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BECOMING A GOOD NEIGHBOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE CASE OF CHINA'S
TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, 1989 - 2006

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University
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ABSTRACT

BECOMING A GOOD NEIGHBOR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE CASE OF CHINA'S TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, 1989 - 2006.

Dirk Richard Morton
Old Dominion University, 2007
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Since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between China and the ASEAN states following the end of the Cold War, Sino-ASEAN relations have widened and deepened considerably. This is surprising, considering that most ASEAN states viewed China as a revisionist power and threat to regional security during the Cold War and Vietnam and the Philippines have a history of armed conflict with China over as-of-yet unresolved territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Given the withdrawal of American military forces from the Philippines in 1992 and the steady growth of Chinese economic and military power, one might expect ASEAN's traditionally-held threat perceptions of China to continue or even increase. This, however, is not the case as China is viewed increasingly in Southeast Asia as a cooperative, responsible "good neighbor" and Sino-ASEAN relations continue to deepen. This study argues that a reorientation of Chinese regional foreign policy is the principal force responsible for these surprising turn of events, and that ideational factors superseded structural factors in inducing this reorientation. Through a historical analysis within a social constructivist theoretical framework of arguably the most contentious issue in Sino-ASEAN relations, this study concludes that China's cognitive base was changed as a result of "complex" social learning induced by increased diplomatic interaction with ASEAN which, in turn, led to Beijing's successful "good neighbor" diplomacy and the subsequent emergence of China's new "post-Cold War" identity in Southeast Asia and beyond.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chinese foreign policy has undergone considerable change since the end of the Cold War, especially so in Southeast Asia. This transition in Beijing's approach to relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹ and member states is responsible, to a large degree, for the rapid improvement and deepening of the relationship that began during the mid-to-late 1990s, and continues today. As of 2006, China's relations with ASEAN and member states have never been better. Trade and economic relations between China and the Southeast Asian countries have increased greatly, and will continue to do so in light of the agreement reached in 2001 to establish a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, in effect merging the economies of China and the ASEAN states to create a huge trading block in Asia estimated to have a combined population of two billion and collective GDP of \$3 trillion by 2010.² Some analysts of Chinese foreign policy argue that current friendly relations between China and the ASEAN states are the result of a change in China's approach to Sino-ASEAN relations initiated during the mid-1990s. Various labels are used to describe this innovative approach, such as China's "smiling diplomacy," "charm offensive" or "good neighbor" diplomacy (GND).³ What-

This dissertation follows the format requirements of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition.

¹ ASEAN is comprised of ten member states: Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Laos; Malaysia; Myanmar; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; and Vietnam.

² John McBeth, "Taking the Helm," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 16 (October 2003).

³ See Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Goals in the Taiwan Strait," *China Journal* 36 (July 1996): 87-93; Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, *Asia's China Debate: A Special Assessment* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2003); and David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2004/05): 64-99, respectively.

ever the label, Beijing's diplomatic approach during the last decade in the region is predicated on reassuring the ASEAN states that China's rise need not be feared -- that no "China threat" exists. Beijing would rather have the ASEAN states view the rise of China as an opportunity for mutual economic benefit as well as the development of a stronger regional Asian position vis-à-vis the United States.

Considerable evidence exists that Beijing's GND has already succeeded in lessening perceptions in Southeast Asia of a China "threat." Witness the PRC's actions during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, when Beijing made repeated assurances that China would not devalue the *renminbi* to maintain the competitiveness of its exports. Even as China's economy slowed the following year, Beijing reiterated its pledge against devaluing China's currency and gained important recognition for doing so from the international community.⁴ Even after the crisis had passed, Beijing continued to resist revaluation of the *renminbi* as late as 2003, when Chinese premier Wen Jiabao pointed out to the international community that "[T]he Chinese government has always held a serious and responsible attitude towards the [currency] issue," and that China's actions had "contributed to the stability of the economy and financial well being of the region and the world."⁵ Since then, China and the ASEAN states deepened their economic interdependence through the implementation of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) in 2005. Improvement in other areas of PRC-ASEAN relations, such as increases in academic and professional exchanges, bi-directional tourism, and the growth of cultural

⁴ Both British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Chirac praised Beijing's responsible behavior during the Asian financial crisis, describing the PRC as "a pillar of stability and responsible behavior." See "Blair Looks to Profit in Beijing," *South China Morning Post*, 6 October 1998.

⁵ "Stable RMB Exchange Rate Benefits World Economy: Premier Wen," *People's Daily Online*, 7 August 2003 (accessed 15 June 2006).

exchange programs can also be observed as further evidence that Beijing's GND has improved China's national image in Southeast Asia.

This turn of events in Southeast Asia is surprising for several reasons. First, China's relations with Southeast Asian countries during the Cold War were, for the most part, antagonistic and confrontational. As elaborated in the following chapter, China has historically been perceived in Southeast Asia as a threat. In fact, ASEAN was established in 1967 partly to oppose the expansion of Chinese power. Second, as discussed in the following two chapters, just a decade ago China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea with several Southeast Asian states (Figure 1) were moving the region closer to conflict.⁶ Aggressive actions and provocative statements by Beijing during the late 1980s and early 1990s in support of China's claim of "inviolable" territorial sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands and most of the South China Sea, for that matter (Figure 2), reinforced and increased perceptions in Southeast Asia of a "China threat." Third, China's military modernization initiated during the 1980s (especially in areas related to power projection capabilities) increased concerns in the region and beyond that a rising China would have a destabilizing influence in Asia. China's military modernization campaign continued unabatedly through the 1990s, and presently shows no sign of slowing its pace. The "China threat" thesis, especially as expounded by the second Bush

⁶ China has territorial disputes with Vietnam over the Paracel and Spratly archipelagoes, with the Philippines over the Spratlys and adjacent areas, with Malaysia and Brunei in the Spratlys, and with Indonesia near the Pratas Islands. While these disputes have engendered much tension between China and the ASEAN states, armed conflict has been limited to China's disputes with Vietnam and the Philippines. As such, Hanoi and Manila historically viewed themselves as "frontline" states facing Chinese expansion into the region.

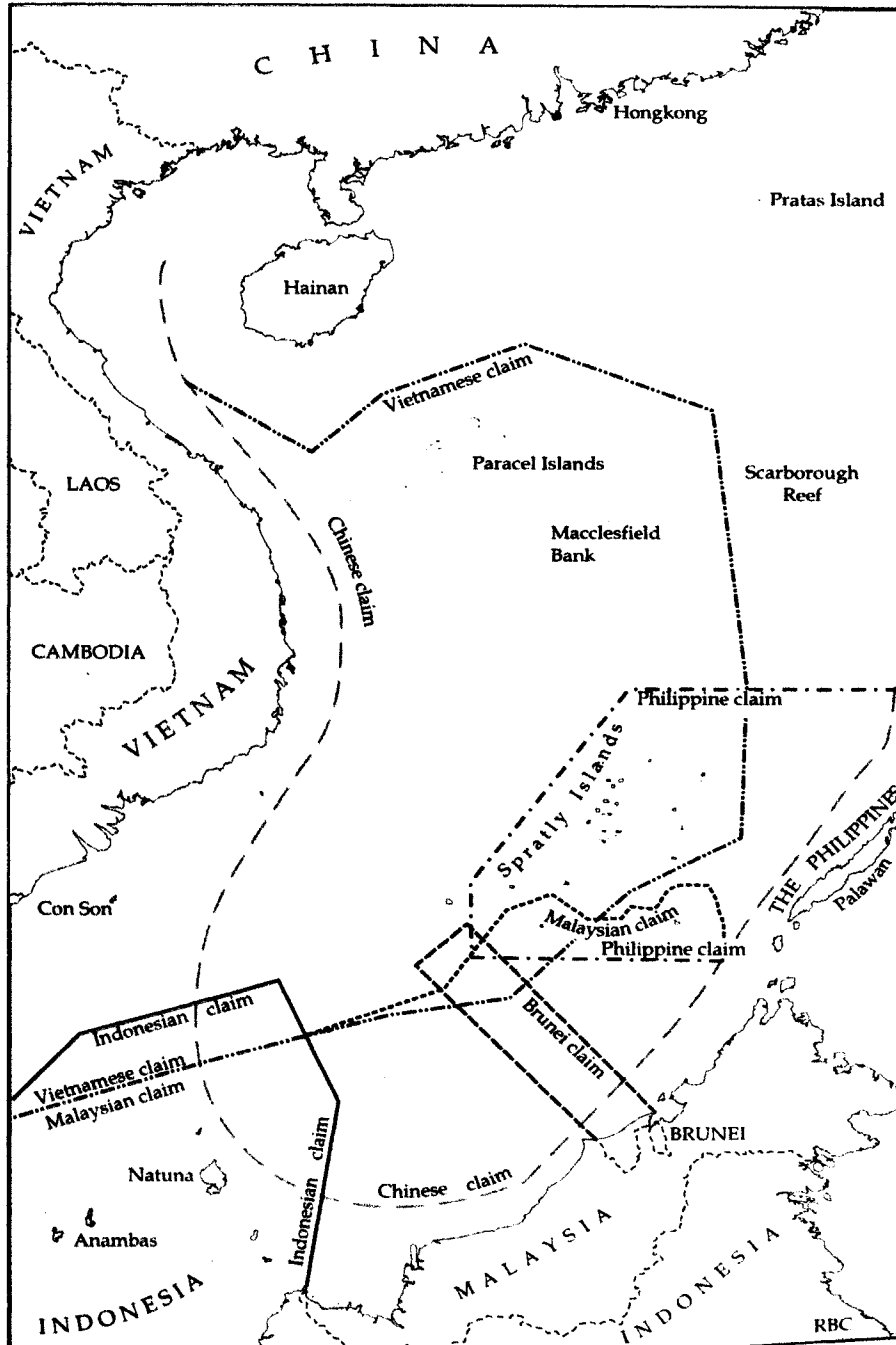


Figure 1. Conflicting Territorial Claims in the South China Sea.
 Source: *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of South East Asia*
 (St. Martin's Press, 2006).



Figure 2. Official Nine-Dash Line Map of Chinese Territorial Claims in the South China Sea. Source: *The Traffic and Tourist Map of Hainan*, 1999.

Administration, appeared therefore to be confirmed by Beijing's aggressive attitude and brash actions regarding the South China Sea disputes. From the vantage point of South-east Asia then, the American military withdrawal from the Philippines in 1992 combined with the PRC's military modernization and truculent attitude vis-à-vis the territorial disputes in the South China Sea reinforced historic perceptions of a China threat.

Given these conditions and perceptions, mainstream realist theory suggests that the smaller and weaker ASEAN states -- especially those contesting Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea such as Vietnam and the Philippines -- should view China as a rising threat. Realism predicts that states either join with or balance against rising powers or threats. As such, the ASEAN states should be expected to either balance against rising Chinese power through defensive alliances with other states (the United States being the most likely balancer) or bandwagon with the rising regional power. Yet the ASEAN states have chosen neither strategy, suggesting that their approach in dealing with the rise of China is not founded solely upon power or threat considerations. In spite of the China threat thesis and its regional manifestation in the form of the South China Sea disputes, Sino-ASEAN relations since the mid-to-late 1990s have improved to the point that both sides now discuss the establishment of a "security community" to complement the economic integration already underway.

While the above evidence supports the assertion that Beijing's GND has improved Sino-ASEAN relations by promoting an image of China as a "friend" and a "good neighbor," some may question whether this test of the GND thesis is indeed rigorous

enough.⁷ This study therefore seeks answers to several important questions concerning China's GND in Southeast Asia. First, what are the underlying motivations behind China's GND in the region, and to what extent has social learning resulting from diplomatic interaction with the ASEAN states impacted Beijing's evolving application of China's good neighbor diplomacy? Second, how successful has Beijing's approach to relations with the ASEAN states been in mitigating regional fears of a "China threat" and in improving Sino-ASEAN relations? And lastly, can Beijing's GND find relevance and utility in China's relations with other regional powers such as Japan, India, and Australia -- as well as with Beijing's strained but vitally important relationship with the United States? To answer these questions, a historical approach within a social constructivist theoretical framework is undertaken to (1) identify and explain the causes of change in China's foreign policy in Southeast Asia since the end of the Cold War by examining the case of China's policy toward the South China Sea disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam, and with ASEAN as a group; and (2) study the effects of such change on Sino-ASEAN relations by examining the change in Southeast Asian perceptions of China as a regional and global power.

As discussed in greater detail below and in subsequent chapters, realist theory falls short in explaining this turn of events in Sino-ASEAN relations because of its myopic focus on material power distribution and associated threat perceptions, while at the same time liberal institutionalist theory also misses the mark because its focus on the constraining effects of institutions on actor behavior is undertaken within the same narrow conception of anarchy utilized by realism. In addition, both schools of thought fall

⁷ I define Beijing's GND as a foreign policy strategy premised upon portraying China as a cooperative, responsible, and friendly "good neighbor" in Southeast Asia aimed at dismissing the "China threat" thesis and improving Sino-ASEAN relations.

short in their analyses of recent Sino-ASEAN relations because they do not allow actor identity and interests to be endogenously given. Therefore, in order to fully understand and appreciate the recent and remarkable about-face in Sino-ASEAN relations, a different theoretical model is needed. Because the “China threat” debate associated with the rise of Chinese economic and military power is intimately related to this study’s analytical approach, a brief review of the relevant literature follows.

CURRENT DEBATE ON CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY

Considerable theoretical debate has taken place concerning the implications of China’s rapidly increasing economic and military power on the international system, and the debate continues. As discussed below, realism believes that China’s rise to great power status in Asia represents a growing threat to the US-led international order, while liberal institutionalism believes that the rise of China can occur less dramatically as China becomes “socialized” through its participation in international institutions and regimes and is transformed into a status quo power. A third approach which focuses on the social construction of identity and interest and its effect on state behavior challenges some basic assumptions made by mainstream IR theory. The constructivist approach, unlike realism and liberal institutionalism, does not assume that actor identity and interests are exogenously given. Instead, actor identity and interest formation is viewed as an ongoing *endogenous* process in which identity and interests can change through social interaction at the international level. Constructivism makes another point of departure from mainstream IR theory in that it rejects the narrow, self-help definition of anarchy shared by the realist and liberal schools.

China as a Rising Threat

Proponents of the “China threat” thesis believe that China is rapidly becoming a threat to the stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region, if not the world. They support their predictions by citing the spectacular rise in the PRC’s economic strength which allows Beijing substantial leverage in the global economy, and by pointing to Chinese efforts at modernizing the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and seeking power projection capabilities in Asia. One of the most widely known works in Realist literature representing the “China threat” school is Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Monroe’s book, *The Coming Conflict with China*. The authors contend that the leadership in China has been working towards a goal of domination over Asia by a four-pronged strategy based on acquiring sovereignty over Taiwan, expanding Chinese power projection capabilities and military presence in the South China Sea, seeking a reduction in American military presence in East Asia (excepting Japan), and tolerating a high American military presence to prevent Tokyo from rearming and becoming more assertive in Asian affairs.⁸ While Bernstein and Monroe’s rather pessimistic analysis of the strategic implications of China’s rise is quite foreboding, other analyses are even more dubious of Chinese intentions and conclude that Chinese foreign policy represents some sort of sinister plot for world domination.⁹ These and other analyses that posit a growing China threat are theo-

⁸ Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Monroe, *The Coming Conflict with China* (Vintage: Reprint edition, 1998).

⁹ Examples of these rather Manichean points of view are Constantine C. Menges, *China: The Gathering Threat* (Nelson Current, 2005), and Arthur Waldron, “Why China Could be Dangerous,” *American Enterprise* 9, no. 4 (July-August 1998): 40-45. Menges argues that the U.S. and China could be headed toward a nuclear face-off within four years. The thesis of Menges’ study is that China is pursuing a systematic strategy to gain geopolitical and economic supremacy in Asia first, and then possibly globally, within the next two decades. Menges cites as evidence China’s secret alliance with Russia, the PRC’s growing military power and nuclear threat, and the damage to the US economy caused by the PRC’s trade tactics. Further, Menges asserts that China and Russia have been responsible for weaponizing terrorists hostile to American interests. Waldron’s argument is similar, but founded upon a more balanced (yet still quite skeptical)

retically based upon “balance of power” theory and represent various variations of the realist approach premised on power considerations (material power, mostly defined in military or economic terms) and a zero-sum, “self-help” conception of anarchy at the systemic level.¹⁰ Other realist approaches are modeled on Stephan Walt’s “balance of threat” theory premised upon perceptions of threat (rather than distributions of power) as evaluated through the lens of human cognition, which represents an attempt in the realist project to incorporate ideational factors into realist structural theories.¹¹ There are, however, some realist studies which do not conclude that China’s rise necessarily constitutes a

analysis of Chinese intentions. Waldron argues that “China seeks to combine targeted military capabilities with diplomatic and economic measures in order to weaken American presence and resolve in Asia.” Also see Waldron’s testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Arthur Waldron, “U.S. China Relations: Status of Reforms in China,” Senate Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 22 April 2004.

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer’s work serves to exemplify these sorts of analyses. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer argues “[t]he great powers seek to maximize their share of world power” because “having dominant power is the best means to ensure one’s own survival,” and warning “against putting too much faith in the goodwill of other countries.” Mearsheimer believes that by trying to make China wealthy and democratic via engagement will only make it a stronger rival. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002). Robert Gilpin argues in *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Reprint edition, 1983) that differential growth of power in the international system and the result of this unevenness causes a shift in the balance of power (defined in economic or military terms) weakens the basis of the existing system as those actors gaining power see increasing benefits and the decreasing costs of changing the system. Actors, therefore, seek to alter the system through territorial, political, or economic expansion until the marginal costs of continuing change are greater than the marginal benefits. When states develop the power to change the system according to their interests, Gilpin maintains they will strive to do so. Another example of such analyses is Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China’s Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (The RAND Corporation; 2000), in which they argue that Chinese history, the behavior of earlier rising powers, and the basic structure and logic of international power relations suggest that a strong China will likely become more assertive globally, beginning in 2015-2020 at the earliest. The United States, they argue, should adopt a policy of realistic engagement with China that combines efforts of cooperation whenever possible; and, if necessary, preventing Chinese acquisition of capabilities that would threaten US national security interests and remaining prepared to cope with the consequences of a more assertive Chinese foreign policy. Other analyses of this type are routinely generated by the RAND Corporation and other think tanks funded by the U.S. Department of Defense, such as, Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy Toward Russia and the Central Asian Republics*, (MR-1045-AF, 1999); Zalmay M. Khalilzad, Abram N. Shulsky, Daniel L. Byman, Roger Cliff, David T. Orletsky, David Shlapak, and Ashley J. Tellis, *The United States and a Rising China: Strategic and Military Implications* (MR-1082-AF, 1999); Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, in *Patterns in China’s Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (MR-1160-AF, 2000). These publications are part of a project conducted in the Strategy and Doctrine Program of Project AIR FORCE sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force (AF/XO), and the Director, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force (AF/XOI).

¹¹ Stephen Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power,” *International Security* 9 (1985): 3-43. and *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

threat to regional order.¹² Nonetheless, the realist approach over determines threat while at the same time under determines change.

A “Socialized” China

Authorities on the other side of the “China threat” debate interpret China’s rise to great power status in less ominous terms. In general, these neo-liberal scholars and analysts believe that China can be “socialized” either through participation in international institutions and regimes which reduce transaction costs and constrain actors behavior through mutually accepted normative frameworks, or as a result of China’s increasing economic interdependence in the global economy. Many scholars of the liberal school argue that the Chinese economy is of vital and primary importance to the Chinese and that Beijing pursues “economic security” through increased economic interdependence with surrounding states.¹³ Most maintain that the Chinese realize that it is not in China’s

¹² Perhaps one of the best examples representing this genre of analysis is Chinese foreign policy is Avery Goldstein’s *Rising to the Challenge: China’s Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). Goldstein does a good job analyzing and explaining the constraints on Chinese foreign policymaking from a *Realpolitik* perspective. Goldstein argues that the PRC’s new grand strategy seeks to promote continued economic growth and development, and domestic stability, while at the same time address and correct irrational and fearful perceptions held by other nations concerning the rise of China. Goldstein makes an interesting historical comparison between the current rise of China and the earlier rise of Germany during the late 1800s, arguing that China’s new grand strategy is quite similar to that followed by Bismarck – namely, reassure neighboring countries that the rising new power is not a threat to be balanced against, and thus mitigate the security dilemma between the rising and established powers. While the comparison is insightful and interesting, there exist some important differences between Germany and China. One obvious difference is that Germany was industrially and technologically one of (if not the most) advanced society in Europe at the time, while the same thing can hardly be said about China currently. Nonetheless, the comparison is interesting in that both states believed that their rise to great power status could best be realized through a strategy of downplaying others’ fears and perceptions of threat posed by the rising power. Goldstein’s thesis gives a good Realist account and explanation *why* Beijing had to rethink its approach to foreign policy, but does not offer any ideas concerning *how* Beijing might actually implement the new approach.

¹³ Thomas G. Moore approaches Beijing’s GND from an economic perspective centered on the effects of globalization on Chinese foreign policy, arguing that “economic globalization provides the means by which China can pursue an alternative strategy for coping with U.S. hegemony in lieu of the classical balancing strategy many observers had expected Beijing to adopt during the post-Cold War era.” According to Moore, China’s alternative strategy is based upon establishing more cooperative relations among countries, or better “economic security.” Thomas G. Moore, “Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization,” in

best interests to follow a confrontational path to great power status. Further, some analysts believe that Beijing came to an understanding that continuing a strategy of balancing against American hegemony by working towards a multi-polar power structure was, in the near to middle future, a flawed stratagem. The PRC could not pursue a costly and dangerous policy of actively balancing against the US *and* continue to experience substantial economic growth simultaneously. American hegemony, the Chinese came to believe, would not quickly yield to a new multi-polar world during the early 21st century, as was initially believed in the early 1990s.¹⁴ Other researchers focus on China's diplomacy and increased participation in international institutions and multilateral organizations.¹⁵ The approach utilized by this group offers a better explanation of the shift in Chinese foreign policy than does the realist approach given the dramatic increase of Chinese participation in multilateralism, but falls short because its approach is limited to studying the constraining effects of institutions on state behavior under anarchy. As with the neo-

China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

¹⁴ Thomas G. Moore and Yong Deng make some of the strongest arguments that Chinese foreign policy has undergone a dramatic shift as a result of new perceptions of what constitutes Chinese self-interest in the 21st century. They posit that Beijing is following new geopolitical strategy of co-opting US power by enmeshing it in a deepening web of interdependence instead of pursuing a traditional balancing strategy against American hegemony. See "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization," chap. 6; and Yong Deng and Thomas G. Moore, "China Views Globalization: Towards a New Great Power Politics?" *Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 117-36.

¹⁵ Jianwei Wang argues that China's recent multilateral diplomacy is mainly motivated by instrumental considerations, being perceived as a more effective and less threatening way of advancing the PRC's interests and projecting China's influence in both Asia and globally. Jianwei Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 159-200. One of the more recent works on Chinese multilateralism in Southeast Asia is Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "Multilateralism in China's ASEAN policy: its evolution, characteristics, and aspirations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 1 (April 2005): 102-121. Kuik studies the origins and patterns of China's involvement in regional multilateral institutions and its characteristics and implications for China's ASEAN policy in the post-Cold War era. Kuik argues that China's perceptions and policies toward multilateral institutions have undergone significant changes, from caution and suspicion to optimism and enthusiasm. Further, he maintains that instead of perceiving multilateral institutions as malign arrangements that might be used by other states to challenge China's national sovereignty and to limit its strategic choices, Beijing now views multilateral institutions as useful diplomatic platforms that can be utilized to advance its own foreign policy objectives.

realist approach, the liberal school does not allow for possible change in actor identity and interest *endogenously* to the interaction process, and -- as with realism -- only defines anarchy in self-help, zero-sum terms. As such, while scholars in this second group do not commit the same error of over determining threat as do neo-realist studies, the neo-liberal approach is guilty of under determining the change in recent Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia.

Metamorphosis of China's Identity

Taking a different perspective than that of the mainstream Realist and Liberal traditions, constructivist analyses of Chinese foreign policy emphasize ideational over material factors. As such, actor identity and interest formation is viewed as being mostly influenced by perceptions of self and of other actors (role-identities) rather than by the distribution of power (material) and self-help anarchy. Constructivist studies argue that Beijing came to a realization that Chinese national interests could be better achieved in Southeast Asia through cooperative rather than confrontational relations with ASEAN and member states.¹⁶ This realization occurred, some argue, through a change in identity and interest formation resulting from social interaction and shared knowledge. There are differences and points of debate within this group concerning China's rise and its influence on Chinese foreign policy, to be sure. These differences are reflected in the differing approaches and perspectives utilized by individual scholars. Some scholars focus on domestic Chinese politics, elite power structures, and Chinese political culture,¹⁷ while

¹⁶ See, for example, Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "China's Regional Strategy," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 48-68.

¹⁷ Addressing the roles of perception and sentiment in the growth of popular nationalism and its influence on Chinese foreign policy and Sino-American relations, Peter Hays Gries traces the emergence of this new nationalism and argues that it is challenging the Communist Party's monopoly on political discourse and thereby threatening the regime's stability. Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and*

other scholars focus their study of Chinese foreign policy on China's national image and identity.¹⁸ For all the above accounts (and including many Institutionalist arguments), China is viewed as the primary catalyst of change in the region because of the rise of the PRC as the engine of regional economic growth, a major military power, a growing force in regional diplomacy, and as a proactive member in multilateral institutions. As such, these scholars challenge the "China threat" theory by arguing that Beijing has come to an understanding that a strategy of balancing against US power ultimately is counterproductive to Chinese interests given current restraints imposed upon China by both domestic as well as international environments. By the early 1990s, Beijing learned that a balancing strategy had little chance of success, was too costly, and would have a detrimental impact on China's domestic development. They argue that instead of balancing against the U.S., Beijing now pursues a strategy based on maintaining a peaceful international environment and China's continued economic development within the present international system. Beijing's GND, therefore, is based upon assuring the ASEAN states that China's rise poses no threat but rather an opportunity for the Southeast Asia states to integrate

Diplomacy (University of California Press, 2005). Concerning China's political culture, several prominent studies have been undertaken. Examples include Lucian W. Pye and Nathan Leites, *Nuances in Chinese Political Culture* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1970); Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); and William S. Pott, A. *Chinese Political Philosophy* (New York: Knopf, 1981). Some more recent works on Chinese political culture are Shiping Hua, ed., *Chinese Political Culture, 1989-2000* (East Gate Book, 2001), and Shiping Hua, *Utopianism in Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

¹⁸ Hongying Wang draws on constructivist theory in her interesting study of Chinese foreign policy and national image building, concluding that Beijing is actively promoting a new image of China as a cooperative and responsible member of the international community. See Hongying Wang, "National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 73-102; and David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2004/05): 64-99. Shambaugh argues that China's "good neighbor" diplomacy has succeeded in dispelling the China threat thesis in region, and that "most nations in the region now see China as a good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a non-threatening regional power."

their own economic development with that of China.¹⁹ As this integration process moves forward and interaction between China and the ASEAN states intensifies, a new regional (Asian) identity emerges.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed fundamentally by the work of Alexander Wendt and other scholars within the constructivist school who follow the positivist tradition of scientific inquiry.²⁰ More specifically, this investigation supports Wendt's argument that "anarchy is what states make of it" and utilizes Wendt's analytical framework of three "cultures of anarchy" and the notion of "distribution of interests" (where interests are defined mostly in ideational terms, but also, to a lesser extent, defined in materialistic terms) in its analysis of Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia.²¹ Through the case study of Beijing's

¹⁹ See David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), David Shambaugh, ed., *Greater China: The Next Superpower?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," 64-99.

²⁰ Amitav Acharya investigates the issue of national identity in Southeast Asia and its influence on state relations in the region, while Alastair Iain Johnston gives a constructivist appraisal of the "ASEAN Way" and IR theory. Johnston makes an interesting argument concerning the social construction of security dilemmas (he focuses on Sino-American relations) which this study will utilize in the context of the security dilemma between China and the ASEAN states vis-à-vis their territorial disputes, as further explained below. Peter J. Katzenstein and others argue that explanations derived from only one paradigm have shortcomings beyond their inability to recognize important empirical anomalies. These authors maintain that IR research is better served by combining explanatory approaches from different research traditions or, as they call it, "analytical eclecticism". See respectively Amitav Acharya, *The Quest for Identity: International Relations of South-East Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alastair Iain Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory," in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, eds. John G. Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), "International Structures and Chinese Foreign Policy," in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Policy Faces the New Millennium*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Westview Press, 1998), 55-87, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security* 27, vol. 4 (Spring 2003): 5-56, and "Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?" in *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power and Efficiency*, ed. J. J. Suh, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004): 34-96; and Peter J. Katzenstein and Rudra Sil, "Rethinking Asian Security: A Case for Analytical Eclecticism," in *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power and Efficiency*, ed. J. J. Suh, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1-33.

²¹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organizations* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425, "The State as person in international theory," *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 298-316, and *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

diplomatic approach to China's South China Sea disputes, I argue that the processes of interaction between China and ASEAN at the international level facilitated a rapid expansion of shared knowledge and social learning which in turn impacted and changed the cognitive base (and thus identity) of each actor. Before continuing, however, I must make two caveats. First, I do not dismiss realist theory as an important analytical tool for the study of international relations. Realism offers many useful insights and ideas such as the notions of anarchy and balance of power which are extremely helpful in understanding the interaction of states in the international community. In fact, this analysis utilizes realist theory to explain structural change in the international system following the end of the Cold War. However, as with any theory, realism has its weaknesses as well. One of realism's most conspicuous weaknesses is that it tends to over determine threat while at the same time underdetermine change. For this reason, I believe that realism proves itself unable to fully explain the incredible rapprochement in Sino-ASEAN relations since the end of the Cold War and why a social constructivist approach offers a more accurate analysis and understanding of our topic. Second, because there exists a great diversity of analytical approaches within the social constructivist school, I must explain why this study is based on the theoretical work of Alexander Wendt as opposed to that of other "constructivists". One reason that my research follows Wendt's version of constructivism is that his approach is commensurate with the scientific approach followed by mainstream International Relations (IR) scholars - positivism. As such, Wendt's form of constructivism represents a "moderate" stream of constructivist IR theory which rejects the more radical "postmodernist" stream represented by the works of Bob Walker, Richard Ashley, and Ann Tickner.²² Another reason for following Wendt's approach is that it re-

²² Richard Ashley, "The poverty of neorealism" *International Organization* 38, 225-286, and "The geopoliti-

jects the realist notion of a “logic of anarchy” (conflictual, self-help world) and thus allows for a more nuanced understanding of anarchy (“anarchy is what states make of it”). Anarchy does not always have to be premised on conflict and self-help - it can sometimes be premised on cooperation and mutual benefit. As such, Wendt’s approach to constructivism allows for a rationalist, positivist approach to IR theory.

Until now, I have not offered a precise definition of “social learning.” This must now be rectified, as social learning resulting from multilateral diplomatic interaction between China and the ASEAN states became the principal source of change in China’s GND in Southeast Asia after 1996. It is important to note that “social learning” is defined differently by the various theoretical approaches in IR. Rationalist theoretical approaches, such as realism, generally emphasize the behavioral (causal) effects of social learning by focusing on how new information about the environment enables actors to pursue and achieve their interests more effectively and treat the identities and interests of the actors as being constant and exogenously given. In other words, for rationalist theories, learning and perspective-taking (the ability to see Self from the perspective of the Other) do not change who actors are or what they desire, just actors’ ability to realize their desires in a given social context (“simple” learning).

A constructivist-interactionist approach, on the other hand, defines “social learning” as a mechanism of cultural selection²³ which allows for the possibility that social

tics of geopolitical space: Toward a critical social theory of international politics” *Alternatives* 12, 403-434; R.B.J. Walker, “Realism, change, and international political theory” *International Studies Quarterly* 31, 65-86, and *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

²³ “Cultural selection” is defined by Alexander Wendt as an “evolutionary mechanism involving the transmission of the determinants of behavior from individual to individual, and thus from generation to generation, by social learning, imitation or some other similar process.” Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 324-326. Wendt quotes Richard Boyd and Peter Richerson, “Sociobiology, culture and economic

learning may also have “construction effects” or *constitutive effects* on identities and interests (“complex” learning).²⁴ Thus, identity and interest formation must be defined as an ongoing social process *endogenously* given to interaction. In other words, actors are at every occurrence of interaction mutually defining who each of them is. This is not to say that the rationalist and constructivist-interactionist models of social learning are mutually exclusive -- just that they have different ideas about what actually occurs in structural change and why it happens. In both models actors are rational, but in the rationalist model the basic unit on which utility and rational action is calculated is the actor (egoistic state), and in the constructionist model the basic unit is the group of actors (holistic community).²⁵ From the constructivist-interactionist perspective then, through interaction-generated “complex” social learning, Self and Other develop a collective identity (a fully internalized culture) that actors have created and with which they identify. The mechanism through which identities are learned is known as “reflected appraisals” or “mirroring,” a process in which “identities and their corresponding interests are learned and then reinforced in response to how actors are treated by significant Others.”²⁶ Thus, the generalized Other becomes part of their conception of Self. As such, collective identity is associated with the structure of any internalized culture, and therefore a change in that structure necessitates a change in collective identity, “involving the breakdown of an

theory,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 1 (1980): 97-121. Wendt equates cultural selection to Kenneth Waltz’s “socialization.”

²⁴ For our study then, “simple” social learning may induce a reorientation of an actor’s method or strategy of realizing foreign policy goals, but without changing an actor’s identity or interests. “Simple” learning, therefore can lead to instrumental change in actor behavior. “Complex” social learning, on the other hand, may induce a reorientation of an actor’s foreign policy *as a result of changed actor identity and interests*. “Complex” learning can therefore lead to constitutive change in actor behavior. See *Social Theory of International Politics*, 326-335. For a more detailed discussion of the differences between simple and complex learning, see Ernst Haas, *When Knowledge is Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Haas uses different terms (“adaptation” and “learning”) but illustrates the same difference.

²⁵ *Social Theory of International Politics*, 337.

²⁶ “Mirroring” hypothesizes that actors see themselves as a reflection of how they think others see them. *Social Theory of International Politics*, 327.

old identity and the emergence of a new. Identity change and structural change are not equivalent, since identity formation happens ultimately at the micro-level [unit, or state] and structural change happens ultimately at the macro, but the later supervenes on the former.”²⁷ As discussed below, an interactionist model of social learning is employed to explain and illustrate the evolution of Beijing’s approach (GND) in the territorial disputes and its impact on ASEAN perceptions of China -- and thus on Sino-ASEAN relations.

Using Wendt’s interactionist model in our analysis of the change in Beijing’s GND and its effect on Sino-ASEAN relations, this chapter identifies and explains the emergence and evolution of a regional collective identity born of “complex” learning as a major source of change in both Beijing’s approach to the territorial disputes and in Sino-ASEAN relations. As argued below, multilateral interaction with ASEAN on economic and security issues influenced change in China’s identity from that of a “sovereign, assertive power” (egoistic identity) to “member of regional grouping” or “ASEAN Partner” (holistic identity).²⁸ This process began with Beijing’s acceptance of multilateral discussion of the South China Sea issue (1995-1996), but the intensity of this process increased exponentially from 1997 forward in most areas of China-ASEAN interaction -- especially in the economic area. I argue that by 2002-2003, as a result of interaction between China and ASEAN and a corresponding development of a regional collective identity as “Asian states,” the culture of anarchy underwriting the relationship moved away from that of a

²⁷ *Social Theory of International Politics*, 338.

²⁸ For this study, China’s “identity” is defined within the framework of the case study (China’s identity as an actor in the issue of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea) and should not be confused with China’s overall national identity (which encompasses far more than the specific issue of China’s territorial disputes in the South China Sea). Therefore, in this case study China’s “identity” is synonymous with China’s “role-identity”.

“Lockean culture” (egoistic identity, others viewed as “rivals”) toward a new “Kantian culture” (collective identity, others viewed as “partners” or “friends”).²⁹

An excellent example of such shift in identity was the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, which revealed a burgeoning sense of “we-ness” in Sino-ASEAN relations on the part of China. Beijing’s decision against devaluing the *Renminbi* demonstrated altruistic thinking based on group interest as opposed to egoistic self-interest. In fact, the 1997 Financial Crisis represented the moment in time when a “collective” identity between China and the ASEAN states began to emerge. While Beijing’s acceptance of multilateral talks on the territorial disputes in 1995 was the result (in all likelihood) of “simple” social learning -- an instrumental application of the shared knowledge that ASEAN highly valued multilateralism -- China’s selfless actions during the Financial Crisis, and demonstrated acceptance of the “ASEAN Way,” signaled that something deeper than egoistic interaction was starting to occur. However, one must remember that identity formation is an ongoing process, and depending on the circumstances in which it occurs, old identities can be either reinforced or changed.

China’s Schizophrenic Identity

Actually, China’s identity during 1997 – 2005 was schizophrenic. Schizophrenic in the sense that while China’s multilateral relations with the ASEAN states concerning the territorial disputes revealed a new “post-Cold War” identity, China’s traditional “Cold War” identity remained dominant in bilateral dialogue until the 2005 Tripartite Agreement between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines for joint development of offshore hydrocarbon reserves in the disputed Spratly Islands.

²⁹ For a more thorough discussion of the three “cultures of anarchy,” see *Social Theory of International Politics*, Chapter 6.

In China's multilateral relationship with ASEAN, Beijing initially pursued a strategy of subsuming the South China Sea disputes within the wider context of Sino-ASEAN relations by indirectly linking progress in Sino-ASEAN relations in general to the South China Sea disputes specifically. If ASEAN pushed China too hard on the disputes issue, Beijing could stall on other issues (trade, cooperation, etc.). Conversely, Beijing might reward ASEAN for downplaying sovereignty issues by conceding to broadened multilateral discussion of the disputes. To this point, it was purely egoistic *Realpolitik* behavior on the part of China. However, by 1996 Beijing began to understand, appreciate, and become comfortable with the special brand of multilateralism practiced by ASEAN -- the "ASEAN Way" of informal, consensus-based multilateral discussion of mutual interests, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states. "Complex" learning began to challenge traditional perceptions of Self and Other ("role-identities") in the relationship. Becoming good neighbors was less daunting than first believed, as both sides "learned" that Self and Other were not that different after all. By 2002 – 2003, China's "post-Cold War" identity superseded her traditional one evidenced by Beijing's acceptance of the Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea (2002) and ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in 2003. From the ASEAN perspective (addressed directly in the next chapter), Beijing's new GND in Southeast Asia was interpreted as evidence that ASEAN's policy of "engagement" and "socialization" of China was working. In addition, not wishing to scare-off the Chinese from this integrative process, the ASEAN states seemed happy not to push China too hard on the Spratlys disputes. Both China and the ASEAN states desired (and took action) to prevent the South China Sea disputes from impeding strengthening China-ASEAN relations. As such, Beijing's GND

approach to the territorial disputes cannot be fully understood and appreciated outside and apart from the wider multilateral context of Sino-ASEAN relations and the role played by “complex” learning and the formation of a “collective identity.” Over time, an emerging collective identity, or perception of “We-ness,” in Sino-ASEAN relations increasingly imparted an influence on Beijing’s bilateral implementation of the GND to the territorial disputes.

Throughout most of this second period of our case study, Chinese bilateral diplomacy represents “simple” learning and *instrumental* changes in Beijing’s application of the GND to the territorial disputes -- in effect, a continuation of China’s “Cold War” identity. Beijing’s bilateral GND strategy was formulated upon linking the disputes to the larger context of improving relations and trade with both Vietnam and the Philippines. Beijing agreed to discuss the disputes with both Hanoi and Manila (as long as the issue of sovereignty was not put on the table) while sweetening the pot in the bilateral relationships with a substantial Chinese commitment to strengthened trade and economic development, as well as increased Chinese technical and scientific aid. As long as Hanoi and Manila agreed to put the issue of sovereignty in the South China Sea disputes on the back burner, relations and trade with China could continue to strengthen. However, as discussed further below, over time “complex” learning at the multilateral level eventually had a “spill-over” effect on China’s bilateral diplomacy ultimately leading to a resolution of China’s “schizophrenic identity” in 2005. The historic 2005 Tripartite Agreement between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines for joint development of offshore oil in the disputed Spratlys evidences that China’s “Cold War” identity in bilateral diplomacy had

finally yielded to the new “post-Cold War” identity evidenced earlier in Beijing’s multi-lateral diplomacy.

Therefore, I am not arguing that China’s identity shift occurred at any immediate, definite moment in time, or that the metamorphosis happened in all issue areas simultaneously. Rather, social construction of actor identity and interests occurs over time and is a never-ending, continual process. As such, I do not make the argument that China and ASEAN have become absolute “friends,” rather that they no longer perceive one another in zero-sum egoistic terms associated with a Hobbesian strategic culture (as “enemy”) or, for that matter, completely in terms attributable to a Lockean culture (as “rival” or “competitor”). Increasingly, China and the ASEAN states are seeing and coming to understand one another in terms associated with a Kantian strategic culture (as “partners” or “friends”).³⁰ This does not mean, however, that Sino-ASEAN relations will continue to improve in a linear fashion. Currently this appears to be the case, but “complex” social learning can also lead to negative changes in role-identities, which adversely affect state-to-state relations.

