisheng, et al., eds., Zhanhou Dongnanya guojia de huaqiao huaren zhengce (The Southeast Asian countries' policies towards huaqiao and huaren after the Second World War) (Jinan University Press, Guangzhou, 1989), passim.

before 1949,[40] and having long lost touch with the situation of overseas Chinese communities when he was officially rehabilitated in 1977 after the Cultural Revolution, Liao could not possibly follow to the letter China's policy of drawing a legal distinction between huaqiao and huaren, a policy he himself had advocated at the height of China's Bandung diplomacy.

China's overseas Chinese policy towards ASEAN since the mid-1980s is a special case. Its policy before that time, which was actually a world-wide approach, has continued unchanged in other countries and regions, especially in the West. For example, in his address to Chinese community leaders in Italy including both huaqiao and huaren during his visit in January 1992, Li Peng not only talked about China as if it were the real "motherland" for all people of Chinese origin living in Italy, but also urged them to contribute to China's modernisation,[41] a far cry from what he had said to the Thai Chinese community in November 1988. In June 1993, Li Suihuan, a standing member of the CCP Politburo and Chairman of the Political Consultative Committee, sent a letter to a group of overseas Chinese musicians gathering in Beijing, urging people of Chinese origin all over the world to "unite hand in hand to make endless efforts to make *our nation* and *motherland* prosperous and powerful".[42]

China's approach to its relations with the communist parties in the ASEAN region was also an exception to its general approach to relations with foreign communist parties. In the Deng era, CCP's

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40 For Liao's overseas background, see Li Rongde, op.cit., pp290-291. For an official profile of Liao, see RR, June 24, 1983, p4.

41 RR, January 29, 1992, p6.

42 RR, June 7, 1993, p4. Emphasis added.

general policy has been to (re)establish and develop relations with more foreign communist parties, as part of the campaign to expand China's international connections and influence. From the 12th CCP Congress in September 1982 to February 1988, the CCP established ties with or contacted 250 foreign communist parties and other "progressive" parties.[43] By late 1990, it had formal relations with more than 280 such parties.[44] Also, China's preaching of the principle of political and moral support and the four principles since 1981 was initially meant to establish guide-lines for China's relations with all foreign communist parties. However, while having continuously mentioned these principles when addressing relations with other communist parties, Chinese leaders quietly abandoned them when making reassurances to their ASEAN counterparts since 1983 about China's relations with ASEAN-based communist parties, choosing to declare that China simply had no relations with these parties. That some of the general patterns of China's approach to external relations have been modified in the ASEAN region is the clearest indication that China has been heading towards a distinct regional policy.

When talking about factors increasing China's awareness of regional sensitivities, mention should also be made of the Western human rights campaign in Asia. As pointed out in Chapter Three, this campaign, against which China has tried to make common cause with ASEAN, should help China to better understand how the ASEAN governments, at the receiving end of China's revolutionary regional policy in the past, had felt about this policy.

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43 Xie Yixian, Zhechong yu gongchu, p218.

44 RR, November 28, 1990, p6.

However, some Chinese officials and leading scholars still too readily reject ASEAN's theory of "China threat" as unnecessary, inappropriate, unfounded, not serious, or even as pretending to be serious, without giving convincing explanations to their ASEAN counterparts.[45] China still has some way to go in heeding the regional concerns and sensitivities about itself, and has still to overcome the divergences between its self-image and regional perceptions of it.[46] For example, in Chinese leaders' statements and press editorials regarding China-ASEAN relations, the so-called "friendship since ancient times" and "common struggle against imperialism and colonialism" are still emphasised as a basis for developing new relationship.[47] Such careless propaganda is quite counter-productive. China ran a tributary system in Southeast Asia in ancient times characterised by a patron-client relationship.[48] As Chang Pao-min has argued, while it may be no more than a habit or friendly gesture for China to speak of the historical "brotherly"

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45 See, for example, Wen Guangyi, "1987 nian Xianggang 'Dongmeng yu Zhongguo guanxi' guoji huiyi jiyao (A summary of 1987 Hong Kong international conference 'China-ASEAN relations')", Dongnanya lishi xuekan (Journal of Southeast Asian History, Guangzhou), No. 4, December 1987, p3, pp6-7.

46 For studies of the perception problems between China and the ASEAN countries, see Michael Yahuda, The China Threat (Seminar Paper of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Kuala Lumpur, 1986); Robert O. Tilman, op.cit.; Bai Yumin, "Hopes and fears,"; and Chang Pao-min, "China and Southeast Asia: The Problems of a Perceptional Gap", CSA, Vol. 9, No. 3, December 1987.

47 RR, December 19, 1990, p7. Zhang Guocheng, "Broad prospects for China's relations with ASEAN countries," Foreign Affairs Journal (The Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, Beijing), No. 20, June 1991, pp20-22.

48 For China's Sinocentric view of the region in history, see Wang Gungwu, China And The Chinese Overseas (Times Academic Press, Singapore, 1991), p41, pp43-44.

relations between China and its smaller neighbours, such references can be very irritating to Southeast Asian countries, as they necessarily imply a superior position for China and relegate its neighbours to the inferior position of younger brothers.[49] As for "common struggle against imperialism and colonialism", the ASEAN governments and Suharto and Lee Kuan Yew personally were in fact condemned as "puppets" of the imperialists and colonialists against whom China urged the regional peoples to struggle before the 1970s. The overthrow of these "puppets" through armed communist revolution was long propagated by China as a major goal of the Southeast Asian NDR. Another example is that, as pointed out in Chapter Four, in its efforts to defuse the ASEAN countries' apprehensions about its armament process, Chinese leaders tend to emphasise the technological obsolescence of its weaponry as compared with major Western powers instead of addressing the issue in the regional context. Clearly greater confidence-building efforts should be made by China and ASEAN to better understand each other especially on political and security matters.[50]

Increasingly stronger economic emphasis

From late 1978, with the launching of reform and the open-door policy, China began to pay more attention to ASEAN economies and economic relations with them, and launched a campaign to woo the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia to contribute to its own modernization drive. Chinese economic bureaucrats were anxious to familiarise themselves with the economic development experiences

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49 Chang Pao-min, "China and Southeast Asia", p189.

50 For some specific proposals raised by academics for that purpose, see Bai Yulin, "Post-Cold War China-Southeast Asia Political Cooperation", pp17-18; and Lee Lai To, "ASEAN-PRC Political And Security Cooperation", pp1102-1103.

of the ASEAN countries, especially their expertise in attracting foreign capital and technology, so as to apply it in China's own SEZs.[51] The sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85) contained a major research project entitled *Research on Development Strategies of Southeast Asian Economies.* However, it is since 1984 that the economic factor has become a major priority in China's ASEAN policy. For example, the development of economic and trade relations has become a new focal point in Chinese leaders' statements about Sino-ASEAN relations.[52] Many high priority research projects aimed at finding the ways and means to enhance this development and studying the ASEAN countries' experience in inviting foreign capital and technology and in other areas have been undertaken by various central government departments and provincial governments. Among the most important of these is the national and Yunnan provincial joint research project for the 7th Five-Year Plan entitled *Open Up Trade and Investment Markets in Southeast Asia.*

In general, two major factors have determined the economic focus in China's ASEAN policy. First, China's ever strengthening reform and coastal development programs since mid-1984 have called for the enhancement of economic exchanges with the Asia-Pacific countries including the dynamic ASEAN economies, and for the

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51 For China-ASEAN economic and trade relations in the initial years of the Deng leadership, see Su Ziqing, "Zhongguo yu Dongmeng jingji de fazhan he hezuo (Economic development of the Chinese and ASEAN economies and their cooperation)", GWY, No. 2, 1981, p23.

52 RR, December 16, 1984, p1. RR, September 20, 1985, p1. RR, November 22, 1985, p1. RR, June 1, 1986, p1. RR, June 16, 17 and 18, 1986, p1. RR, November 25, 1986, p1. RR, August 21, 1987, p1. RR, July 9, 1988, p1. RR, September 15, 1988, p1.

study of their development experiences relevant to China. They have strengthened the notion that pursuit of economic, trade and technological benefits should be treated as the top priority of diplomacy, especially since late 1987, with China having lost its previous strategic and political influence in world affairs due to East-West detente and the end of the Cold War. With the June 4 event and the world-wide collapse of communist regimes, economic reform and open-door policy have become ever more important to the survival of the communist system in China.