During the first period of our study (1989-1996) discussed in the following chapter, interaction between China and the ASEAN states led mostly to “simple” social learning which caused Beijing to modify its GND through a superficial embrace of multilateralism to demonstrate a cooperative and non-threatening Chinese attitude. The initial re-orientation of Beijing’s GND toward multilateralism, however, was principally motivated by instrumental calculations. China’s traditional Cold War identity as a self-interested actor appeared to continue unchanged into the post-Cold War period (Figure 3). This is not to say, however, that “complex” learning was not occurring as well. Learning is a

³⁰ *Social Theory of International Politics*, 297-312.

process which occurs over time. As such, the impact of social learning on actor behavior may not be immediately perceptible, as new ideas challenge standing beliefs or perceptions (culture) which are not easily changed.³¹ I argue that “complex” learning began to take place during the first period of our study, but its impact on Beijing’s GND only became readily discernable during the second period of this study (1997-2006). I argue that diplomatic interaction between China and the ASEAN states generated shared knowledge as a result of both “simple” and “complex” learning which caused a change in the cognitive base of Chinese policymakers as well as that of their ASEAN counterparts. Changes in actor cognitive bases caused by “complex” learning, in turn, caused (and continues to cause) a corresponding transformation in shared role-identities which ultimately is responsible for the positive developments witnessed in Sino-ASEAN relations during the last decade. In other words, due to “complex” social learning gained through diplomatic interaction, China’s traditional identity is changing toward a new, more holistic or collective post-Cold War identity. As such, the role-identity of China among the ASEAN states is emerging from the historic “enemy” or “rival” to a new role-identity of “good neighbor,” “partner,” or even “friend.”

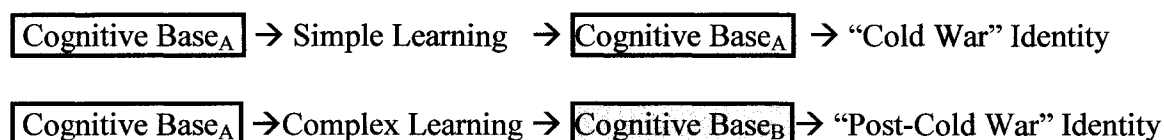


Figure 3. Hypothesized Effects of “Simple” and “Complex” Learning on Chinese Cognitive Base and National Identity.

³¹Wendt argues that due to the dialectical relationship between agency and structure, “culture is a self-fulfilling prophecy” and must reproduce itself “if it is to be culture at all.” *Social Theory of International Politics*, 186-187.

Cognitive Base_A reflects China's traditional knowledge base of Self and Other predicated on self-interest, self-help, and the distribution of material power in the international system, externalized as China's "Cold War" identity (China as an egoistic, revisionist power with an essentially bilateral approach to foreign policy). Cognitive Base_B reflects China's new (current) knowledge base of Self and Other predicated on mutual interest, cooperation, and the distribution of both material power *and ideas*, externalized as China's "Post-Cold War" identity (China as a holistic, status-quo power with an increasingly multilateral approach to foreign policy emphasizing mutual interests-benefits).

This theoretical approach allows a more nuanced and insightful understanding of recent Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia than do mainstream realist and liberal theories. The strategy behind Beijing's foreign policy has significantly changed due to the social construction of knowledge at the international level of politics (shared knowledge) and its influence on the social construction of identity and interests at the state (unit) level. As argued below, the source of this change has not been adequately identified nor explained thus far by mainstream neo-realist analyses based upon notions of "balance of power" or "balance of threat," relative national (material) strength, and distribution of capabilities within the international system, nor by neo-liberal analyses which neglect the social processes of identity and interest formation and tend to focus on explaining results rather than process. The reason for this is that these approaches discount or ignore the important role played by non-material forces and factors (ideas, social processes, and shared knowledge) on the construction and composition of state identity, interest, and perception of Self and Other (culture) and rely too heavily on materialistic and individualistic (as opposed to holistic or systemic) explanations. As a result, these ap-

proaches fail to offer a complete explanation of the sources of change in the deepening China-ASEAN relationship. I argue that a more complete explanation and analysis can be accomplished by supplementing mainstream realist and liberal analyses by defining state interest and identity formation in idealistic as well as materialistic terms, and by allowing for the existence of more than one “logic of anarchy” as postulated by realist and liberal theories.

Assumptions and Major Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework explained above, this study assumes a causal relationship between Chinese “good neighbor” diplomacy in Southeast Asia and a change in perceptions of China by the ASEAN states. I argue therefore that threat perceptions of China held by Vietnam, the Philippines, and ASEAN only began to lessen as China’s traditional Cold War identity began to give-way to a new post-Cold War identity born of shared knowledge, complex learning, and a changed cognitive base. Specific to the case study, this study tests the following hypotheses: (1) Over time, social learning (independent variable) has affected a change in China’s GND (dependent variable) toward a more holistic and less narcissistic attitude; and (2), the change in China’s GND (now the independent variable) has affected a change in ASEAN perceptions of China as well as the style and orientation of their China policies (dependent variable). In other words, there are two assumed causal relationships (as Figure 4 indicates): one relationship is between social learning gained through interaction and a reorientation in Beijing’s GND where the former is the independent variable and the latter the dependent variable; the other relationship is between the reorientation of Beijing’s GND and a change in ASEAN states’ perceptions of China and their China policies, where the former becomes the independent

variable and the latter the dependent variable. These hypothesized casual relationships are explained and tested by the case study as discussed in the following three chapters.



Figure 4. The Major Relationships Among the Variables.

VARIABLES AND THEIR MEASUREMENT

Hongying Wang's recent study of national image building as part of Chinese foreign policy traces various images that the PRC government projected of China since the Maoist period.³² Wang's study provides us with an assessment and measurement of Beijing's external promotion of China as a "cooperative" and "peace-loving" country which clearly demonstrates China's active campaign to promote a "good neighbor" image in the international community. Wang's analysis of the average frequencies of projected images (1954-1999) indicates that Beijing's projection of China as an international "cooperator" has increased appreciably since 1989 and become the most frequently projected image of China since 1993.³³ The image of China as a "peace-loving" country is the second most frequently projected image by Beijing since 1992.³⁴ This investigation complements Wang's study by measuring ASEAN perceptions of China through an analysis of public opinion polls and surveys, and media. Indicators of favorable regional percep-

³² Wang's data was derived from quantitative content analysis of articles appearing in *Beijing Review* and government work reports (*zhengfu gongzuo baogao*) relating to Chinese foreign policy. Hongying Wang, "National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 73-102.

³³ "National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy," figures 4.1 and 4.2, 77-78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

tions of China relating to the disputes are views (images) of China as a “peaceful” or “cooperative” or “responsible” member of the international community (good neighbor). Indicators of Chinese accommodation are increased bilateral cooperation in various issues concerning the South China Sea, and increased acceptance and willingness to discuss the disputes multilaterally (*accede* to ASEAN normative behavior -- the “ASEAN Way”). Indicators of Chinese aggressiveness are provocative military actions and deployments, and refusal or hesitancy to discuss the disputes within a multilateral setting (*rejecting* ASEAN normative behavior).

WORKING HYPOTHESES FOR THE CASE STUDY OF CHINA’S TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Working from our two major hypotheses, it is possible to derive several working hypotheses for the investigation of the PRC’s “good neighbor” diplomacy using the case of the regional territorial disputes between China and Vietnam, and China and the Philippines. (1) If social learning causes Beijing to adjust its GND to accommodate the concerns of ASEAN states regarding disputed territories in the maritime environment, then regional perceptions of China will become less suspicious and more benign. (2) If social learning causes Beijing to adjust its GND to accommodate Chinese self-interest by becoming more aggressive in enforcing or defending Chinese territorial claims, then regional perceptions of China will become less benign and more suspicious. (3) As perceptions of China in Southeast Asia move along the spectrum between threat and cooperation, ASEAN and ASEAN states’ China policy will change in terms of orientation and style.

ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

Chapter Two discusses and critically analyses Beijing's traditional bilateral diplomacy concerning China's South China Sea disputes with both the Philippines and Vietnam from the end of the Cold War until 1996, and also explains why Beijing began in 1995-1996 to explore a new approach to the disputes at the multilateral level. In essence, the origins of Beijing's "good-neighbor" diplomacy (GND) in Southeast Asia can, to a large extent, be traced to the lessons and insights gained by Chinese leaders from the mounting problems associated with the territorial disputes and their increasingly detrimental effects on Sino-ASEAN relations. Beijing's traditional bilateral approach to the disputes, premised on China's "indisputable" sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands, a strong aversion and avoidance of multilateral dialogue, and an aggressive military posture in the South China Sea, caused an increased perception in Southeast Asia of China as a growing "threat." This regional trend served to support the wider "China threat" thesis, as articulated by the United States to support Washington's escalating containment strategy, and therefore threatened to undermine Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia. The solution to Beijing's foreign policy dilemma, as it turned out, was to *deconstruct* China's image as a "threat" in the region by actively promoting a new friendly, cooperative "good neighbor" image of China in Southeast Asia (instrumental change of GND as a result of mostly "simple" social learning). The South Sea disputes became, then, a good opportunity for Beijing to demonstrate China's good intentions and ameliorate China's traditional image in the region. And, considering that the South Sea disputes represented one of the most difficult and challenging issues in Sino-ASEAN re-

lations, they became a rigorous litmus test that China had to pass before China's relationship with ASEAN could deepen.

Chapter Three discusses the evolution and implementation of Beijing's GND to China's territorial disputes during the last decade (1997 – 2006) with Vietnam and the Philippines at the bilateral level, as well as with ASEAN at the multilateral level. A new source of change in Beijing's GND is identified and its impact on both the territorial disputes and Sino-ASEAN relations is analyzed. The argument is made that during this period "complex" social learning increasingly caused both instrumental and constitutive change in Beijing's GND. Specifically, "simple" learning led to *instrumental* change, while "complex" learning led to *constitutive* change in Beijing's GND due to a change in China's cognitive base (identity). Further, I argue that bilateral diplomacy, due to the directly confrontational setting of this type of dialogue, led mostly to "simple" social learning which affected instrumental modification of Beijing's GND without affecting a change in China's cognitive base or national identity. On the other hand, multilateral diplomacy (especially Track II settings) led to both types of social learning, "simple" and "complex," due to the plurality of views and positions facilitated by this type of setting. As such, Beijing's bilateral handling of the territorial disputes represents "simple" social learning during the first period of this study (1989 – 1996) and during *most* of the second period (until 2004 or so) as well; while China's growing multilateral approach to the disputes represents the impact of "complex" social learning (beginning in 1995 - 1996) which led to a change of China's cognitive base and national identity.

Chapter Four offers an evaluation of the impact of Beijing's reoriented GND on ASEAN perceptions of China through a qualitative analysis of the change in China's na-

tional image in Southeast Asia (strength of “China threat” perception in the region) and its resultant influence on the security behavior of the ASEAN states regarding China. This empirical analysis is based on data obtained from opinion polls and surveys, and from content analysis of articles appearing in the region’s national English-language newspapers concerning the territorial disputes. The general effects of Beijing’s GND on ASEAN perceptions (as a group) of China are discussed first, followed by a country-specific analysis of the change in national perception of China resulting from Beijing’s GND and its impact on security behavior of each of the following countries: Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Chapter Five concludes the study by reviewing and discussing the forces and factors responsible for the evolution of Beijing’s GND since the end of the Cold War, and by evaluating the impact of Beijing’s GND on the territorial disputes, as well as the implications and ramifications of China’s GND within a wider, more inclusive context of Sino-ASEAN relations in general.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study will make several contributions to the discourse on Chinese foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. First of all, the case study of China’s territorial disputes in maritime Southeast Asia will produce more empirical data concerning Beijing’s “good neighbor” diplomacy in the region and its influences and effects on Sino-ASEAN relations. Moreover, it contributes to the analysis of security tension between China and ASEAN by advancing Alastair Iain Johnston’s investigation of the social con-

struction of security dilemmas³⁵ by investigating how security dilemmas might be socially *deconstructed* as well. This paper argues that as social constructions, security dilemmas can be altered through actions taken by one (or more) actor(s) that change threat perceptions of the “other” either toward spiraling arms races and increasing possibilities of conflict (as realist interpretations of security dilemmas maintain), or toward a lessening of threat perceptions and the growth of more harmonious relations. Security dilemmas need not necessarily spiral toward conflict -- actors can sometimes “learn” that the “other” is not as threatening as initially believed, and therefore change their opinions and perceptions of one another. Shared knowledge, therefore, can impart positive, as well as negative influences on the social processes of state identity and interest construction, which can (sometimes) change the “logic of anarchy.”

This study makes several arguments concerning Beijing’s “good neighbor” diplomacy in Southeast Asia. First, China’s GND in Southeast Asia represents a profound transformation, beginning in the mid-1990s, in Beijing’s foreign policy in the region. Second, this change in Chinese diplomacy, to a large extent, reflects Beijing’s response to increasing perceptions in Southeast Asia of China’s rise as constituting a growing “China threat.” Third, Beijing’s GND aims to dispel the “China threat” thesis in Southeast Asia by promoting a friendly, non-threatening image in the region that that will reassure the ASEAN states and lessen the Sino-ASEAN security dilemma. Fourth, this study argues that, to a certain extent, Beijing’s “good neighbor” diplomacy in Southeast Asia is the result of socialization between China and the ASEAN states, and that Beijing’s new regional diplomacy is based partially upon the “ASEAN Way” (consensus-based, non-

³⁵ See Alastair Iain Johnston, “International Structures and Chinese Foreign Policy,” in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Policy Faces the New Millennium*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Westview Press, 1998), 55-87.

confrontational relations). Fifth, the evolution and maturation of Beijing's GND in Southeast Asia appears as a text book example of Wendt's interactionist model of social learning. The realization that China's image as a threat in Southeast Asia was being perpetuated by Beijing's South China Sea policy led ultimately to a policy based on the Kantian model of collective identity and cooperation. Sixth, this study will shed light on possible strategies an ascending power might follow to manage its rise in the international system. And finally, this investigation posits that China's GND approach to its relations in Southeast Asia might offer greater insight into Chinese foreign policy in general, especially since the turn of the 21st century.

Unlike the often unilateral foreign policy approach of the United States during the George W. Bush administration, the PRC has pursued both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy at Track I and Track II venues to cooperate with China's neighbors. Without giving any ground on China's claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea, Beijing's GND has transformed an issue fraught with potential for armed conflict into one of joint exploration and cooperation -- truly a remarkable success by any measure.

CHAPTER II

CHINESE DIPLOMACY AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES, 1989 – 1996:
IN SEARCH OF A NEW APPROACH

This chapter seeks to explain the change and reformulation of China's regional foreign policy in Southeast Asia from 1989 to 1996 through a case study of Beijing's evolving diplomatic approach to the South China Sea disputes and its effect on Sino-ASEAN relations. Argued below, two major factors contributed to the transformation of China's regional foreign policy -- one structural, the other ideational. The initial factor affecting a transformation of Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia was structural. The end of the Cold War, the subsequent death of the Soviet Union, and the resolution of the Third Indochina War had, by the end of 1991, removed historic constraints on Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia allowing Beijing greater opportunity and freedom to pursue closer relations with the ASEAN states. During the first half of the 1990s, however, Sino-ASEAN relations remained strained as China continued to be perceived as a threat to regional peace and stability. Beijing's bold and aggressive action concerning the South China Sea disputes was the principal reason for the continuance of China's traditional Cold War image in Southeast Asia. However, increased interaction between China and the ASEAN states concerning the territorial disputes led to the second and most important factor affecting change in Beijing's GND and substantial improvement in Sino-ASEAN relations -- social learning (ideational factor).

Through interaction over time, China and the ASEAN states developed shared knowledge of Self and Other which led to both "simple" and "complex" learning. As argued below, Beijing's social learning during the first period was mostly "simple" learn-

ing which affected instrumental change in Beijing's GND but led to little or no change in China's identity. Beijing "learned" that the ASEAN states continued to perceive China as a threat in spite of China's promotion of a "good neighbor" image in the region, and that the South China Sea disputes were the principal reason for this. As explained below, this knowledge induced an *instrumental* transformation of Beijing's GND toward accepting multilateral dialogue with ASEAN concerning the territorial disputes in the South China Sea without affecting a change of China's traditional cognitive base and identity (Figure 5). However, towards the end of the first period (by mid-1995), "complex" learning began to challenge some core beliefs or assumptions underwriting China's traditional cognitive base. However, the effects of the initial "complex" social learning did not directly manifest themselves in Beijing's GND until the second period (1997 - 2006). Let us now briefly discuss China's traditional Cold War identity (or Cognitive Base_A) and assess the causal effects that structural change in the international system imparted on China's regional foreign policy.

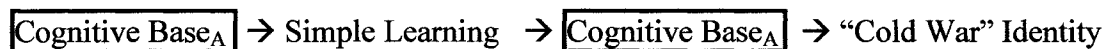


Figure 5. Effect of "Simple" Learning on China's Cognitive Base and Identity.

STRUCTURAL FACTORS

China's relations with most of its Southeast Asian neighbors during the Cold War were adversarial, reflecting the bipolar setting that forced Beijing to conceive Chinese security in global, rather than regional terms. Because Beijing supported insurgency groups in many Southeast Asian countries at the time, China had an image of being an

aggressive troublemaker. Chinese support of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge in the then unfolding Cambodian disaster reinforced the image shared by most ASEAN states of China as a “threat.” Beijing’s violent 1988 clash with Vietnamese naval units at Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratlys, in which three Vietnamese vessels were destroyed and over 70 sailors killed, heightened fears in Southeast Asia that the PRC would increasingly use force in asserting its territorial claims in the South China Sea.³⁶ Events leading to the June 1989 government crackdown on the student-led pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square further strengthened the image of China as a growing problem and potential threat worldwide, as most western nations condemned Beijing’s actions and demonstrated their disapproval by imposing sanctions against the People’s Republic. With the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War, many wondered whether Beijing’s foreign policy would become even more aggressive as the constraints on Chinese foreign policy imposed by the bipolar international structure at the time gave way and the US was expected to significantly reduce its military presence in Asia as a consequence. Thus, by the end of the Cold War, the regime in China was perceived by much of the world as brutal and authoritarian in its domestic policies, aggressive in asserting China’s territorial claims, and revisionist in its foreign policy. In short, China was perceived as constituting a “threat” both domestically as well as externally in the international community.

This negative, threatening image of China began to change, however, during the 1980s when Beijing began formulating an integrated regional policy known as *zhoubian*

³⁶ See Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 134-35 and U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, *Country Analysis Brief: South China Sea Region* (Washington, D.C., 2003). http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/South_China_Sea/Background.html (accessed 12 June 2006).

zhengce (“periphery policy”) or *mulin zhengce* (“good neighbor policy”) to adapt China’s foreign policy to new trends in Asia. One of these trends was the promise of a “Pacific century” marked by fast economic growth in the Asia-Pacific. Beijing understood that integrating China’s economy with the rest of the region could offer a new path to economic development and prosperity. Another trend was the rise of the “new Asianism” doctrine that attributed the success of Asian modernization to uniquely Asian values. As this doctrine challenged the concept of Western economic and ideological dominance, Beijing wished to support this trend through establishing closer relations with China’s Asian neighbors.³⁷ This new policy was undertaken by Beijing during the 1980s partially in response to a diminishing Soviet threat and partially in light of a corresponding diminishment in the utility of Sino-American rapprochement.³⁸ As such, Beijing’s new “periphery policy” was a nuanced adjustment of China’s Cold War regional foreign policy bringing it in line with what were perceived at the time to be slowly developing geo-strategic trends. Beijing’s peripheral policy, however, was inadequate and underdeveloped to respond to unforeseen events in 1989.

Tiananmen

In 1989 two events significantly changed China’s external political and strategic environment which, in turn, stimulated greater impetus toward further adjustments and reformulation of Beijing’s new “good neighbor policy” or GND; the Tiananmen Massacre in June, and the ending of the Cold War in November. As we shall see, both events can be seen as causal factors in stimulating an initial change (1989 to 1995, or so) in Bei-

³⁷ See You Ji and Jia Qingguo, “China’s Re-emergence and Its Foreign Policy Strategy,” in *China Review*, ed. Joseph Y. S. Cheng (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1998), 128.

³⁸ Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China’s Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 21-22.

Beijing's foreign policy approach in Southeast Asia. Because of the events of June 1989 and the resultant international condemnation of the Chinese government, China found itself sanctioned and diplomatically isolated by the West. The reaction in Southeast Asia, however, was more subdued and far less critical than that of the West. Actually, Beijing's brutal repression of the pro-democracy activists imparted little negative impact on China's relations in the region. This is not difficult to understand, considering that most of the ASEAN states had human rights records no better than that of China. As such, the Southeast Asia states were sympathetic to China's notion of state sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries (both China and the ASEAN states resented the American human rights campaign). It seemed logical, therefore, that Beijing focus China's diplomatic energies on cultivating better relations with the ASEAN states to counter the diplomatic isolation imposed on China by the West. Establishing good relations with the ASEAN states, therefore, became extremely important to Beijing in its campaign of ending China's status as an international pariah.³⁹

End of the Cold War

The other big event of 1989 which impacted and induced change in Chinese regional foreign policy -- the end of the Cold War -- facilitated Beijing's plans of wooing the Southeast Asian states by removing constraints on Chinese foreign policy associated with the bipolar international system. The ending of the Cold War and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union transformed the then extant bipolar international system into the current American unipolar configuration, which in effect changed the external condi-

³⁹ Suisheng Zhao, "China's Periphery Policy and Its Asian Neighbors," *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 3 (1999): 338.

tions on which China's grand strategy of "peace and development" was based.⁴⁰ The post-Cold War international environment for China then, was significantly less threatening than the immediate past, which allowed Beijing increased flexibility in pursuing China's relations with other states. In Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union's demise ended Vietnam's ability to continue its aggressive and expansionistic policies in Cambodia and forced Hanoi to seek accommodation with China and the ASEAN states that allowed a resolution of the Cambodian issue in 1991. With this accomplishment, the last vestiges of the Cold War security situation (security dilemma) in Southeast Asia finally ended, removing the associated constraints on Chinese regional foreign policy. In short, during the early 1990s it became possible for Beijing to implement its "good neighbor diplomacy" in a meaningful way.⁴¹ To that end, Beijing initiated a bilateral campaign to improve relations with China's neighboring countries. In Southeast Asia, China normalized relations with Indonesia (8 August 1990), Singapore (3 October 1990), Brunei (30 September 1991), and Vietnam (November 1991),⁴² and began to pursue relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1991.⁴³ This brings us to another

⁴⁰ See John W. Garver, "China's U.S. Policies," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 201-204; Bates Gill, "China's Evolving Regional Security Strategy," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 247-252.

⁴¹ From this point in time forward, I define GND as being the diplomatic component of Beijing's new foreign policy approach in Southeast Asia aimed at deepening China's relations and influence with ASEAN and member states while at the same time resisting American and Japanese influence in the region. A basic premise of the GND is mitigating fears associated with the rise of Chinese economic and military power through actively promoting a friendly, cooperative, and responsible image of China in Southeast Asia.

⁴² Zhao, 338.

⁴³ For good accounts of initial China-ASEAN encounters, see David Shambaugh, "Return to the Middle Kingdom? China and Asia in the Early Twenty-First Century," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 23-47; David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2004/05): 64-99; Jianwei Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 166-177; and Suisheng Zhao, "China's Periphery Policy and Its Asian Neighbors," *Security Dialogue* 30, no 3 (1999): 335-346.

(and perhaps most interesting) source of change in Beijing's regional foreign policy -- the increase in interaction between China and the ASEAN states in the post-Cold War era.

IDEATIONAL FACTORS

During China's period of diplomatic isolation imposed by the West following the Tiananmen Crisis and the end of the Cold War, ASEAN decided to pursue a policy of engaging China with a view of "socializing" Chinese behavior to mitigate possible regional instability and conflict associated with China's rise and a possible American military drawdown in Asia. As such, Beijing's desire to establish good relations with ASEAN dovetailed on ASEAN's desire to engage China. These mutual desires led to the informal establishment of Sino-ASEAN relations in 1991 and to formal relations between the two sides in 1996.⁴⁴ The end of the bipolar international system removed many constraints on Chinese foreign policy and allowed Beijing to pursue a new, more focused regional policy aimed at improving Sino-ASEAN relations. However, as the early 1990s neared an end, the impact of this source of change on Chinese foreign policy weakened. At about the same time, the impact of increased interaction and "simple" social learning between China and ASEAN on Beijing's regional foreign policy amplified. Much of the increase in interaction is attributable to the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which during the early 1990s was the principal issue standing in the way of improved Sino-ASEAN relations. Actions undertaken by Beijing in 1992 and 1995 to assert Chinese sovereignty over the Spratly archipelago and much of the South China Sea (discussed below) served to heighten perceptions of a rising China threat among the ASEAN

⁴⁴Lai To Lee gives a good account of initial China-ASEAN contacts. Lai To Lee, *China and the South China Sea Dialogues* (London: Praeger, 1999), 15-27. By 1991, China had established official relations with all ASEAN states, and in 1996 China became an official dialogue partner of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC).

states and thereby undermine Beijing's strategy of pursuing improved Sino-ASEAN relations vis-à-vis China's "good neighbor" diplomacy. As such, the territorial disputes became *the* crucial issue in determining the future of Sino-ASEAN relations. I argue below that through the process of China-ASEAN interaction, "simple" social learning occurred resulting in the creation of "shared knowledge" of Self and Other that induced an instrumental transformation of Beijing's GND -- but not yet a transformation of China's cognitive base and identity. However, as discussed in the following chapter, "simple" social learning, over time, ultimately led to "complex" social learning that *did* affect a metamorphosis of China's identity (Cognitive Base_B) and a *constitutive* change in Beijing's GND.

PROBLEMS WITH THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Beijing's traditional diplomatic approach to the territorial disputes in the South China Sea from 1989 to 1996 was based on three guiding premises -- the inviolability of Chinese sovereign territory, a strong preference for bilateral negotiations with other disputants, and an intense determination to prevent the internationalization of the South China Sea issue. These premises, however, began to have detrimental effects on China's larger foreign policy goal in the region -- to strengthen China-ASEAN relations and thereby limit American and Japanese influence in Southeast Asia.⁴⁵ Ever since the end of the Cold War and especially after the stunning 1991 American military tour de force in the first Gulf War, Beijing pursued a foreign policy of promoting a multipolar global system to balance the preponderant military and economic power of the United States. This stance caused growing problems between Washington and Beijing that led to a more con-

⁴⁵ Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "China's Regional Strategy," in *Power Shift*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 50-51.

frontational relationship between the two states and ultimately to the birth of the China threat thesis. The Clinton Administration's linkage of human rights in China and the renewal of China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status heightened ill will in both capitals as well as supported a growing opinion among the American public that the rise of Chinese power and influence spelled trouble for the U.S. The Bush Administration's aggressive and confrontational position in Sino-American relations, along with primarily American calls for the containment of China, led to perceptions in Beijing that China had to prevent the strategic encirclement of itself by an American-led, anti-China alliance. Hence, Beijing pursued a policy in Southeast Asia of seeking and promoting closer China-ASEAN relations to dispel the China threat thesis and thus lessen any desire among ASEAN countries to ally with the U.S. against China in the region. Beijing's recalcitrant and reluctant attitude to address the South China Sea disputes within ASEAN's multilateral framework and aggressive Chinese moves to assert the PRC's claim of territorial sovereignty over the Spratlys were causing friction in the burgeoning China-ASEAN relationship and were, therefore undermining Beijing's larger strategy of resisting American influence in Southeast Asia. Beijing's aggressive and assertive actions concerning the South China Sea disputes also supported the China threat thesis by strengthening the traditional image of China in Southeast Asia as a potential aggressor. In short, China's approach to the South China Sea disputes was antithetical to Beijing's larger foreign policy goals of strengthening relations with ASEAN and resisting Japanese and American influence in Southeast Asia.

By 1995, as we shall see, China's leadership realized that a new approach to the South China Sea disputes was vital if the China-ASEAN relationship was to widen and

deepen. It became imperative for Beijing to prevent the maritime disputes from straining and limiting, or perhaps even preventing, the normalization of China–ASEAN relations. The problem for Beijing was that it had to accomplish this task without compromising China’s claim of territorial sovereignty over much of the South China Sea, which Beijing saw as inviolable.⁴⁶ We will first examine Beijing’s bilateral approach to the South Sea disputes with both the Philippines and Vietnam, as bilateral diplomacy represents China’s traditional approach in relations with Southeast Asia (Cognitive Base_A). Beijing’s multi-lateral diplomacy is examined next, as it serves as a key indicator of change in China’s GND. Having said that, I must point out that in some instances Beijing’s bilateral diplomacy also serves as an indicator of change, but this is so mostly during the second period of this study (1997-2006).

BILATERAL DIPLOMACY

The Philippines

The dispute over the Spratlys between China and the Philippines remained quiet since Filipino President Aquino’s 1988 trip to China, where both sides reached an agreement to put the territorial dispute on hold so that it would not negatively affect improving relations between the two countries.⁴⁷ However, by the time of Washington’s 1992 announcement of an American military withdrawal from the Philippines and an increase in tensions between China and the Philippines in the Spratlys due in part to Manila’s plans for turning two islets in the Spratlys into diving resorts, Manila’s view of the PRC had

⁴⁶ The issue of territorial sovereignty has always been one of the most important issues for the PRC; an issue that, until recently, caused Beijing considerable friction and conflict with states along China’s land border (Soviet Union, India, Vietnam) as well as with states that share a maritime border with the PRC (Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan).

⁴⁷ *The Straits Times*, 26 April 1988.

become more dubious and suspicious. Thus, at the 25th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) hosted by the Philippines in July 1992, President Fidel Ramos and Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus demonstrated their displeasure to Beijing by attempting to internationalize the South China Sea disputes just as ASEAN promulgated the Declaration on the South China Sea (both discussed below).⁴⁸ The following year, Ramos traveled to Beijing in April for talks concerning the dispute.

During the talks, Ramos was reassured that Beijing was committed to resolving the dispute peacefully. Further, the Chinese suggested that both sides shelve the sovereignty issue and develop the natural resources of the Spratlys jointly.⁴⁹ Ramos returned home with a smile on his face, a result apparently of both the substantial economic agreements and benefits gained by the Philippines, as well comforting reassurance from Beijing that China was not a military threat to the Philippines.⁵⁰ Indeed, Ramos subsequently suggested that the Chinese economy was a model for Asia and that he was confident that the PRC would not start a new confrontation with the Philippines over the Spratlys. He cited Beijing's agreement to take part in a future multilateral workshop hosted by Manila on marine research in the Spratlys as evidence of China's good intentions.⁵¹ The road toward increased cooperation and better relations between Beijing and Manila, however, still had bumps and potholes ahead that had to be circumvented.

The relationship between China and the Philippines began to sour in 1994. Beijing was not pleased by Ramos receiving Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui at Subic Bay

⁴⁸ President Ramos favored a conference under United Nations auspices to resolve the problem, while Raul Manglapus made proposals to the AMM and ASEAN PMC that an international conference be convened on the disputed Spratlys. See Lee, 102.

⁴⁹ *Lianhe Zaobao*, 27 April 1993 as cited in Lee, 102.

⁵⁰ *The Straits Times*, 28 April 1993.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

during Lee's controversial "holiday diplomacy" nor did China approve of Manila's licensing of a Philippine-American offshore oil exploration project in the Reed Bank area close to the Spratlys. According to Lai To Lee, these circumstances expedited Beijing's desires for, and efforts toward, an agreement with Manila for joint offshore oil and gas exploration and development in the Spratlys.⁵² However, just as it seemed that Beijing and Manila were moving towards an understanding over the Spratlys, the discovery by the Philippines of Chinese-built structures on Mischief Reef in the Philippine-claimed Kalayaan area of the disputed archipelago began a diplomatic row between the two disputants. Manila lodged official protests against Chinese actions, and subsequently destroyed Chinese territorial markers on nearby reefs, arrested 62 Chinese anglers for poaching, and organized a media trip to the area to publicize Chinese territorial encroachment.⁵³ In addition, Manila suggested taking the issue to the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice if no bilateral solution could be reached and also passed a \$2 billion (US) bill in the Philippines Congress for modernizing its military (naval and air forces), building lighthouses and increasing armed patrols in the disputed area.⁵⁴ Further, President Ramos's use of the row with China to whip up public support of his coalition party in upcoming elections did not help relations with Beijing.⁵⁵

Beijing reacted by denouncing Manila's actions as "provocative" and, as could be expected, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan voiced China's objections to the

⁵² Lee, 105. During a meeting in June 1994, Chinese vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made it clear to Philippines House of Representatives Speaker Jose De Venecia that Beijing welcomed joint development of the Spratlys and shelving sovereignty issues, but at the same time indicated that China would not welcome any internationalization of the Spratlys dispute. See *The Straits Times*, 20 June 1994.

⁵³ Lee, 105.

⁵⁴ *The Straits Times*, 21 February 1995.

⁵⁵ Lee, 106.

internationalization of the issue.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, China agreed to hold bilateral talks with Manila to discuss the disputes. Talks commenced shortly thereafter covering a wide range of issues such as cultural and economic cooperation, but failed to reach any substantive agreement concerning the Spratlys specifically, save consensus to solve the dispute in a peaceful manner and to continue talks at an unspecified date in the future.⁵⁷

Because the Mischief Reef affair marked the first instance of a territorial dispute with an ASEAN state, China faced for the first time a multilateral reaction. The ASEAN ministers issued a joint statement on the South China Sea on 18 March 1995 urging all concerned parties to respect and follow the provisions of the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea advising concerned parties to seek negotiated solutions through participation in various forums.⁵⁸ Further, during the first China-ASEAN security dialogue held in Hangzhou during April, the Spratlys were also brought up in the discussions (discussed below). Increasingly, ASEAN applied multilateral pressure on Beijing, and Vietnam's accession to ASEAN as a full member in July only intensified that pressure. Therefore, the Chinese realized that some diplomatic way to diffuse the conflictual situation in the South China Sea was necessary so that it would not undo the gains made by Beijing in its strategy of strengthening relations with ASEAN.

During the months of April and May 1995, considerable diplomatic activity conducted between China and the Philippines ultimately yielded an understanding (but not a resolution) over the Spratlys. Jiang Zemin assured Ramos by letter that the Spratly problem would be resolved peacefully and that friendly relations between the two countries

⁵⁶ *The Straits Times*, 23 March 1995.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea* (22 July 1992). <http://www.aseansec.org/3634.htm> (accessed 5 August 2005).

would continue.⁵⁹ In response to increased tensions between Beijing and Manila because of Manila's press tour of the Spratlys, President Ramos decided on a Track II approach and sent Filipino businessman Alfonso Yuchengco to Beijing as a special envoy to carry Ramos' response to one of Jiang Zemin's letters. During his visit to China, Yuchengco was presented with a plan for joint ventures between China and the Philippines for scientific surveying and developing the oil resources of Reed Bank. In addition, the Chinese indicated that Beijing would even consider international cooperation and capital investment in the project, but warned against any moves by Manila to internationalize the dispute over sovereignty of the archipelago.⁶⁰ Concerning the structures erected on Mischief Reef by the Chinese, Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yinfan stated that those structures were available for use by Philippine fishermen, and that he hoped for the early release of the 62 Chinese anglers arrested by Philippine authorities after the Mischief Reef incident. Wang also announced that China would like an agreement with Manila promoting cooperation on fishing in the area as well as preventing the arrest of Chinese anglers in the future.⁶¹ This Track II approach seemed to yield some benefit for the Philippines in subsequent Track I dialogues with China.

During the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and the second ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting held during July 1995 in Brunei, Chinese and Philippine delegates discussed their bilateral relationship (including the Spratlys issue) on the sidelines, successfully laying the groundwork for formal meetings the following month. At

⁵⁹ *The Straits Times*, 16 May 1995.

⁶⁰ Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yinfan made it perfectly clear to Yuchengco that it would be unwise for Manila to involve ASEAN or the United States in the dispute, adding that the Chinese military had been restrained by Beijing from taking any action in the Spratlys, but this restraint would not be permanent if Manila continued to take provocative actions. See Lee, 108-109; and *The Straits Times*, 23 June 1995.

⁶¹ *The Straits Times*, 23 June 1995.

these meetings, an agreement was reached to set up panels of experts to discuss the legal basis of their conflicting claims of territorial sovereignty in the Spratlys. More significantly, both parties agreed to formulate and implement a “code of conduct” governing their mutual actions in the Spratlys.⁶² The Code stipulated that the disputes in the Spratlys should not be allowed to adversely affect the normal development of relations between the two countries, and that the disputes should be resolved in peaceful ways. Importantly, the Code would adhere to international law and the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Even more importantly, the Code represented the first instance of Beijing agreeing to *multilateral* cooperation “at the appropriate time”⁶³ and the first official acknowledgement by Manila of the Chinese proposal for joint exploration and development of offshore oil and gas reserves in the Spratlys.⁶⁴ Following the August meetings and agreement on a “code of conduct,” relations between the two countries improved. Ramos released the 62 detained Chinese anglers in two batches the next month and, in November, released another group of 14 Chinese anglers on compassionate grounds.⁶⁵ During a November meeting between Jiang and Ramos in Osaka before the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, the Chinese President reiterated that the PRC posed no threat to the peace and stability in the Asia Pacific, and that China and the Philippines could resolve their differences through friendly talks, while Ramos made little fuss over naval encounters off Subic Bay with ships of possible Chinese origins.⁶⁶ At a later meeting between Ramos and Li Peng at the first Asia-Europe Meeting held in Bang-

⁶² *The Straits Times*, 12 August 1995.

⁶³ *The Straits Times*, 11 August 1995.

⁶⁴ Lee, 110. Also, see *The Straits Times*, 11 August 1995.

⁶⁵ *The Straits Times*, 10 November 1995.

⁶⁶ According to Lee, Beijing denied any knowledge of the suspect ships and their activities. Lee, 110. Also, see *The Straits Times*, 30 January and 12 February 1996.

kok in March 1996, both sides agreed to keep their ships away from the disputed areas in the Spratlys to avoid possible conflict.⁶⁷ Cooperation in the Spratlys between Beijing and Manila was subsequently furthered during bilateral meetings at the vice-ministerial level later that month, where several important confidence-building measures (CBMs) were established to facilitate cooperation in the areas of piracy, smuggling, fishing, environmental protection, the establishment of communication systems for military garrisons in the Spratlys as well as initializing military exchanges between the two sides.⁶⁸ Concerning the Chinese presence on Mischief Reef, it was agreed that the issue would be set aside for the time being.⁶⁹ The agreement to put the territorial issue on hold and pursue joint development of the area was reiterated by the Chinese at subsequent interactions between Beijing and Manila.⁷⁰

The marked improvement in Chinese-Filipino relations witnessed during the latter half of 1995 and 1996 did not last. Nonetheless, Beijing's bilateral diplomacy with Manila during this period did reveal hints of a change in the PRC's overall position vis-à-vis territorial disputes in the South China Sea. While negotiations with Manila conformed, for the most part, to China's traditional strategy of seeking bilateral resolution of its territorial disputes in the Southeast Asian maritime environment, the Chinese acknowledgment that *multilateral* venues and CBM mechanisms concerning the Spratlys dispute were a possibility in the future was highly significant. It suggested that shared knowledge (ASEAN set a high value on China's willingness to discuss the territorial disputes

⁶⁷ *The Straits Times*, 3 March 1996.

⁶⁸ *The Straits Times*, 15 March 1996.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Interestingly, the Chinese used the bilateral meeting to assure that Beijing's missile tests being conducted at the time in the Taiwan Strait was not a threat to the Philippines nor to the 100,000 or so Filipinos living in Taiwan, and that China's military maneuvers would not lead to war with the ROC.

⁷⁰ During Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon's June visit to China, and during President Jiang Zemin's official visit to the Philippines following that year's APEC summit held at Subic Bay in November.

multilaterally in its threat evaluation of China) gained earlier by the Chinese through interaction with ASEAN states at the yearly Track II Indonesian-sponsored workshops (discussed below) played a part in Beijing's subsequent reevaluation of its diplomatic approach (both bilateral and multilateral) toward the most difficult problem in PRC-ASEAN relations.

Vietnam

The territorial dispute between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea is arguably the most serious of all the PRC's disputes in the Southeast Asian maritime region. One reason is that both Beijing and Hanoi claim the whole South China Sea as their sovereign territory. Another reason is that both countries have the most substantial military and defense presence of all the South China Sea states and, therefore, China and Vietnam constitute the major players in the conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War and the resultant collapse of the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam are two of only a handful of socialist states remaining in the world. The normalization of relations between the PRC and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) in November 1991 was, in all likelihood, a consequence of these major events and the resulting strategic situation facing both states.⁷¹ According to Lee Lai To, a mutual fear of "peaceful evolution" and "attempts allegedly initiated by the West to undermine socialist regimes by stirring up issues such as human rights" was the chief reason for bilateral discussions leading to the normalization of Chinese-Vietnamese relations.⁷² In any event, one of -- if not *the* -- major challenges facing both sides in establishing friendly relations remains the territorial disputes along the land border, as well as in the Tonkin Gulf and the South China Sea.

⁷¹ Lee, 92-93.

⁷² Ibid.

At the Sino-Vietnamese Summit of November 1991, agreements were reached concerning trade and border affairs, and during Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's visit to Vietnam the following year agreements on economic cooperation and visa exemption were concluded.⁷³ These diplomatic milestones were furthered during subsequent high-level meetings throughout the 1990s where the two states deepened relations (especially in economic cooperation): Premier Li Peng's December 1992 visit to Vietnam; Vietnamese President Le Duc Anh's November 1993 trip to Beijing and President Jiang Zemin's reciprocal visit to Vietnam late in 1994; the second visit of Communist Party General Secretary Do Muoi to China in 1995; and Premier Vo Van Kiet's trip to Beijing early in 1996. The territorial issues were apparently placed on the sidelines during the early 1990s, and both sides agreed to settle these outstanding disputes through peaceful negotiations.⁷⁴ However, as talks between Hanoi and Beijing were progressing, Vietnam further complicated matters concerning the territorial dispute with China by awarding contracts to quite a number of foreign firms for offshore oil and gas exploration in the Dai Hung oil field located off the southeast coast of Vietnam -- an area of the South China Sea claimed by China.⁷⁵ In reaction to Hanoi's actions, the PRC published its 1992 Proclamation of China's Law on Territorial Sea and made known its May 1992 deal with the American oil exploration company Crestone Energy Corporation to drill in an offshore area claimed by Vietnam.