Second, China intends to use economic and trade relations as an instrument for improving and strengthening political relations with the ASEAN countries. As mentioned above, China has increased its efforts since the mid-1980s to improve and strengthen relations with them in order to help create a tranquil environment in the Asia-Pacific, facilitate bilateral economic relations, and shore up its international and regional influence. Business and political relations are interdependent. Given that the ASEAN governments' long-term suspicions of China's regional intentions and the obstacles these had created in bilateral relations were difficult to overcome in the short term, China hoped that enhancement of economic and trade cooperation could help to improve overall bilateral relations, and this would in turn further benefit commercial relations.[53] As a leading ASEAN expert in China wrote:

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[53] For the interdependence of politics and economics in China-ASEAN relations, see Cheng Bifan, Zhang Nansheng, "Institutional Factors in China-ASEAN Economic Relations", p33, p36.

> If China-ASEAN economic cooperation can be strengthened, it will not only help deepen mutual understanding, but also inspire both sides to treasure and protect good political relations. In such an environment, political misunderstandings and divisions can be more easily settled with both sides willing to settle their disputes through seeking common ground.[54]

For China to shore up its international and regional influence, the importance of economic and trade relations as an instrument is obvious. With the transformation of the international and Southeast Asian situations since late 1987, the focus of the foreign policies of many countries including the ASEAN members has shifted to economic and trade interests. It is against this background that Taiwan has successfully expanded its influence in Southeast Asia, and Japan has strengthened its presence in the region. If China does not establish and strengthen its economic significance to the region in the post-Cambodian era, its role in regional affairs will be further marginalized.

As a result of China's greater interest in economic relations with ASEAN and various reform measures in China concerning the management regime of foreign economic relations, as well as the enthusiasm on ASEAN's part, China's trade and investment relations with the ASEAN countries have not only witnessed solid progress but also diversified in terms of variety of traded products and

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[54] Cheng Bifan" a changing pattern in relationship between China and the ASEAN countries," in Frances F. W. Lai, ed., The Emerging Relations Between China and Southeast Asia, p86.

investment fields since 1984 (for the increase of the value of trade and investment, see Table One and Table Four).[55] Based on the figures in Table One, the volume of the two-way trade increased from US$6630.66 million in 1984 to US$7946.54 million in 1991. ASEAN's annual investment in China increased from US$8.51 million in 1984 to US$87.93 million in 1991, based on the figures in Table Four. China's investment in ASEAN was negligible in the early 1980s, but had increased to US$150 million in cumulative terms by June 1992.[56] In 1991 alone, China invested US$12.50 million.[57] A regulatory framework for investment has been established. China signed investment protection treaties with Thailand (1985), Singapore (1986) and Malaysia (1988), and has signed double taxation avoidance treaties with Malaysia (1985), Thailand (1986) and Singapore (1989).[58] In an effort to institutionalise the wider business relations, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen proposed at the 25th AMM in July 1992 a joint economic and trade cooperation agreement with ASEAN. As an alternative, he suggested that two sides could reach an agreement on a joint committee of economic and trade cooperation to institute a consultation mechanism first.[59]

Although the volume of China-ASEAN trade has increased, its proportion in China's total foreign trade has remained largely static,

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55 For progress of China-ASEAN economic relations in the 1980s, see the works listed in Note 3 in Introduction.

56 RR, August 10, 1992, p6. For the expansion of China's investment in the ASEAN countries, see also Friedrich Wu, "China Capitalises on Asean", FEER, January 20, 1994, p17.

57 Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1992-1993, p374.