⁷³ *The Straits Times*, 9 March 1992.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* During Qian Qichen's 1992 visit, both sides agreed to establish a group of experts to discuss the disputes.

⁷⁵ Hanoi had awarded contracts to firms from Great Britain, Australia, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, and the Netherlands to explore and develop the Dai Hung (or Big Bear) oil field off Vietnam's southeast coast. See Lee, 94 and *The Straits Times*, 27 June 1992.

China's Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, ratified by the National People's Congress in February 1992, underlined a more assertive stance in Beijing's territorial claims in the region. In addition to reiterating China's territorial claims to the Paracel and Spratly Islands, the Law on the Territorial Sea also asserted and documented China's claim over most of the remaining territory in the entire South China Sea! Beijing's assertiveness in establishing its legal claim of ownership over the maritime region was reinforced by an aggressive declaration of the legal right of hot pursuit against foreign ships if they violated Chinese laws and regulations.⁷⁶ The PRC's Law on the Territorial Sea cast considerable doubt among the ASEAN states concerning China's oft-stated peaceful and benign intentions in the South China Sea. As a result, China's image in Southeast Asia moved again toward one of "threat" and perhaps even toward an image of "enemy-in-the-future" for certain ASEAN states. Additionally, as mentioned above, China's National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) had signed a contract in May of that year with Crestone Energy Corporation to explore for oil and natural gas in a large area of the Wanan Bei-21 (or Vanguard Bank-21) block. These provocative moves taken by Beijing in early 1992 were further highlighted by statements made by senior Chinese military officers indicating the need for a more assertive and aggressive defense of China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. General Zhang Xusan, the deputy commander-in-chief of the Chinese navy, argued in early 1992 that China should adjust its naval strategy and capabilities to better protect and develop offshore oil and gas re-

⁷⁶ See *Beijing Review*, 30 March - 5 April 1992, 6-7. The Chinese delegation distributed copies of the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone" to the other participants attending the third workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea held in Yogyakarta, 28 June-2 July.

serves in the South China Sea.⁷⁷ In addition, statements made by the president of Crestone, Randall Thompson, claiming that the PRC had promised to protect Crestone's oil exploration operations in the Wanan Bei-21 area with its naval forces, further exacerbated feelings of ill will between the two disputants.⁷⁸

The reaction from Hanoi was quick. Vietnamese officials reminded Beijing that both sides had reached an agreement that neither side should take any provocative actions that might complicate the situation in the South China Sea and demanded that China annul the contract with Crestone.⁷⁹ Hanoi, as the old saying goes, wanted to "have its cake and eat it too." However, in spite of the row over offshore drilling in contested waters and the fallout from China's 1992 Law of the Sea, Beijing and Hanoi nonetheless continued to seek a diplomatic solution to their territorial disputes along the mainland border, in the Tonkin Gulf, and in the South China Sea. These efforts focused primarily on resolving the contested mainland border and the territorial dispute in the Tonkin Gulf. The Paracels and Spratlys were apparently too controversial a topic for either side to broach in a serious manner. An agreement was ultimately reached in October 1993 stipulating that both sides would follow a set of general principles on handling these disputes.⁸⁰ In addition, the agreement established two working groups at the expert level to conduct follow-up talks, one for the land border and the other for the Tonkin Gulf.⁸¹ After many succes-

⁷⁷ *The Straits Times*, 7 April 1992.

⁷⁸ See *Beijing Review* (20-26 July 1992): 5; and *The Straits Times*, 23 June 1992. Thompson confirmed Beijing's promise of military protection in Crestone's area of operations during a telephone conversation. Randall Thompson, interview by author, telephone conversation, July 1992.

⁷⁹ *The Straits Times*, 19 May 1992.

⁸⁰ Both sides agreed to speed up negotiations on the border, avoid actions that could complicate the situation, and eschew the use of force over border disputes. *The Straits Times*, 20 October 1993.

⁸¹ Lee, 95.

sive rounds of talks, neither working group reach any tangible settlements.⁸² Talks on the South China Sea disputes were even less successful. In an attempt to jumpstart the stalled negotiations on the Paracel and Spratly islands, a special group of experts was established to address these disputes specifically.

During Chinese President Jiang Zemin's November 1994 trip to Hanoi, both sides agreed to establish a group of experts (GEM) to work on this most difficult problem. The GEM decided in July of 1995 that the Spratlys dispute could be negotiated, but not the dispute over ownership of the Paracels. It seems that Beijing's refusal to discuss the Paracels was due to China's complete military control of the archipelago. Beijing's agreement to put the Spratlys on the negotiating table, however, is important in that it represented a significant and notable change in China's historic position on the issue considering that as recently as Premier Li Peng's visit to Hanoi in late 1992 the Chinese had been unwilling to discuss any of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.⁸³ These moves made it apparent that during the first half of the 1990s Beijing had begun to soften its stance toward Vietnam vis-à-vis territorial issues by agreeing to limited talks and cooperative projects such as the joint working groups previously discussed. In doing so, Beijing prevented these issues from adversely affecting China's warming relations with Vietnam.⁸⁴

At a higher level of analysis, China's image in Vietnam had, since the end of the Cold War, undergone change from one of "threat" and "enemy" toward an image of a

⁸² By January 1998, the working group on the land border had participated in eleven rounds of talks without any real progress, and by March, the group working on the border in the Tonkin Gulf had convened ten rounds of talks with results no more substantial than agreeing to base talks upon the spirit of international law and practice. See *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia Pacific*, FED3118, 01/07/98.

⁸³ *The Straits Times*, 3 December 1992.

⁸⁴ Lee, 97.

more “friendly” and “cooperative” (while at the same time also a “competitive”) neighbor to the north. Admittedly, the positive transition of China’s national image in Vietnam during this period was affected mostly by increased cooperation between the two countries in economic and social-cultural issues.⁸⁵ Both sides realized that the territorial disputes remained a very real and ever-present point of conflict between China and Vietnam and, as such, constituted the greatest obstacle to improving Sino-Vietnamese relations. Both sides, however, also believed that the benefits of warmer, closer PRC-DRVN relations were of greater importance than seeking a solution of the South China Sea disputes favorable to themselves. Both sides were, therefore, ultimately unwilling to allow the disputes over the Paracels and Spratlys to undermine progress toward good relations between the two socialist countries. The difficulty was that neither side completely trusted the other. Because of this lack of complete trust, each side continued to make aggressive moves and take assertive action to strengthen their territorial claims.

What is important for this case study is that Beijing’s diplomacy (however taciturn it appeared at the time) prevented the territorial disputes from jeopardizing China’s goal of forging closer relations with Vietnam. There is little doubt that as Vietnam moved closer toward full ASEAN membership, Beijing’s bilateral diplomacy with Hanoi concerning the territorial disputes became more urgent and focused, as the Chinese believed that it would be far better to reach some tentative understanding with Vietnam *before* it gained the advantage of direct ASEAN support. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, were stalling on the South China Sea issue while at the same time moving forward in bilateral talks and agreements with China in other areas such as trade, economic aid,

⁸⁵ For example, during the visit of Premier Vo Van Kiet to China in February 1996, an agreement was reached for the resumption of railway connections between China and Vietnam. *The Straits Times*, 13 February 1996.

and cultural exchanges. Hanoi would wait *until* Vietnam was a full ASEAN member before seriously addressing the territorial disputes with China. After all, when confronting large powerful states, it is to the advantage of small weak states to form a unified position, take collective action, and implement multilateral strategies to lessen the asymmetrical balance of power favoring the large powerful state. This explains, in part, the lack of any substantial progress in resolving the territorial disputes in the South China Sea before Vietnamese accession to full ASEAN membership. Progress made by Beijing and Hanoi through bilateral talks on the land border and maritime boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin was significant and impressive, but these achievements represent “easier” concessions made by both sides that served to keep Sino-Vietnamese relations headed in the right direction and mitigate tensions over the disputed Paracel and Spratly islands. Beijing could demonstrate its good neighborliness to Hanoi (and the ASEAN states), thereby lessen the image of China as a “threat,” and promote its “good neighbor” image in the region. Hanoi, on the other hand, chose both bilateral and multilateral venues to address the territorial dispute with China, but expected greater success through the multilateral ASEAN process. Hanoi, it seems, used the prospect of future multilateral discussion of the South China Sea issue (where Vietnam would have the advantage of being part of a collective in discussions with China) as advantage in its bilateral dealings with Beijing to maximize its gains.

Through its bilateral diplomacy with both Vietnam and the Philippines, Beijing came to realize in the mid-1990s that China would ultimately have to address the South China Sea disputes within ASEAN’s multilateral framework as both Hanoi and Manila sought the advantage of confronting China as a group and therefore were unwilling to

address seriously the disputes on a bilateral level. This realization was also founded upon Beijing's growing understanding and appreciation of the high level of importance ASEAN placed on Beijing's willingness to accept a multilateralization of the territorial disputes in its evaluation of Chinese intentions. Clearly, if Beijing wished to change ASEAN threat perceptions of China for the better, Beijing had to accept multilateral talks thereby demonstrating a cooperative, good neighborly attitude. Moreover, only by doing so could Beijing prevent the South China Sea issue from jeopardizing the future of Sino-ASEAN relations.

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Track I

A major turning point in Sino-ASEAN relations occurred in July 1991 when China received an invitation to attend that year's ASEAN Ministerial Meeting as a guest of the hosting country, Malaysia. It was the beginning of ASEAN's policy of engaging China so that this rising economic and military power might be "socialized" into accepting the shared norms of behavior and interaction of the ASEAN states and thereby decrease or manage the "China threat."⁸⁶ The Chinese were eager as well to engage the ASEAN states and promote an image of China in Southeast Asia as a friendly, cooperative "good neighbor." To Beijing, this was part of a larger foreign policy strategy initiated in the 1980s aimed at promoting a peaceful international environment conducive to China's continuing economic growth and development, as well as breaking China's post-

⁸⁶ For an excellent discussion of the complementary economic and normative perspectives of China and ASEAN, see Gungwu Wang, "China and Southeast Asia: The Context of a New Beginning," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 187-204.

Tiananmen isolation and balancing against American regional hegemony.⁸⁷ Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's attendance at the July 1991 AMM held in Kuala Lumpur provided Beijing an excellent opportunity to implement its GND in the region. Qian made it clear that China desired closer relations with ASEAN and that increased cooperation in the economic, political, scientific-technological, and security fields would yield mutual benefits. Chinese assistance in various high-tech sectors such as microelectronics, telecommunications, and aviation would greatly benefit the ASEAN economies, as would Beijing's backing of ASEAN's effort at a settlement of the Cambodian issue, since without Chinese assistance (China was the main backer of the Khmer Rouge) a solution of the Cambodian situation was all but impossible.⁸⁸ The South China Sea issue was not addressed at the meeting, as Qian quite obviously did not wish to sour the talks by discussing China's claim of "indisputable" sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands. The ASEAN delegates, not wanting the first China-ASEAN interaction to go badly, also avoided this controversial issue. At any rate, the major security concern for ASEAN in 1991 was Cambodia and Chinese assistance was deemed essential for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

China's next encounter with ASEAN at the July 1992 AMM hosted by the Philippines was not as copasetic as the 1991 meeting had been, as ASEAN took the opportunity of raising the issue of the South China Sea. ASEAN states, especially the Philippines, brought up the South China Sea disputes with China, trying to determine what Beijing's future moves might be. Beijing had passed its Law on the Territorial Sea and the Con-

⁸⁷ See Jianwei Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the new Millennium," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 159-200.

⁸⁸ Lee, 22.

tiguous Zone in February 1992, and signed a contract in May with Crestone Energy Corporation to prospect for gas and oil in disputed waters of the South China Sea. In addition, Washington had announced plans to withdraw American military forces from Subic Bay by the end of 1992, increasing the security concerns vis-à-vis China of ASEAN, Vietnam, and the Philippines in particular.

Qian Qichen anticipated a debate on the South China Sea and preempted the issue during his earlier bilateral talks with Philippine Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus in Brunei. Qian stated that China would not fill any power “vacuum” in Southeast Asia, and also that the “informal” workshop held in Bandung was a “positive” undertaking and that China would give positive consideration to some of the understandings reached at the workshop. Specifically, Qian maintained that Beijing fully supported the proposals of the Chinese experts at the workshop to increase cooperation among the maritime states of the South China Sea in the areas of navigation, meteorology, and scientific research. Qian did not believe that the South China Sea would become a new focus of conflict, insisting that China’s policy emphasized peaceful solution of the dispute through bilateral or *multilateral* negotiations and that the disputes over the Spratlys could be put on hold until the time was ripe for discussion. Qian also indicated that Beijing was agreeable to joint exploration of the resources in the disputed areas.⁸⁹

The 1992 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila opened with a speech by Philippine President Ramos who set the tone of the talks by stating that the Spratly dispute could no longer be put on hold. To the chagrin of the Chinese, Ramos called for an international meeting to settle the issue. As the meeting progressed, other ASEAN states besides the Philippines asked specific questions concerning China’s intentions in the area,

⁸⁹ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-92-141, 07/22/92; my emphasis.

especially about Beijing's exploration deal with Crestone Energy Corporation. Foreign Minister Qian gave somewhat ambiguous answers, stating that Chinese actions in the area did not contradict the principles articulated earlier by Beijing.⁹⁰ Not satisfied with the answers given by the Chinese delegates, and facing growing pressure from the Philippines and Vietnam (attending as an "observer"), the ministers issued the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea.⁹¹ The Declaration stated general principles based on the joint statement of the 1991 informal workshop held in Bandung and the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, urging disputant states to renounce the use of force and exercise self-restraint, and set aside issues of sovereignty while exploring joint cooperation in the area.⁹² The declaration, however, was for both the Philippines and Vietnam a much weaker and watered-down version than what they had hoped.⁹³ While Manila and Hanoi were unhappy with the declaration's timidity, Beijing only accepted a few of the basic principles articulated in the Declaration, and rejected the remainder as China considered areas in the South China Sea such as the Paracels and Pratas to fall outside the purview of ASEAN. Further, the Chinese were obviously concerned that the Declaration might lead to multilateral discussions on issues of sovereignty and jurisdiction in disputed areas of the South China Sea, which could weaken China's claim in the Spratlys. According to Qian, China would only enter into such talks when the conditions to do so were "ripe."⁹⁴ Qian suggested that quiet diplomacy was the most prudent approach, as public discus-

⁹⁰ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-92-142, 07/23/92.

⁹¹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea* (22 July 1992). <http://www.aseansec.org/3634.htm> (accessed 5 August 2005).

⁹² Lee, 25.

⁹³ Apparently, most ASEAN officials were afraid that a more strongly worded statement might offend Beijing and pressure China into using the "Cambodian card" (perhaps resupply the Khmer Rouge with arms) in retaliation. See *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Far East*, FE/1438, A2/2, 7/21/92.

⁹⁴ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Far East*, FE/1441, A1/2, 7/24/92.

sions might engender “a longer time for tensions to subside, or might in fact heighten current tensions in the region.”⁹⁵

China’s first major interaction with ASEAN on the South China Sea disputes at the Track I level revealed that Beijing was hesitant, to say the least, in discussing the issue, except to state that the PRC intended to promote cooperation and joint development among the claimants by shelving the sovereignty issue (ideas, as we shall see below, that the Chinese learned through earlier interaction with ASEAN states at the Track II Indonesian workshops). Clearly, the Chinese recognized by then that they would have to address the territorial disputes within ASEAN’s multilateral process if Beijing’s desire of improved China-ASEAN relations was to be realized.⁹⁶ Chinese participation at the 26th AMM as a guest of hosting Singapore the following year was significant in that it revealed Beijing’s desire for stronger relations with ASEAN not only in economic, scientific, and technological areas, but also in security matters.⁹⁷ In a move to assuage ASEAN fears of a growing “China threat” Qian emphasized that China did not, and would not in the future seek hegemony in Southeast Asia. Further, Qian stated that through dialogue at all levels and venues all parties could reach mutual understanding and agreement regarding the principles and mechanisms underwriting regional security.⁹⁸ When the ASEAN ministers asked for a full Chinese endorsement and support of the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, Qian responded that following the 1992 AMM he had written to Philippine Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo (who had then

⁹⁵ *The Straits Times*, 22 July 1992.

⁹⁶ Lee, 26-27.

⁹⁷ Even before the 1993 AMM, Qian Qichen made it known to Singapore’s Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng that the PRC would be pleased to participate with ASEAN in regional security dialogues. See *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-93-140, 07/23/93.

⁹⁸ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-93-141, 07/26/93.

been chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee) stating that the Declaration's principles were mostly identical with those of China.⁹⁹ However, while Qian indicated Chinese support for the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) and Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in Southeast Asia, he also made it clear that Beijing would not necessarily sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, as China was not geographically situated in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng extended an invitation to China to join the new ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as a consultative partner during an "informal" dinner on 24 July 1993.¹⁰¹

The ARF was established at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post Ministerial Conference held in Singapore in July 1993. During the ARF's July 1994 inaugural meeting in Bangkok, the institution identified two primary objectives: (1) "to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern" and (2) "to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventative diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region."¹⁰² Considering that the South China Sea disputes between China and several ASEAN states directly affected security interests of many of the region's states (who were ARF members as well), it seemed logical that the territorial disputes should be included in the ARF's agenda. Vietnam and the Philippines certainly hoped that this would be the case. As could have been expected, China objected to the disputes issue being included in the agenda.

Concerning the Spratlys problem, Qian Qichen indicated in April 1994 to senior Thai Foreign Ministry officials that China opposed including the issue in the ARF

⁹⁹ *The Straits Times*, 24 July 1993.

¹⁰⁰ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-93-141, 07/26/93.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² ASEAN Regional Forum. <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org> (accessed 12 February 2006).

agenda. Instead, Qian argued that the ARF should focus on confidence-building measures (CBMs).¹⁰³ The inaugural ARF Bangkok meeting was premised upon the theme “Security in the Asia Pacific: Challenges, Opportunities and Confidence Building Measures in the Context of Preventive Diplomacy,” but the Spratlys issue did not become a point of contention. ASEAN officials had proposed that speakers not raise any contentious issues, and Beijing was eager to avoid the issue altogether.¹⁰⁴ During his address, Qian Qichen proposed some ideas concerning security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and enunciated China’s policy on regional security. While side stepping the Spratlys imbroglio, Qian stated that some territorial and border issues leftover from the past had to be resolved. And while Beijing supported the establishment of the ARF and saw it as an excellent forum for joint exploration for “effective ways to eliminate any destabilizing factors and strengthen and enhance peace and stability in the region,” Qian also emphasized the importance of bilateral diplomacy in mitigating specific issues between countries, citing China’s successful use of bilateral talks in building trust and confidence (CBMs) between itself and some of its Southeast Asian neighbors.¹⁰⁵ Exemplifying Beijing’s belief in bilateral negotiation, Qian utilized the occasion to pursue bilateral talks with other foreign ministers on the sidelines of the multilateral forum. Among others, Qian met with the foreign ministers of both the Philippines and Vietnam, but apparently these talks only touched upon South China Sea issues in a general way.¹⁰⁶ In an effort to dispel fears expressed in Bangkok by some of the ASEAN states of the rise of Chinese military and economic power, Qian proclaimed at a press conference that China advo-

¹⁰³ *Lianhe Zaobao*, 5 April 1994 as cited in Lee, 31.

¹⁰⁴ *The Straits Times*, 13 July 1994.

¹⁰⁵ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-94-143, 07/26/94.

¹⁰⁶ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-94-142, 07/25/94.

cated leaving sovereignty issues aside while exploring joint development of the natural resources in the South China Sea (again, a position that China learned would be welcomed by ASEAN at earlier informal workshops sponsored by Indonesia). Qian would not, however discuss issues of sovereignty. Clearly, neither China nor ASEAN were comfortable at the first meeting of the ARF with discussing the territorial disputes directly. Both sides at the time placed more importance on promoting cooperation between China and ASEAN at the higher level and using the ARF venue for discussing CBMs for the Asia-Pacific in general, than directly addressing the difficult South China Sea issues.¹⁰⁷ This reluctance of ASEAN to confront China over the maritime territorial disputes, however, was not long-lived.

As mentioned above, the 1995 Mischief Reef affair between China and the Philippines increased anxiety among the ASEAN states, adding new fuel to the China threat thesis, especially in Manila and Hanoi. Furthermore, following the outbreak of the Mischief Reef crisis, the United States (a member of the ARF) took concerted action at the Bangkok meeting to have the Spratlys issue discussed at the second ARF meeting while, at the same time, applying direct diplomatic pressure on Beijing concerning the Spratlys.¹⁰⁸ In addition to American concerns, other countries and users of the vital sea-lanes through the South China Sea, such as Japan, Singapore, the European Union, and even Moscow, expressed their concern and displeasure regarding the Spratlys imbroglio.¹⁰⁹ The failed attempt by the Philippines to gain consensus at the 1994 ARF meeting for a

¹⁰⁷ Lee, 33-34.

¹⁰⁸ During an April 1995 meeting in New York between Qian Qichen and Warren Christopher, Qian was told that Washington could not support a Chinese use, or threatened use of force to resolve the Spratlys dispute. Additionally, the U.S. Department of State issued a statement on the South China Sea in May declaring that the U.S. would "view with serious concern any maritime claim, or restriction on maritime activity, in the South China Sea that was not consistent with international law, including the 1992 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea." *The Straits Times*, 21 April 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Lee, 35.

collective ASEAN position on the Spratlys revealed a strong reluctance, on the part of ASEAN, to confront Beijing on the Spratlys issue for fear of jeopardizing improving relations with the PRC. Instead, the ASEAN ministers agreed to air their views on the Spratlys individually at the upcoming ARF Senior Officials Meeting (ARF-SOM) in July 1995.¹¹⁰

Then, in March 1995, ASEAN took a stronger position with China vis-à-vis the Spratlys dispute by issuing the Joint Statement on the South China Sea urging all concerned parties to adhere to the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea of 1992.¹¹¹ ASEAN's statement indicated that the Spratlys issue was increasingly becoming a major point of contention in China-ASEAN relations. ASEAN was determined to broach the issue with Beijing due in part to strong lobbying efforts by Vietnam and the Philippines, and a downturn in China's image among the ASEAN states from "cooperative" and "friendly" toward China as a "threat." Obviously, the territorial disputes were becoming a problem for Beijing and had the potential to destroy recent progress toward deepening relations with ASEAN. If China-ASEAN relations were to improve further, Beijing clearly had to find a solution to the problem. The Chinese had to prevent the South China Sea issues from jeopardizing relations with ASEAN while at the same time defending and maintaining the PRC's claims of territorial sovereignty. An opportunity to do so presented itself in April 1995.

At the first ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting (ASEAN-China SOM) on political and security issues hosted by China in April 1995, the Spratlys dispute was

¹¹⁰ *The Straits Times*, 23 May 1995.

¹¹¹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Twenty-eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and Dialogue Partners and ASEAN Regional Forum* (Jakarta: 1995): 66, 86.

raised, in light of the Mischief Reef Incident, even though it was not an agenda item. China had little choice but to respond. Tang Jiaxuan, China's head delegate, made an unexpected move by discussing the Spratlys informally with key ASEAN officials after dinner in a separate room. While reiterating China's position on the disputes and voicing Beijing's rejection of a proposal to set up a working group to examine territorial and sovereignty issues of the Spratlys, Tang suggested that the Spratlys problem could be discussed at the next ASEAN-China SOM to be held the next year in Indonesia.¹¹² To the Chinese, it was apparent that the Spratlys issue was becoming an international affair - the very thing Beijing did not want - and had the potential of derailing China-ASEAN relations. Clearly, the Spratlys dispute had to either be resolved or somehow made a non-issue in China's relations with ASEAN so that Beijing's overall plan of forging closer relations with ASEAN and resisting American and Japanese influence in the region could move forward. Tang's commitment at the first ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou to future multilateral discussions about the Spratlys revealed, for the first time, that Beijing was investigating new approaches to mitigate the negative impact of China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea on China-ASEAN relations. It appears that through China's initial interactions with ASEAN beginning in 1991, *some* Chinese came to believe that the "ASEAN Way" of informal talks and the consensus-based approach could be used to China's own advantage. By agreeing to discuss the Spratlys issue in the multilateral ASEAN-China SOM, Beijing reasoned that China could more effectively control the pace of the discussions (maintain the slowest possible pace) while, at the same time, improve China's image in Southeast Asia. A more "cooperative" and "friendly" image

¹¹² Lee, 35. Also see *Lianhe Zaobao*, 24 March 1998 as cited by Lee where an article about Tang Jiaxuan mentions the arrangements made at the 1995 Hangzhou meeting.

could help assuage ASEAN fears of a growing China threat and thereby move PRC-ASEAN relations ahead.

However, China's commitment to multilateral discussion on the Spratlys at this time was limited only to the ASEAN-China SOM venue, as Beijing continued to resist the issue's inclusion in the ARF agenda where the U.S. was a member.¹¹³ Nonetheless, this commitment to a multilateral approach is a key indicator of Beijing's GND as it demonstrated Chinese commitment to cooperation and promoted China's "good neighbor" image in the region. Apparently, the Chinese foreign policy establishment had not yet reached a consensus on the PRC's approach to handling the South China Sea disputes. While domestic Chinese politics is outside this study's purview, it appears that the Foreign Ministry began to favor a more cooperative, multilateral approach to the disputes at the time, while hard-liners within the People's Liberation Army (PLA) believed that China should continue the traditional bilateral approach based on the "inviolability" of Chinese sovereign territory. At any rate, it is important to note here that an alternative approach to the South China Sea disputes was taking shape within the Chinese leadership. To some, a new approach existed that would allow China to both mitigate the ill-effects of the territorial disputes on improving China-ASEAN relations *and* at the same time defend PRC claims of territorial sovereignty over the Paracels and Spratlys.

At the second ARF meeting held in August 1995 in Brunei, China proved unable to prevent discussion of the South China Sea issues, but Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen could, and did, manage to lessen the severity of the ARF Chairman's of-

¹¹³ Beijing vehemently resisted the "internationalization" of the Spratlys dispute, which explains China's hesitancy to discuss the issue at the ARF.

ficial report of 1 August 1995.¹¹⁴ Qian's address of the ARF delegates on Asia-Pacific security issues did not mention the Spratlys directly, but it did give an indication of the Chinese position on the issue. Qian stated that China

advocates the development of regional cooperation in security matters in stages in the spirit of dealing with issues in ascending order of difficulty, and of seeking common ground while reserving differences. For some time to come, the countries concerned may hold preliminary informal discussions and consultations on the principles, content, scope and method of cooperation in security matters. Meanwhile, they should carry out specific activities of cooperation on which the parties concerned have reached a consensus or which are not highly contentious, and institute some practical and feasible confidence-building measures in a gradual manner. It is not enough to limit confidence-building measures to the military sphere only; they should encompass various fields – political, economic and social.¹¹⁵

Addressing the Spratlys specifically, Qian reiterated Beijing's long-held position that a solution of the Spratlys issue should be pursued through bilateral talks, contradicting his earlier 1992 statements as well as the promise of multilateral talks made by Tang in 1995 at the first ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou. Chinese diplomacy must have seemed schizophrenic to some ASEAN delegates attending the second ARF meeting in Brunei – is China willing or not to discuss the Spratlys at a multilateral venue? In deference to growing concerns over China's increasing military power on the part of ASEAN states, Qian emphasized that China's military was defensive in its strategic posture and posed no threat to the region. Further, in an attempt at mitigating ASEAN fears, Qian announced that the PRC would promote greater military transparency in the region by

¹¹⁴ The chair's report mentioned, for the first time, the South China Sea disputes specifically, stating that the foreign ministers of the ARF "expressed concern on overlapping sovereignty claims in the region. They encouraged all claimants to reaffirm their commitment to the principles contained in relevant international laws and convention, and the ASEAN's 1992 Declaration on the South China Sea." Association of South-east Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Twenty-eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and Dialogue Partners and ASEAN Regional Forum* (Jakarta: 1995): 84.

¹¹⁵ FBIS, *Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-95-148, 08/02/95.

publishing white papers on China's military modernization and national defense policies at an appropriate time.¹¹⁶

Clearly, by 1995 Beijing's approach to ASEAN and the South China Sea disputes had moved away from a *complete* reluctance to addressing the problematic issue multilaterally, allowing for the possibility of such an approach in the future. This partial acceptance of multilateral talks indicates that Beijing understood the premium placed on multilateralism by ASEAN as an indicator of China's cooperative and friendly intentions. While some more hawkish elements in Beijing continued to favor the traditional, bilateral approach, others were coming to the realization that Beijing would have to address China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea within a limited multilateral framework if China-ASEAN relations were to widen and deepen in the future. The members of the latter group understood that it was necessary for Beijing to convince the ASEAN states that the PRC was not a threat, but rather a cooperative partner. Agreeing to discuss the South China Sea disputes at multilateral forums would afford Beijing an opportunity of improving China's image among the ASEAN countries. After all, Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan committed China to multilateral discussion on the Spratlys at the inaugural ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou.

The question remained, however, if consensus yet existed in Beijing for implementing the new approach. Three such multilateral forums scheduled for 1996 would allow Beijing excellent opportunities to promote a friendly, cooperative, "good neighbor" image of China in Southeast Asia: the ARF SOM (May); the second ASEAN-China SOM (June); and the third ARF meeting to be held in Jakarta in July. By putting forward

¹¹⁶ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Twenty-eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and Dialogue Partners and ASEAN Regional Forum*, 66. Beijing published its first defense White Paper in November 1995.

a friendly, more cooperative image, Beijing might deemphasize the South China Sea issues since they were detrimental influences on China-ASEAN relations, dispel the “China threat” thesis, *and* thereby lessen American influence in the region. If Beijing succeeded in reaffirming its GND there would be no need for ASEAN to strengthen relations with Washington. In order to implement the new approach, however, Chinese leaders opposing the plan needed to be convinced that China could “catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”

At the May 1996 ARF SOM, the South China Sea disputes were discussed in preparation for the July ARF Jakarta meeting. Accepting the fact that the territorial disputes would be an issue at the upcoming ARF meeting that could no longer be side-stepped, Beijing proactively ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹¹⁷ shortly after the ARF SOM in preparation for the upcoming ARF meeting. The UNCLOS treaty established an international legal framework for the world’s international waters to “contribute to the strengthening of peace, security, co-operation and friendly relations among all nations in conformity with the principles of justice and equal rights and will promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples of the world, in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations as set forth in the Charter.”¹¹⁸ The treaty also established a legal framework for determining a country’s territorial borders and resolving territorial disputes, as well as determining and demarking international waterways and international rights of safe passage. By ratifying the UNCLOS and thereby signaling to the world that the People’s Republic of China agreed to be bound by international law (as represented by UNCLOS),

¹¹⁷ UNCLOS was established on 10 December 1982 at Montego Bay.

¹¹⁸ United Nations, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas* (UNCLOS). http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm (accessed 9 July 2005).

Chinese delegates would arrive in Jakarta with demonstrable evidence that China was indeed a “cooperative” player who accepted and followed international law and the law of the sea. In addition, by following through on its earlier promise to accede to the provisions of UNCLOS¹¹⁹, Beijing reinforced an image in Southeast Asia (and beyond) of a “trustworthy” China.

The second ASEAN-China SOM held in Bukit Tinggi in June 1996 gave the Chinese yet another excellent opportunity to make good on Tang Jiaxuan’s 1995 promise and thereby demonstrate that the People’s Republic of China honored its commitments and valued a cooperative relationship with ASEAN. Although discussion on the Spratlys issue was not on the agenda, the Chinese did address the disputes directly and proposed the establishment of a working group of experts from both sides to exchange views on maritime law. In addition, China indicated that it was willing to contribute to an ASEAN fund to promote China-ASEAN relations.¹²⁰ Beijing’s more cooperative attitude concerning the South China Sea issues at the Bukit Tinggi meeting must have assuaged, to an appreciable amount, recent fears and concerns held by ASEAN associated with the rise of China and the recent Mischief Reef affair, as well as Beijing’s 1995-96 aggressive military maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait.¹²¹ Consequentially, the ASEAN senior officials agreed to recommend that China be accepted as one of ASEAN’s dialogue partners.¹²² Clearly, China was no longer seen by ASEAN as an implacable “enemy,” but instead China was coming to be viewed by the Southeast Asian states as a “competitor” who,

¹¹⁹ *The Straits Times*, 17 May 1996.

¹²⁰ *The Straits Times*, 12 June 1996.

¹²¹ While Chinese military maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait were undertaken as a warning to Taiwan against any moves that would nullify the “One China” policy, Beijing’s actions caused alarm in Southeast Asia as conflict between the PRC and ROC (and the USA?) would destabilize the region and detrimentally effect trade and the economies of the ASEAN states. Beijing was aware of this, and took steps to reassure the Southeast Asian states that their nationals in Taiwan would not be harmed.

¹²² *The Straits Times*, 12 June 1996.

over time, was gaining an understanding and acceptance of the rules of the multilateral game.

At the third ARF meeting in July 1996, the South China Sea conflicts were directly mentioned for the first time as an issue of discussion on the agenda. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, chair of the ARF meeting, welcomed the “efforts by countries concerned to seek solutions by peaceful means in accordance with international law in general and with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas of 1982 in particular.” Alatas also noted the contributions made by the unofficial Tract II multilateral Workshop Series on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea.¹²³ Representing a more skeptical point of view concerning Qian’s May 1996 declaration, Malaysian foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi indicated to Qian that China’s definition of its territorial baselines had raised questions among some ASEAN members, and requested that Qian clarify the declaration.¹²⁴ The ASEAN delegates clearly desired a definitive statement from Qian on China’s position and intentions in the South China Sea. They wanted to know whether China constituted a continuing threat to peace and security in the region. Was Beijing still willing to use force in defending its territorial claims over the Paracels and Spratlys?

Lingering fears of an increasingly aggressive China among some ASEAN states precipitated calls for a regional code of conduct for the entire South China Sea during the 1996 AMM preceding that year’s ARF meeting. Ali Alatas responded to the proposal in a way intended to mollify the Chinese by pointing out that the proposed code of conduct

¹²³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Twenty-ninth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and Dialogue Partners and ASEAN Regional Forum* (Jakarta: 1996): 96.

¹²⁴ *Twenty-ninth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and Dialogue Partners and ASEAN Regional Forum*, 154.

was only an idea at that stage that needed further study.¹²⁵ Alatas apparently did not want to create undue friction between ASEAN and China at that time. However, Alatas had a change of mind by the time of the third ARF meeting and pursued the idea of a code of conduct in his opening address, stating that he was confident that the ARF could facilitate and agree upon a mutually fashioned regional security order based upon a code of conduct.¹²⁶

In response, Qian Qichen made an important and unequivocal announcement that China was now open to negotiations and discussions concerning the South China Sea situation with ASEAN *as a group*.¹²⁷ Qian explained that since China had declared its territorial baseline along the Chinese coast and the Paracels, Beijing was now prepared to discuss the Spratlys dispute. Referring to the Spratlys by their Chinese name, *Nansha dao*, Qian commented that the situation in the Spratlys was stable. Qian's use of the Chinese name for the Spratlys, however, indirectly reiterated China's claim to the archipelago. However, in the name of cooperation and good neighborliness, Qian suggested that the issue of sovereignty be shelved for the time being. China and the other disputants should pursue joint development of the region. Qian cited China's recent talks with the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam on joint development of disputed territories to support China's position. Qian did not address ASEAN's call for a code of conduct, as it was a relatively new idea that the Chinese probably desired to study further before responding. However, Chinese Foreign Ministry representative Shen Guofang did not discount the idea of a code of conduct for the South China Sea in answering a reporter's question concerning the possibility, stating that China was willing to discuss the issue with ASEAN

¹²⁵ *The Straits Times*, 22 July 1996.

¹²⁶ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia Pacific*, FED 2673, 07/25/96.

¹²⁷ *The Straits Times*, 31 July 1995.

countries.¹²⁸ While agreeing in principle to multilateral talks on the Spratlys, Qian also made it clear that Beijing would not discuss other disputed territories in the South China Sea, such as the Paracels (*Xisha dao*).¹²⁹ Qian, however, did stress the importance Beijing placed on bilateral discussions between China and other involved countries in addressing the maritime disputes. To demonstrate China's faith in bilateral talks, as well as Beijing's growing support of the ARF process in promoting security cooperation, Qian indicated that China and the Philippines would cosponsor a meeting on CBMs in Beijing the next year.

Qian's actions and statements at the 1996 ARF meeting, directed at promoting a friendly, cooperative image of China in Southeast Asia that was now willing to address the territorial disputes multilaterally, were underscored by the fact that the upcoming Beijing meeting would constitute the first official, multilateral international forum on security issues hosted by the PRC.¹³⁰ The change in Beijing's approach to the disputes began with Tang's 1995 promise during the first China-ASEAN SOM in Hangzhou that China would discuss the Spratlys within a multilateral framework at the next year's meeting. By making good on that promise the following year at the second China-ASEAN SOM, as well as adopting a more cooperative stance at the 1996 ARF meeting, Beijing began a concerted effort to promote a friendly and cooperative image of China that was willing to play by the rules. By doing so, Beijing also mollified the China threat thesis. Beijing's acknowledgement and acceptance of key ASEAN norms (consensus-based, informal multilateral relations) indicates that, to a certain extent, ASEAN's strategy to engage and socialize China had met with success. However, ASEAN's success was also due, in part,

¹²⁸ *The Straits Times*, 22 July 1996.

¹²⁹ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-96-144, 07/23/96.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

to a growing willingness on the behalf of Beijing to be socialized. Clearly, both sides were learning from their interaction with one another, and consequently moving closer toward recognition of shared interests. Interestingly, while Beijing accepted this reality at the official Tract I level, Chinese delegates at the Indonesian-sponsored Track II workshops, as we shall see below, were far less willing to discuss -- much less reach any substantive agreement -- on the Spratlys disputes or other South China Sea conflicts.

Track II

China first participated in the Indonesian-sponsored informal workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea at its second meeting held in Bandung in 1991. Wang Yinfan, then Director of Asia Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led the Chinese delegation. From the beginning, Wang made it perfectly clear that Beijing would not compromise China's claim of "indisputable" sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands, but at the same time also mentioned that since the mid-1980s Beijing had been more than willing to shelve the sovereignty issue and pursue joint development of the natural resources in the Spratlys.¹³¹ Further, Wang argued that it would be more productive to begin joint development by first cooperating on less conflictual projects such as marine pollution and the protection of maritime living resources, search and rescue operations, anti-piracy, scientific research, and safety of navigations.¹³² In addition, the Chinese put forth the notion of basing cooperation upon both the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as well as observing the require-

¹³¹ See Yinfan Wang's statement in Singgih M. Hadipranowo, ed., *The Second Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea* (Jakarta: Research and Development Agency, 1991): 191; hereafter, *The Second Report*.

¹³² *The Second Report*, 127-136, and 229-232.

ments of the International Maritime Organization and provisions of international law.¹³³

Wang explained, however, that China did not feel that it was necessary to seek the help of the UN nor any third party in pursuing a resolution of the South Sea disputes, nor would Beijing discuss issues relating to sovereignty.¹³⁴

Having successfully deflected any substantive discussion of territorial sovereignty over the Paracels and Spratlys, and stressing that Beijing would not agree to the internationalization of the discussions, the Chinese delegation agreed that any territorial dispute in the South China Sea should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation, and that disputants should exercise self-restraint in order that the situation not be further complicated.¹³⁵ The Chinese supported their call for joint development by agreeing to have their own experts submit proposals for scientific cooperation in investigating the natural phenomena, meteorological conditions, and the promotion of safe navigation in the South China Sea.¹³⁶ In short, Beijing was seeking a solution of the territorial disputes without addressing *de jure* the question of sovereignty.

Chinese representatives at the third Indonesian-sponsored workshop, held in 1992, faced growing concerns among the ASEAN states regarding recent Chinese actions in disputed areas of the South China Sea. Along with Beijing's promulgation of China's Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone that year (which asserted Chinese sovereignty over most of the South China Sea), other actions and statements by the Chinese reinforced perceptions in the region of a rising China threat. For example, state-

¹³³ Lee, 62.

¹³⁴ The joint statement signed by China at the second workshop states that the participants agreed to recommend that their respective governments consider cooperation in the South China Sea "without prejudice and jurisdictional claims." *The Second Report*, 75.

¹³⁵ *The Second Report*, 75.

¹³⁶ *The Second Report*, 31.

ments made by Vice Admiral Zhang Lianzhong to the effect that China had to be prepared for military conflict in the region against other disputants, which the admiral believed would become increasingly likely as Chinese exploitation of the maritime resources intensified, and similar bellicose statements and actions undertaken by Beijing preceding the third workshop insured a more suspicious and cautious attitude among the ASEAN delegates concerning China.¹³⁷ As such, the delegates representing the People's Republic at the workshop had a more difficult time reassuring the ASEAN states of China's benign intentions in the South China Sea. They returned to China with a clear understanding that the South China Sea issue was becoming an obstacle for China that had the potential to jeopardize Beijing's strategy of forging closer relations with ASEAN.

At the workshop, Chinese participants vigorously defended China's right to award Crestone Energy Corporation a contract to explore for oil in an area long-claimed by China, and argued that China's 1992 Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone was the culmination of years of hard work and careful consideration, and only served to give legislative backing to Beijing's long-held position on the South China Sea issue. They maintained that Beijing was sincere in its desire for, and efforts toward, a peaceful and cooperative relationship with the ASEAN states, and did not believe that recent Chinese actions would hinder efforts towards greater cooperation. Toward that goal, the Chinese suggested that it would be better to put the issue of sovereignty aside and instead focus on joint development efforts, such as ensuring the safety of maritime traffic.¹³⁸ At the same time, however, the Chinese let it be known that they would not accept any non-

¹³⁷ Lee points out that these more assertive actions, and hawkish statements by some senior PLA officers concerning the South China Sea that seemed to contradict the position taken by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, revealed differences of opinion among Chinese leaders on handling the territorial disputes. Lee, 63-67.

¹³⁸ *The Straits Times*, 2 July 1992.

regional power(s) becoming involved in the territorial dispute between China and some ASEAN states.¹³⁹ Ultimately, an agreement was reached to form two Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to look into possible joint evaluation of the natural resources and means of joint development, and to conduct joint scientific research in the South China Sea. When it was suggested that it might be advisable, at some time in the future, to involve extra-regional powers or organizations such as the UN Development Program (UNDP) to lend technical assistance, the Chinese noted their displeasure but accepted the possibility that non-regional participation might be possible on specific projects agreed to by the disputants.¹⁴⁰

Beijing seemed quite willing in 1992 to move forward on joint development and other cooperative activities in the South China Sea, but remained wary of internationalizing the dispute over the Spratlys, as this might constitute a Trojan horse through which some states (the Philippines) might bring in the United States to balance or even contain China. While promoting an image of China as an increasingly cooperative and reasonable dialogue partner and “good neighbor” of the ASEAN states, Beijing at the same time had agreed to nothing that might have infringed upon China’s claim of sovereignty in both the Paracel and Spratly islands. For the moment, the issue of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea had not become an inhibiting factor in the growth of China-ASEAN cooperation in general.¹⁴¹

By the time of the fourth workshop held in Surabaya in 1993, the two TWGs had met but had not reached any real agreements. Two stumbling blocks prevented progress; disagreement on whether or not the discussions should be raised to the formal level, and

¹³⁹ *The Straits Times*, 3 July 1992.

¹⁴⁰ Lee, 65-66.

¹⁴¹ Lee, 67.

whether or not non-South China Sea states should participate in the workshop.¹⁴² The Chinese indicated that Beijing was not in favor of moving discussion to the official level, as conditions were not right given the complicated nature of the South China Sea issue. They argued that it would be more helpful to continue discussion at the informal level where participants acted in their personal capacities.¹⁴³ Regarding the dispute over ownership of the Parcel and Spratly archipelagos, the Chinese objected to raising the issue as an agenda item at the workshop. The PRC delegates argued that the workshop was not the correct venue for discussions concerning such political controversies, as it would only cause animosity and endanger cooperation. They then reiterated the familiar mantra that such discussions should take place between China and the other disputants on a bilateral basis.¹⁴⁴ Beijing had not altered its traditional position concerning the Paracel and Spratly islands (and most of the South China Sea, for that matter) -- they belonged to China. Therefore, the issue of sovereignty should not be an item on the workshop agenda.

The Chinese delegates were more enthusiastic about joint development, and had actively participated in the various TWGs investigating ways of establishing cooperation and CBMs between China and ASEAN. Concerning the TWG on marine scientific research, the Chinese agreed to develop proposals for cooperative sharing of scientific information via networked databases, and agreed to host the first meeting of a newly established TWG on the environment.¹⁴⁵ By the end of the fourth workshop, it was clear that

¹⁴² Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas suggested a need to move the talks to a more formal government-to-government format to maintain the momentum of the workshop process and deepen dialogue, cooperation, and self-restraint among the concerned parties. See Singgih M. Hadipranowo, ed., *The Fourth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea* (Jakarta: Research and Development Agency, 1993): 72; hereafter, *The Fourth Report*.

¹⁴³ *The Straits Times*, 24 August 1993.

¹⁴⁴ *The Fourth Report*, 36.

¹⁴⁵ *The Fourth Report*, 76.

China was willing to cooperate in CBMs concerning technical, scientific matters, but remained steadfastly against any CBMs focusing on political and security issues.

By the fifth meeting of the Track II workshop on conflict in the South China Sea, China was a consultative partner of the ARF and could therefore join ASEAN Track One processes. As discussed earlier, China appeared reasonably comfortable with the tone and pace of multilateral discussions at the official Track I level, as they had agreed in principle to hold Senior Officials' Meetings (SOMs) on political and security issues. This was not the case, however at the informal Track II level, where the Chinese delegates continued to resist discussion about the "Spratly and Paracel Issues" and the participation of non-South China Sea states in projects proposed by the TWGs. It seemed that Beijing would only discuss such issues at the Track I level.¹⁴⁶

The sixth meeting of the workshop held in Balikpapan in October 1995 was strongly influenced by the Mischief Reef affair earlier in the year between China and the Philippines, as well as Vietnam's July entry into ASEAN. Additionally, as discussed above, the Chinese were forced into discussing the South China Sea conflicts at the Track One discussions with ASEAN in both April and August of 1995,¹⁴⁷ which undoubtedly brought Beijing to the realization that the maritime territorial disputes between China and several South China Sea states could not be kept on the back burner any longer without jeopardizing China's efforts of engaging ASEAN. Through interaction, the Chinese learned that ASEAN viewed China in more ominous and threatening terms than Beijing believed to be the case. China's "good neighbor" image in Southeast Asia was apparently tarnished. At any rate, Beijing acted bilaterally on this "shared" knowledge obtained

¹⁴⁶ Lee, 71-74.

¹⁴⁷ In April 1995, the first Senior Official's Meeting (SOM) between China and ASEAN took place in Hangzhou, and the second ARF meeting convened in August of that year.

through interaction with ASEAN by agreeing to a code of conduct and cooperation with the Philippines in the Spratlys (as discussed above) and multilaterally by stressing at the China-ASEAN consultative meeting of July 1995 that the PRC was prepared to settle the disputes according to international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).¹⁴⁸ Beijing was determined not to allow the South China Sea disputes to tarnish China's "good neighbor" image in the region and jeopardize improving China-ASEAN relations. However, as revealed at the informal workshop in 1995, Beijing's efforts of promoting China as a "good neighbor" were not yet uniformly implemented in Chinese regional diplomacy.

At that year's informal workshop on conflict in the South China Sea, the Chinese delegates refused to allow the South China Sea disputes to become formalized in the discussions because, as Beijing saw things, they were already being discussed at the Track I level. As for suggestions made by some workshop participants that new CBMs be set-up, the Chinese refused, stating that the Workshop *itself* was a CBM, and therefore no other CBMs were necessary.¹⁴⁹ In fact, the Chinese successfully had deleted from an earlier draft of the workshop statement specific measures suggested for the claimants to ease tensions in the South China Sea, and were able to limit projects for joint development of shared maritime resources to only three: a biodiversity study; monitoring tide and sea-levels; and developing an exchange network of marine science data and information.¹⁵⁰ It was clear that Beijing would not discuss issues of territorial sovereignty at the informal level, and favored a slow approach at the time toward joint development projects. Beijing's "good neighbor" strategy had, at the time, obviously not yet fully matured. The

¹⁴⁸ Lee, 74-75.

¹⁴⁹ *The Straits Times*, 13 October 1995.

¹⁵⁰ Lee, 76.

issue of territorial sovereignty was far too serious for the Chinese to address at a Track II dialogue.

The Seventh Workshop held in Batam in December 1996, following the Taiwan Straits Crisis, failed to produce any substantive progress in addressing the Spratlys dispute or, for that matter, any of the problematic issues between the PRC and ASEAN states in the South China Sea. Indeed, it appeared as though the workshop participants were prepared to focus only on promoting the joint ventures already agreed upon (the various TWGs mentioned above) and leave the more contentious South China Sea issues for Track I discussion, now that many of the associated issues had become part of the ARF agenda. Indonesia's foreign minister Ali Alatas underlined the point that Indonesia did not intend to transform the workshop into an intergovernmental forum, adding his hope that "the cooperative projects proposals which the workshop has approved will soon be implemented with the full support of the authorities concerned."¹⁵¹ Much of the workshop discussions focused on the mechanics of implementing some of the joint projects and, as such, it was decided that many technical meetings were necessary within both the TWGs and Groups of Experts Meetings (GEMs), and that each participating state was entitled to host a TWG or GEM meeting.¹⁵² Beijing agreed to host the second meeting of the TWG on protecting the marine environment in 1997, while at the same time indicating that China was not yet prepared to commence on implementing the joint project on biodiversity in the South China Sea.¹⁵³ Since China's initial participation in the South China Sea workshop in 1991, Beijing had intrinsically remained true to its original posi-

¹⁵¹ *Statement of the Seventh Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea*, 17 December 1996, 78; hereafter as *Seventh Report*.

¹⁵² *The Fourth Report*, 72.

¹⁵³ *Seventh Report*, 78-79.

tion of avoiding direct discussion of territorial sovereignty and instead moved slowly forward on certain CBMs such as the TWGs and GEMs. The direct impact of the workshops on Beijing's regional foreign policy to this point in time was minimal. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, "complex" learning and knowledge gained of Self and Other through multilateral diplomatic interaction during the yearly workshop process (shared knowledge) would impact subsequent Track I interaction (both bilateral and multilateral) as an nascent "collective identity" was beginning to emerge. In other words, "complex" learning gained through *multilateral* interaction was beginning to affect a change in China's cognitive base and thus a change in China's national identity. This, of course, did not occur at once. In fact, as we shall see in the following chapter, Beijing's bilateral diplomacy concerning the territorial disputes appeared to confirm China's traditional Cold War image in Southeast Asia, while at the same time Beijing's multilateral diplomacy revealed (at least tentatively during 1995 -1996) a changing Chinese cognitive base (Cognitive Base_A → Cognitive Base_B) and self-image away from China's traditional "Cold War" image based upon revisionist ideology and egoistic pursuit of self-interest (*Realpolitik* politics), towards a "post-Cold War" image based upon *status-quo entente* ideology and a more holistic or collective pursuit of mutual interests. As discussed in the next chapter, the pace and intensity of China's "complex" social learning at multilateral venues which began during the last year or so (1995 – 1996) of this first period of our case study, increased over time during the second period of our study (1997 – 2006) and led to the emergence of a noticeably changed Chinese cognitive base and national identity by 2002. This change in China's identity due to "complex" learning gained through multilateral diplomacy would affect a change in Beijing's bilat-

eral diplomacy exemplified by the 2005 Tripartite Agreement between China, the Philippines, and Vietnam for joint offshore oil and natural gas exploration and development in and around the Spratly Islands.

CONCLUSIONS

Several observations are in order concerning Beijing's diplomatic approach to China's territorial disputes during the first half of the 1990s. Certainly, the territorial disputes proved to be one of the most difficult issues in China's ongoing relations with ASEAN. Beijing's courtships of ASEAN, initiated at the end of the Cold War as a means of breaking China's Western-imposed isolation after Tiananmen, limiting both American and Japanese influence in the region and resist a perceived American strategy of containing China, and also to counter the China threat thesis, were on several occasions almost ruined by the South Sea disputes. Beijing's ratification of its Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone in February 1992, which legally established China's territorial claim over most of the South China Sea, certainly reinforced traditional views and images held by ASEAN states of China as a rising threat. Further, Beijing's contract with Crestone Energy Corporation to explore for oil and gas in disputed waters in the South China Sea, signed in May 1992, reinforced the traditional image in Southeast Asia of China as a "threat" or even as an "enemy." The Mischief Reef affair between China and the Philippines early in 1995 only reiterated China's threatening image in the region (as did the Taiwan Straits crisis which occurred during the same approximate period) and risked souring the burgeoning China-ASEAN relationship.

During 1995-1996, it became apparent to the Chinese leadership that a new approach needed to be found in dealing with the troublesome South China Sea issues if Beijing

were to pursue successfully its strategy of forging closer relations with ASEAN.

Through diplomatic interaction with ASEAN and member states, Beijing learned that the Southeast Asians placed a high level of importance on resolving issues through multilateral dialogue (the “ASEAN Way”), and that they expected China to conform to the ASEAN norm of consensus-based multilateral dialogue. The Chinese also learned that the ASEAN states were no longer willing to overlook the conflicting territorial claims over the Spratly islands because of a fear that doing so might cause ASEAN’s “engagement” of China to fail. Mainland Southeast Asia was peaceful now that the Cambodian issue was resolved with Chinese help in 1991, so ASEAN no longer felt the same need as before to “tread lightly” in its dealings with China. Beijing also learned through its interaction with ASEAN that China’s “engagement” of ASEAN was being jeopardized by the South China Sea disputes and, if Beijing could not find a better way to alleviate fear in Southeast Asia of Chinese territorial aggression in the South China Sea, then the PRC’s regional strategy in Southeast Asia would also fail. High-ranking civilians within China’s foreign policy establishment had come to realize that aggressive and provocative actions by China in support of its territorial claims over the Spratlys were ultimately antithetical to Beijing’s overall foreign policy and security strategies in the region. In addition, Beijing’s reluctance to directly discuss the disputes within ASEAN’s multilateral framework, where the smaller, weaker ASEAN states might have a better position vis-à-vis China as a collective group, directly contradicted the “cooperative” image of China that Beijing wished to promote. The lessons “learned” resulted mostly from “simple” social learning at the bilateral level that translated into mostly instrumental changes in Beijing’s GND. However, having said that, it is important to note that “complex” learning at

the multilateral level (mostly Track II venues) *began* to influence China's cognitive base during this first period of our case study. As a source of change in Beijing's GND, however, "complex" learning would exert a much stronger impact on Chinese policymaking during the second period of this study (especially after 2001).

Beijing's dilemma concerning its tenuous relations with ASEAN vis-à-vis the territorial disputes did have a solution. The solution was illuminated several times during 1995-1996. Chinese vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan realized in 1995 at the inaugural ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou that the Chinese would have to move forward on the territorial disputes multilaterally if the PRC were to foster any trust among the ASEAN states. His promise to bring the issue to the table at the 1996 ASEAN-China SOM alleviated some concern among the ASEAN officials about Chinese territorial intentions by reinforcing a "cooperative" image of China. By making good Tang's promise at the second ASEAN-China SOM, China's "cooperative" image strengthened while the image of China as a "threat" or "enemy" diminished. By agreeing to multilateral discussions on the issue, China could assuage fear, promote a more positive, cooperative image in Southeast Asia, and thereby realize Beijing's wider geo-strategic goals in the region. Because of Tang's new approach to the territorial disputes, senior ASEAN officials agreed to recommend to their respective foreign ministers that China be accepted an ASEAN dialogue partner in 1996. As a result, relations between China and ASEAN continued to widen and deepen despite the contentious situation in the South China Sea. Additionally, Qian Qichen's diplomacy during the May 1995 Brunei ARF-SOM and the subsequent July ARF meeting in Jakarta also began to promote a cooperative, friendly image of China in Southeast Asia by agreeing to address the South China Sea disputes multilaterally.

ally. The Chinese were learning that they could assuage fears of China by promoting a more favorable image in the region, while at the same time using the “ASEAN Way” to China’s advantage by circumventing the issue of territorial sovereignty.¹⁵⁴

In short, China’s traditional bilateral approach to the South China Sea disputes was, by 1995-1996, becoming increasingly problematic for Beijing. In order to promote deeper Sino-ASEAN relations, some within China’s foreign policy establishment began to understand and appreciate the necessity of pursuing a more cooperative, accommodating, and friendly approach with China’s small neighbors to the south. As discussed in the following chapter, shared knowledge (“simple” learning) obtained through interaction with the ASEAN states caused a change in Chinese regional foreign policy toward increased participation in multilateral dialogue as a means of promoting a favorable image of China aimed at countering perceptions of a China threat and thus also intended to downplay the South China Sea issue in Sino-ASEAN relations. Promoting and deepening economic relations between China and the ASEAN states was not enough. The diplomatic element of China’s regional strategy had to be better developed and more intelligently utilized in future relations with ASEAN if Beijing were to realize any substantive gains in China’s relationship with ASEAN. In effect, by the mid-1990s a new approach to China-ASEAN relations was beginning to crystallize in Beijing due, in part, to lessons learned from China’s earlier efforts at handling the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and also due to subtle changes in the identity and interest of each actor, as explained

¹⁵⁴ The “ASEAN Way” is premised on informal discussion, peaceful settlement of disputes, and consensus. In other words, the ASEAN processes move at the pace of the slowest member. By allowing China to be ‘socialized’ into the “ASEAN Way,” Beijing could better control the pace at which discussion of the South China Sea issues progressed. The Chinese could use ASEAN’s multilateral norms of behavior instrumentally to both mitigate the Spratlys issue as a point of contention in PRC-ASEAN relations, while at the same time slow down the pace of discussion concerning the territorial disputes. PRC-ASEAN relations could move forward without any substantive Chinese concessions regarding its claim of territorial sovereignty.

and discussed in the following chapter. As such, changes in Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia during 1989 – 1996 resulted mostly from “simple” social learning acquired at the bilateral level. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, “complex” social learning, which initially occurred at multilateral Track II forums during the early-to-mid 1990s, intensified during the second period and increasingly affected a change in China’s cognitive base and identity, ultimately causing a reorientation of Beijing’s GND.

CHAPTER III

CHINA'S TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, 1997-2006:

BECOMING A GOOD NEIGHBOR.

“Joe Nye talked about soft power, and in traditional [Chinese] culture emphasized by Confucius and Lao-tzu, if you are powerful it is better to follow the kingly way [*wang dao*] than the way of the hegemon [*ba dao*]. So China in Asia is trying to use soft power. . . . China . . . [has] cultural power; there are many Overseas Chinese in Malaysia, Singapore, [and] Indonesia, and China's culture is important in the region.”

- Chinese Scholar, November 2003 -

“China's intention to increase economic relationships has been well received in Southeast Asia since it is seen as part of a “comprehensive security” strategy that intertwines economic benefits, diplomacy, and national security to provide a partnership for the developing nations. As a result, Beijing has garnered greater support in regional capitals than what is perceived as Washington's single-minded focus on terrorism, which comes at the expense of a broader relationship, including issues of importance to Southeast Asian nations.”

- Bruce Klingner, March 2004 -

This chapter continues our constructivist-interactionist analysis of Beijing's evolving foreign policy in Southeast Asia by examining the impact of interaction and social learning on the reorientation of Beijing's GND during the second period of our case study (1997 - 2006). As we have seen, by 1995 - 1996 interaction between China and the ASEAN states concerning the territorial disputes affected a reorientation of Beijing's GND to agree to address the South China Sea disputes with ASEAN as a group at Track I dialogue processes (ARF-SOM, ARF, ASEAN Plus One). Beijing's acceptance of official multilateral discussion concerning the disputes clearly evidences a change of China's cognitive base, but does it also evidence a change of state identity and interests? Accord-

ing to our constructivist-interactionist model, any change in China's identity can only occur through an acknowledgment of the new identity by the Other (Wendt's "reflected-appraisals").¹⁵⁵ Our analysis of China's image in Southeast Asia indicates that by 1996 China's role-identity had not yet changed from that of "enemy" or "rival." Increased multilateral interaction between China and ASEAN during 1997 - 2006 concerning the disputes, however, ultimately led to the social construction of a new Chinese role-identity ("partner") and thus to China's "post-Cold War" identity. China's "post-Cold War" identity, however, first revealed itself within Beijing's Track I multilateral relationship with ASEAN in 2002 - 2003, and then later within China's Track I bilateral diplomacy by 2005. I therefore argue below that most "complex" social learning occurred as a result of multilateral interaction (especially Track II), which ultimately had a "spill-over" effect on Beijing's bilateral diplomacy. Only in 2005, when China's "post-Cold War" identity finally replaced China's traditional "Cold War" identity in Beijing's official bilateral relations can we conclude that China's identity and interests have indeed changed as a result of "complex" social learning. In order to illustrate and explain this social process of identity and interest construction which led to China's new identity by 2005, our analysis focuses specifically on the territorial disputes between China and the two "frontline" ASEAN states Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as between China and ASEAN as a group.

The organization of this chapter is as follows. China's increasing participation in multilateral dialogue with ASEAN concerning the South China Sea disputes as well as its influence on Beijing's GND is discussed first. Specifically, the continuing metamorphosis of China's identity due to "complex" social learning, which began in 1995 - 1996 at

¹⁵⁵ *Social Theory of International Politics*, 327.

the multilateral level, is addressed and analyzed. We next discuss Beijing's bilateral diplomacy with Vietnam and the Philippines concerning the disputes, and analyze the influence of social learning on China's "Cold War" identity (Cognitive Base_A) and traditional bilateral diplomacy. The effects of an emerging China-ASEAN "collective" identity on China's South Sea disputes are discussed and analyzed, and an explanation of the importance of the South China Sea issue to Sino-ASEAN relations is offered below. As we shall see, both China and ASEAN came to see the territorial disputes as a side issue that neither side would allow to damage Sino-ASEAN relations. After all, economic and security "partners" can agree to disagree on certain issues and remove them from discussion, while "rivals" cannot. China had passed ASEAN's "litmus test" in the South China Sea by overcoming the territorial dispute issue through becoming an economic-security "partner" of ASEAN -- and by behaving as a good neighbor. Most importantly, ASEAN threat perceptions of China ("Cold War" image) have changed. China is no longer perceived in the region as a serious threat to the national security and territorial integrity of ASEAN states. Instead, China is increasingly perceived as a "good neighbor" and as an important economic and security opportunity in Southeast Asia ("post-Cold War" image).

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Beijing's initial moves towards accepting limited multilateral discussion on the South China Sea issue during 1995-1996, taken to reassure ASEAN and member states that China was not a threat, but rather a cooperative and responsible "friend" willing to settle its disputes peaceably, were followed and supported by moves demonstrating that "friendship" between states meant more than agreeable talk alone -- it also meant helping a friend or friends overcome their troubles. As discussed later in the chapter, Beijing

took advantage of the opportunity presented by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Aided by related perceptions held in Asia that the West (Washington) was not genuinely interested in making any sacrifice or taking any meaningful action to help Asian nations (especially those in Southeast Asia, where the crisis began and had the greatest impact) in their time of need, China demonstrated its friendship with Southeast Asian countries by assisting in the economic recovery of the financially-crippled states.

Besides widening the scope of China's GND from its initial bilateral security application in the South China Sea disputes with Manila and Hanoi into financial and economic aspects of Sino-ASEAN relations, Beijing also began in 1997 to greatly deepen China's multilateral interaction with ASEAN and thereby facilitate a continued strengthening of China-ASEAN relations by reiterating an image of China as a friendly, cooperative, and responsible "good neighbor" that need not be feared. Beijing's strategy of expanding Chinese-ASEAN relations (especially in the realm of trade and economics) was subtly linked with Beijing's bilateral approach in handling China's territorial disputes with Vietnam and the Philippines. When China found itself facing amplified pressure from Manila or Hanoi over the South China Sea disputes, Beijing's usual diplomatic countermove was to demonstrate China's friendly and non-threatening intentions in the region by making concessions at either the bilateral or multilateral level. Examples of bilateral concessions include joint cooperation in CBMs, proposals for joint offshore oil exploration and development in disputed territories, agreements to settle disputes peacefully, and favorable economic or trade agreements. On the multilateral level, an excellent example of Chinese concessions to ASEAN is increased participation in the various ASEAN processes demonstrating to the ASEAN states that China was indeed becoming

“socialized” to the “ASEAN Way” (normative as well as constitutive norms). Beijing repeatedly demonstrated that China valued cooperation and dialogue over the use of force. Other examples of multilateral concessions include participation in the Indonesian-sponsored Workshop on Preventing Conflict in the South China Sea and the ARF-sponsored Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) workshops on maritime security, cooperation on transnational crime, CBMs, and human trafficking (both Track II mechanisms), and agreeing to discuss the South China Sea issue at the ARF, China-ASEAN summits and APT meetings. In the economic realm, Beijing made numerous concessions in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with ASEAN and individual member states. Beijing’s proposal and support of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is perhaps the best example of Chinese economic concessions as it gives preferential treatment in some issues to China’s ASEAN trading partner(s). Obviously, Beijing undertook these moves to widen and deepen Sino-ASEAN relations in a general sense; but, as we shall see, these actions were also intended to exert a favorable influence (directly or indirectly) on China’s position in the South China Sea disputes by emphasizing and strengthening China’s positive image in the region. Concurrently at the multilateral level, Beijing would strengthen China’s “cooperative” and “responsible” image in Southeast Asia by widening its participation with ASEAN in general, and by agreeing to expand multilateral discussion of the South China Sea issues within certain ASEAN forums. Also, by employing an adapted version of the “ASEAN Way” of informal, consensus-based approach in Sino-ASEAN relations, Beijing could demonstrate good faith by discussing the Spratlys and thus mitigate the “China threat” thesis by strengthening China’s “good neighbor” image in the region while, at the same

time, stall on the territorial sovereignty issue through participating in protracted talks, working groups, and cooperative projects in less controversial areas such as scientific research and search and rescue operations in the South China Sea.¹⁵⁶ As discussed later in the chapter, Beijing could sublimate the territorial disputes within the larger context of China's improving and deepening economic and political relations with ASEAN and with its member states. Moreover, importantly, Beijing could accomplish this without *directly* compromising China's claim of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea. China could "have its cake and eat it too."

1997 Asian Financial Crisis

The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998 marked an important turning point in Sino-ASEAN relations for several important reasons. First, Washington's shortsighted and imperceptive response to the Asian financial crisis damaged American political capital and legitimacy in the region while at the same time presented Beijing with an excellent opportunity both to underscore its GND approach to Sino-ASEAN with concrete, tangible action, and to increase Chinese influence and perhaps weaken the U.S. position in Southeast Asia. Washington's refusal to assist Thailand after the devaluation of the Baht and support of a proposed Asian Monetary Fund, as well as the U.S. Treasury Department's implementation of anti-dumping measures that retarded the recovery of Asian export levels, clearly disappointed ASEAN and its member states. The United States seemed to be indicating that Southeast Asia as a region was no longer as critically important as it had been during the Cold War. Second, by resisting a devaluation of the *Ren-*

¹⁵⁶ The consensus-based approach allows progress in matters to proceed at the pace of the slowest, most hesitant participant. In essence, by agreeing to discuss the territorial disputes within some of the multilateral processes of ASEAN, Beijing could better control the pace at which ASEAN handled the matter.

minbi (Chinese Yuan) and taking actions to support and strengthen the weakened South-east Asian economies, Beijing intensified China's image as a "good neighbor" willing to act altruistically (indeed -- even act against China's immediate self-interest) and cooperatively to help its neighbors in distress and, as a result, overcame much lingering mistrust of China in the region.¹⁵⁷ Third, the 1997 Crisis reveals a changed Chinese "role-identity" in Sino-ASEAN relations, from that of "economic rival" to that of "economic cooperator." Beijing's understanding of global economic interdependence (interdependence is one of Wendt's four "master variables" of systemic change) led to the view that Chinese security in the 21st Century could no longer be defined in traditional military-strategic terms alone, but also defined in economic terms. For China and many of the ASEAN states, national security after 1989 became defined in mostly domestic terms as *internal threats* such as social-political instability, insurgency and separatist movements posed the most immediate concern for the respective governments. Pronounced social-economic disparities in many ASEAN states is the basis of much domestic instability and, as such, economic growth and wealth creation are crucial factors in a government's ability to maintain its legitimacy to rule (or its ability to control power, as the case may be). Therefore, Beijing's promotion of "comprehensive security" in Southeast Asia linking economic and security issues together -- the "economic-security nexus"¹⁵⁸ -- was

¹⁵⁷ In June 1997 Thailand devalued the Baht setting-off a chain-reaction of devaluations in other Asian countries, resulting in a 14% contraction of Indonesia's economy, Singapore's worst economic recession in 40 years, and varying degrees of economic stagnation in Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea. See Paul Dibb, David P. Hale, and Peter Prince, "Asia's Insecurity," *Survival* 41 (Autumn 1999): 5-20. Also see Hugh De Santis, "The Dragon and the Tigers: China and Asian Regionalism," *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2005): 24-25.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas G. Moore makes a convincing argument that the emergence of economic security (*jingji an-quan*) as a central concept in China's foreign policy discourse is a major factor in breaking down traditional conceptual barriers between security and economic affairs in the minds of Chinese leaders. See Thomas G. Moore, "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in*

well-received by ASEAN. As such, shared knowledge between China and the ASEAN states that they defined national security in the same terms (focus on internal threats) and had the same distaste for Washington's human rights campaign in Asia (perceived as an American intrusion into the internal affairs of sovereign nations), led to "complex" learning of Self and Other, which began to change "role-identities" in the Sino-ASEAN relationship. A collective identity between China and ASEAN as "Asian states" began to develop in 1997, which resulted in changing *economic* and *social* "role-identities" from those of "economic rival" and "ideological rival" to those of "economic cooperator" and "Asian-values state." The change in economic "role-identities" in turn precipitated a change, beginning in 2002, in China-ASEAN *security* "role-identities" from "security cooperator" to "security partner." Clearly, China was beginning to think and act in the context of a budding "collective identity" (holistic Self) between China and the ASEAN states by the time of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. In addition, besides not taking advantage of the financial crisis by devaluing its currency, China also extended financial help to both Thailand and Indonesia, an act that contrasted strongly with the austere measures taken by western financial institutions and the United States. Finally, if the West (U.S.) appeared to Southeast Asian leaders as being less-than-concerned about Asia's financial problems, then Beijing's actions during and after the Asian Financial Crisis demonstrated that China *was* concerned and was willing to help its neighbors to the south in substantial ways. Beijing reassured the ASEAN states that together, "we" will pull through these difficult times. Beijing demonstrated that its "good neighbor" diplo-

Chinese Foreign Policy, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 121-158.

macy was more than empty words and that China was indeed sincere in its desire for cooperative, friendly, and mutually beneficial relations with ASEAN.

According to David Shambaugh, “[China’s] assistance punctured the prevailing image of China in the region as either aloof or hegemonic and began to replace it with an image of China as a responsible power.”¹⁵⁹ Alice Ba explains the significance of the Asian Financial Crisis to Beijing’s new diplomatic approach in Southeast Asia:

Specifically, the crisis provided China with opportunities to demonstrate its political and economic value as a partner, even a regional leader. China was especially able to take advantage of ASEAN’s disappointment with the international response to the economic crisis. ASEAN found International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions intrusive, inappropriate, and insensitive to specific economic and political conditions in affected countries; however, its greatest unhappiness lay with the US, which was not only associated with the problematic IMF conditions but also was viewed as benefiting from Southeast Asia’s financial problems.¹⁶⁰

Beijing’s deft diplomacy and superb handling of the financial crisis gained China great credibility and trust among the ASEAN states by decisively demonstrating that the PRC was indeed a “good neighbor” whose actions were predicated upon cooperation, multilateralism, and a non zero-sum mentality. The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998 provided Beijing the pretext and opportunity to widen the implementation of China’s new GND and demonstrate that China was a rising yet cooperative and friendly neighbor. Beijing’s actions in support of the ASEAN states’ economies during the Financial Crisis demonstrated that China did indeed support its rhetoric about pursuing mutual benefit and non-zero sum policies in its foreign relations with concrete, tangible action. Clearly, by

¹⁵⁹ Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” 68.

¹⁶⁰ Alice D. Ba, “China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia,” *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (July-August 2003): 635.

the end of 1997, China was viewed by ASEAN as being an “economic cooperator” and a “good neighbor.”

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

Beijing used various multilateral forums to apply its GND approach directly to the territorial disputes. China’s earlier pledges to discuss the South Sea disputes at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was honored, but Beijing steadfastly refused to enter into any discussion concerning issues of sovereignty, limiting Chinese participation to discussions concerning CBMs. This refusal was based on China’s adamant rejection of internationalizing the South China Sea disputes. And therefore, since the United States, Japan, Russia, and other ethnically non-Asian powers were ARF members, Beijing merely made minor concessions within the ARF mechanism designed to promote a cooperative, responsible “good neighbor” image as well as prevent any meaningful movement forward on the South Sea issue by stalling on substantial points and agreeing to cooperate in less contentious joint activities such as working groups and CBMs.

Beijing worked assiduously within the ARF framework to deepen China’s relations with ASEAN. In 1997, China and the Philippines co-hosted intercessional meetings on confidence-building measures. The PRC also hosted several other meetings of the ARF, such as the ARF Professional Training Program on China’s Security Policy, the fourth ARF Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges, and the ARF Seminar on military logistics outsourcing (September 2002). Throughout the period, Beijing also regularly submitted annual defense policy white papers to the ARF.¹⁶¹ In May 2002, Beijing presented a position paper at the ARF arguing for improved cooperation on non-traditional

¹⁶¹ Bates Gill, “China’s Evolving Regional Security Strategy,” in *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 255-59.

security issues. The paper committed China to playing a major role in working with other countries to resolve these issues.¹⁶² Again, this action served to strengthen China's image as a cooperative and responsible "good neighbor" in Southeast Asia while in the same instance permitted Beijing to side step any specific discussion over the territorial disputes and prevent the issue from becoming internationalized. Most of Beijing's diplomatic activity at the ARF concerning the South China Sea disputes was undertaken in an indirect fashion. Substantive Chinese multilateral action directly concerning the disputes, as we shall see below, took place within other ASEAN dialogues *outside* the ARF process.

Concerning the territorial disputes specifically, Beijing did expand its discussion of the South China Sea issues to several indigenous ASEAN Track I venues such as the ASEAN-China Summits, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Senior Officials Meetings (SOMs), Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMCs), and ASEAN Plus Three (APT), while avoiding discussion of the disputes at other multilateral venues where non-Asian powers (the United States and its allies) were present. However, China refused to discuss (and continues to refuse) the issue of territorial sovereignty at multilateral forums while, at the same time, promoting a cooperative, friendly image of China in the region by proposing joint development of the disputed areas as well as increasing economic, technical, scientific and social interaction between China and the ASEAN states in general. At the same time, Beijing deemphasized the military component of its grand strategy. The fact that the territorial disputes have not had a detrimental effect on the deepening of China's relations with ASEAN and ASEAN member states (especially Vietnam and the Philippines) offers

¹⁶² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China's Position Paper on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of non-traditional security issues*. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjlb/zzjg/gjs/gizzyhy/2612/2614/t15318.htm> (accessed 6 February 2006).

evidence of the salience and success of Beijing's GND in Southeast Asia. As in China's bilateral relations with Vietnam and the Philippines, Beijing has pursued a strategy since 1996 of defining security in much wider and inclusive terms ("comprehensive security" or "new security") to include, in addition to military security, political, economic, and cultural security.¹⁶³

The New Security Concept

The "economic-security nexus" constitutes the foundation of what Beijing has come to call the "New Security Concept" (*xin anquan guandian*, or NSC). At the multi-lateral level, Beijing's application of the NSC as a component of China's GND approach to the territorial disputes in the South China Sea allows Beijing to deemphasize military security -- and thus lessen perceptions in Southeast Asia of possible Chinese military aggression -- by placing much greater emphasis on economic security. In this way, Beijing has linked the South China Sea issue to wider aspects of Sino-ASEAN relations in which the PRC has more latitude in making concessions to promote China's "good neighbor" image in the region and thereby dispel the "China threat" thesis. Most of these conciliatory moves have been in the form of increased Chinese trade and intensifying economic relations with the ASEAN states -- areas in which Beijing can utilize China's expanding economy and increasing national wealth in pursuing the PRC's foreign policy objectives. This became especially true during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 – 1998, that substantially weakened the Southeast Asian economies and led to related domestic security

¹⁶³ See Tang Yongsheng, "Zhonghe anquan yu zongti zhanlue," [Comprehensive security and grand strategy], *Shijie Zhishi* [World Affairs] (Beijing), no. 20 (October 16, 1996): 16-17 cited by Fei-ling Wang, "Beijing's Incentive Structure: The Pursuit of Preservation, Prosperity, and Power," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 26.

problems for some ASEAN states (Philippines and Indonesia). By emphasizing economic aspects in Sino-ASEAN relations and lessening the traditional political-military focus of China's grand strategy, Beijing successfully refuted the "China threat" thesis and, more specifically, greatly diminished perceptions in Southeast Asia of the use of force by China in asserting its claims of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea.

China's NSC represented a conclusion reached by the Chinese leadership in 1997 that economic and security issues were becoming increasingly linked in the 21st Century due to the effects of economic globalization on world order. As early as 1999, the NSC was used as a medium by Beijing for applying the GND indirectly to the South China Sea disputes -- the "economic-security nexus." China's NSC stresses that relations among states should be based upon the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, that states should not interfere in others' internal affairs, that the promotion of mutually beneficial economic contacts creates a stable security and economic environment, and that greater dialogue promotes trust and allows the peaceful settlement of disputes.¹⁶⁴ Even without mentioning the South Sea disputes directly, the broad design of China's NSC was also salient vis-à-vis China's territorial disputes as they represented one, if not the most serious security concern for ASEAN in the South China Sea. The stipulations and reasoning behind the NSC would be meaningless and empty (and therefore most likely rejected by ASEAN) if not also applied to the South China Sea issue. The linkage between the all-encompassing design of China's NSC and the territorial disputes did not need to be stated specifically. Chinese leader Jiang Zemin elaborated on the NSC in a major foreign policy speech given in March 1999:

¹⁶⁴ Robert Sutter gives a good overview of similarities between ASEAN's cooperative security concept and China's NSC. Robert Sutter, "China's Regional Strategy and Why It May Not Be Good for America," in *Power Shift*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 289-305.

The world is undergoing profound changes which require the discard [sic] of the Cold War mentality and the development of a new security concept and a new international political, economic, and security order responsive to the needs of our times. . . . The core of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The UN Charter, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and other universally recognized principles governing international relations should serve as the political basis for safeguarding peace while mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity are its economic guarantee. To conduct dialogue, consultation and negotiation on an equal footing is the right way to solve disputes and safeguard peace. . . . Only by developing a new security concept and establishing a fair and reasonable new international order can world peace and security be fundamentally guaranteed.¹⁶⁵

Jiang's Geneva speech in 1999 articulated publicly a conclusion reached by the Chinese leadership in 1997 concerning economic globalization and its influence in shaping a new 21st Century world order; economic and security issues would increasingly share a common vision and, as such, the "economic-security nexus" should become the central focus of Chinese foreign policy discourse.¹⁶⁶

In May 2002, China presented a position paper at the ARF arguing for improved cooperation on non-traditional security issues. The paper committed China to playing a major role in working with other countries to resolve these issues.¹⁶⁷ A formal position paper followed in July, explaining China's New Security Concept (NSC) and linking the NSC to the mission of the ARF.¹⁶⁸ In a speech made on 31 July at the 2002 ARF Ministerial Meeting (AMM), Tang Jiaxuan referred to a change in the global security situation "in which traditional and non-traditional security factors are intertwined," and stressed

¹⁶⁵ "Promote Disarmament Process and Safeguard World Security," Address at the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, by Jiang Zemin, President of the Peoples Republic of China (26 March 1999). <http://www.clw.org/archive/coalition/jiang99.htm> (accessed 24 June 2006). The principles of China's New Security Concept were reiterated in *China's National Defense* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, October 2000).

¹⁶⁶ For a clear explanation of the economic-security nexus in Chinese foreign policy, see Moore, "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization," 121-158.

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China's Position Paper on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of non-traditional security issues*. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gizzyhy/2612/2614/t15318.htm> (accessed 6 February 2006).

¹⁶⁸ "China's Evolving Regional Security Strategy," p. 256.

the need for countries to address security issues in a new, mutually cooperative way. Tang maintained that individual states could no longer adequately deal with the new global security issues by themselves, and that “multilateral cooperation is the only way to tackle them.”¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, the NSC (as explained by Tang) strongly resembled the “ASEAN Way” as the NSC was based “on building mutual trust through dialogue, settling disputes through negotiation, and seeking security through cooperation.”¹⁷⁰ China’s concept of mutual security was subsequently reiterated that same year during Tang Jiaxuan’s address of the UN General Assembly.

In his UN speech of 2002, Tang declared, “security is no longer a zero-sum game. Its mutuality is obviously on the increase, as countries have to come to realize that they have common security interests and feel a greater sense of interdependence.”¹⁷¹ Tang continued, stating that in response to the new global security environment, China had developed a New Security Concept (NSC) based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation:

By mutual trust, we mean that countries should rise above their differing ideologies and social systems, abandon the Cold-War mentality and power politics mindset, and refrain from misgivings and hostility against each other. Instead, they should go in for frequent dialogues and briefings on their security and defense policies or the major actions they are about to take.

By mutual benefit, we mean that a country, in keeping with the objective requirements of the development of globalization, should respect the security interests of others while pursuing the interests of its own, help create conditions for the better security of others while making itself more secure, thus achieving universal security.

By equality, we mean that every country, big or small, strong or weak, is a member of the international community. All countries should respect each other, treat each other as equals and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs, so

¹⁶⁹ Tang Jiaxuan, speech at the 9th ARF Foreign Ministers Meeting, 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Tang, speech to UN General Assembly, 14 September 2002.

that international relations will become more democratized.

By cooperation, we mean that countries should resolve their disputes through peaceful negotiations, carry out extensive and deep-going cooperation on their shared security concerns and help eliminate hidden dangers and prevent wars and conflicts from happening.

All in all, our new security concept is aimed at increasing mutual trust through dialogue and promoting common security through cooperation.

It is in the spirit of this new security concept that we in China have been working hard to promote the mechanisms for regional security dialogue and cooperation, cherishing and actively participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the ASEAN Regional Forum and endeavoring, together with other countries in the region, for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific security framework geared to dialogue, rather than confrontation.¹⁷²

David Shambaugh argues that Chinese participation in multilateral organizations, especially the various ASEAN forums, precipitated a change in Beijing's view of multilateralism from traditional suspicions that the U.S. used such venues as a means of containing China, toward a new supportiveness of the multilateral process:

After a year or two of sending observers to the meetings of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), and nongovernmental track 2 meetings, China's Foreign Ministry became more agnostic and more open to learning about them. Chinese analysts soon discovered that the United States did not control these organizations; to the contrary, it became evident to China (and other Asian participants) that Washington tended to dismiss or ignore them. Chinese delegates to these organizations further discovered that the cooperative security approach adopted by these organizations, as pushed by the ASEAN states and Japan, was compatible with China's new security concept (NSC), which Chinese officials had begun to discuss in the late 1990s.¹⁷³

Interestingly, while China's image as a friendly, cooperative, and peaceful ascending power in Southeast Asia was becoming stronger, the United States was increasingly per-

¹⁷² Tang, speech to UN General Assembly, 14 September 2002.