58 Clyde D. Stoltenberg, op.cit., p34, p37.

59 Xinhua, Manila, July 21, 1992, in FBIS/DR/C, 22 July 1992, p2.

from about 4% in 1978 to 6% in 1991.[60] Its proportion in ASEAN's total foreign trade has also remained low, from 1.2% in 1978 to 2.3% in 1991.[61] From 1984 to 1991, China-ASEAN trade increased 120%, whereas China's total foreign trade increased 273%.[62] It has been argued in the region that to a significant extent the economic structures of China and the ASEAN countries (except Singapore) are not complementary to each other, and they are mainly competing against each other for export market and investment funds. However, while acknowledging the problem, the Chinese have argued that the issue of complementarity vs. competition has been exaggerated. They tend to think that the less-than-satisfactory progress of trade as compared to each other's overall foreign trade performance is because not enough efforts have been made to actively explore new ways and areas for economic cooperation. They are also optimistic that with the rapid industrialisation of both China and the ASEAN countries, a bright future of economic cooperation can be expected.[63]

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60 The 1978 percentage is based on figures in Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1984, p817, p839, p842, pp845-846, p848. The 1991 percentage is based on ibid., 1992-1993, p391, and Guojia Tongji Ju (State Statistics Bureau), ed., Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 1992 (China's Statistical Yearbook, 1992) (China Statistics Press, 1992, Beijing), p632.

61 The 1978 percentage is based on figures in Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 1985 (International Monetary Fund, 1985), p223, p226, p323, p351, p378; and Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1984, p839, p842, pp845-846, p848. The 1991 percentage is based on figures in Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 1993, p224, p226, p351, p323, p379; and Table One in this thesis.

62 These growth rates are based on Table Four, Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1985, p793, and ibid., 1992-1993, p391.

63 For arguments about complementarity vs. competition, see Cheng Bifan, "a changing pattern in relationship between China and the ASEAN countries," pp85-86; Ji Guoxing, "China's role in Asian-Pacific security: a

Table Four **ASEAN investment in China: 1979-91** (US$ million)

	1979-83*	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Indonesia	-	-	0.08	0.49	-	0.32	1.37	1.00	2.18
Philippines	4.28	2.29	3.11	1.08	3.83	3.63	1.52	1.67	5.85
Thailand	2.50	4.45	8.84	9.10	11.24	7.22	12.68	7.52	19.73
Malaysia	-	0.57	0.25	0.41	0.13	1.30	0.40	0.64	1.96
Singapore	54.47	1.20	10.13	13.62	21.63	30.16	86.54	53.54	58.21

* Figures for 1979-83 represent funds agreed upon.

Sources: Yearbook of China's Foreign Economic Relations and Trade: 1984 (Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, Beijing, 1984), p1093. Ibid., 1985, p1067. Guojia Tongji Ju (State Statistics Bureau), ed., Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian, 1986, p582. Ibid., 1987, p604. Ibid., 1988, p734. Ibid., 1990, p654. Ibid., 1992, p642.

In its economic interest in ASEAN, China has focused particularly on Singapore. While there have been various though decreasing problems with respect to complementarity between other ASEAN countries' economies and China's, China and Singapore are natural economic partners. First, on a general level, Singapore's role as a

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Chinese perspective," in Frances F. W. Lai, ed., The Emerging Relations between China and Southeast Asia, p94; Cheng Bifan, Zhang Nansheng, op.cit., pp34-35; Sura Sanittanont, "China's Modernization Program and Its Impact on ASEAN", Asia Pacific Community, Fall, 1979, pp64-65; Fred Herschede, "Trade between China and ASEAN: The Impact of the Pacific Rim Era", Pacific Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 2, Summer 1991, pp185-191; Paul Chan, "Policies, Mechanisms, and Institutions affecting ASEAN-China Economic Relations", in Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Developments in ASEAN and China, p58; Chia Siow-Yue, "ASEAN-China Trade in Manufactured Goods", in Chia Siow-Yue, Cheng Bifan, eds., ASEAN-China Economic Relations: Trends and Patterns, p124; and John Wong, "An Overview of ASEAN-China Economic Relations", ibid., p12, pp16-18.