¹⁷³ "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," 69.

ceived in the region as a growing threat to world peace due to Washington's preparation for the American (almost) unilateral invasion of Iraq. Considering the authoritarian nature of some ASEAN states, it is not surprising that Washington's intervention policy (regime change) in the Middle East was not well received in some Southeast Asian capitals -- especially in the Islamic states of Malaysia and Indonesia. As such, Beijing's championing of state sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states was well received in Southeast Asia and helped to promote a favorable image of China in the region. As one Singapore businessman observed, China was trying to help its neighboring countries while, at the same time, the United States was perceived in Southeast Asia "as a country involved more and more on its own foreign policy agenda, and strong-arming everyone onto that agenda."¹⁷⁴ Beijing capitalized on the world's increasing concern about Washington's hawkish and aggressive unilateral foreign policy by stressing and strengthening China's image in Southeast Asia as a peaceful, cooperative, and responsible neighbor.

The "Peaceful Rise" Thesis

In addition to the NSC component of the GND, Beijing began in early 2003 to articulate the "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*) thesis that China could ascend to great power status in Asia without upsetting the international order. The "peaceful rise" thesis directly contradicted the conventional realist wisdom underwriting the "China threat" thesis promoted by mostly American analysts, that rising powers pose an increasing challenge to the hegemonic power (as well as threaten the international system organized and main-

¹⁷⁴ As quoted in Jane Perlez, "Asian Leaders Find China a More Cordial Neighbor," *New York Times*, 18 October 2003.

tained by the hegemon), that necessarily results in conflict between the rising and hegemonic powers.

Zheng Bijian, senior CCP adviser, first advanced China's "peaceful rise" thesis in Spring 2003. According to Ming Wang, the Chinese leadership became greatly concerned about foreign perceptions of a growing "China threat" after Zheng returned from heading a Chinese mission to Washington in December 2002. Zheng, a former executive vice president of the Central Party School and currently head of the China Reform Forum, used his high standing in the CCP to impress upon the Chinese leadership the importance of alleviating foreign (American) concern of China's rise. Zheng argued that China's peaceful rise, begun in 1978 and continuing into the mid-twenty-first century, would mark a transition in Chinese foreign policy from a traditional approach based upon China being a developing country focused on domestic issues to one predicated upon China's potential as a regional and global power.¹⁷⁵ Zheng was subsequently placed in charge of the Central Party School's large "Peaceful Rise" project in early 2003.¹⁷⁶ Apparently, Hu Jintao personally and promptly approved the project (as well as Zheng heading the project) and decided to allow the school to take a leading role in formulating Chinese foreign policy as evidenced by the project's "unheard of sum" of over 2 million Yuan funding.¹⁷⁷ In late 2003, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao reiterated the "peaceful rise" theme in a speech at Harvard University. In his 11 December speech, Wen stressed China's peaceful intentions, stating, "we are determined to secure a peaceful international

¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth Economy, "China's Rise in Southeast Asia: Implications for the United States," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 44 (August 2005): 412-413. Also see Yiwei Wang, "The dimensions of China's peaceful rise," *Asia Times*. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/printN.html> (accessed 16 April 2006).

¹⁷⁶ Ming Wang, "Democracy and Human Rights in Chinese Foreign Policy," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, eds. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 296.

¹⁷⁷ Wang also points out that Zheng's team included scholars outside the Party school, also indicating the great level of importance given the project. Ming Wang, 296.

environment and a stable domestic environment in which to concentrate on our own development and, with it, to help promote world peace and development."¹⁷⁸

One of the central tenets of the peaceful rise thesis, stressed repeatedly by Chinese political leaders and academics, is that the PRC would never seek regional hegemony in Asia and that China's rise would benefit other Asian nations. Li Junru, Vice-President of the Central Party School, pointed out the benefits of China's rise to neighboring countries, stating that it would not "damage the interests of other Asian countries. That is because as China rises, it provides a huge market for its neighbors. At the same time, the achievements of China's developments will allow it to support the progress of others in the region."¹⁷⁹ Ruan Zongze, Vice Director of the China Institute of International Studies, furthered the benefits argument concerning China's rise by emphasizing that a stronger China could play a larger role in regional stability. Ruan argued that China's development "is conducive to security and stability in the region." He continued:

China lies at the joint of the "curve of turbulence" through Eurasia continent to northeast Asia and this region is where the interests of major powers converge and therefore has many "hotspots." A stronger China would have more leverage in mediating regional conflicts, and thus contributing to cooperation."¹⁸⁰

ASEAN-China Summits

Quite interestingly, China's approach to the South Sea disputes and to Southeast Asian security issues in general, from the late 1990s on has been based upon initiating many dialogue processes with ASEAN *outside* the ARF framework. Beijing's growing

¹⁷⁸ Chinese Embassy in the United States, "China's Peaceful Rise Relies on Own Efforts for Development: Premier." <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/first%20beginning/t56059.htm> (accessed 15 May 2006).

¹⁷⁹ Jifan Zan, "Peaceful Rise," *Beijing Review*. [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200416/BoaoSpecial-200416\(B\).htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200416/BoaoSpecial-200416(B).htm) (accessed 9 July 2006).

¹⁸⁰ Zongze Rong, "What are the implications of China's peaceful rise to the world?" [http://www.crf.org.cn/peaceful rise/ruanzongze2.htm](http://www.crf.org.cn/peaceful%20rise/ruanzongze2.htm) (accessed 12 February 2006).

commitment to accept ASEAN norms continued within the annual ASEAN-China Summits. At the 1997 summit, Chinese President Jiang Zemin signed a joint statement on “ASEAN-China Co-operation towards the 21st Century” that outlined basic principles for expanding PRC-ASEAN relations in economic, political, and security issues. Specific to the South China Sea disputes, the joint statement reiterated earlier agreements between China and ASEAN on the rejection of the use of force to settle outstanding territorial disputes in the region and the necessity of continuing dialogue based on international law and the 1982 UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Importantly, the statement also made clear the fact that both the ASEAN states and China desired a more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship, and that both sides agreed, “not to allow existing differences to hamper the development of friendly relations and co-operation.”¹⁸¹ By signing the joint statement, Jiang also reaffirmed China’s support of other ASEAN initiatives, such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), and the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in Southeast Asia.¹⁸² In return for Beijing’s expanded acceptance of ASEAN norms, the joint statement included a brief declaration of ASEAN’s continued support of the “one China” policy.

During the November 2002 China-ASEAN meeting, Beijing took a significantly different approach regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea by agreeing to the terms of the ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea of 1992. In doing so, China relaxed its traditional South China Sea strategy of pursuing bi-

¹⁸¹ See *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia-Pacific*, FED 3105 (18 December 1997).

¹⁸² Jiang indicated that China had reservations about the wording of the NWFZ concerning the accession of nuclear weapons states to the protocol of the treaty, and pointed-out that negotiations were still ongoing. At the time, it seemed that China was concerned that ratifying the NWFZ treaty would adversely affect its territorial claims over the South China Sea. However, Beijing overcame its reservations, and announced in July 1999 that the PRC would be the first nuclear weapons state to accede to the NWFZ. See Lee, “China’s Relations with ASEAN: Partners in the 21st Century?”, 65, 70, and *The South China Morning Post*, 28 July 1999.

lateral talks with other disputants while avoiding multilateral venues,¹⁸³ by accepting an essentially multilateral code of governance.¹⁸⁴ The Declaration was the first political document signed between China and ASEAN concerning the territorial disputes, and marked a most significant and important step toward lessening the possibility of conflict in the South China Sea. The agreement stipulated that China and ASEAN reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the principles of international law, and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). In addition, the declaration committed concerned parties to reject the use of force and pursue a peaceful resolution of territorial and jurisdictional disputes through friendly negotiations between states directly concerned, as well as exercising self-restraint in conducting activities that would complicate or exacerbate tensions, including refraining from inhabiting uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, etc. The Declaration also stipulated that pending a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the disputes, disputant states could explore and undertake cooperative projects concerning marine pollution, search, and rescue operations, scientific research, and combating transnational crime.¹⁸⁵ China's acceptance of the Declaration in 2002 represents the first manifestation of China's changed security "role-identity" from that of "security cooperator" to that of "security partner."

¹⁸³ Even as late as August 1999, the Chinese Foreign Ministry denounced a multilateral approach to the South Seas issue. During a news briefing at the 1999 ARF Ministerial Meeting, Chinese spokesman Zhang Qiyue, stated that the PRC did not favor discussing the dispute "at any multilateral forum because this can only lead to further complication of the matter The China Sea [disputes] should be resolved through bilateral negotiations between countries concerned in peaceful means." See "China Rejects ASEAN 'Code of Conduct' for Spratlys," *Kyodo News International*, 2 August 1999.

¹⁸⁴ See Gill, "China's Regional Security Strategy," 256-7.

¹⁸⁵ See Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea* (22 July 1992). <http://www.aseansec.org/3634.htm> (accessed 5 August 2005); "China, ASEAN Sign Code of Conduct on South China Sea," *Xinhuanet*, 4 November 2002; and "ASEAN Cooperation Surges Ahead," *China Daily*, 6 January 2002.

China-ASEAN “Strategic Partnership” and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation

Beijing’s growing acceptance of multilateral cooperation in China’s relations with ASEAN was strengthened when in October both parties established the Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and China acceded to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). The declaration establishing the Strategic Partnership committed both parties to, among other things, “implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea” and also to convene “ASEAN-China security-related dialogue to enhance mutual understanding and promote peace and security in the region.”¹⁸⁶ By agreeing to enter into the Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, China became the first strategic partner of ASEAN.¹⁸⁷ Following the National People’s Congress (NPC) approval in June that year of China’s accession to the TAC treaty, China formally joined the TAC treaty at the seventh ASEAN-China Summit held as part of the larger ASEAN Plus Three (APT) summit that year in Indonesia. By doing so, the PRC became the first non-Southeast Asian major power to sign the treaty.¹⁸⁸ The TAC committed all signatories to employ peaceful means to settle disputes between themselves, *including territorial disputes*. In the event that direct negotiations between disputants failed to resolve the dispute, the TAC provided for the possibility of third-party mediation. Further, the treaty stipulated that countries agreed not to “participate in any activity which shall constitute a threat to the political and economic stability, sovereignty, or territorial integ-

¹⁸⁶ See Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the People’s Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity* (8 October 2003). <http://www.asean.org/15265.htm> (accessed 19 August 2006).

¹⁸⁷ ASEAN is the first regional grouping with which China formed such a relationship, indicating an increased level of political and strategic relations between China and ASEAN. See Wang, “China’s Multilateral Diplomacy in the new Millennium,” 171-172, and “ASEAN, China Forge Strategic Partnership,” *People’s Daily*, 9 October 2003.

¹⁸⁸ See “China Joins Treaty of Amity, Cooperation in Southeast Asia,” *People’s Daily*, 9 October 2003, and Jane Perlez, “Asian Leaders Find China a More Cordial Neighbor,” *New York Times*, 18 October 2003.

rity” of other signatories.¹⁸⁹ By agreeing to accede to the TAC, Beijing enhanced China’s image in Southeast Asia as a “good neighbor” and “cooperative” power which would “foster cooperation in the furtherance of the cause of peace, harmony, and stability in the region,” and not undertake or participate in any activity constituting “a threat to the political and economic stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity” of the other signatory states and to “refrain from the threat or use of force” and settle disputes through “friendly negotiations.”¹⁹⁰ In addition, by signing the TAC, China also broke from its traditional diplomatic posture by allowing ASEAN states essentially to dictate the norms of behavior concerning the South China Sea disputes.¹⁹¹

By acceding to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and participating in the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership in 2003, Beijing significantly reinforced China’s peaceful, cooperative “good neighbor” image in Southeast Asia while, at the same time, substantially decreased perceptions in the region of a “China threat.” Further, Beijing’s diplomatic activity demonstrated to the ASEAN states that China was indeed becoming “socialized” as reflected by China’s increased acceptance of ASEAN’s regulatory and constitutive norms.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia* (24 February 1976). <http://www.aseansec.org/1654.htm> (accessed 18 January 2007).

¹⁹⁰ The complete *Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia* was first ratified 24 February 1976. Also, see Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Instrument of Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia* (8 October 2003). <http://www.aseansec.org/15271.htm> (accessed 11 April 2006).

“China, Southeast Asia Conclude Strategic Partnership Pact,” *Xinhua*, 8 October 2003.

¹⁹¹ Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping argue that by doing so, Beijing is pursuing the “most effective way for China to show that it is a responsible power” by demonstrating its “benign intentions by exercising self-restraint and displaying willingness to be restrained.” See Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, “China’s Regional Strategy,” in *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 52.

¹⁹² Yuen Foong Khong provides a good analysis of norm-building, the “ASEAN Way,” and Sino-

ASEAN Plus Three (APT)

Another ASEAN multilateral process in which Beijing directly applied the GND to the South Sea disputes is the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) forum. Constituted by ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea, the APT mechanism was initially established as an informal dialogue intended to increase regional economic cooperation. Beijing enthusiastically supported the creation of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) in 1997 in response to the Asian Financial Crisis. Beginning in 2000, however, the annual informal APT meetings were upgraded in status to formal East Asia summits and thus became a key component of the annual ASEAN gatherings on par with the ARF, AMM, and PMCs.¹⁹³ Beijing was instrumental in elevating the APT mechanism's status within the ASEAN process, and continues to actively promote the APT as a "main framework of East Asia regional cooperation."¹⁹⁴ In fact, some of Beijing's boldest initiatives in Sino-ASEAN relations have been proposed at the APT. For example, in his speech at the 2001 annual APT summit, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji suggested, "efforts should be made to gradually carry out dialogue and cooperation in the political and security field."¹⁹⁵ In November 2002, China signed a joint declaration with ASEAN to increase cooperation on nontraditional security issues and, the following June, proposed the establishment of a new "ARF Security Policy Conference" in which military and civilian personnel would participate in developing an ARF security pact acknowledging the principles such as noninterference in the internal affairs of other states, and the peaceful resolution of international disputes through dia-

ASEAN relations in "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy," in *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency*, eds. J. J. Suh, Peter Katzenstein, Allen Carlson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 172-208.

¹⁹³ Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium," 176-177.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Rongji Zhu, "Strengthening East Asian Cooperation and Promoting Common Development," 5 November 2001. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/end/21861.html> (accessed 14 March 2006).

logue.¹⁹⁶ Due largely to Beijing's efforts, the APT process has expanded its scope to 16 areas of cooperation, including economic, monetary and finance, political, security, tourism, agriculture, environment, and energy.¹⁹⁷ In regards to the territorial disputes, the security area of cooperation is most salient.

Beijing's new approach to the South China Sea disputes successfully prevented the issue from souring Sino-ASEAN relations. By agreeing to discuss the disputes multilaterally and indicating a willingness for joint development of the disputed regions, Beijing was able to diplomatically prevent the South China Sea disputes from have a detrimental effect on the intensification of Sino-ASEAN relations by reassuring the Southeast Asian states that they had little reason to fear the rise of China. In short, the China threat thesis in Southeast Asia was being incrementally reduced by Beijing's proactive and cooperative diplomatic approach in the region. Moreover, Beijing accomplished this *without* compromising China's claims of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea

Track II Diplomacy

Chinese diplomacy concerning the South China Sea disputes at the informal Track II level has been less spectacular than that at the various Track I dialogues. Due to the overall lack of tangible progress in resolving the disputes at both the unofficial Indonesian sponsored Workshops on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea and the ARF sponsored Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), many observers have discounted the effectiveness of these Track II venues, calling them "talk

¹⁹⁶ For details, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept*. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/xw/t27742.htm> (accessed 22 December 2006).

¹⁹⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation* (2004). <http://www.aseansec.org/16580.htm> (accessed 23 March 2006).

shops.” However, I disagree with this assessment. What is interesting and important about the Track II processes is that they provided a venue and opportunity for the free exchange of ideas, which allowed the participants to understand better the positions of the other disputant states. Further, the workshops allowed for an exchange and sharing of knowledge that facilitated progress at the Track I dialogues. Two good examples of shared knowledge leading to tangible cooperation at the official Track I level are the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, and the 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Both ASEAN initiatives were actually first suggested and discussed at the Track II workshops. By the conclusion of the second Workshop held in Bandung in 1991, a statement was issued on the need to resolve the territorial disputes in the South China Sea by “peaceful means through dialogue and negotiation” and that “force should not be used to settle territorial and jurisdictional disputes” and that the involved parties should “exercise self-restraint in order not to complicate the situation.”¹⁹⁸ This statement was adopted at the Track I level as the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea. The same holds true for the 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, as the idea for a code of conduct originated within the Indonesian workshop process.¹⁹⁹ In addition, the notion of joint development of the disputed areas in the South China Sea advocated by China in its mid-1990s bilateral dialogues with the Philippines and Vietnam (and finally implemented by the 2005 tripartite agreement between Beijing, Manila, and Hanoi) for joint offshore

¹⁹⁸ See Hasjim Djalal and Ian Townsend-Gault, “Preventive Diplomacy: Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea,” in *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, ed. Hampson Crocker, 107-133, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999.

¹⁹⁹ Hasjim Djalal, “South China Sea Island Disputes,” *The Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, Supplement No. 8 (National University of Singapore, 2000): 9-21. <http://rmbr.nus.edu.sg/exanambas/rbzs8-scs/Djalal.html> (accessed 23 August 2006).

oil development in the Spratlys was first broached within the Workshop process.²⁰⁰ It seems reasonable to assert that shared knowledge (“complex” learning) gained by the Workshop participants at the Track II level facilitated the eventual agreements reached concerning the South China Sea issue within the Track I ASEAN dialogues. The Track II dialogues allowed the participants to socialize with one another on a personal basis, and thereby better familiarize themselves with the positions and points of view of other participants. This process of “social learning” must be seen as an important factor that subsequently led to the formal agreements on the South China Sea discussed in this study.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Workshop meetings focused on establishing confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the South China Sea in areas such as joint search and rescue operations, scientific studies of the tide and sea level, and the maritime region’s biodiversity, and scientific databases. Several technical working groups (TWG) and groups of experts were established in the 1990s to study and facilitate cooperative programs. By the sixth Workshop held in Balikpapan in 1995, the Chinese delegates resisted efforts towards additional CBMs, as they perceived the workshop itself as a CBM and therefore did not believe that additional CBMs were warranted.²⁰¹ By the conclusion of the Balikpapan workshop, it was decided to recommend only three projects to the respective governments -- biodiversity studies, sea level and tide monitoring, and a marine science data and information exchange network. Interestingly, while Chinese delegates resisted efforts at the workshop to establish these CBMs, Beijing was simultaneously moving slowly toward such talks at the Track I level.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. A Special Technical Working Group on Resources Assessment and Ways of Development initially met in Jakarta (July 1993) to discuss joint development of the South China Sea, where the Chinese delegates expressed China’s willingness to shelve territorial or sovereignty claims in favor of joint development.

²⁰¹ *The Straits Times*, 13 October 1995.

Beijing's initial refusal to cooperate in the biodiversity project was seen by others as yet another example of Chinese stalling the process. In addition, the Mischief Reef affair between Beijing and Manila (1995) continued to have a detrimental influence on the workshop process. Carolina Hernandez, president of the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, commented that China's 1995 occupation of Mischief Reef "shattered the image of China as a trustworthy neighbor," while a Singapore analyst blamed Beijing for intensifying the dispute: "So far, it has largely been a case of China 'advancing' in the region through the show and use of force."²⁰² However, by the end of the 1997 workshop, an agreement was reached to implement several cooperative projects: biodiversity; study on tide and sea level change; and database and information networking for scientists. By finally agreeing to the cooperative biodiversity study, the Chinese delegates reinforced China's "cooperative" and "responsible" image and at the same time by doing so lessened negative fallout from China's reluctance at the time to support the workshop's call for a code of conduct for the South China Sea.

BILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Throughout much of the second period of our case study, Beijing's bilateral diplomacy regarding the territorial disputes reflected a continuation of the traditional approach to the issue associated with China's "Cold War" identity. At this level, most learning gained through interaction was "simple," which led only to instrumental changes in Beijing's GND. This, however, began to change as Beijing's bilateral actions increasingly came into line with the new multilateral approach. "Complex" learning gained through multilateral interaction influenced China's bilateral diplomacy with the Philip-

²⁰² "The Smiling but Unrelenting Dragon," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 7 November 1997.

pines and Vietnam. Beijing's schizophrenic identity (Cognitive Base_A -- bilateral diplomacy; Cognitive Base_B – multilateral diplomacy) appeared to be on the mend.

The Philippines

The 1995 Mischief Reef Affair between China and the Philippines in the Spratlys certainly marked a low point in relations between the two countries. Manila's protests and diplomatic activities concerning Beijing's provocations in the South China Sea were the most vociferous and concerted of the ASEAN states. Efforts made by Manila to internationalize the Spratlys dispute, as well as a growing American interest in the disputes and reproving statements from Washington, pressured Beijing, as discussed in the previous chapter, to reappraise its approach to the territorial disputes. Following the initial crisis, bilateral talks between Beijing and Manila produced a joint "code of conduct" to defuse the situation in August 1995. This diplomatic breakthrough was made possible, in large part, to Beijing's new stance on accepting international law and UNCLOS in seeking a resolution of China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea, as well as China's increased flexibility concerning multilateral cooperation and the possibility of multilateral talks on the Spratlys at an "appropriate time," as indicated by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen at the 1995 ARF meeting hosted in July by Brunei.²⁰³ In addition, personal diplomacy on the part of Chinese leader Jiang Zemin and Philippines President Ramos also played a significant role in mitigating tensions between both countries caused by the Mischief Reef affair. However, actions taken subsequently by both sides in the Spratlys in support of their respective claims of territorial sovereignty (as discussed in Chapter 2), renewed tensions in Sino-Philippine relations. In March 1996, the Spratly

²⁰³ Lee, 107.

disputes were one of the most urgent issues on the agenda during vice-ministerial level talks between Manila and Beijing. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, agreements were reached at the end of the talks for establishing cooperation through several CBMs including military-to-military contacts, and both countries decided that the Mischief Reef issue would be set aside for the time being. The March 1996 talks succeeded in reducing tensions between China and the Philippines.

During the second half of 1996, Sino-Philippines relations were further improved by personal interactions between leaders from both states. In June, Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon visited Beijing and was reassured that Beijing would resolve the territorial disputes with Manila in a peaceful fashion within the framework of international law and UNCLOS.²⁰⁴ Siazon's trip to China was reciprocated when Jiang Zemin paid an official visit to the Philippines following the November APEC summit convened at Subic Bay. During their talks, Ramos attempted unsuccessfully to persuade Jiang that China should withdraw from Mischief Reef. Both men did agree, however, not to discuss issues of sovereignty and instead work toward building confidence and develop disputed areas of the Spratlys jointly.²⁰⁵ In addition, Jiang made a pledge that China would not aggravate the situation by militarizing the disputed area.²⁰⁶ The improved atmosphere in Sino-Philippine relations, however, was short-lived.

On Christmas Day 1996, Philippine Army Chief of Staff Arnulfo Acedera formally opened an airfield runway on one of the more substantial islands in the Spratlys and declared that Manila would develop the area into a tourist resort.²⁰⁷ Protest came

²⁰⁴ *The Straits Times*, 14 June 1996.

²⁰⁵ *The Straits Times*, 27 November 1996.

²⁰⁶ *Lianhe Zaobao*, 28 November 1996 as cited in Lee, 113.

²⁰⁷ *The Straits Times*, 31 December 1996.

quickly from Beijing, admonishing and warning Manila to refrain from actions that could threaten relations between the two countries.²⁰⁸ Then, after rounds of protests and counter-protests, tensions between Beijing and Manila worsened in April 1997 when the Philippines accused China of aggravating the situation by dispatching armed naval vessels in the Spratlys to patrol near islands occupied by Filipinos. Beijing responded by accusing the Philippines of violating Chinese sovereignty in the Macclesfield Bank area north of the Spratlys by removing Chinese territorial markers and hoisting a Philippine flag on Scarborough Shoal.²⁰⁹ In addition, Filipino politicians made trips to Scarborough Shoal to defend Philippine sovereignty in front of the Philippines press, while others urged President Ramos to ask Washington to increase its military presence in the region to counter China.²¹⁰ As tensions between Beijing and Manila mounted, Ramos did explore diplomatic initiatives to prevent conflict with China in the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal.

The Ramos Administration argued that the code of conduct agreed to in 1995 by both sides was not specific enough to prevent incidences of hostility in disputed waters. Manila therefore suggested that the two countries establish clearer rules of engagement in the South China Sea to prevent armed clashes between PRC and Philippines naval units.²¹¹ As a result, talks were held in Beijing late in May and it was agreed that a work-

²⁰⁸ *The Straits Times*, 30 December 1996.

²⁰⁹ Additional aggressive actions were taken by both sides in and around the Scarborough Shoal area that heightened tensions in the dispute. Philippine moves to order Chinese Boats out of the area and arrests of more Chinese fishermen near the Shoal in May intensified the rift between the PRC and the Philippines. In July, Philippine troops destroyed concrete markers and removed two of three Chinese buoys on Sabina Shoal located 75 miles west of the Philippines island of Palawan. See *The Straits Times*, 14 May, 25 June, and 5 July 1997.

²¹⁰ *The Straits Times*, 29 May 1997.

²¹¹ General Arnulfo Acedera suggested that a mechanism for cooperation be established through which China and the Philippines could announce plans for military deployments before they are implemented. See Lee, 114-115.

ing group on CBMs be established to examine the legal issues of the conflicting territorial claims and the movement of ships and personnel in the disputed regions, as well as the possibilities of cooperation in issues such as search and rescue, exchanges between military garrisons in the Spratlys, and disaster relief.²¹² Endeavoring to promote good will, Ramos later released Chinese fishermen arrested earlier near Scarborough Shoal, announced that Chinese fishing boats could pass through Philippine waters in route to other fishing grounds in international waters, and invited the Chinese navy to make a port call to Subic Bay in May 1998.²¹³ The “role-identities” of China and the Philippines were by this point moving away from “enemy-enemy” toward “competitor-competitor.”

Because of bilateral negotiations begun in May 1997, China and the Philippines reached a preliminary understanding on how to handle their disputes in the South China Sea. It appears that both sides worked out the details concerning how Chinese warships could approach (and Chinese fishing vessels transit through) Philippine waters. Additionally, agreement was reached in principle for cooperation in areas such as marine scientific research, fishery, and search and rescue. From the Chinese perspective, Beijing’s response to Manila’s provocative moves in the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal was restrained. By avoiding moves that might have exacerbated tensions between China and the Philippines and instead pursuing a diplomatic resolution, China reinforced its image in Southeast Asia as a “good neighbor” willing to forgo the use of force and pursue a peaceful settlement of its disputes with Manila. Beijing’s approach in handling the Spratlys crisis with Manila was also informed and influenced by wider considerations.

²¹² *The Straits Times*, 3 June 1997.

²¹³ The invitation was accepted by Beijing, and in April 1998, three Chinese warships arrived in the Philippines and participated in celebrating Philippine independence. *The Straits Times*, 14 April 1998.

Other ASEAN states having territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea were monitoring the situation in the Spratlys and closely observing Chinese actions – especially Vietnam. Beijing was aware that its announcements and actions concerning the Philippines would affect China's relations with other ASEAN nations and, as such, it was extremely important that China not be seen by the wider audience in the region as a threat. By talking instead of shooting, China could reinforce its national image in South-east Asia as a “responsible” and “cooperative” country -- a “good neighbor” -- and thus prevent the South China Sea disputes from endangering Sino-ASEAN relations.

Talks between the two states continued until an agreement was reached on the sidelines of that year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit held in Kuala Lumpur in November 1998. Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon agreed in principle to joint use of disputed Mischief Reef once the “modalities for joint use (and) the technical details of access” were negotiated by an expert working group on confidence-building measures that was supposed to meet in January 1999. This agreement was subsequently endorsed at the APEC summit during a one-on-one meeting between Presidents Jiang Zemin and Estrada.²¹⁴

Early the following year, however, accusations and recriminations over encounters between fishing boats and naval patrols of both countries in and around Scarborough Shoal, as well as continued construction projects in the Spratlys,²¹⁵ led to heightened ten-

²¹⁴ “Philippines, Mainland China Agree to Jointly Use Mischief Reef,” *Central News Agency* (Taiwan), 22 November 1998.

²¹⁵ According to Manila, the Chinese had constructed facilities in Mischief Reef of the Spratlys “with possible gun emplacements and navigational radar . . . , which could be used for military purposes.” See “China remains firm on Spratlys,” *BBC News: Asia-Pacific*, 23 March 1999. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/301876.stm> (accessed 7 October 2006).

sions between China and the Philippines.²¹⁶ Philippine Vice-Admiral Eduardo Santos, the Navy Chief, and the Vice-Chief of Staff of the Armed forces of the Philippines, commented to reporters that Chinese structures on Mischief Reef were “definitely not for fishing alone,” and that these structures could become the next base of operations of Chinese naval forces in the Spratlys.²¹⁷ Orlando Mercado, Secretary of Defense of the Philippines, also underlined Manila’s perceptions of a growing Chinese threat at a press conference. Concerning the Chinese structures on Mischief Reef, Mercado stated “They [Chinese] say these are structures for fishermen who may be marooned in a typhoon, but of course we have never been naive enough to believe that.”²¹⁸ During two days of talks between Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Lauro Baja and Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yi concerning recent provocative actions and statements by both sides in the dispute, Wang repeated Beijing’s assurances that the structures on Mischief Reef were only shelters for Chinese fishermen and not intended for military purposes. Wang added that once the structures were completed (and when China-Philippines relations improved), China would consider allowing Filipino anglers to use the facilities.²¹⁹ Manila responded by demanding that China demolish the structures. The Chinese rejected the demand, stressing that Mischief Reef was Chinese sovereign territory. Mr. Baja remarked to reporters following the talks that he was “not deliriously happy” with the re-

²¹⁶ In May, a Chinese fishing boat was sunk after a collision with a Philippine warship, and late in November, China demanded that a “stranded” Filipino naval vessel near Scarborough Shoal be towed away as its presence posed a challenge to Chinese sovereignty. See “Spratlys continue to loom as Asian flashpoint,” *World Socialist Web Site*, 13 December 1999. <http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/dec1999/spra-d13.shtml> (accessed 23 October 2006).

²¹⁷ See “The Mischief Reef Affair,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 1998 and “Mischief Reef a major Chinese fortress, says Philippine navy,” *The Straits Times*, 25 January 1999.

²¹⁸ “Diplomatic Storm Over Islands,” *Newsday*, 4 February 1999.

²¹⁹ “Philippines to discuss use of Mischief Reef structures with China,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 19 March 1999.

sults.²²⁰ Philippine President Joseph Estrada indicated after the two-day talks with the Chinese that he might “elevate the issue to the United Nations.”²²¹

Shortly after the Chinese-Filipino meetings, Manila intensified its protest by reporting that Chinese forces on Johnson Reef had recently opened fire against a Philippine Air force plane—an incident that had not been made public at the time.²²² A week later President Estrada announced a postponement of his planned trip to Beijing.²²³ Two weeks later at the Inter-parliamentary Union meeting in Brussels, Blas Ople, head of the Philippine 18-man delegation and Senate President Pro Tempore, demanded a Chinese withdrawal from Mischief Reef during his speech at the IPU, which triggered a dispute with the Chinese representatives: “We ask that the parties commit themselves to the status quo in the area. This means that China must withdraw from Mischief Reef which it has illegally occupied since 1995 in violation of the Manila Declaration of 1992.” Lia Daoyu gave the Chinese response, accusing Ople of “distorting the facts and making false accusations.” Lia stated, “we are deeply surprised at the intervention of the Philippine delegation. This intervention will have negative effects on the Filipino people.”²²⁴ China’s cooperative image in the Philippines was quickly becoming tarnished, as the traditional ‘China-as-a-threat’ image strengthened. Relations between Beijing and Manila worsened the following month.

²²⁰ “China remains firm on Spratlys,” *BBC News: Asia-Pacific*, 23 March 1999. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/301876.stm> (accessed 14 November 2006).

²²¹ Ibid. Shortly thereafter Estrada met with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York asking him to help find a peaceful resolution to the disputes with China. Also see “Trouble brews on Mischief Reef,” *BBC News: Asia-Pacific*, 22 January 1999.

²²² “Spratlys pose multiple problems for China-Philippine relations,” *Agence France-Presse*, 24 March 1999.

²²³ “Estrada delays Beijing trip over Mischief Reef spat,” *The Straits Times*, 1 April 1999.

²²⁴ “Chinese mischief at Reef to IPU,” *Manila Standard*, 16 April 1999.

On 20 May 1999, Beijing called for a settlement of its dispute with the Philippines over Mischief Reef. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said that China “deeply regrets” the comments made by President Estrada in Hong Kong that Chinese territorial ambitions in the South China Sea were harming regional security, but stated that China desired a peaceful settlement of the dispute in accordance with international maritime laws including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Zhu continued; “China hopes the parties concerned will jointly commit themselves to peace and stability in the South China Sea region. Remarks or actions that contradict this will not help solve the problem and are not desirable.”²²⁵ Two days after the Chinese statement, the Philippine House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning Chinese intrusions into the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone and commending the Philippine Navy for “galantly protecting our territorial integrity.” The resolution stated that the “presence of the Chinese fishing boat in the Scarborough Shoal is part of the ploy and strategy of the PROC to maintain and gradually increase their presence therein like what they did in Mischief Reef which ended up in the construction of concrete, high rise buildings, something the PROC undoubtedly dreams of doing in Scarborough Shoal.”²²⁶ Manila also widened its dispute with China when the Philippines proposed that ASEAN establish a regional code of conduct to govern activities in the South China Sea.²²⁷ Manila’s relentless diplomatic pressure against China continued through 2000 and into early 2001, when former Philippine President Fidel Ramos characterized China as a threat to Southeast Asia during the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. At a

²²⁵ “China urges peaceful talks on Spratly Islands dispute,” *Asian Political News*, 24 May 1999.

²²⁶ “Legislative Resolution on Foreign Affairs,” House Resolution No. 944, House of Representatives, Republic of the Philippines (26 May 1999).

²²⁷ Wang, “China’s Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium,” 170.

working dinner on “Security and Stability in Asia,” Ramos commented on the rise of China and its implications for Asia:

Economic growth has also set off a sea change in Chinese strategic thinking. Today, China’s ambition is to project power –beyond mainland East Asia, where its strategic authority is already widely accepted-initially into East Asia’s maritime regions, and ultimately into the world-ocean.

Because China has been a land-power since the early 15th century, its build-up of sea-and air power is liable to become Asia’s key security issue over these next 10-15 years. Already other powers with maritime interests-like India and Japan-are beginning to react to what they must see as a threat to their own sea-lanes of communication.

The Spratlys and Taiwan Straits problems are vital components of China’s maritime interests.

How China exercises its potential political and military power must concern all the countries of the Asia-Pacific-*and none more so than we of Southeast Asia, who lie in the direction of its historical expansion* [emphasis mine].²²⁸

China’s territorial dispute with the Philippines over the Spratlys was quickly becoming a liability for Beijing that potentially could undermine Chinese efforts at strengthening Sino-ASEAN relations. Beijing would have to dispel growing mistrust of China by reinforcing China’s cooperative, friendly image in Southeast Asia by taking the initiative at both the bilateral as well as multilateral levels. Through bilateral negotiations with the Philippines, Beijing could make some measured concessions to Manila such as increased Chinese cooperation in various CBMs in the South China Sea, as well as economic “carrots” such as favorable trade deals and increased Chinese technical assistance. These measures would strengthen China’s “good neighbor” image by demonstrating that the PRC was a “cooperative” and “responsible” rising power desiring peaceful, mutually beneficial relations with the Philippines. By talking instead of shooting, and by demon-

²²⁸ Remarks of Fidel Ramos at Hotel Caprice, Davos Switzerland, during a working dinner on “Security and Stability in Asia,” 29 January 2001. http://www.dfa.gov.ph/archieve/speech/fvr/fvr_dinner.htm (accessed 19 September 2006).

strating that closer relations with China had substantial economic and political benefits far outweighing any Manila might realize by continuing to focus on the issue of territorial sovereignty, Beijing could maintain the status quo in the Spratlys while at the same time strengthen and deepen economic ties between the two countries.

In December 2001, Beijing took a step forward by agreeing to discuss joint use of the Mischief Reef structures with the Philippines.²²⁹ This concession was apparently not enough to assuage Filipino (and Vietnamese) suspicions of China's ulterior motives in the region. Beijing would have to make a larger concession; it appeared, to accomplish the task of reassuring the ASEAN states that China was sincere in its efforts of cooperation and seeking a peaceful resolution of the disputes. In November 2002, Beijing made such a move by signing the ASEAN Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, crossing a new threshold in China's direct application of the GND on the territorial disputes. Even though the ASEAN states (especially the Philippines and Vietnam) had pushed for a stronger, legally binding *code* of conduct but were, however, eventually persuaded by the Chinese to accept a non-binding *declaration*, Beijing's accession to the Declaration was a major Chinese concession and marked a turning point for Beijing toward an increasingly liberal application of the GND in Sino-ASEAN relations. China's accession to the Declaration apparently reduced tensions between Beijing and Manila, which allowed movement forward in the bilateral dialogue concerning their territorial dispute in the South China Sea. As we have seen, the process of "collective" identity formation is not unidirectional. As with personal relationships, in which shared knowledge of Self and Other can change because of interaction and affect the "role-identities" in the relationship, the same holds true for corporate (state) relations. Sometimes interac-

²²⁹ *Manila Standard*, 9 December 2001.

tion results in positive (holistic) identity change, sometime it results in negative (egoistic) identity change.²³⁰

During Philippine President Gloria Arroyo's state visit to China in late August 2004, an agreement to begin a joint three-year seismic survey of potential oil deposits in the Spratlys was signed. Importantly, the agreement between Beijing and Manila stated, "[t]here is an understanding between the Philippines and China that the PNOC [Philippines National Oil Company]-CNOOC [Chinese National Offshore Oil Company] undertaking will be open to the participation of a third party, such as companies of other claimant states." The "third party" mentioned was Vietnam's offshore oil company PetroVietnam, whose participation in the survey was strongly supported by Manila.²³¹ The bilateral agreement between Beijing and Manila for joint oil exploration in the Spratlys by their respective national oil companies marked a diplomatic success for China.

By undertaking joint offshore oil exploration in the disputed Spratlys, Beijing strengthened China's "cooperative" and "responsible" image in the region by demonstrating a willingness to work with the Philippines in resolving the territorial dispute as well as "share" the resources of the area despite the absence of a final solution of the dispute. In doing so, Beijing both paved the way for closer China-Philippines relations and mitigated the negative political fall-out in the region due to China's most recent spat with the Philippines over Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoal. By agreeing to allow "third parties" to participate in the joint seismic survey, Beijing essentially indicated a softening in

²³⁰ Wendt argues that the kind of representational practice ("reflected appraisals") that produces enemies is known as Realpolitik, "which involves treating others in self-interested terms, casting them as if they were nothing but objects, without standing or rights, to be killed, conquered, or left alone as one sees fit", and that which produces friends is known as "prosocial", "which involves treating others as if one not only respected their individual security concerns but also 'cared' for them, a willingness to help them even when this serves no narrowly self-interested purpose." *Social Theory of International Politics*, 341.

²³¹ See "Philippines, China to map potential oil in Spratlys; Vietnam invited," *Agence France Presse*, 2 September 2004.

its position against multilateral approaches to the South Sea disputes. However, the joint PRC-RP survey of the Spratlys caused friction between Beijing and Hanoi (as discussed below) that was not mitigated until Hanoi finally agreed to join the seismic survey in March 2005.²³²

The 2005 tripartite agreement between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines for joint offshore oil and gas prospecting in disputed areas of the South China Sea, according to Beijing, had turned a “sea of disputes” into a “sea of cooperation.” Chinese ambassador Wu Hongbo stated that the trilateral accord, based on mutual understanding and common interest, would set a good example for resolving the South China Sea issue in a peaceful way, while Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said that the agreement signified “the growing level of trust and confidence among claimants and their commitment to pursue peaceful options on the issue.” Philippine Energy Secretary Vincent Perez also underlined the significance of the tripartite agreement by stating, “in contrast to the gunbattle [sic] diplomacy of the last century, we call this seismic vessel diplomacy.”²³³ Even former Philippine President Ramos, who had sounded the alarm bell of a China threat so directly and impassionedly at the 2001 Davos meeting of the World Economic Forum, had modified his analysis of the “China threat” by September 2005. Demonstrating a new, more upbeat attitude concerning Chinese intentions in the Spratlys, Ramos commented to reporters that the tripartite oil exploration deal between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines was a win-win proposition for all participants. Ramos remarked, “with the major claimants to the islands [Spratlys] supervising the oil explora-

²³² See “Philippines, China, Vietnam to explore S. China Sea areas,” *Kyodo News*, 14 March 2005, “China, Philippines, Vietnam sign joint South China Sea oil search accord,” *Agence France Presse*, 14 March 2005.

²³³ See “Turning ‘sea of disputes’ into ‘sea of cooperation,’” *Xinhua News Agency*, 15 March 2005 and “Trio sign deal for Spratlys surveys,” *Upstream*, 18 March 2005 respectively.

tions, we could also gain a defense and security benefit from it. Instead of fighting over the islands we are coming together to bring about the joint exploration and development of the islands.”²³⁴ Vietnam’s accession to what had originally been a bilateral agreement between Beijing and Manila for joint exploration of the Spratlys transformed the enterprise into a multilateral undertaking. Significantly, this multilateralization occurred because of bilateral talks outside of ASEAN’s multilateral processes. This diplomatic accomplishment served to reinforce Beijing’s long-standing assertion that the disputes should be resolved initially and primarily through bilateral dialogue between disputant states.

Beijing’s concession towards multilateralism was viewed by Manila and ASEAN positively and helped to reduce China’s image as a “threat” in Southeast Asia. From Manila’s point of view, Beijing’s move allowed for the possibility of a joint Philippines-Vietnam position in the Spratlys vis-à-vis China, which would strengthen Manila’s negotiating position, while at the same time allow for increased trade and economic relations with China. From ASEAN’s point of view (discussed in the following chapter), Beijing’s agreement with Manila for joint development of the Spratlys further proved that the strategy of “engaging” and “socializing” China was working. Further, the invitation to Vietnam to join the joint PRC-RP exploration project illustrated to ASEAN leaders that the Chinese were becoming more comfortable with ASEAN’s special multilateral approach to international relations and dispute resolution. In effect, it was obvious that China was increasingly becoming “socialized” into accepting ASEAN norms. As such, perceptions in Southeast Asia of a rising Chinese threat were greatly reduced. From Beijing’s perspective, Chinese GND at the bilateral level had successfully prevented the Spratlys dis-

²³⁴ “Ramos: Spratlys oil exploration deal to promote peace in region,” *BusinessWorld*, 2 September 2005.

pute with the Philippines from derailing a further deepening of relations between the two countries and, at the same time, reinforced the “cooperative” and “responsible” images of China increasingly held by ASEAN leaders. Most significantly, Beijing accomplished this without *directly* compromising China’s claim of territorial sovereignty.

A recent event in the Spratlys further exemplifies the success of Beijing’s “good neighbor” diplomacy in China’s relations with the Philippines, as well as the remarkable change in China-Philippine “role-identities.” On 26 April 2006, the Chinese fishing vessel *Jinghai 03012* was attacked and boarded by unknown assailants while operating in an area of the Spratlys disputed by China and the Philippines. The attack left four Chinese dead and three others wounded.²³⁵ According to the Chinese newspaper *Southern Daily*, a survivor stated that a Philippine boat was behind the attack and that six of the attackers “wore camouflage clothes while the other seven were casually dressed.”²³⁶ The incident prompted Beijing on 3 May to request officially that Manila investigate the attack. Commenting on the Chinese request, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita cautioned against immediately assuming that the attackers were Filipinos, while at the same time expressing his confidence that Sino-Philippine relations would not be hurt by the event: “this is a very minor [incident] and our diplomatic ties remain strong.”²³⁷ The Chinese insinuation that the Philippines was behind the attack angered Philippine Senator Rodolfo Biazon, who denounced the Chinese paper’s report and retorted that pirates were probably responsible for the attack: “that area [Spratlys] is teeming with pirates, so it’s not fair

²³⁵ See “Beijing asks RP to probe killings,” *Manila Standard*, 4 May 2006, and “AFP probes Spratlys incident,” *Manila Standard*, 5 May 2006.

²³⁶ “Beijing asks RP to probe killings,” *Manila Standard*, 4 May 2006, and “Spratly Ship Remains A Phantom,” *The Manila Times*, 7 May 2006.

²³⁷ “Beijing asks RP to probe killings,” *Manila Standard*, 4 May 2006.

to accuse our nationals of being responsible for that [attack].”²³⁸ After concluding its investigation, Manila officially denied any role in the attack on *Jinghai 03012*. On 8 May, Philippine military spokesman Colonel Tristan Kison told reporters “there were no [Philippine] military units in the area when that incident happened,” and that pirates appeared to be responsible.”²³⁹

As subsequent statements and counterstatements concerning the incident were issued by Beijing and Manila, the attack on the *Jinghai 03012* might have led to renewed friction and conflict between China and the Philippines -- as had occurred in the past as outlined in Chapter 2 -- but this time the outcome was much different. In response to the violent event, Beijing, Manila, and Hanoi agreed to strengthen security cooperation between the three countries in the Spratlys. Commenting on the agreement, Philippine military chief General Generosa Senga stated, “we have agreed that we will continue our direct communication and direct cooperation . . . so that such problems in the area – piracy, smuggling, transnational crimes and others, other issues and concerns that are bothering all of us in common – will be resolved.”²⁴⁰ Unlike the past, when violent encounters in the Spratlys led to worsening relations between the two countries, the April 2006 attack on the Chinese fishing vessel led to increased cooperation and *improved* Sino-Philippine relations. Even more significant, neither side made mention of its claim of territorial sovereignty in the Spratlys! Clearly, by 2006 the traditional enmity between Beijing and Manila over the Spratlys had transformed into amity and cooperation. Perhaps more importantly, the “role-identities” between both actors had become “partner-partner” and

²³⁸ “AFP probes Spratlys incident,” *Manila Standard*, 5 May 2006.

²³⁹ “Philippines denies role in attack on Chinese fishermen in Spratly Islands,” *AFX Asia*, 8 May 2006.

²⁴⁰ See “Pirates attacked Chinese fishermen in Spratlys, says Philippine military chief,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 19 May 2006, and “RP, China, Vietnam to cooperate in Spratlys security,” *Manila Bulletin*, 19 May 2006.

showed no indication, now that the territorial dispute issue was willingly placed on a back burner by both parties, of reverting to “competitor-competitor” or “enemy-enemy.”

Vietnam

As with China’s bilateral relation with the Philippines, so too would Beijing learn that Chinese and Vietnamese interests shared much in common -- a focus on domestic economic development, and a desire for a stable, peaceful international environment. In addition, Beijing learned that Hanoi was willing to put the South China Sea issue on the “back burner” for the time being, as long as China exemplified its peaceful “good neighbor” rhetoric with concrete action. Beijing’s initial “simple” learning and corresponding instrumental modifications in its GND, however, began over time to change towards “complex” learning which caused a transformation of China’s cognitive base and traditional “Cold War” identity bringing it in line with the “post-Cold War” identity already discernable in China’s multilateral diplomacy with ASEAN. The shift in China’s identity resulting from “complex” learning at the multilateral level took more time to occur at the bilateral level. This is understandable, given the directly confrontational nature of bilateral negotiations, as opposed to the more diffused, nuanced setting of multilateral forums. As we shall see, a change in China’s identity eventually influenced Beijing’s bilateral diplomacy and relations with Vietnam. The role-identities shared between China and Vietnam had also changed from “enemy-enemy” to “partner-partner” by 2005. Hanoi’s China threat perceptions decreased as China’s new “post-Cold War” identity became more discernable and believable to the Vietnamese.

As noted earlier, territorial disputes along the land and sea borders, and over the Paracel and Spratly islands in the South China Sea, had long been a major point of con-

tention in Sino-Vietnamese relations. Normalization of PRC-DRV relations in 1991, along with an increase in bilateral diplomacy between Beijing and Hanoi, by 1996, had produced tangible results even while the South China Sea disputes continued to threaten improving relations. The resumption of rail links between China and Vietnam early in 1996 was perhaps the best manifestation of the positive change in relations, reflecting the diligent efforts of both Beijing and Hanoi toward preventing conflict over territory as both countries perceived a peaceful, stable Southeast Asia as being critical for their nations' interests. Additionally, Chinese minesweeping along the border cleared previously mined areas and restored farmland as well as increased border trade between China and Vietnam. By 1997, border trade between the two countries increased to almost four times that of 1992.²⁴¹ However, even while trade and cross-border contact substantially increased between the PRC and DRV, territorial disputes continued to menace relations between both socialist countries.

Mistrusting one another, both Hanoi and Beijing took unilateral steps to consolidate their respective territorial claims even while Sino-Vietnamese relations deepened in other areas. The "role-identities" of China and Vietnam were no longer "enemy-enemy," now rather "competitor-competitor." One strategy employed by both sides was to grant oil and gas exploration and drilling concession areas to foreign oil companies in disputed regions of the South China Sea. In March 1997, the Chinese drilling rig *Kan Tan III* was observed to be operating in an area between Hainan Island and the central coast of Vietnam, at the entrance of the Gulf of Tonkin.²⁴² When Hanoi protested, the Chinese withdrew *Kan Tan III* from the area and entered into special talks with their neighbor to the

²⁴¹ The volume of border trade in 1992 was 100 million dollars; in 1997, the volume of border trade had risen to 360 million dollars. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia Pacific*, FED3135, 01/27/98.

²⁴² *The Straits Times*, 8 April 1997.

south to resolve the new territorial dispute.²⁴³ Even as Beijing took a conciliatory position regarding the incident by withdrawing the oilrig from the disputed waters and entering into new talks with Hanoi concerning that specific territory, the Chinese leadership did not waiver in its claim of Chinese territorial sovereignty.²⁴⁴ After the March incident and subsequent Sino-Vietnamese talks, however, Beijing renewed tensions with the DRV by granting in October 1997 offshore oil and gas exploration rights to Atlantic Richfield Corporation (ARCO) nearby the area where *Kan Tan III* had operated in March.²⁴⁵

Early in 1998, a dispute over the land border near the Vietnamese town of Hoanh Mo strained Sino-Vietnamese relations, indicating that both sides still mistrusted one another. Hanoi initiated this new round of squabbling over the land border by accusing China of reclaiming land along a river border, which diverted the flow of water, and thus causing flood damage along the Vietnamese side of the river. Beijing responded by asserting that Vietnam had built an outcrop into the river initially, causing damage to the Chinese river bank, forcing Beijing to reinforce its river bank to prevent damage to Chinese land and crops.²⁴⁶ Yet, the working group on the Chinese-Vietnamese sea border in the Gulf of Tonkin reached an agreement by the tenth round of talks in March 1998 to accelerate the pace of negotiations that a resolution of the dispute could be reached by 2000.²⁴⁷ Qian Qichen and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam agreed in July 1997 that the best way to speed up resolution of the outstanding territorial disputes

²⁴³ Apparently, Hanoi successfully played the "ASEAN card" during the dispute with China by calling in and presenting Vietnam's case to the ASEAN ambassadors. See Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnamese Perspectives of the 'China Threat'" in *The China Threat: Perception, Myths, and Reality*, Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 227.

²⁴⁴ *The Straits Times*, 15 April 1997.

²⁴⁵ Arco and China's state-owned offshore oil company CNOOC agreed to exploit jointly the Ledong gas field near the Yacheng gas field where the two companies were building an offshore pipeline to the Chinese mainland. *The Straits Times*, 24 November 1997.

²⁴⁶ *The Straits Times*, 24 and 26 January 1998.

²⁴⁷ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia Pacific*, FED3190, 04/01/98.

between the two countries was to seek solutions to the comparably easier land and sea borders first, and then work out the South China Sea disputes over the Parcel and Spratly islands.²⁴⁸ At the eleventh round of talks in January 1998, a draft agreement demarcating the Sino-Vietnamese land border was reportedly commented upon by both sides in preparation for a final resolution of that particular border dispute.²⁴⁹ Even while Beijing and Hanoi were about to conclude an agreement on the mutual land border, the South China Sea disputes continued to test the resiliency of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Both countries continued to affirm their territorial claims in the region during 1998-1999 by awarding oil contracts to foreign companies to drill in disputed areas, as well as constructing buildings and structures in the Parcel and Spratly archipelagoes, such as the ground satellite station in the Paracels and telephone booth in the Spratlys built by the Chinese.²⁵⁰

However, irrespective of the intractable position taken by both sides in the South China Sea disputes, the two countries finally signed in 2000 the Agreement on Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Long-standing Stability, followed by additional treaties that same year settling major points of dispute concerning the land border and outlining the pathway toward resolving the maritime boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin.²⁵¹ As for the South China Sea claims, a forum was established to continue efforts of reaching a resolution of the most difficult territorial dispute between the two countries. Talks between

²⁴⁸ *FBIS, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-97-196, 07/15/97.

²⁴⁹ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3: Asia Pacific*, FED3133, 01/24/98.

²⁵⁰ See Cheng Guan Ang, "Vietnam-China Relations Since the End of the Cold War," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 12 (1998), 1122-1141, and "Vietnam: Another Milestone and the Country Plods On," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2002), 352-353.

²⁵¹ See "China and Vietnam Sign Land border Treaty," (15 November 2000), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/tyfls/tyfl/2631/t15493.htm> (accessed 3 July 2006) and "China's Maritime Demarcation and Bilateral Fishery Affairs," (9 July 2001). <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/tyfls/tyfl/2626/2628/t15476.htm> (accessed 9 July 2006).

China and Vietnam concerning the Spratlys, as well as the remaining procedural issues and problems inherent in the recent agreements settling the land border and maritime boundary in the Tonkin gulf, continued the next few years as PRC-DRV relations strengthened within wider (especially economic) context. Both sides realized that further progress on territorial issues was essential for maintaining the forward momentum in Sino-Vietnamese relations. However, both Beijing and Hanoi also realized that neither of them had much room for maneuver on the Spratlys-Paracels dispute. Therefore, talks between the two states focused instead on resolving smaller, easier territorial issues. Progress in these negotiations ultimately led to subsequent agreements.

By 2002, China and Vietnam had essentially resolved their mutual territorial disputes concerning the land border and in the Gulf of Tonkin. The remaining outstanding (minor) issues were subsequently resolved. On 24 February 2004, China and Vietnam signed a supplementary protocol for cooperation in fisheries issues, demonstrating tangible progress toward a resolution of remaining difficulties in the bilateral relationship. While this supplemental protocol was not as monumental an agreement as one resolving the Spratlys dispute might be, it was nonetheless important in furthering Sino-Vietnamese relations. This was a point well stressed by both sides. At the reception given in honor of the visiting Chinese delegation, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan praised the common effort at reaching an agreement on fisheries in the Bac Bo (Tonkin) Gulf, adding that the agreement was important to “long-term stability in the Gulf of Tonkin while helping to strengthen trust, friendship and co-operation between the people living on its shores [as] well as the people of Viet Nam and China.”²⁵² However, even as both sides were able to reach agreements settling the land border and outlining the necessary

²⁵² *Viet Nam News*, 26 February 2004.

steps for resolving the sea boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin, disputes over the Paracels and Spratlys in the South China Sea continued to vex Sino-Vietnamese relations.

In March 2004, yet another row concerning ownership of the Spratlys erupted between China and Vietnam. Conflicting claims of sovereignty over the Spratlys archipelago (or *Truong Sa* in Vietnamese) were made by both China and Vietnam. Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Le Dung rejected recent Chinese territorial claims in the Spratlys, calling the claim “groundless.” Dung stated, “Viet Nam has time and time again asserted its indisputable sovereignty over both the Truong Sa and Hoang Sa (Paracel) archipelagos.” After reaffirming Vietnamese sovereignty, Dung continued by stressing the 2002 Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea and advised all parties to “restrain themselves and cease issuing unnecessary statements over the issue.”²⁵³ Subsequently, Vietnam announced plans to send tourists to the Spratlys, further complicating relations with Beijing while at the same time gaining support for Hanoi’s plans from the Philippines who, as we have seen, was keen at the time to foster better cooperation with Vietnam vis-à-vis China.²⁵⁴

In September 2004, the row between Hanoi and Beijing-Manila intensified when Vietnam accused China and the Philippines of planning surveying activities in its territorial jurisdiction. Within one week of the announcement of the PRC-RP deal for joint oil exploration in the Spratlys, Hanoi accused Beijing and Manila of disregarding the 2002 ASEAN Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea. Vietnamese foreign ministry spokesperson Le Dung stated, “as a signatory to the code of conduct on the South China

²⁵³ *Viet Nam News*, 26 March 2004.

²⁵⁴ Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert was quoted to say that the Philippines did not oppose Vietnamese plans to send tourists to the Spratlys and that Hanoi’s moves did not violate the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. See *Viet Nam News*, 8 and 19 April, 2004.

Sea signed between ASEAN and China in November 2002, Vietnam has committed with relevant parties to implement the code towards the maintenance of peace and stability.” Dung went on to urge “all parties to seriously implement the agreement,” while at the same time reiterating Vietnamese sovereignty over the Spratlys.²⁵⁵ Still dubious of China’s “smiling” diplomacy in Southeast Asia and uncertain whether Beijing’s recent cooperative attitude with Vietnam would continue in the ongoing effort to reach a resolution of the South China Sea disputes, Hanoi launched a new campaign reaffirming Vietnam’s territorial sovereignty in the Spratlys.²⁵⁶ Shortly thereafter, Beijing responded by accusing Vietnam of violating Chinese territorial sovereignty in the Spratlys by inviting bids for offshore oil exploration in the region.²⁵⁷ The territorial dispute between China and Vietnam over the Spratlys again threatened to tarnish Beijing’s GND in Southeast Asia. With the intension of reinforcing China’s “good neighbor” image in the region, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao suggested at the eighth ASEAN-China summit of November 2004 that a senior-level working group be established to examine the issues of joint development.²⁵⁸

The DRV undertook a conspicuous media campaign in 2005 and early 2006 that stressed Vietnamese sovereignty over the Spratlys and highlighted the determination and dedication of the country’s armed forces in the archipelago.²⁵⁹ In April 2005, Vietnam celebrated the 30th anniversary of the “liberation” of the Truong Sa archipelago (Sprat-

²⁵⁵ “Vietnam hits out at China, Philippines over Spratly oil plans,” *Agence France Presse*, 9 September 2004.

²⁵⁶ “Truong Sa Island celebrates 30th anniversary of liberation,” *Viet Nam News*, 29 April 2005.

²⁵⁷ See Gilbert Felongco, “Manila unfazed by Spratly Isles tensions,” *Financial Times Information*, 11 September 2004 and “China protest Vietnam’s bid in South China Sea,” *Agence France Presse*, 20 October 2004.

²⁵⁸ “Major points of Premier Wen’s speech at the 8th China-ASEAN summit,” *Xinhua New Agency*, (30 November 2004).

²⁵⁹ For example, see “Gifts arrive for soldiers on Truong Sa islands,” *Viet Nam News*, 26 January 2006.

lys). Speaking at a ceremony celebrating the anniversary, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnamese People's Army, Lieutenant-General Nguyen Khac Nghien, hailed the efforts and sacrifices of the Vietnamese people and soldiers in overcoming "difficulties to protect the sovereignty of the country." Before ending his address, General Nghien asked the armed forces in the islands to maintain their vigil in protecting Vietnamese sovereignty. Interestingly, Hanoi's media blitz on the Spratlys was not only aimed at foreign ears, but was apparently also intended for domestic consumption.

A 2006 article appearing in the *Viet Nam News*, an English language newspaper published by the state Vietnamese News Agency, reported the arrival of gifts for the soldiers stationed in the Spratlys for the Tet (Lunar New Year) celebration. The *Viet Nam News* reported that in addition to fresh vegetables, fruits, and "healthy" pigs, soldiers also received copies of nationalistic literature celebrating several Vietnamese heroes who martyred themselves in the war against the United States.²⁶⁰ Clearly, the Vietnamese government was concerned about the morale of its military garrison in the Spratlys, but it seems more likely that Hanoi's "media blitz" was largely intended to strengthen Vietnam's negotiating position in the South China Sea disputes vis-à-vis Beijing and Manila. Hanoi had historically rejected proposals for joint development because Vietnamese leaders felt that doing so would weaken Vietnam's legal claims of territorial sovereignty over both the Spratly and Paracel archipelagoes.

The reassertion of Vietnamese sovereignty in the South China Sea during 2005-2006 was most likely a consequence of this reasoning rather than a move undertaken out of genuine concern that China might again flex its growing military might in the Spratlys.

²⁶⁰ The works, distributed by the Communist Youth Union of Khanh Hoa Province, were "Mai mai tuoi hai muoi," and "Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram" (The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram). *Viet Nam News*, 26 January 2006.

It makes sense that if Hanoi indeed feared future Chinese territorial aggression in the South China Sea, the Vietnamese would not have signed the tripartite agreement in March 2005. One must consider, however, that the long history of enmity, animosity, and conflict between Vietnam and China cannot be reversed overnight, and that the difficult shared history must account for lingering suspicions between the two countries. The momentous 2005 tripartite agreement for joint development in the disputed Spratlys, along with increased PRC-DRV trade and Chinese economic and technical assistance, did ease mutual suspicions to an appreciable extent. It remains doubtful that Sino-Vietnamese relations would have progressed as far as they have during the last decade if Vietnamese perceptions of China as a “threat” had not lessened.

Beijing’s diplomatic activities in Southeast Asia, undertaken since the mid-1990s to promote a friendly and cooperative “good neighbor” image of China had lessened Vietnamese fears and suspicions of China to an extent that allowed this remarkable improvement in Sino-Vietnamese relations. China’s friendly, “good neighbor” image in Vietnam had strengthen to the point that during a March 2005 visit to Hanoi, Chinese leader Jia Qinglin commented to Vietnamese General Secretary Nong Duc Manh that China-Vietnam relations were at one of the most inimitable highpoints in history. Jia continued:

China is ready to work with Vietnam to continuously enrich the content of the guideline of long-term stability, orientation to the future, friendship and good-neighborliness [sic] and all-round cooperation and the goals of being *good neighbors, good friends, good comrades* and *good partners* [emphasis mine]. All these are aimed to pass on the friendship between China and Vietnam from generation to generation, promote the profound development of bilateral cooperation for more mutually beneficial results.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ “China-Vietnam relations in best time in history,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 21 March 2006. This was the lead story for *Xinhua*.

General Secretary Manh responded by agreeing with Jia's comments, and then praised China's remarkable achievements in national development. Manh added that China's developmental model was an encouragement for the "reform and opening drive" of Vietnam's own development and that Vietnam placed "great importance" on learning from the PRC's experiences. Manh also stated that Vietnam was ready to expand the exchange of high-level visits with China, increase cooperation in various fields, advance bilateral and party-to-party relations between the two countries, and deepen coordination in regional and international affairs.²⁶² The statements made by both Jia and Manh were not, as it turned out, premised upon polite, but empty words.

Both Beijing and Hanoi took further actions to demonstrate concretely their sincere desire for closer, more cooperative relations between the two socialist countries. On the same day that Jia and Manh officially celebrated the improvement in Sino-Vietnamese relations in general, the 15th round of negotiations at the chairperson level of the Vietnam-China Joint Committee on Land Border Delineation and Marker Planting were underway. The event was described by the *Thai News Service* as "an event of friendship and frankness where the two sides discussed effective measures to fulfill high-level commitments on border demarcation and speed up the planting of border markers."²⁶³ In addition to demonstrating their "good neighborliness" by finalizing agreements on the land border and the maritime boundary in the Tonkin Gulf, China and Vietnam confirmed cooperation in the security area by conducting the first joint PRC-DRV navy patrol in the Tonkin Gulf during the 27th and 28th of April to mark the implementation of an agreement between the armed forces and navies of both countries. The *Viet*

²⁶² "China-Vietnam relations in best time in history," *Xinhua News Agency*, 21 March 2006.

²⁶³ "Vietnam, China continue border negotiations," *Thai News Service*, 21 March 2006.

Nam News Agency remarked that the success of the first joint naval patrol helped “promote friendly and cooperative relations between the two armed forces and navies of Vietnam and China, and achieve the goal of peace, stability, prosperous development in the Tonkin Gulf and the region.”²⁶⁴ These agreements were followed on 1 May by the signing of 16 economic cooperation projects between Chinese businesses from Zhanjiang City and their Vietnamese counterparts in Ho Chi Minh City worth \$158 million US dollars, and on 11 May by the signing in Beijing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning Chinese-Vietnamese cooperation in combating cross-border crime.²⁶⁵

Clearly, Beijing’s diplomatic approach of the last decade or so to Sino-Vietnamese relations in general and to the territorial disputes specifically, was a stunning success. The mutually held goal of achieving a closer, more friendly and cooperative relationship between the two countries in the economic and security sectors was largely attained *in spite of the unresolved and emotionally charged territorial disputes in the South China Sea*. Beijing’s GND had successfully replaced the traditionally held image in Vietnam of China as a “threat” with a new friendlier, cooperative “good neighbor” image of China to such an extent that the most problematic issue in Sino-Vietnamese relations (the South China Sea issue) did not prevent the achievement of enhanced and deepened relations between both states. In addition, as in the above-mentioned incident between China and the Philippines, another recent event in the Spratlys serves to illustrate the great success of Beijing’s GND in Sino-Vietnamese relations.

²⁶⁴ “Vietnam, China make first joint navy patrol,” *Thai News Service*, 2 May 2006.

²⁶⁵ The MoU was reached at the 2nd Vietnam-China Meeting on Cooperation in Fighting Crime and Ensuring Security in Border Areas, mutually-chaired by Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Public Security Nguyen Khanh Toan and his Chinese counterpart, Meng Hongwei, who spoke highly of the regular meetings between the two Ministries and considered them “an effective measure to promote . . . cooperation.” See “Vietnam, China sign agreement on economic projects worth 158m dollars,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 12 May 2006.

In May 2006, Vietnam suffered substantial losses in both property and human life during powerful typhoon *Chanchu*. On 19 May, the Vietnamese government sent an SOS message asking for Chinese assistance in search and rescue operations in the Spratlys to locate and help approximately 32 Vietnamese ships in the area. The *Vietnam News Brief Service* reported on 22 May that, as of the previous evening, “the Chinese partnership found and rescued 15 Vietnamese ships with 330 fishermen, including 21 deaths and six injuries.”²⁶⁶ No mention was made by either side of their respective territorial claim in the Spratlys during or following search and rescue operations in the disputed waters. Obviously, Beijing’s GND had successfully sublimated the South China Sea issue within a wider context -- Moore’s “economic-security nexus” -- of Sino-Vietnamese relations in such a way as to lessen the comparable benefits of Vietnam pursuing a “hard” stance in the territorial disputes, and increase the comparable economic rewards of a “soft” or “co-operative” Vietnamese approach to the South China Sea disputes with China. The benefits of increased trade and economic relations with the PRC far outweighed any benefits Vietnam might gain by pushing China too hard on the South China Sea issue. After all, Vietnam could, in a way, “have its cake and eat it too” by agreeing to put the sovereignty issue aside for the moment and gain the economic benefits associated with joint development of the disputed regions *as well as benefits associated with increased Sino-Vietnamese trade and economic relations*. Beijing’s GND had transformed the traditional zero-sum approach of both Beijing and Hanoi concerning the disputes into a shared vision of a “win-win” methodology toward resolving (or at least diminishing the detrimental effects of) the South China Sea issue.

²⁶⁶ “Vietnam Suffers Unforeseen Huge Losses Caused by 1st Powerful Typhoon,” *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 22 May 2006.

However, this transformation in bilateral relations between China and both ASEAN states, the Philippines and Vietnam, away from conflict and toward cooperation, could not have occurred without a corresponding transformation of “role-identities” of all actors begot by a budding “collective” identity as “fellow Asians” established as a result of “complex” learning from multilateral interaction. In short, as “enemies,” the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, in all probability, would not have witnessed the positive change that has occurred. In China’s bilateral (traditional) relations with Vietnam and the Philippines during the first period of our study (1989-1996), little “complex” learning took place because the “role-identities” of the actors were too egoistic and conflictual (economic and security “rivals”). “Simple” learning about Self and Other served to incarnate a hostile shared Lockean strategic culture. Only through multilateral interaction between China and the ASEAN states was “complex” learning possible because “role-identities” other than those above were possible (“cooperator-cooperator,” “equal member-equal member,” “partner-partner,” etc.). In other words, the birth and growth of a collective “we-ness” between China and the ASEAN states, conceived through multilateral interaction, made the transformation of bilateral relations possible.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes that the positive change in economic and security relations (territorial disputes) corresponds with two changes in China’s “role-identity” in Sino-ASEAN relations; from “enemy” or “rival” to “cooperator,” and then from “cooperator” to “partner” (economic “cooperator” 1997, “partner” 2001; security “cooperator” 1996,

“partner” 2003).²⁶⁷ Further, these changes in “role-identity” resulted from “complex” learning about Self and Other obtained through multilateral interaction. This is not to say, however, that *only* “complex” social learning took place via multilateral interaction - “simple” social learning also took place because of multilateral interaction. What I am arguing is that over time the frequency of “complex” learning increased (and thus its causal impact on Beijing’s GND as well), while that of “simple” learning (and its causal impact on Beijing’s GND) either remained steady or decreased, thus lessening its relevance in China’s evolving “good neighbor” diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Further, the changes in Beijing’s GND invoked by “complex” social learning during this second period of our case study were not all *constitutive* changes -- instrumental changes in China’s “good neighbor” diplomacy also occurred, but in a decreasing frequency inversely related to the change in China’s identity. In other words, as China’s cognitive base became increasingly influenced by “complex” learning via multilateral interaction, Beijing’s application of the GND became less instrumental and more constitutive. I argue, therefore, that by 2002 – 2003 “complex” social learning via multilateral interaction became the principal causal factor eliciting constitutive change in China’s identity (from China’s “Cold War” identity to the new “post-Cold War” identity), and thus a change in Beijing’s GND resulting in a positive change in Sino-ASEAN relations.

Beijing’s “good neighbor” diplomacy has met with stunning success in Southeast Asia considering that Sino-ASEAN relations have never been better in spite of the still unresolved territorial disputes in the South China Sea. This is remarkable, considering that only a decade ago the South Sea disputes were seen as a likely point of regional con-

²⁶⁷ Wendt defines “role-identity” as “the meanings that actors attribute to themselves when seeing themselves as an object . . . from the perspective of the Other.” Each actor is at each stage of interaction “jointly defining who each of them is.” *Social Theory of International Politics*, 334-335.

flict between China and some ASEAN states, as well as a probable obstacle in Sino-ASEAN relations. Yet Vietnam and the Philippines agreed in 2005 to ignore the sovereignty issue for the time being and signed a Tripartite agreement with Beijing for joint exploration and development of offshore oil reserves in and around the disputed Spratlys. The two ASEAN states most wary and suspicious of Chinese intentions in the South China Sea, and most vociferous in their demand for a stronger ASEAN position on the disputes, are now *partners* with China in developing the natural resources of the Spratlys. Moreover, who might have imagined in 2000 that an armed attack on a Chinese fishing trawler in disputed waters by a “Philippine boat,” leaving four Chinese dead and three wounded, would *not* precipitate a crisis in China-Philippine relations? The 2006 “pirate” attack on *Jinghai 03012* did not result in the traditional accusations, denials, and counter-accusations of the past. As we have seen, only one Chinese newspaper accused Manila of culpability, and following a brief investigation of the incident, both Beijing and Manila concluded that cooperation in the Spratlys between the Chinese and Philippine navies *should be increased!* How can we explain such an unexpected turnabout in the most contentious issue in China’s relations with ASEAN and member states?

The simple (and incomplete) answer is that China’s GND represents a stunning success of hardnosed *Realpolitik* on the behalf of Beijing. Informed by knowledge gained through interaction with ASEAN and member states, Beijing carefully de-emphasized the South Sea disputes in Sino-ASEAN relations to the degree that this most difficult issue no longer poses a serious obstacle to good relations between China and the ASEAN nations. With China’s superior economic wealth as advantage, Beijing manipulated Vietnam, the Philippines, and ASEAN to accept China’s position of putting the

sovereignty issue on hold and, until a final resolution of the disputes is reached, pursuing joint development of the contested areas. The 2005 tripartite agreement between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines evidences this assertion, as do the other bilateral agreements between China and Vietnam, and between China and the Philippines, as well as the multi-lateral agreements concluded between China and ASEAN. In short, Beijing's skillful diplomacy manipulated the ASEAN states into accepting China's position of inviolable territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea in exchange for better economic relations with China.

Some of the conclusions above are correct. Beijing *did* succeed in mollifying ASEAN fears of a rising China "threat" and consequently *was* successful in sublimating the South China Sea disputes within wider concerns and shared expectations in Sino-ASEAN relations. However, this rationalist (realist) mainstream explanation fails to explain the rapidity and intensity of positive change in China's relations with the ASEAN states and in Beijing's bilateral relations with Vietnam and the Philippines. After all, China's claims of "inviolable" territorial sovereignty over much of the South China Sea still stand, and the power projection capabilities of the Chinese military continue to improve, increasing Beijing's ability of using force to defend Chinese territorial sovereignty in the region. The logical answer is that the ASEAN states no longer believe that China has aggressive territorial intentions in the region. The PRC may be acquiring the necessary military capabilities to "resolve" unilaterally the territorial disputes, but that does not mean that Beijing will do so. In fact, from the ASEAN perspective, the use of force by Beijing in the region is now only a remote possibility.

The more complete answer to the question is that China and the ASEAN states have “learned” about one another (self and other) through multilateral interaction that, because of shared knowledge and “complex” learning, challenged and changed traditional “role-identities” in the relationship. Beijing learned that the “ASEAN Way” of unofficial multilateral dialogue was not incompatible with Chinese interests and approach to regional foreign policy. This knowledge came in part from participation in the Indonesian workshops, and in part from interaction at various ASEAN processes such as the China-ASEAN summits, ARF, APT, and PMC. The Chinese learned that the “ASEAN Way” respected cultural and political differences among member nations, and valued the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states -- both China and the ASEAN states identified with a “hard” conception of state sovereignty. This became clear to China and ASEAN as both sides rejected the internationalization of the territorial disputes issue. In this issue, a collective (holistic) identity associated with resisting U.S. interference in the domestic affairs of other states (human rights campaign, military interventions) was further strengthened. The effect of this “complex” learning on the evolution of Beijing’s approach to the disputes is obviously present in China’s NSC. The NSC defines equality in holistic terms: “equality means that all countries, big or small, are equal members of the international community and should respect each other, treat each other as equals, refrain from interfering in other countries’ internal affairs and promote the democratization of the international relations.” The NSC also stresses diversity (pluralism, again a holistic idea) and presents China as a “member of the group” (holistic identity):

China believes that ours is a world of diversity, and this is particularly true of the Asia-Pacific region. Given such reality, only mutual-accommodation, mutual-

learning and greater cooperation can serve to achieve common progress and development of all nations. Therefore, security cooperation is not just something for countries with similar or identical views and mode of development, it includes cooperation between countries whose views and mode of development differ.²⁶⁸

Another example of “complex” learning affecting China’s identity and interests is found in Beijing’s decision to sign the 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. As discussed above, Chinese participation in the Indonesian Workshops on Preventing Conflict in the South China Sea allowed Beijing to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the positions of the other disputant states, as well as become more familiarized and comfortable with the multilateral process. Beijing learned through Chinese participation in the annual workshops that the ASEAN states (especially the Philippines and Vietnam) placed great value on establishing a code of conduct for the South China Sea. China’s hesitation in accepting such a code appeared to the ASEAN states as being contrary to the cooperative “good neighbor” image Beijing actively promoted in the region. While China’s economic “role-identity” in Southeast Asia was quickly becoming that of “economic partner,” her security “role-identity” at the time seemed schizophrenic -- wavering between egoistic (defender of Chinese sovereignty) and holistic (supporter of NSC and “comprehensive” security) identities. Through multilateral Track II dialogue (interaction), Beijing learned that the ASEAN states could not really trust China until this contradiction in China’s national identity was rectified. While not acting on this knowledge at the Track II level, Beijing did employ this knowledge at the official Track I level by acceding to the ASEAN Declaration on Conduct in the South China Sea in 2002. This move served to greatly enhance China’s “good neighbor” image

²⁶⁸ See *China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept* (31 July 2002). <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/2614/t15319.htm> (accessed 27 March 2006).

in the region by further lessening fears of future Chinese territorial aggression to support its territorial claims over the Paracel and Spratly islands. In addition, Beijing learned early on at the workshops that a joint development strategy might mitigate the detrimental effects of the territorial disputes on Sino-ASEAN relations and allow China to circumvent the issue of territorial sovereignty. As a result, Beijing has consistently proposed joint development of the disputed territories in both its bilateral dialogues with Manila and Hanoi, as well as in China's multilateral dialogue with ASEAN. This strategy, learned in part through Chinese participation in the Track II multilateral workshops, finally bore fruit with the above-mentioned 2005 Tripartite agreement for joint offshore oil exploration and development between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines in the Spratlys. China's schizophrenic security identity was "cured" by a dose of "complex" learning, as China's "role-identity" changed from that of "security cooperator" (1996-2001) to one of "security partner" (2002-present). This would not have been possible without two key changes: a change in China's national identity and interests (from egoistic to holistic), and a corresponding change in ASEAN perceptions of China (from China as a "threat" to China as a "partner"). The empirical evidence supporting this argument is presented next.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPACT OF BEIJING'S GOOD NEIGHBOR DIPLOMACY
ON THE PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR OF SIX ASEAN STATES
TOWARD CHINA, 1989 – 2006

As regional integration process accelerates, China has found itself more and more closely linked with the rest of East Asia. China's development could not be possible without the common development of the countries in the region. Enhancing regional cooperation is a major part of China's foreign policy of making friends and partners with its neighbors and building a harmonious, secure, and prosperous neighborhood. China will, as always, enthusiastically support and take part in East Asian cooperation. I believe, with concerted efforts, East Asian cooperation will surely have a brighter future.

- Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing -

This chapter analyzes the effects of Beijing's Good Neighbor Diplomacy on threat perceptions of China in Southeast Asia concerning the South China Sea disputes specifically and the rise of Chinese economic and military power in general, as well as an analysis of recent security behavior of six ASEAN states towards China. The previous chapters make the argument that China's identity and interests have changed because of interaction with the ASEAN states, imparting a positive impact on Sino-ASEAN relations. Over time, the ASEAN states have become less apprehensive of Chinese intentions in the South China Sea. In short, the ASEAN states no longer view China as a "threat" because interaction and social learning have changed Beijing's "role-identity" in the relationship – and thus moved the regional strategic culture increasingly toward a Kantian logic of anarchy.²⁶⁹ This chapter offers empirical support of my argument

²⁶⁹ Wendt argues that Kantian culture, like its counterparts (Hobbesian and Lockean), is susceptible to three degrees of internalization, 1st degree, 2nd degree, and 3rd degree, which are not mutually exclusive; "I believe it is more useful to see them as reflecting three different "degrees" to which a norm can be *internal-*

through an analysis of China's changing national image in six ASEAN states (Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand) regarding the South China Sea disputes, from that of "threat" to one of "partner." The four additional states are included in our study to afford a more balanced assessment of regional perceptions of China. As earlier discussed, Vietnam and the Philippines are the two ASEAN states with the most pronounced China threat perceptions. Of the two, Vietnam is the ASEAN state historically most distrustful of China. Besides Vietnam and the Philippines, Singapore represents another difficult test for our case study of Chinese regional foreign policy. While Singapore is largely responsible for initiating ASEAN's "engagement" of China, the city-state has the closest informal defense relations with the United States in the region (construction of naval facilities for visiting American aircraft carriers, for example). As such, while remaining open to the possibilities of improved relations with China, Singapore "hedges" its security strategy by supporting a continuing American military presence in the region. On the other hand, both Thai and Indonesian perceptions of China have changed during the period of our study in almost an inverse relationship to one another. Thailand's perception of China has changed from one of optimism (along with Singapore, Thailand was an early advocate for a policy of "engaging" China) to a more cautious position, given deepening Sino-Myanmar relations, while China's image in Indonesia has changed from that of a troublemaker and threat to one as a cooperative "good neighbor." Malaysia represents the least challenging test of our thesis. Although both countries share a territorial dispute over parts of the Spratly archipelago, Beijing and

ized, and thus as generating three different pathways by which the same structure can be produced – 'force,' 'price,' and 'legitimacy'. It is an empirical question which pathway occurs in a given case. It is only with the third degree of internalization that actors are really 'constructed' by culture up to that point culture is affecting just their behavior or beliefs about the environment, not who they are or what they want." See *Social Theory of International Politics*, chapter 6.

Kuala Lumpur agreed early on in their relationship not to allow their differences in the Spratlys interfere with the overall improvement of Sino-Malaysian relations.²⁷⁰

Data for this analysis were obtained from three sources. This study's primary data was obtained through content analysis of articles appearing in major regional English-language newspapers during 1994-2006 concerning the South China Sea territorial disputes. The second set of supportive data was obtained from regional and global opinion polls and surveys concerning security (threat) perceptions of China and Chinese foreign policy. A third source of data was derived through an analysis of the security behavior of ASEAN states towards China. The six ASEAN countries were chosen for our study because they represent a collectively "balanced" regional perception of China in a region noted for its exceptionally diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, and political composition.²⁷¹

THE DATA

Methodology of Content Analysis

Articles concerning China and the South China Sea disputes were collected from the following regional English-language newspapers: The *Manila Standard* and the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (the Philippines); *Vietnam News Service* and the *Saigon Daily Times* (Vietnam); the *Straits Times* (Singapore); *The Nation* and the *Bangkok Post* (Thailand); the *New Straits Times* and the Malaysian National News Agency *Bernama* (Malay-

²⁷⁰ It should be noted that Malaysia was the first ASEAN state to establish formal relations with Beijing in 1974. In addition, Malaysia established strong economic and military ties with Beijing during the 1990s, and supported China's position of dealing with the South China Sea issue bilaterally. In fact, Malaysian Prime Minister Bin Mohammad Mahathir's foreign policy closely mirrored that of China. Mahathir consistently refuted the "China threat" thesis, argued the need for a multipolar international system to balance American power and influence, and took other anti-Western postures that pleased Beijing. See Lee 17-125.

²⁷¹ D. R. SarDesai makes an excellent discussion of ethnic and cultural diversity in Southeast Asia and gives an informed explanation of its impact on the history of the region. D. R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia: Past & Present* 5th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003).

sia); and the *Jakarta Post* (Indonesia). The articles were analyzed and coded according to the image of China presented. Articles coded “favorable” presented a friendly, cooperative, peaceful “good neighbor” image of China (“post-Cold War” identity). Friendly,” in the sense that China’s actions and statements regarding the territorial disputes are perceived to be undertaken in a spirit of mutual benefit, as opposed to one based solely upon self interest. “Cooperative,” in the sense that Beijing’s diplomacy, actions, and participation in joint activities concerning the South China Sea disputes are perceived as sincere efforts to reduce tension and seek rapprochement with the contestant states. “Peaceful,” in the sense that China is not perceived as seeking a military resolution of the disputes, but rather a political solution. Articles coded “unfavorable” expressed an unfriendly, uncooperative, hostile or threatening image of China vis-à-vis the disputes (traditional “Cold War” identity). Articles not clearly falling into either of these categories were coded “neutral.” The data for each ASEAN state (percentage of “favorable,” “unfavorable,” and “neutral” articles – Y-axis) was tallied by year (X-axis) and plotted on a graph. Trend lines for each characteristic (“favorable,” “unfavorable,” and “neutral”) were calculated and plotted.