major centre of international trade and finance and its close links to Western multi-nationals are valuable to China in almost all areas of China's foreign economic cooperation. Second, Singapore can provide many products and services which are lacking in China and yet direly needed, like oil exploration equipment, crude refinery facilities, expertise in running supply bases and engineering services for off-shore oil development, banking and finance, tourism, harbour management, and telecommunications. Third, beside bilateral economic complementarity, the two countries share Chinese culture and traditions, a clear plus for bilateral economic cooperation. With these favourable factors, Singapore has been the largest ASEAN investor in, and the largest ASEAN trader with, China.[64] Based on Table One, the value of China-Singapore trade was 45% of total value of China-ASEAN trade from 1983 to 1991, and based on Table Four, 73% of ASEAN's investment in China from 1979 to 1991 came from Singapore. In fact, during the latter period Singapore was China's fifth largest foreign investor in terms of cumulative investment.[65] Singapore also has another economic attraction for China. While they are generally interested in development experiences of all the ASEAN countries, Chinese leaders have been particularly interested in Singapore's development model. This is because Singapore, as a Chinese country, has achieved great economic success while preserving its cultural heritage and maintaining political stability. They hope to

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64 For Sino-Singapore business relations, see Wu-Shan Lim, op.cit., pp22-26; and Cao Yunhua, "Zhong Xin jingmao guanxi: huigu, zhanwang yu duice (Sino-Singapore economic and trade relations: review, prospects and counter-measure)", circulated by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Jinan University, Guangzhou, September 1990, pp1-24.

65 RR, August 10, 1992, p6.

learn from this model and apply it to certain coastal areas in China without touching the fundamental mechanism of communist dictatorship.

The result of China's strategy of using enhanced economic relations to improve political relations has also been encouraging. Particularly, the years from 1984 to 1986 provided a good opportunity for this strategy. The ASEAN countries in general were in an economic downturn, and one way to stimulate their economies was to increase sales to the booming market of China. Thus countries like Malaysia and Indonesia began to let economic pragmatism outweigh political misgivings, and more actively promote their economic relations with China. For example, Mahathir led a large business delegation to China in 1985. Zhao Ziyang seized the chance and stressed to the guest that economic and trade cooperation "would lay a more solid foundation for our good-neighbourly relations".[66] The two governments signed a memorandum of understanding on direct trade during the trip. Indonesia restored its direct trade link with China the same year.

However, China's economic diplomacy contributed little to enhancing its regional influence. China's economic position in the region, as compared with those of its rivals, has remained weak, if not deteriorated, despite the continued rapid domestic economic growth. China's relative economic influence in the region is largely based on regional appreciation of China's expanding economic size, the potential opportunities it implies for foreign countries, and regional optimism about the future of Chinese economy, which has

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66 RR, November 23, 1985, p4.

in fact become a wild card in international relations because of its unpredictability. It is by no means certain that the difficult transition of Chinese economy from a central-controlled system to a market system will be smooth and successful, and that serious structural problems in the economy and social and political problems arising from this transition will not turn into systematic turmoil. Because it has not become a weighty economic player on the ground in Southeast Asia, China has found itself in danger of being excluded from the economics-focused regional diplomacy. How to contain this trend has become the most serious challenge China has faced in its ASEAN policy in the post-Cambodian era. It remains to be seen whether China will resort to forceful means in its effort, including a further strengthened posture in the South China Sea.

That economic factors have become a major consideration in China's ASEAN policy is unprecedented since 1949. In the Maoist era, the overwhelming objective in China's regional policy was to ensure China's security. Economic exchanges were not considered important and in most cases were used to serve political and strategic purposes associated with China's relations with the superpowers. Lack of economic interest was also a result of Mao's self-reliance line. Under this approach, trade was restricted to filling gaps in domestic supply, rather than according to comparative advantage.

Conclusion

In the Deng era, China's ASEAN policy has seen five general trends. First, the era has witnessed the gradual demise of a single issue -

centred policy theme. Second, China's ASEAN policy has gradually shaken off its communist ideological legacy. Third, China has made persistent and increasingly strenuous efforts to improve relations with the ASEAN countries and the organisation of ASEAN. Fourth, China has gradually changed from a regional country without a regional policy to a major Asian power, having significantly increased its attention to intra-regional affairs and viewing its relations with regional countries increasingly from a regional and bilateral angle. Fifth, China's ASEAN policy has gradually become more economically oriented. Major factors contributing to these developments include China's expanding reform and open-door programs and changes in the international and regional situations such as the decline of the Soviet threat, East-West detente and the end of the Cold War.