Opinion Polls and Surveys

The availability of this type of data concerning China’s image in Southeast Asia is limited and does not necessarily represent the entire population of a country. Nonetheless, these data are heuristic for our understanding of the ASEAN countries’ perception of China. Therefore, opinion poll and survey data are utilized to supplement the primary data set mentioned above. The available data reveal much about China’s image in Southeast Asia (and globally) -- especially since 2004.

The earliest data available come from a 1995 Social Weather Stations Survey of public opinion in the Philippines.²⁷² A portion of the survey contains questions directly concerning the Mischief Reef crisis with China, as well as more generalized (but important) questions concerning relations with China and with the United States that indirectly inform our study. This Social Weather Stations survey also serves as a representative “benchmark” of Southeast Asian perceptions of China in 1995 (as survey and opinion poll data for the other ASEAN states is unavailable until 2004) that can be compared and contrasted with the results of more recent and regionally-inclusive surveys and opinion polls. These include two 2004 BBC World Service Polls, *View of China* (22 nations)²⁷³ and *Who Will Lead the World?* (23 nations);²⁷⁴ a 2005 BBC News 22 Nation Poll on China (March);²⁷⁵ an April 2005 Globescan-PIPA (Program on International Policy Attitudes) Poll, *Evaluating the World Powers* (23 nations)²⁷⁶; the June 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Project *16-Country Global Attitudes Report: China*;²⁷⁷ the November 2005 (updated 2006) Office of Research Opinion Analysis, *Asian Views of China* (7 East Asian

²⁷² Social Weather Stations. *Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines]: Quarter II, 1995* [Computer file] ICPSR version. Quezon City, Philippines: Social Weather Stations [producer], 1998. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1998.

²⁷³ The study conducted by GlobeScan and PIPA for the BBC World Service polled 22,953 people in 22 countries. Available online at www.worldpublicopinion.org.

²⁷⁴ The poll of 23,518 people was conducted for the BBC by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on international Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland during December 2004. Available online at www.worldpublicopinion.org.

²⁷⁵ This BBC World Service Poll of people in 22 countries was undertaken by GlobeScan and PIPA from November 2004 to January 2005.

²⁷⁶ This BBC World Service Poll of 22,953 people in 23 countries was undertaken by GlobeScan and PIPA in April 2005.

²⁷⁷ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *16-Country Global Attitudes Report: China* (23 June 2005).

nations),²⁷⁸ and the February 2006 BBC World Service Poll, *Global Views of Countries* (33 nations).²⁷⁹

THE RESULTS

Newspaper Content Analysis

China's image in Southeast Asia concerning the South China Sea disputes improved in all six ASEAN states investigated in this study. Surprisingly, China's image improved the most markedly in the two "frontline" states Vietnam and the Philippines, which previously viewed China as an "enemy" or "rival." China's "favorable" image also rose dramatically in another claimant state in the scramble for the Spratlys, Malaysia.

The Philippines

Figure 6 summarizes the results of the content analysis of the *Manila Standard* and the *Philippine Daily Enquirer*. While data for the content analysis of the first four years of this study was unavailable, it is not needed to establish that China's image in the Philippines during those years was quite unfavorable, given the history of Sino-Philippine relations concerning the territorial disputes. Manila clearly perceived China as a threat and a likely enemy by the time of the Mischief Reef affair in 1995. However, survey data for 1995 concerning China's image in the Philippines vis-à-vis the dispute in the Spratlys does exist. When asked "If your trust/faith in China is very big, big, maybe big/maybe small, small or very small?", 32.5% answered "small," 29.0% expressed a

²⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State, Office of Research and Opinion Analysis, *Asian Views of China* (November 2005, updated 2006).

²⁷⁹ This poll of 39,435 people was conducted in 33 countries for the BBC World Service by GlobeScan and PIPA between October 2005 and January 2006.

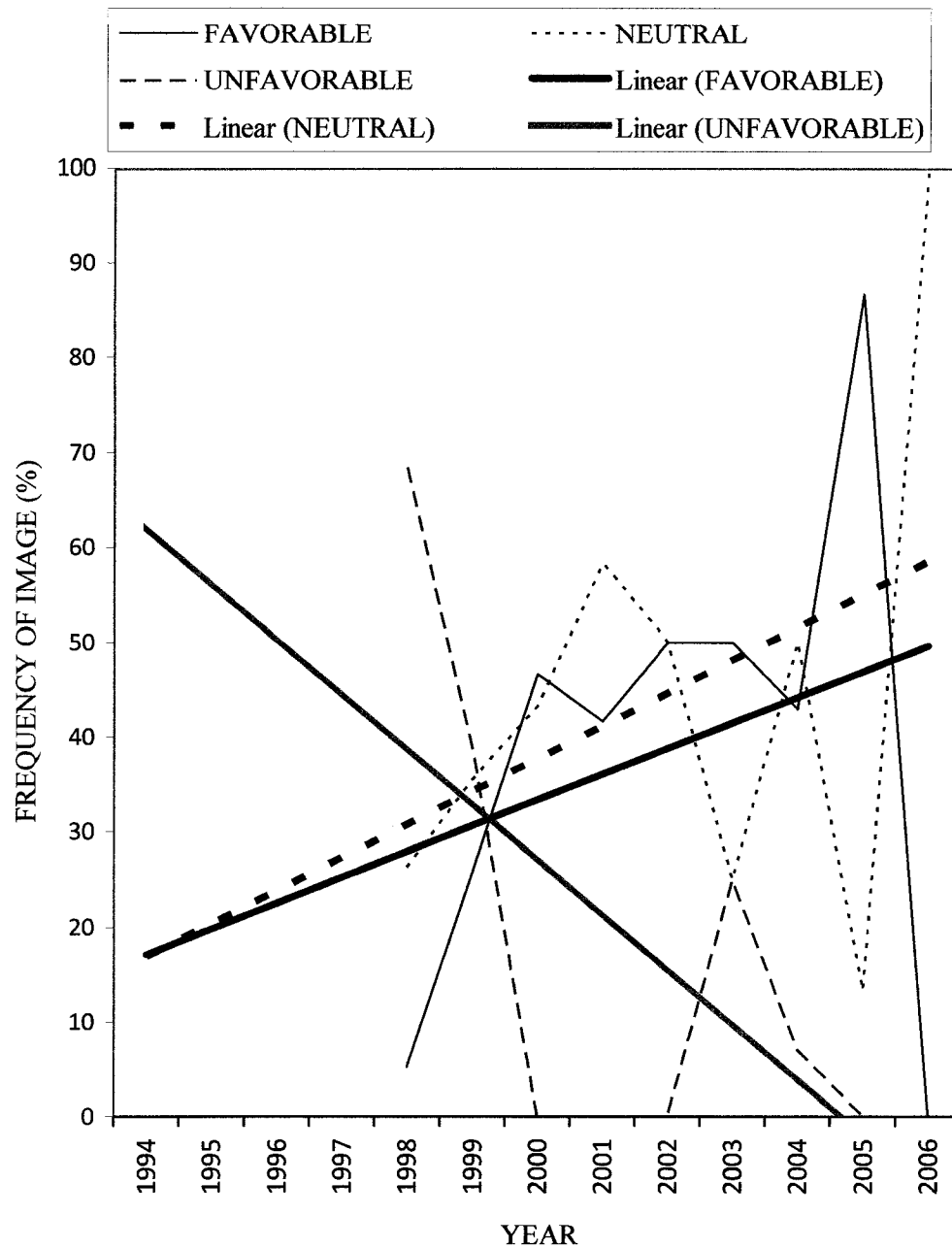


Figure 6. China's National Image in the Philippines (*Manila Standard, Philippine Daily Enquirer*). Note: Total number of articles by year: 1998 (19), 1999 (29), 2000 (33), 2001 (13), 2002 (11), 2003 (4), 2004 (31), 2005 (20), 2006 (6). Data unavailable for 1994-1997.

more cautious view of China by selecting “maybe big, maybe small,” while only 15% of those polled expressed a “big” trust in China and roughly twice that amount (32.5%) expressed a “small” trust in China. Only 1.5% of those polled had a “very big” trust in China.²⁸⁰ When asked if they agreed with the statement, “The Armed Forces of the Philippines should be strengthened so that other nations will not be tempted to occupy the national territories of the Philippines,” 80.1% agreed with the statement (64.1% “agree,” 16.0% “strongly agree”), while only 6.7% disagreed with the statement (5.9% “disagree” and 0.8% “strongly disagree”).²⁸¹ Interestingly, even while most Filipinos believed that the Philippine armed forces should be strengthened, most also believed that the best course of action for Manila to take regarding the territorial dispute with China was to pursue a diplomatic rather than a military solution of the problem (See figures 7, 8, and 9). China’s national image in the Philippines during the first half of the 1990s concerning the Spratlys issue then, was clearly a threatening and hostile image.

In our content analysis, the trend lines in Figure 6 for both “favorable” and “unfavorable” during 1994-1997 confirm this initial unfavorable (threatening) image of China in the Philippines. Beginning in the first year of available newspaper articles for our analysis (1998), China’s image becomes less threatening as reflected by the substantial increase in “favorable” images of China and a corresponding decrease in “unfavorable” images. During the same period, “neutral” images also witnessed a marked increase in frequency. Interestingly, this positive overall trend continues through 2001 for “neutral” and “unfavorable” images of China, but “favorable” images witnessed a slight decline.

²⁸⁰ *Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines]* (1995), question # 91.

²⁸¹ *Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines]* (1995), question # 109.

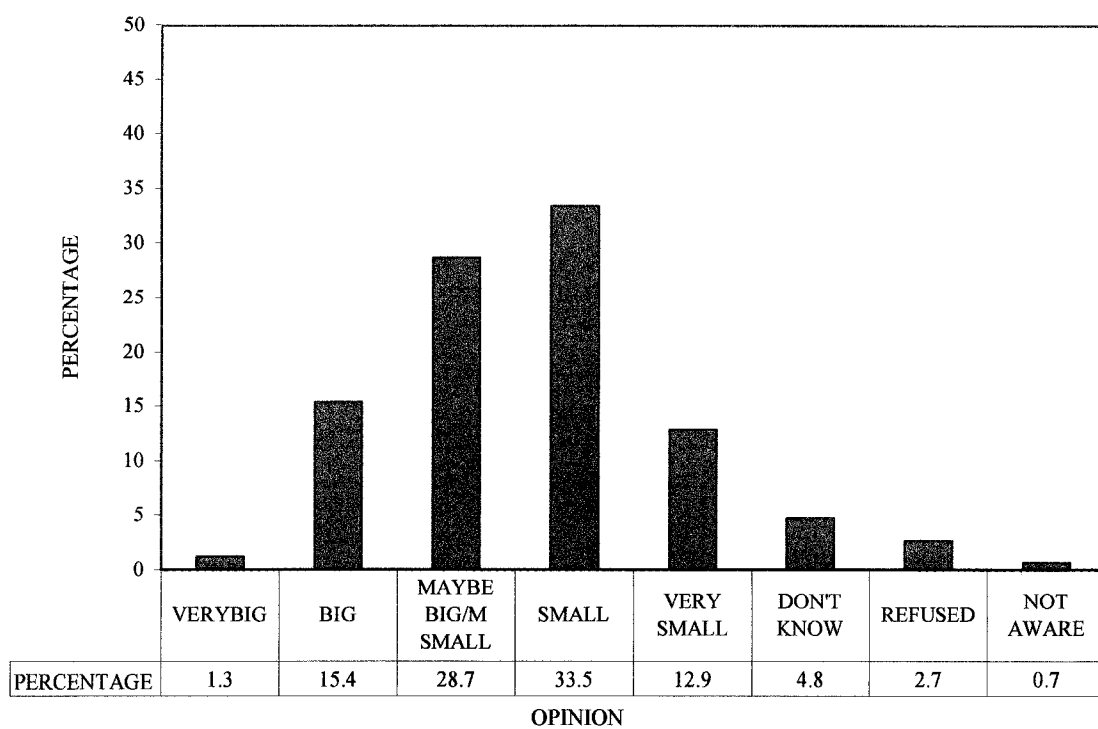


Figure 7. What Is Your Trust and Faith in China? 1995 Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines], question # 91/96.

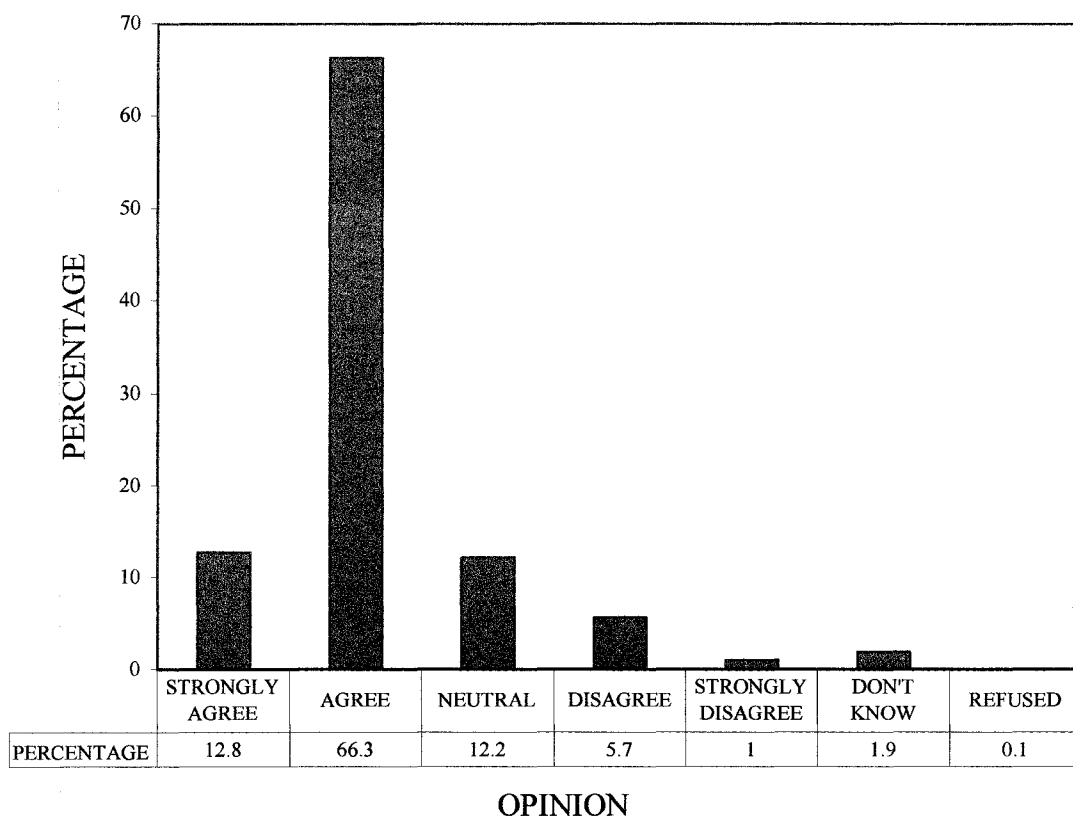


Figure 8. Should Armed Forces of the Philippines be Strengthened? 1995 Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines], question # 109.

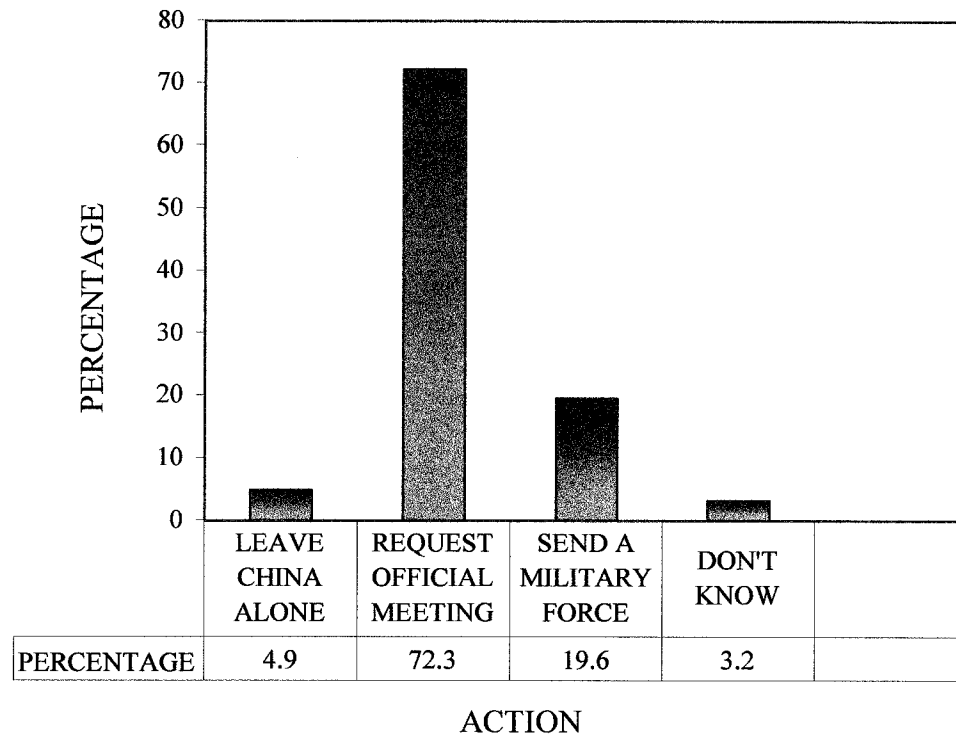


Figure 9. What Is Best Step For Philippines To Take On Spratlys? 1995 Social Weather Stations Survey [Philippines], question # 188.

For 2002, the frequency of “neutral” images of China decreased slightly, while the frequency of “favorable” images increased, probably representing the influence of China’s accession to the ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in November of that year. In 2003, the frequency of “unfavorable” images of China increased, as the frequency of “neutral” images witnessed a corresponding decrease. However, the frequency of “unfavorable” images in 2004 decreased to only 7% and, for 2005-2006, no “unfavorable” images of China vis-à-vis the Spratlys were observed. In 2005, “favorable” images increased in frequency to 86.7%, while the frequency of “neutral” images of China decreased to only 13.3% and, for the second year, no “unfavorable” images were observed. Data for 2005 clearly reflects the influence of the bilateral agreement that year between Beijing and Manila for joint offshore oil exploration and development in the Spratlys (which, as we have already seen, was expanded later that year to include Vietnam). Data for 2006 indicate a 100% frequency of “neutral” images of China. This is likely due to a lessening in importance of the South China Sea issue in relations between Beijing and Manila because of the 2005 Tripartite Agreement. China and the Philippines no longer view one another as an “enemy” in the South China Sea. Rather, they have come to view the Other as a “partner.” While it remains true that partners are not necessarily friends, it is difficult to conceive partners as enemies (usually). Concerning the dispute with Manila over the Spratlys, China’s “role-identity” has transformed from one of “enemy” or “rival,” to one of “partner.” As discussed later in the chapter, data derived from opinion polls and surveys concerning China’s national image in the Philippines support the results of our content analysis.

Vietnam

Collecting data for Vietnam was problematic due to a lack of newspaper articles and *Vietnam News Service* reports before 1999, and the small numbers of relevant articles and reports until 2003, when the volume of data increases almost exponentially the last three years of our study. Nonetheless, a change in Vietnam's perception of China regarding the territorial disputes is clearly discernable. Figure 10 summarizes the results of the content analysis of the *Vietnam News Service* and the *Saigon Daily Times*. As this graph indicates, since 1999 China's national image in Vietnam concerning the South China Sea issue changed from "unfavorable" to "favorable" in 2003 (where the "favorable" and "unfavorable" trend lines intersect). The frequency of "unfavorable" images is highest in 1999, when Beijing and Hanoi had not yet concluded the land border agreement and Beijing appeared to be stalling on the issue of a code of conduct in the South China Sea. However, in 2001 and 2002 the frequency of "unfavorable" images of China decrease, and "neutral" and (in 2002) "favorable" images of China begin to emerge. This is understandable in light of the 2000 settlement of the China-Vietnamese land border and maritime boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin, as well as China's decision to sign the ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of parties in the South China Sea in November 2002. China's image in Vietnam improved the following year reflecting China's accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). However, in 2004 China's unfavorable image increased due to renewed tensions over the Spratlys. In 2005, China's image in Vietnam changed considerably as the frequency of unfavorable images dropped and the frequency of favorable images rose. This can be explained by Hanoi's decision to participate with China and the Philippines in joint development of offshore hydrocarbon reserves in the Spratlys (Tripartite Agreement). As the plotted

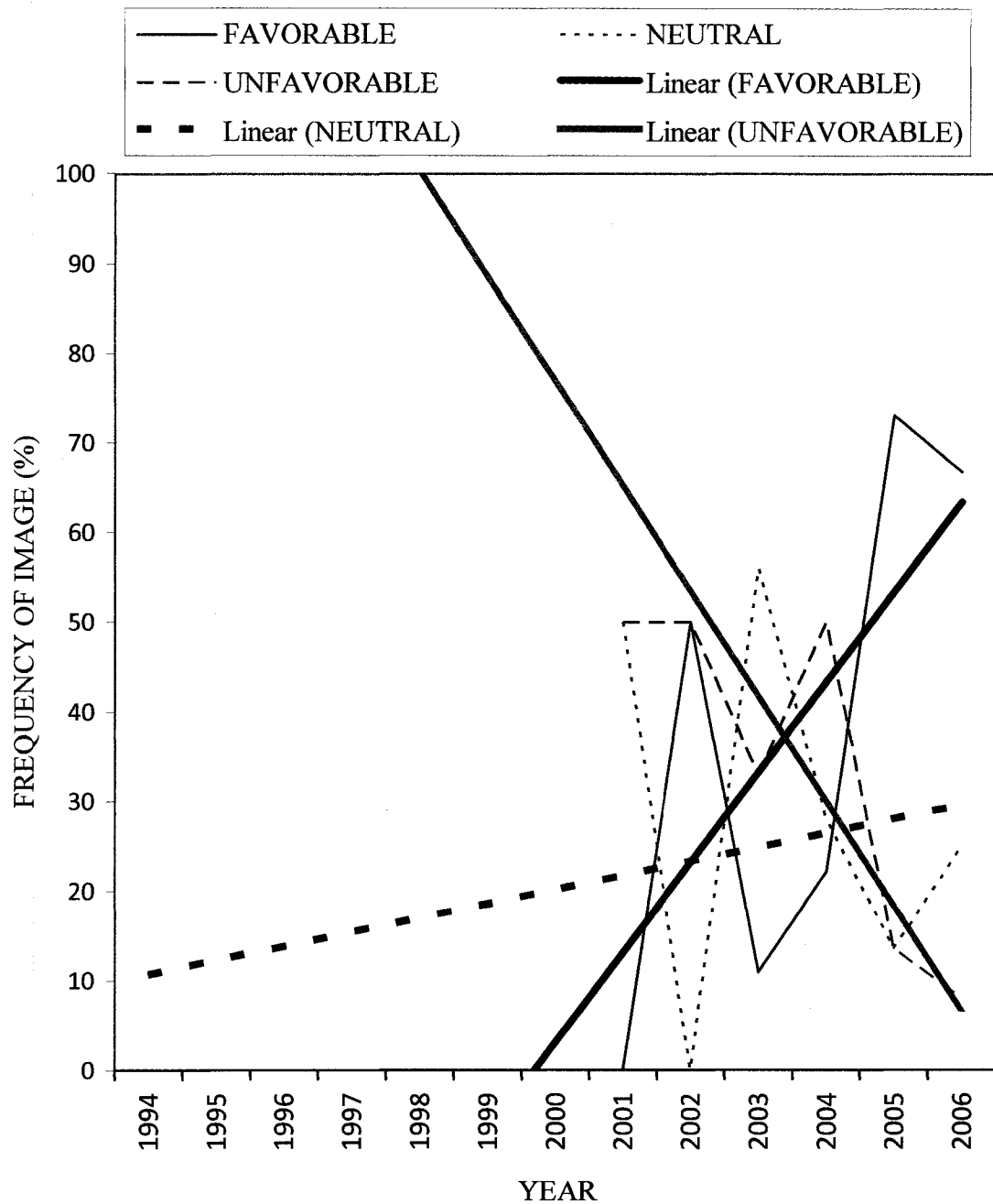


Figure 10. China's Image in Vietnam (*Saigon Times Daily* and *Vietnam News Service*). Note: Total number of articles by year: 1999 (3), 2001 (4), 2002 (6), 2003 (9), 2004 (18), 2005 (22), 2006 (12). Data unavailable for 1994-1998, and 2000.

trend lines indicate, China's national image in Vietnam concerning the most contentious issue in Sino-Vietnamese relations has clearly changed for the better. Beijing and Hanoi no longer perceive one another as "enemies" or "rivals" in the South China Sea. Instead, they now increasingly view the one another as a cooperative "partner."

Thailand

The data for Thailand indicate that China's national image as reflected by the territorial disputes improved only slightly, as the trend lines for both "favorable" and "unfavorable" remain flat in comparison with those of other ASEAN states (Figure 11). The frequency of "neutral" images of China in Thailand is comparably high to that of the other states, reflecting the fact that Thailand does not have a territorial dispute with China and, therefore, Bangkok can be less critical of China concerning the South China Sea issue. In addition, the high frequency of "neutral" images also reflects Thailand's changing regional strategic relationship with China in mainland Southeast Asia (elaborated upon below) vis-à-vis the growth in relations between the PRC and Myanmar, which the Thais perceive as troubling. Not wishing to be provocative (nor timid) in relations with China, Bangkok's attitude has become more reserved toward China than during the late 1980s and early 1990s when both states faced a common enemy -- Vietnam. The overall neutral image of China in Thailand concerning the territorial disputes is consistent with what one would expect of Bangkok's famous "bamboo diplomacy."²⁸²

²⁸² Thailand is the only country in Asia that successfully resisted Western imperialism and maintained its independence. Like bamboo that is blown about by the high winds, from this side to that, bending but not breaking, Thai foreign policy swayed with the "wind" of imperialism without breaking.

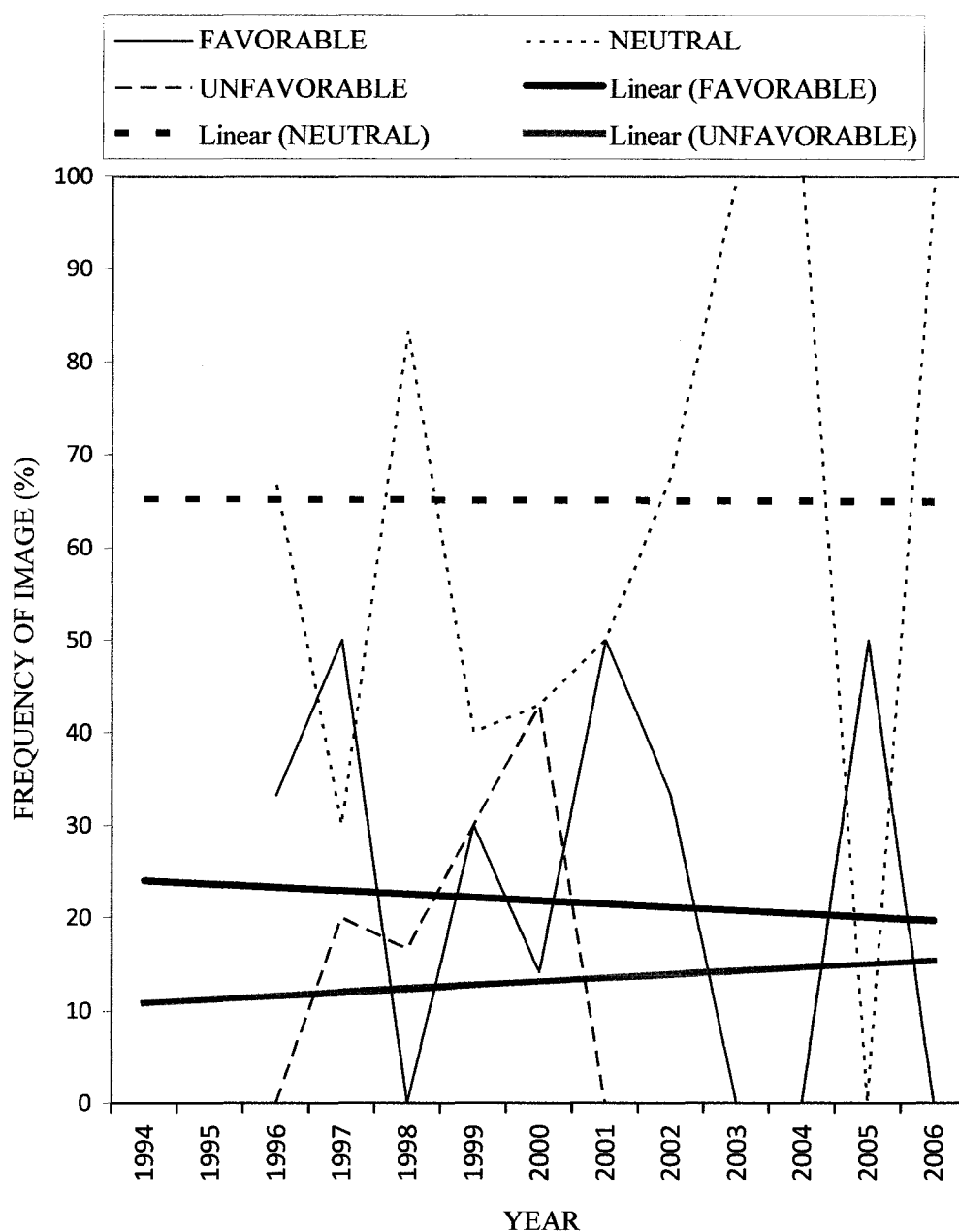


Figure 11. China's Image in Thailand (*Bangkok Post*, *The Nation*). Note: Total number of articles by year: 1994 (3), 1996 (4), 1997 (9), 1998 (7), 1999 (10), 2000 (9), 2001 (5), 2002 (5), 2003 (6), 2004 (3), 2005 (6), 2006 (5). Data unavailable for 1995.

During 1997, “favorable” images of China increased in frequency, while a decrease in frequency of “neutral” images was observed in Thailand. These results probably reflect a positive impact of Beijing’s unselfish actions during the Asian Financial Crisis. Beginning in 1997, an increasing frequency in “unfavorable” images of China is observed, continuing until reaching a peak of 42.9% in 2000. The frequency of “unfavorable” images of China from 2001 until 2004 falls to 0%. Beijing’s accession to the ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002, and to the TAC the following year, played crucial roles in changing the image of China in Thailand. The trend line for the frequency of “neutral” images of China decreases over time in an inverse relationship with the trend lines for “favorable” and “unfavorable.” Further, the height of the “neutral” trend line indicates that the Thais remain cautious in their perceptions of China. Curiously, during 2002-2003 the frequency of “favorable” images of China decrease markedly while, at the same time, the frequency of “neutral” images increase in a similar but opposite (inverse) relationship.

Singapore

Figure 12 represents the frequency of “favorable,” “neutral,” and “unfavorable” images over time of China in Singapore concerning the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. While data for 2000, 2001, and 2006 were unavailable, data for the remaining years of the study is sufficient to reveal trends in Singaporean perceptions of China. As with the other ASEAN states, China’s national image in Singapore has changed favorably. The trend line for “favorable” images rises, albeit less dramatically than those of Vietnam and the Philippines, but more so than that of Thailand. “Unfavorable” images are the most frequent during 1994-1995, and then again during 1997-1998, which reflect

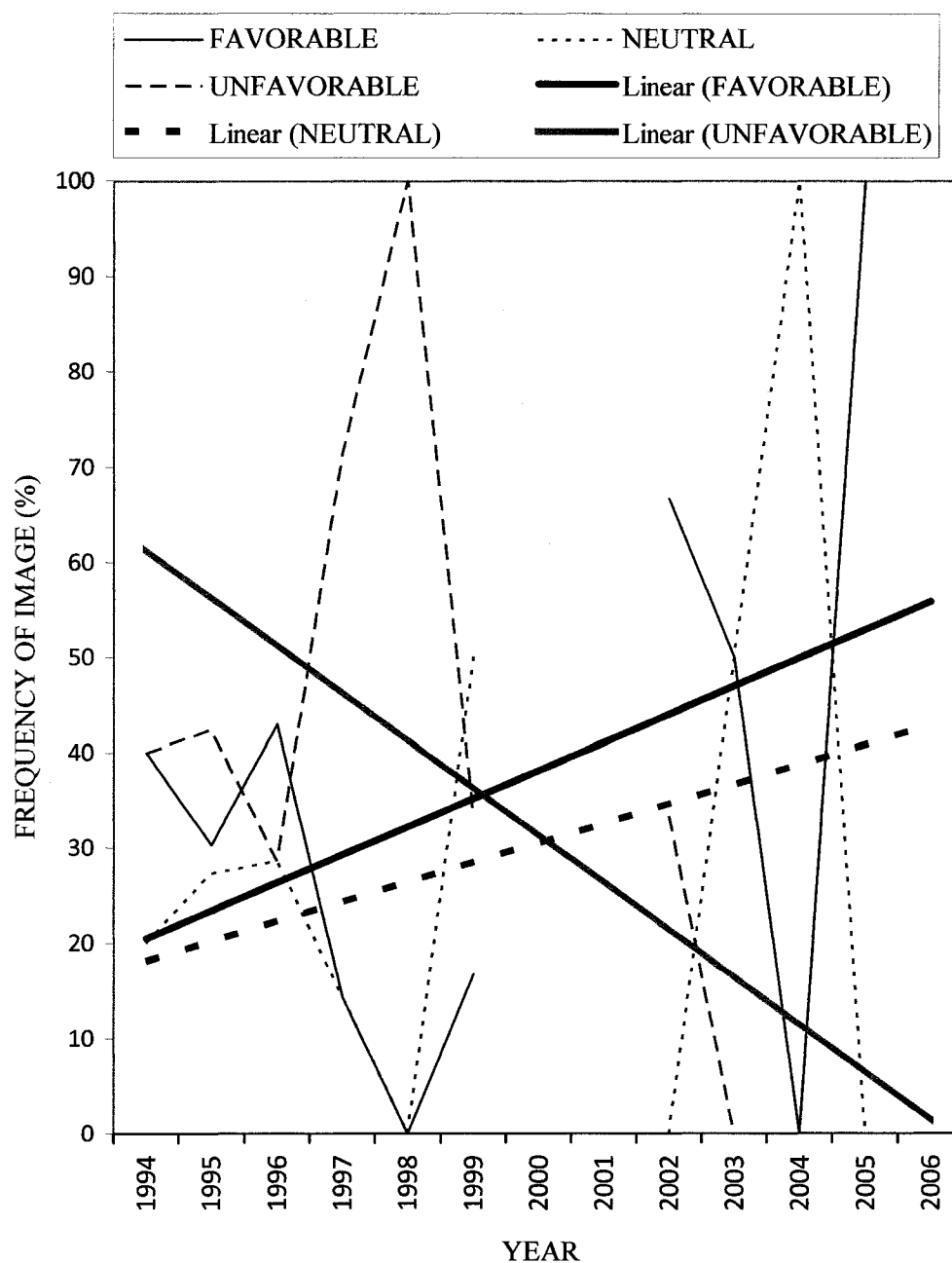


Figure 12. China's Image in Singapore (*Straits Times*). Note: Total number of articles by year: 1994 (5), 1995 (32), 1996 (14), 1997 (8), 1998 (4), 1999 (12), 2002 (6), 2003 (3), 2004 (3), 2005 (4). Data unavailable for 2000, 2001, and 2006.

corresponding periods of increased tension between China and Vietnam, and between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. However, during 2003-2005 no “unfavorable” images of China are observed, reflecting again Beijing’s acceptance in 2002 of ASEAN’s Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and 2003 signing of the TAC. For 2004, the frequency of “neutral” images is 100%, while the following year the frequency of “favorable” images is 100%. In sum, China’s image concerning the territorial disputes in Singapore is more benign and less threatening than it was during the mid-to-late 1990s.

Indonesia

As with the data for the preceding ASEAN states, the data for Indonesia also indicate a measurable change of China’s national image during our period of study (Figure 13). As one would expect of the country that spearheaded efforts toward functional cooperation in the South China Sea, and since 1990 chaired the annual informal Workshops on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea, the frequency of “neutral” images of China is high, especially during 1999, 2001, and 2006. As the trend lines indicate, “neutral” and “favorable” images of China increase over time, while “unfavorable” images decrease in frequency at a faster rate (steeper slope) than the rate of frequency increase of the other images. No “unfavorable” images of China are observed for six of the nine years for which we have data. Moreover, as with the other ASEAN states thus far in our study, a decrease in “unfavorable” images of China is accompanied by a corresponding increase in frequency of “neutral” images. The frequency of “favorable” images peaks at 60% in 2003, reflecting the positive influence of Beijing signing the 2002

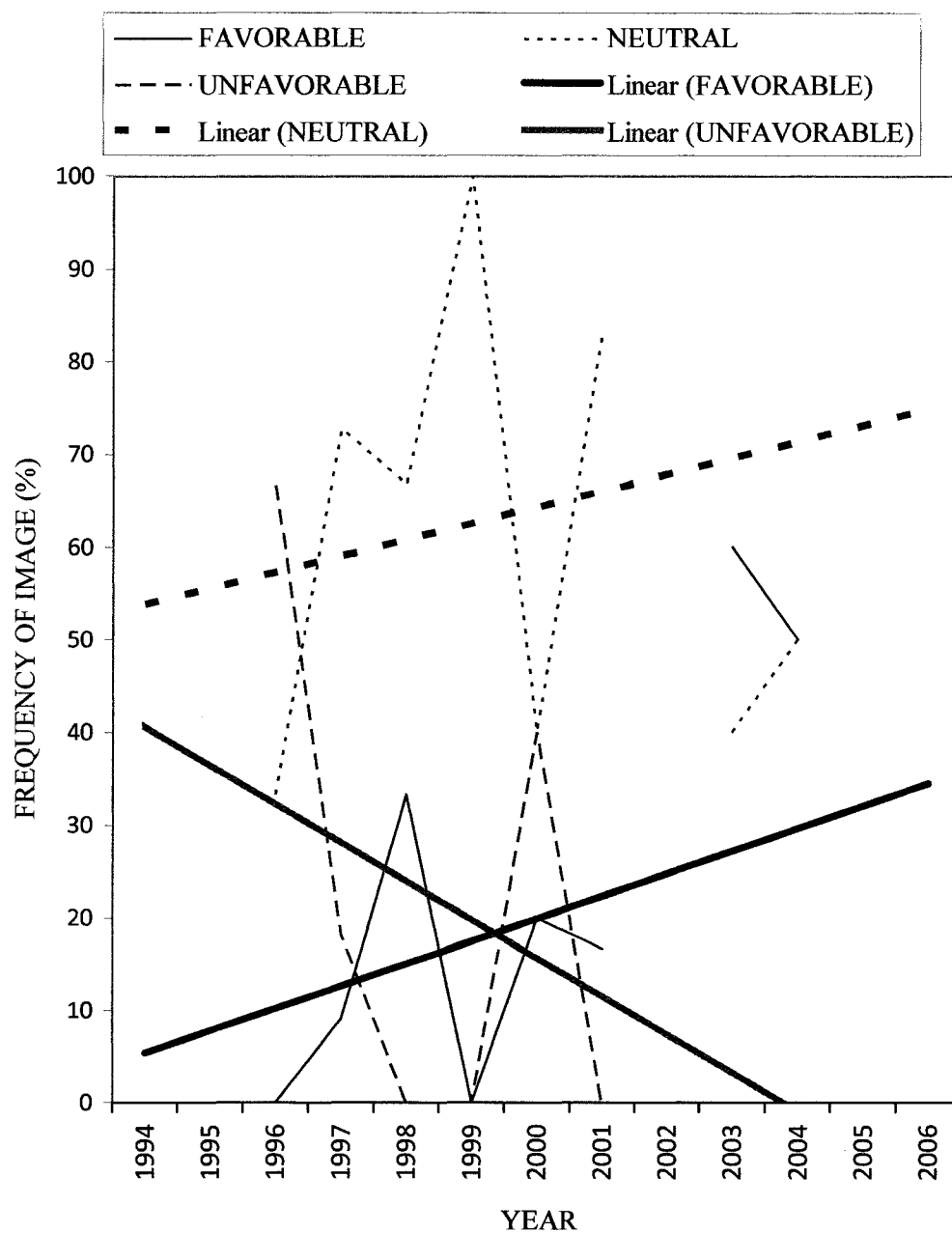


Figure 13. China's Image in Indonesia (*Jakarta Post*). Note: total number of articles by year: 1996 (2), 1997 (8), 1998 (6), 1999 (5), 2000 (4), 2001 (3), 2003 (3), 2004 (4), 2006 (2). Data unavailable for 1994-1995, 2002, and 2005.

Declaration and acceding in 2003 to the ASEAN TAC. In short, Indonesian perceptions of a China “threat” in the South China Sea decrease over time.