Conclusion

The thesis has examined China's ASEAN policy in Deng's era by studying its general trends, and studying China's policies and actions in the issues of Soviet/Vietnam "hegemonism" (1978-82), the expanding ASEAN-Taiwan de facto official relations, the Western human rights campaign in Asia, the Spratly dispute, and China's relations with regional communist insurgencies.

By examining general trends, and specific policies and actions, as done in the previous chapters, I consider it clear that Deng's China has five main objectives in its ASEAN policy. These objectives are: to create and secure a tranquil regional environment in which China can concentrate on its modernisation; to maintain the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system, both at home and in the changing world order; to protect China's sovereignty; to shore up China's international and regional influence; and to increase economic benefit from trading with, and attracting investment from, the ASEAN countries, and from making some ASEAN countries give up their attempts to slow down Western economic and technological assistance to China.

In all the issues and general trends I have considered, more than one objective has been involved in China's actions and policies. For example, in making its Spratly policy, China has considered its claim to sovereignty, the legitimacy of its regime, regional influence and maintenance of regional stability. However, in China's approach to the five major issues, which I have considered, each has a chief objective, although not all these chief objectives are necessarily

distinct from each other. For example, in both China's human rights diplomacy and its approach to ASEAN-Taiwan relations, the chief objective is the protection of the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system, but in the case of its Spratly policy, the chief objective is to protect China's territorial sovereignty.

China's objectives have been influenced by domestic, regional and international developments. From an overall point of view, the developments against which China has framed its objectives are: (1) its expanding economic reform and open-door programs, (2) the superpower detente and the end of the Cold War, and (3) the June 4 event. For example, the first development has determined that China must maintain a stable regional environment, hence the need to improve relations with the ASEAN countries through measures such as ceasing relations with regional communist insurgents, and minimizing the effect of the Spratly dispute. It has also led China to promote economic and trade relations with the ASEAN countries. The second development, combined with concomitant regional factors in the Asia-Pacific region, has diminished China's regional influence (with the end of China's influencial role in superpower relations, rapid progress in solving the Cambodian conflict, and strengthened regional influence of Taiwan and Japan), has challenged the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system (with enhanced international and regional profile of Taiwan, the Western human rights campaign, and intensification of the Spratly dispute), and has challenged China's sovereignty (with intensification of the Spratly dispute, rapid progress in ASEAN-Taiwan de facto official relations, and the Western human rights

campaign). This challenge to the legitimacy of the Chinese government and political system has been compounded by the third development.

The most important objective in China's ASEAN policy is to create a peaceful regional environment for modernisation, by way of improving relations with the ASEAN countries, because economic prosperity is the chief determinant of the legitimacy and survival of the Chinese communist government. This legitimacy can be shored up only in the short term by suppressing Taiwan's expanding international and regional profile, making a tactical readjustment in fighting "peaceful evolution", and adopting an assertive Spratly policy. In the long run, unless the Chinese people feel satisfied when they "make a comparison", the Chinese communist regime cannot be sustained. In fact all the objectives in China's ASEAN policy are related to China's economic modernisation, in one way or another. To protect its sovereignty regarding the Spratlys and Taiwan, China needs the strong economic power upon which military strength is built. Military modernisation can restrain the regional claimants in their "illegal" actions in South China Sea, and deployment of advanced weapons on the mainland side of the Taiwan Strait can restrain Taipei in challenging Beijing's international legitimacy, as well as restraining the separatist activities on the island. Economic development can increase China's economic attractiveness to, and economic relations with, the ASEAN countries, balancing their expanding business ties with Taiwan, which are used politically by the latter. It will also enhance economic integration between the mainland and Taiwan, thus contributing to the process of China's reunification. To maintain and

upgrade its international and regional influence, China needs to strengthen its economic power and actively conduct an economic diplomacy, since with the end of the Cold War, the agenda of international relations and regional diplomacy in Southeast Asia has shifted from strategic to economic issues.

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