Malaysia

The data for Malaysia clearly indicate a sharp increase in frequency of “favorable” images of China concerning the disputes in the South China Sea, and a significant decrease in frequency of “neutral” images (Figure 14). The trend line for “unfavorable” images of China decreases at a more modest rate than that of “neutral” images, but this is understandable given the low initial frequency rate of “unfavorable” images (only 8.3% in 1995) of China. As with Indonesia, no “unfavorable” images of China are observed in six of the ten years (1996, 2000-2004) of available data for Malaysia. Most significantly, a 100% frequency rate for “favorable” images is observed twice (2003, 2004). Singapore is the only other country in our study with a 100% frequency for “favorable” images of China (2005) -- and no territorial dispute exists between Singapore and China. The frequency of “unfavorable” images of China peaks in 1997 (22.2%), but steadily decreases until 2000 when the frequency drops to zero percent for the remainder of the study. China’s image in Malaysia, even though Beijing and Kuala Lumpur dispute ownership over areas of the Spratly archipelago, is clearly the most favorable of all six ASEAN states.

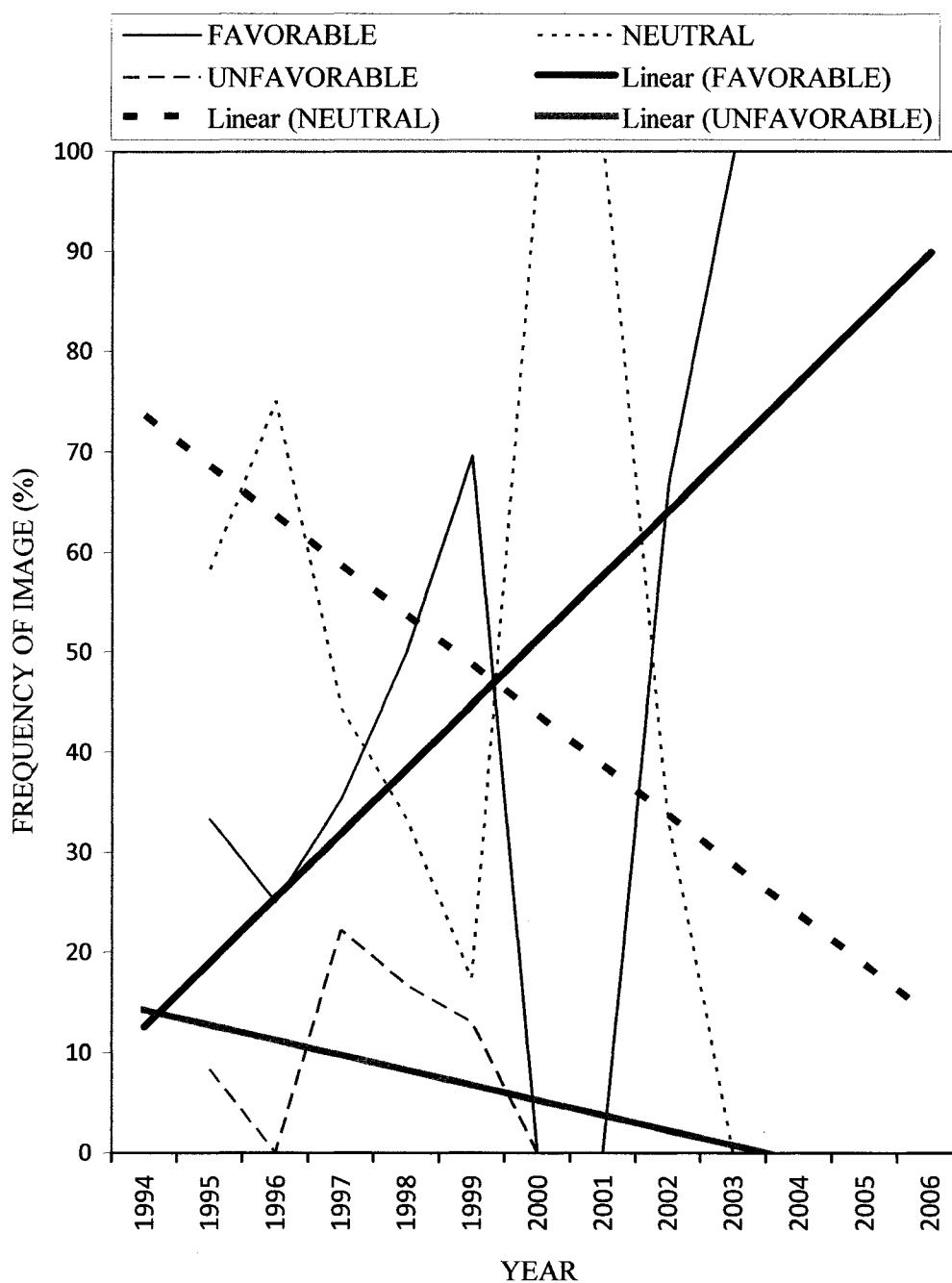


Figure 14. China's Image in Malaysia (*New Straits Times*, *Bernama* - Malaysian National News Agency). Note: Total number of articles by year: 1995 (10), 1996 (8), 1997 (8), 1998 (6), 1999 (22), 2000 (7), 2001 (4), 2002 (6), 2003 (4), 2004 (4). Data unavailable for 1994, 2005-2006.

Poll and Survey Data Concerning China's Image in Southeast Asia

Data derived from regional and global opinion polls and surveys concerning China's image support the findings of our case-specific analysis of perceptions of China in regional newspaper articles. All opinion poll and survey data indicate that perceptions of a China "threat" in Southeast Asia have lessened considerably, even though the distribution of capabilities and power in the region increasingly favor China. Steven Kull, Director of PIPA, notes that "it is quite remarkable that with its growing economic power China is viewed as so benign, *especially by its Asian neighbors* [emphasis mine] that it could threaten or seek to dominate. However, this cordial view from around the world does appear to depend on China restraining itself from seeking to convert its burgeoning economic power into a threatening military presence."²⁸³ As we have seen, even the territorial disputes in the South China Sea -- the China "threat" as manifest in Southeast Asia -- have not prevented a favorable change in perceptions of China throughout the region. The results of *BBC World Service Polls* for 2004, 2005, and 2006, and a 2005 U.S. State Department study confirm the change in China's national image observed in our country-and issue-specific content analysis of newspaper articles.

The Philippines

Of the seven countries surveyed in the 2005 State Department survey *Asian views of China*, the Philippines still has a residual sense of a China threat due to past sparring over territories in the South China Sea (only data for the four Southeast Asian states is

²⁸³ "22 Nation Poll Shows China Viewed Positively by Most Countries," GlobeScan and PIPA (2004). Available online at www.worldpublicopinion.org, and at www.pipa.org.

presented here).²⁸⁴ When asked what group or nation threatens Philippine national security (Figure 15), only 9 percent of Filipinos select China, placing Iraq (16%) and Abu Sayyaf, an insurgent group in the southern Philippines (15%), ahead of China. When selecting from two alternative visions of China, 56% of Filipinos see China as “a peaceful country that is more interested in economic growth than in military adventures,” while 35% view China as “an expansionist power that is building up its military to enforce its claims to sovereignty in the South China Sea.”²⁸⁵ When identifying key images of China, Filipinos overwhelmingly selected positive images over negative (Figure 16). Sixty-two percent of Filipinos view Chinese as “hardworking people,” forty-two percent have an image of China as being a “beautiful country,” while only eleven percent of Filipinos choose a “military threat” image of China and only seven percent believe that China “bullies other countries.”

When selecting the greatest threat to world peace in the next five years from seven choices,²⁸⁶ Filipinos see international terrorism as the leading threat (29%), the uncontrolled spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as the next most pressing threat (21%), followed by the collapse of politically unstable countries (15%), Islamic extremism (13%), and the U.S. use of military force (12%). Only three percent (3%) see growing Chinese military power as the greatest threat to world peace in the next five years (Figure 17). *Filipinos see the U.S. as a greater threat to world peace than China!* This is most surprising, considering that a clear majority of Filipinos (72%) continue to

²⁸⁴ The seven countries are Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

²⁸⁵ *Asian Views of China*, 5.

²⁸⁶ The choices are international terrorism, Islamic extremism, uncontrolled spread of WMD, U.S. use of military force, collapse of politically unstable countries, growing Chinese military power, and Japanese militarism.

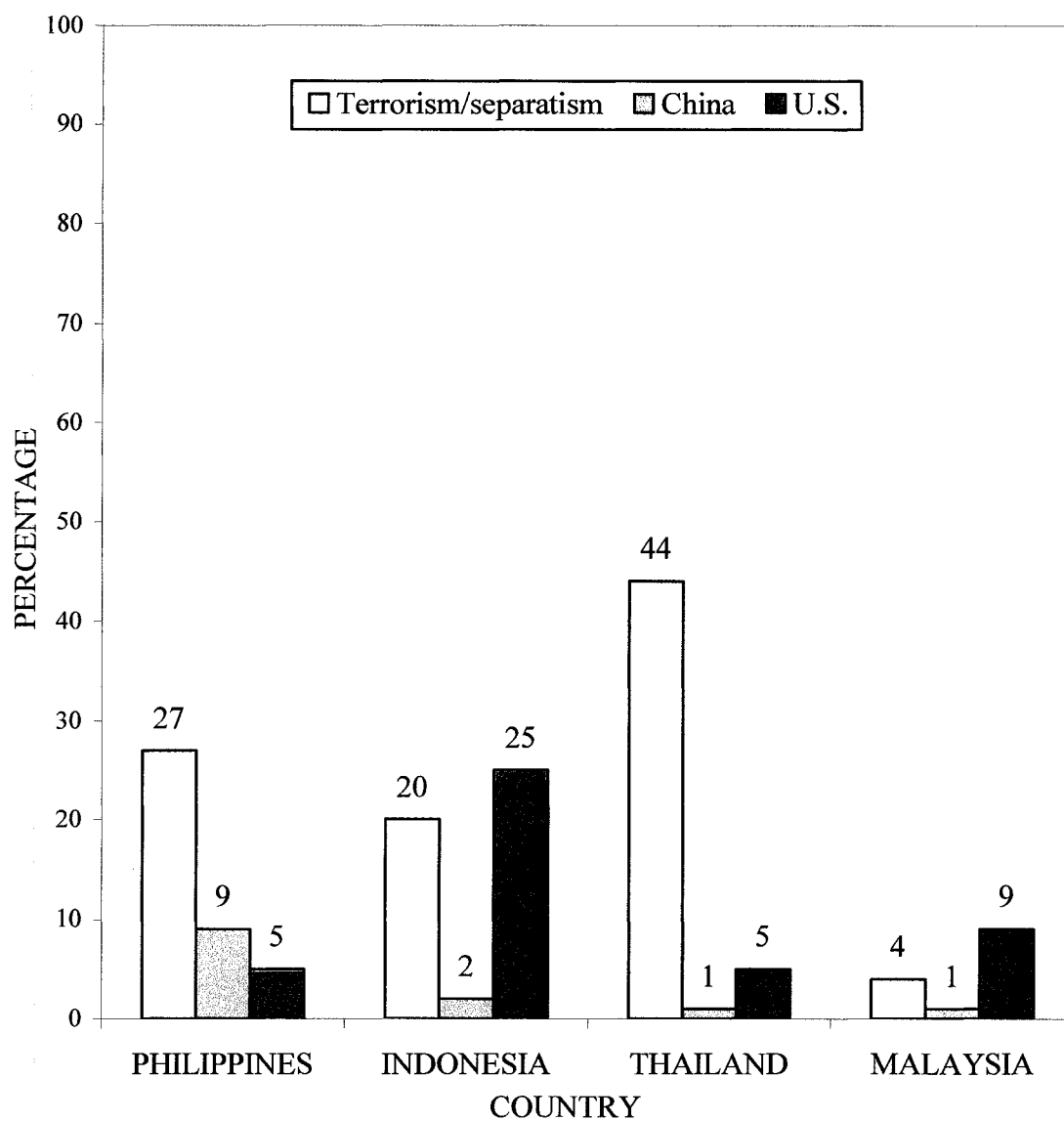


Figure 15. "Which Nation or Group Threatens Your Country's National Security?" Source of Data: *Asian Views of China*, Opinion Analysis, U.S. Department of State, November 2005.

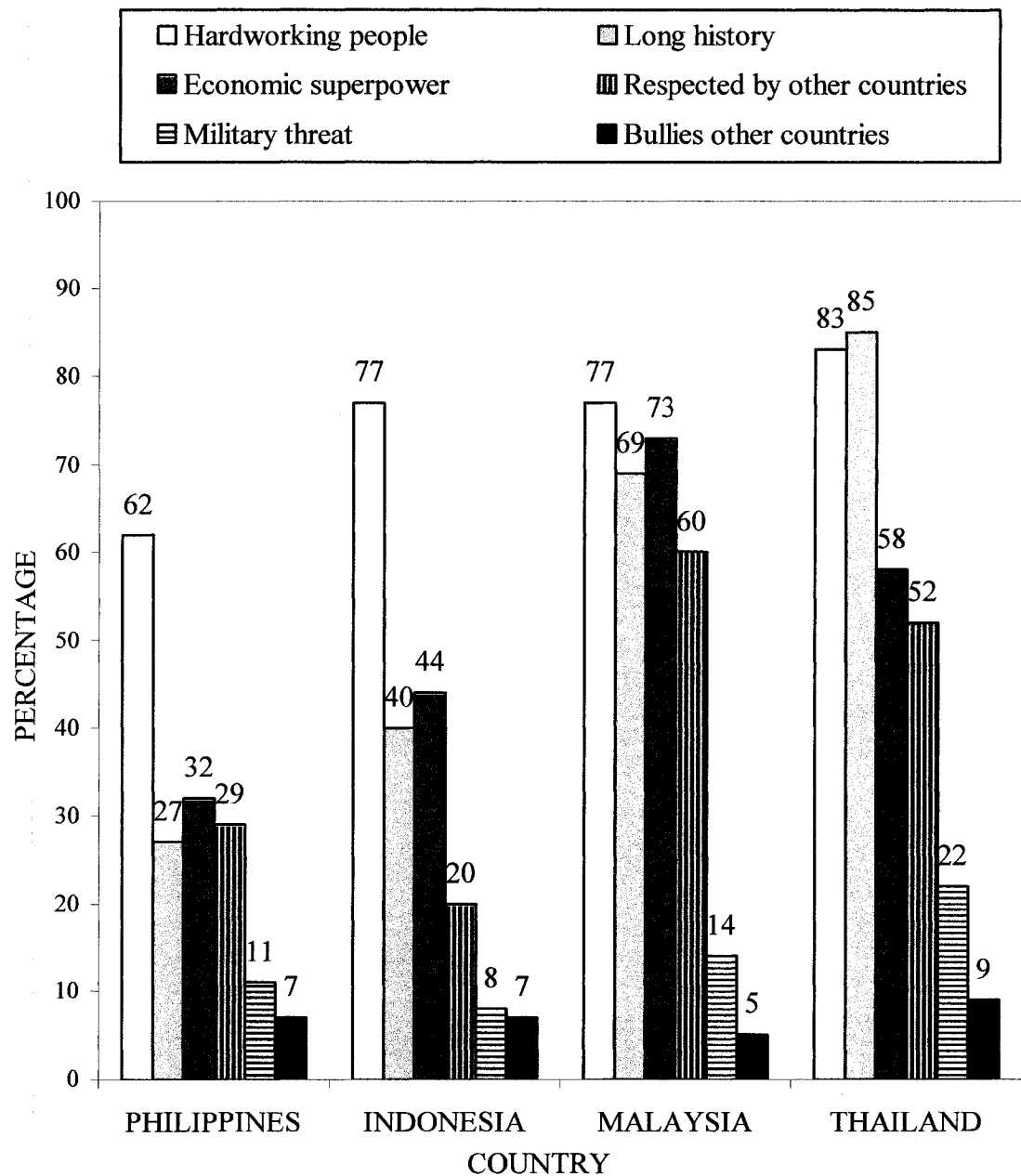


Figure 16. "Which of These Images Do You Most Strongly Associate With China?"
 Source of Data: *Asian Views of China*, Opinion Analysis, U.S.
 Department of State, November 2005.

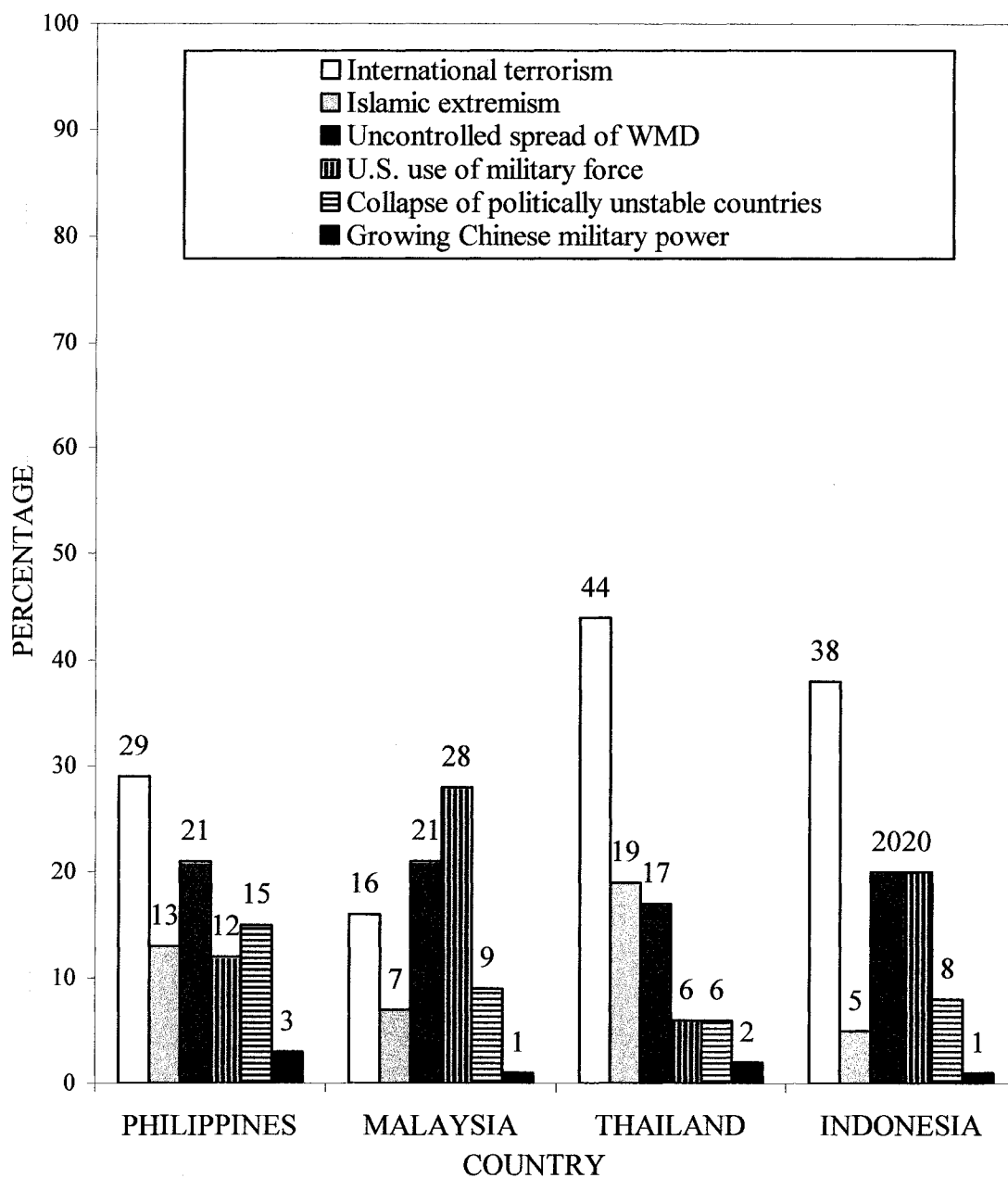


Figure 17. "Greatest Threat to World Peace in the Next 5 Years?" Source of Data: *Asian Views of China*, Opinion Analysis, U.S. Department of State, November 2005.

see the U.S. as the Philippines' "closest security partner in 5-10 Years."²⁸⁷ Additionally, a strong majority of Filipinos (69%) expresses confidence that China deals with international problems responsibly (Figure 18), and most (81%) believe that bilateral relations with China are good (Figure 19). The 2005 BBC World Service 23 Nation Poll "Who Will Lead the World?" supports these findings, concluding that China's image as a "positive influence in the world" in the Philippines is among the highest of the 23 nations polled (70%).²⁸⁸

China's national image in the Philippines since the early 1990s has clearly become less threatening and more benign. By 2005, Filipinos were less mistrusting and far less fearful of China than during the mid-1990s. The remarkable change in Filipino public opinion is revealed by a comparison of the 1995 *Social Weather Stations Survey* data with that of the 2005 U.S. State Department *Asian Views of China* survey. As discussed in Chapter 2, China's image in the Philippines in 1995 was one of a hostile aggressor or enemy. However, the U.S. State Department's 2005 public opinion survey revealed that only 9% of Filipinos viewed China as a national security threat (just 4 percentage points higher than that of the United States!), only 11% viewed China as a military threat, and only 7% perceived China as a "bully." (Figures 15, and 16 respectively). Quite interestingly, more Filipinos viewed the use of U.S. military force as the "greatest threat to world peace in the next five years" (12%) than China's growing military power (3%)!

Public opinion surveys conducted in the ASEAN states since 2005 indicate that China is no longer perceived as a revisionist state posing a rising military threat

²⁸⁷ *Asian Views of China*, 8.

²⁸⁸ BBC World Service 23 Nation Poll, "Who Will Lead the World?" (conducted by GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes, April 2005), 4.

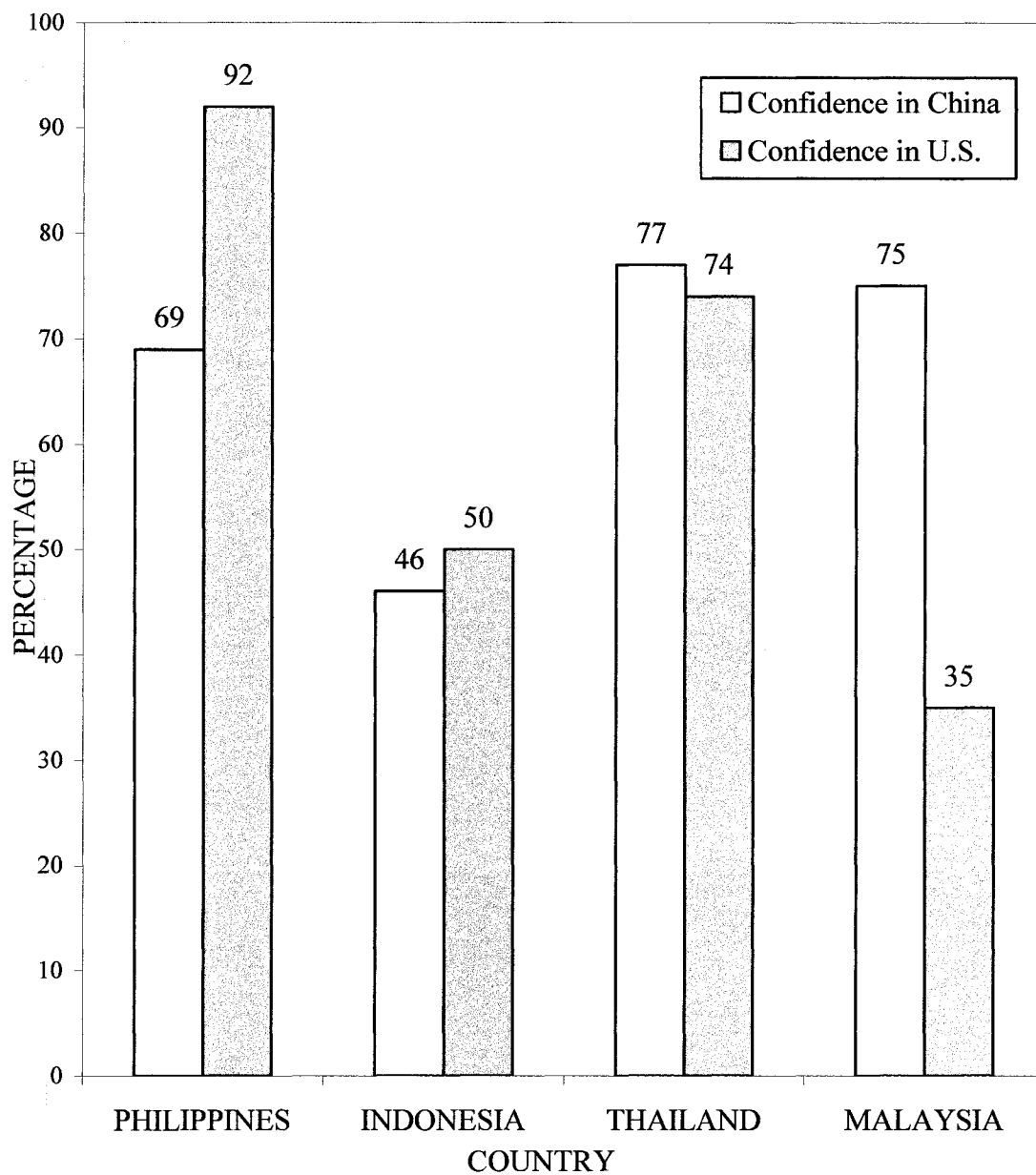


Figure 18. “What Confidence Do You Have in China, U.S. to Deal Responsibly with International Problems?” Source of Data: *Asian Views of China*, Opinion Analysis, U.S. Department of State, November 2005.

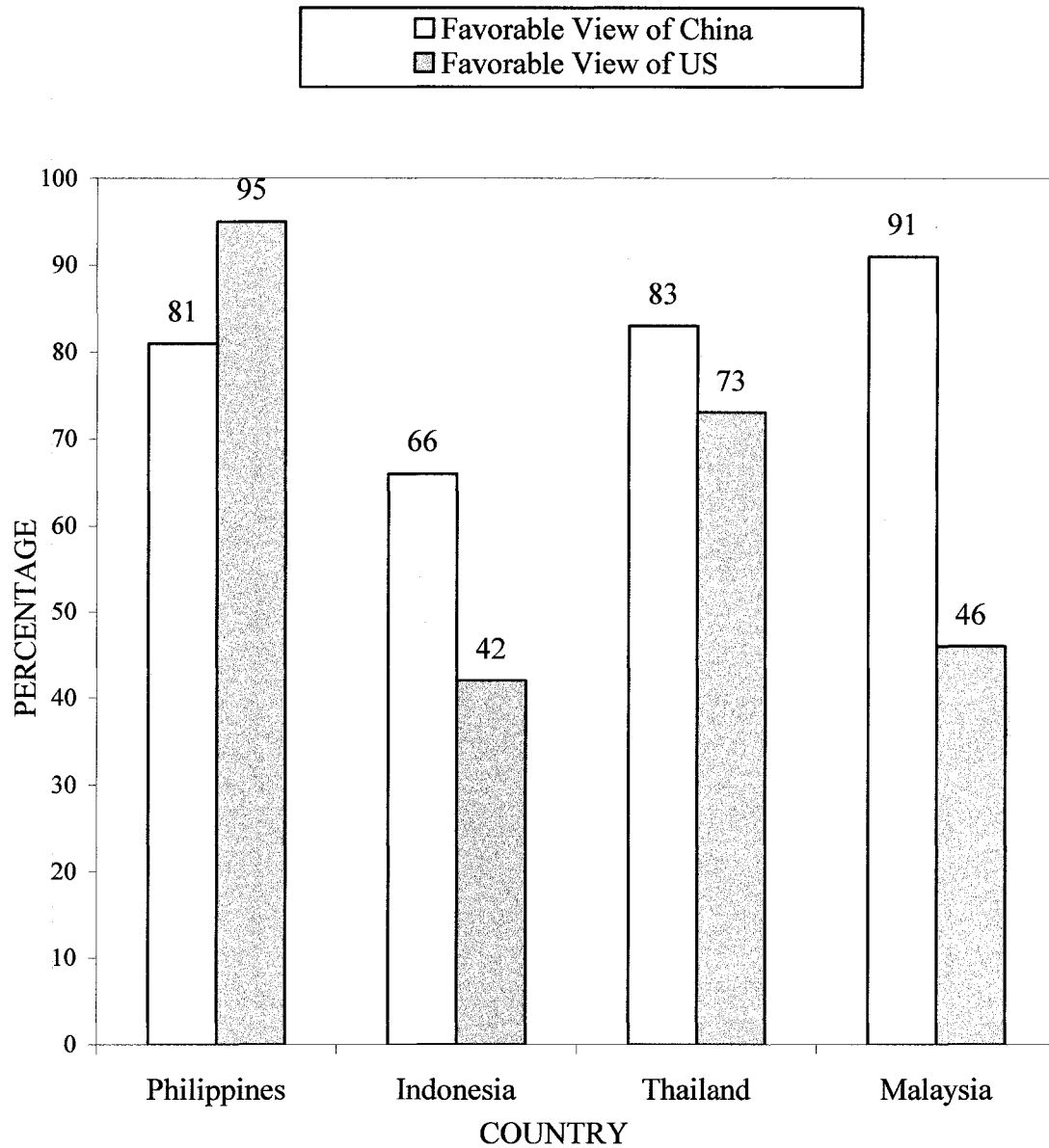


Figure 19. "What is Your Perception of Bilateral Relations with China, with U.S.?" Source of Data: *Asian Views of China*, Opinion Analysis, U.S. Department of State, November 2005.

to regional peace and stability. Instead, the 2005 – 2006 polls and surveys indicate that China's image among the ASEAN publics is currently one of a cooperative, responsible rising power whose contributions to regional economic and political stability reflect an increasing leadership role for China in Southeast Asia. In Thailand and Malaysia, the public have more confidence in China than the U.S. to deal responsibly with international problems, while almost 70% of those surveyed in the Philippines view China as responsible in dealing with international problems (Figure 18). ASEAN public perceptions of their respective country's bilateral relations with China are extremely positive. This is especially true in Thailand and Malaysia, where positive perceptions of the bilateral relationship with China were almost unanimous (97%, 96%, respectively). Public perception of bilateral relations with China in the Philippines (82%) and Indonesia (92%) were also extremely positive while, by comparison, perceptions of bilateral relations with the U.S. were much less favorable in Indonesia and Malaysia (70% and 74% respectively).

Vietnam

Opinion poll and survey data for Vietnam is quite limited due to the country's all but recent isolation from much of the international community. The only opinion poll or survey data available for Vietnam is the Australian *Morgan Poll* (2005 and 2006 data only), but this poll does not measure Vietnamese perceptions of China.

Thailand

The national image of China in Thailand is mostly favorable. Most Thais see China as a benign power whose rising economic strength will benefit Thailand.²⁸⁹ Most

²⁸⁹ *Asian Views of China*, 2.

Thai have a favorable opinion of China (83%)²⁹⁰ and all most all (97%) say that Thai-China relations are good (Figures 20 and 19, respectively). Most Thais have positive images of China (Figure 16), selecting positive attributes such as “hardworking people” (83%) and “beautiful country” (69%), while avoiding negative attributes such as “military threat” (22%) and “bullies other countries” (9%). Most importantly, China is not viewed as a threat in Thailand. As indicated in Figures 15 and 17, only one percent (1%) of Thais polled view China as a threat, and only two percent of those polled regard China as the greatest threat to world peace in the next five years. This data set paints a more benign perception of China as a threat than does the data for Thailand in our content analysis above (Figure 11). However, the trend in Thailand toward a less-threatening view of China is apparent in both studies.

Singapore

English-language poll and survey data concerning China’s national image in Singapore are unavailable.

Indonesia

China’s national image in Indonesia is the most benign of all six ASEAN countries in our study. The State Department’s 2005 survey *Asian Views of China* concludes that Indonesia neither views China as a potential threat to Indonesian national security (Figures 15 and 17), nor as a likely security partner.²⁹¹ The strongest images of China in Indonesia are “hardworking people” (77%), “economic superpower” (44%), and “long

²⁹⁰ Thailand has a more favorable opinion of China than of the United States (only 73% have a favorable opinion of the United States. *Asian Views of China*, 6.

²⁹¹ Most Indonesians see ASEAN as their closest security partner in 5-10 years (39%). The United States is the second choice (23%), then the EU (5%), Japan (8%), and finally China (4%). *Asian Views of China*, 4.

history” (40%), while China as a “military threat” (8%), “human rights violator” (11%), and “bully” of other nations (7%) are the weakest images of China (Figure 16). Overall, Indonesians view China favorably (66%) and (92%) view bilateral relations with China as “good” (Figure 19).²⁹²

According to results of the 2005 BBC World Service 23 Nation Poll “Who Will Lead the World?”, China’s image as a “positive influence in the world” in Indonesia was among the highest of the 23 nations polled (68%).²⁹³ The poll makes an insightful comment about China’s positive global image, stating that the “positive view of China is closely related to its economic role in the world rather than its potential military power.” The study concludes that countries “which have engaged the world primarily through economic relations -- or soft power -- are widely seen as having a mostly positive influence, while the countries that have very large militaries and have used them in a prominent way -- the US and Russia -- are more often seen as having a negative influence While trade might buy you love, guns clearly do not.”²⁹⁴

Malaysia

Data concerning China’s image in Malaysia in the 2005 State Department Survey *Asian Views of China* clearly indicate that Malaysians do not view China as a threat (1%), even though the dispute between Beijing and Kuala Lumpur in the Spratly archipelago has yet to be resolved (Figure 17). 91% of Malaysians have a favorable opinion of China (Figure 20) and almost all (96%) describe the bilateral relationship with China as “good.”

²⁹² For the sake of comparison, only 42% of Indonesians have a favorable opinion of the U.S., but trust the U.S. to deal responsibly with international problems more (50%) than they trust China to do so (46%). *Asian Views of China*, 4.

²⁹³ BBC World Service 23 Nation Poll, “Who Will Lead the World?” (conducted by GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes, April 2005), 4.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

Malaysians are also much more likely to trust China (75%) than the U.S. (35%) to deal with international problems responsibly (Figure 18). The strongest images held by Malaysians of China are “hardworking people” (77%), “economic superpower” (73%), “long history” (69%), “beautiful country” (62%). Images of China as a “military threat” (14%), “human rights violator” (7%), and “bullies other countries” (7%) are the weakest among Malaysians (Figure 16).

All of the data presented thus far support the assertion that Beijing’s GND is successfully altering threat perceptions of China in Southeast Asia. Our newspaper content analysis of China’s image in six ASEAN states concerning the South China Sea disputes indicates a positive change in regional threat perceptions of China. The news media in Southeast Asia clearly no longer view China as a serious threat to the national security of their respective countries. The more generalized data obtained from public opinion polls and surveys presented above concerning China’s image in the region support the findings of our content analysis. The “man in the street” clearly no longer believes it likely that Beijing will use force to alter the status quo in the Spratlys. China no longer has a public image in the region of being a “bully of other countries” nor a “military threat.” However, do the *governments* of these ASEAN states share the increasingly favorable view of China expressed by the public? To answer this question, we must now turn our attention to the security behavior of the ASEAN states.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES’ POLICIES TOWARDS CHINA

ASEAN Policy Towards China

The territorial disputes in the South China Sea represent one of the most serious security concerns for ASEAN (especially for the Philippines and Vietnam), as discussed

above. The fact that the ASEAN states have agreed with Beijing not to allow the disputes to stand in the way of closer China-ASEAN relations indicates that ASEAN threat perceptions of China have decreased considerably. Even while China's power projection capabilities continue to improve and military expenditures continue to increase, the ASEAN states appear less inclined to view the rise of China as a threat. After all, the two "frontline" states in the territorial disputes with China, Vietnam and the Philippines, are now partners with the PRC in developing the offshore oil potential in the Spratlys! If this analysis is correct, then we would expect to see evidence of increased trust and "partnership" in Sino-ASEAN relations manifest itself in the security behavior of these states towards China. In other words, it is difficult to believe that Sino-ASEAN relations could improve as dramatically as they have during the last decade if China were still perceived to represent a serious military threat in Southeast Asia. Therefore, if perceptions of a China threat remain high in the region, we would expect the security behavior of the ASEAN states to reflect such a condition. We would expect the ASEAN states to either balance against or bandwagon with China. Given the continuing growth of Chinese economic and military power, any state that felt threatened by China would logically, over time, view China as an increasing security threat due to the PRC's increasing military capability. As such, we would expect adjustments in the security policies of the threatened states such as internal balancing (increase military and economic strength), external balancing against China via closer security relations with the U.S., or bandwagoning with China. If, on the other hand, perceptions of a China threat were decreasing in Southeast Asia, we would expect the security policies of ASEAN and member states to reflect this condition as well. Given the economic troubles in the region since 1997, decreased threat

perceptions should lead to decreased military spending as limited economic resources are reallocated to other sectors. In addition, a decrease in threat perceptions of China would allow the ASEAN states more maneuvering room in their relations with both the United States and China -- there would be less pressure to pursue or strengthen security relations with either Washington or Beijing. As such, the ASEAN states could benefit through pursuing good relations with both regional powers (the optimum situation).

As explained below, the security behavior of ASEAN and member states toward China since the end of the Cold War has undergone and continues to undergo significant change as China is increasingly viewed as a cooperative security partner in the region. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, Beijing began in the late 1990s to promote “comprehensive” and “cooperative” security in the form of the New Security Concept (NSC), which echoes a number of ASEAN norms -- non-interference in the internal affairs of other states (strong state sovereignty), mutual non-aggression, peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue.²⁹⁵ The convergence of Chinese and ASEAN security interests during the 1990s (regional stability and economic development), as well as the emergence of a collective identity in China-ASEAN relations, have induced a change in both ASEAN perceptions and security behavior vis-à-vis China. Regional views of China have changed from China as a “threat” to China as a cooperative economic and security “partner” as reflected by a change in ASEAN and member states’ behavior towards China. Increasingly, China and ASEAN are moving in the direction of establishing an Asian economic and security community. ASEAN decided to pursue its

²⁹⁵ Muthiah Alagappa, “Constructing Security Order in Asia: Conceptions and issues,” in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford: Stanford University press, 2003), 76.

own security community as the Ministers agreed to contribute to the establishment of an ASEAN Security Community (ASC) as declared by the ASEAN Heads of State and Government at the ninth ASEAN Summit held in Bali, Indonesia, on 7 October 2003 and mandated under the Vientiane Action Programme (VAP).²⁹⁶ Since then, Beijing has also promoted the concept of a regional security community. In light of the above, it is clear that threat perceptions associated with the rise of Chinese economic and military power and with China's historic national image as a "threat" in Southeast Asia have declined considerably. China is no longer viewed in Southeast Asia as much a threat as an opportunity for economic and military cooperation. This conclusion holds true as well for individual ASEAN states.

The Security Policies of Six ASEAN States Toward China

The security policies of the six ASEAN states studied above also indicate that regional threat perceptions of China have decreased. As discussed below, military expenditures as a percentage of GDP of five of our study's six ASEAN states have decreased, and these states have not sought to respond to growing Chinese military power by either balancing against or bandwagoning with China, as Realist theory predicts. In an attempt to correct this theoretical deficiency, realists are currently labeling this non-realist behavior "hedging." By doing so, they continue to ground their analysis on power and threat considerations while at the same time discount or ignore the social construction of state identity and interest and the possibility that this is an endogenous process.²⁹⁷ In addition,

²⁹⁶ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN Secretariat, *Declaration of ASEAN Concord II* (Bali Concord II), 7 October 2003. <http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm> (accessed 14 July 2006).

²⁹⁷ Evelyn Goh provides a good explanation of the "hedging" strategy of the ASEAN states through case studies of Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand. Evelyn Goh, "Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies," *Policy Studies 16* (East-West Center Washington, 2005).

the very fact that these states have the luxury of pursuing so-called “hedging” strategies regarding China indicates that the rise of Chinese power has not caused a corresponding increase in regional threat perceptions of China -- otherwise these states would be under greater pressure to choose between balancing against or bandwagoning with China, due to the asymmetry of national power between China and the small ASEAN states. The regional distribution of power in economic and military terms does influence perceptions and security strategies of the ASEAN states toward China, but to a less extent now than during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Even as Chinese economic and military power continue to expand and a resolution of the South China Sea disputes has yet to materialize, perceptions in Southeast Asia of a China “threat” are lessening as China is increasingly viewed in the region as being a cooperative partner and good neighbor. This is true for all ASEAN states, but in differing degrees for each member state. Having said that, I must add a caveat. It would be “stretching it” to suggest that China is presently viewed as a true “friend” by any ASEAN state (except perhaps Myanmar, Malaysia, or Cambodia) -- after all, the positive change in Southeast Asian perceptions of China began barely ten years ago and is still an ongoing process (and thus subject to change). Considering the long history of enmity between China and Vietnam, it would be surprising indeed for the Vietnamese to lose their apprehension of China in a mere decade. Trust is not easily earned -- it takes time to develop. Nonetheless, a trend towards “friendship” in Sino-ASEAN (as a group and as individual states) relations is discernable and is affecting the security policies of ASEAN and member states. This trend will likely continue as long as relations across the Taiwan Strait remain stable and the global economy does not experience any serious downturns.

Vietnam

Even though China remains the paramount security concern for Hanoi, the security behavior of Vietnam since the early 1990s indicates that perceptions of a China threat are decreasing among the leadership in Hanoi. This is evidenced by Hanoi's increased emphasis on diplomacy in its China policy and a corresponding attenuation of attention on military capabilities. While the armed forces of the PRC continue to modernize and develop increased power-projection capabilities, Vietnamese military expenditures are decreasing as measured as a percentage of GDP. After reaching a spending peak of 7.9% of GDP in 1990, Vietnamese military expenditures drop off considerably during 1991-1993, then rise slightly (from 2.3% to 2.6%) during 1994 (Figure 21). Data on Vietnamese military spending for 1995-1998 is regrettably unavailable, but data does exist for 1999-2005. However, this data comes from a different source than that of the 1988-1994 data and measures military expenditures in \$US Billions (as opposed to percentage of GDP). While the two data sets are not directly comparable with one another, they both indicate that Vietnam's military spending remains comparatively modest with that of other ASEAN states. According to the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Vietnam's military budget increased slightly during 1999-2005 (Figure 22). In 2004 Vietnam's military spending was \$ 3.2 billion (US). To put this figure into perspective,

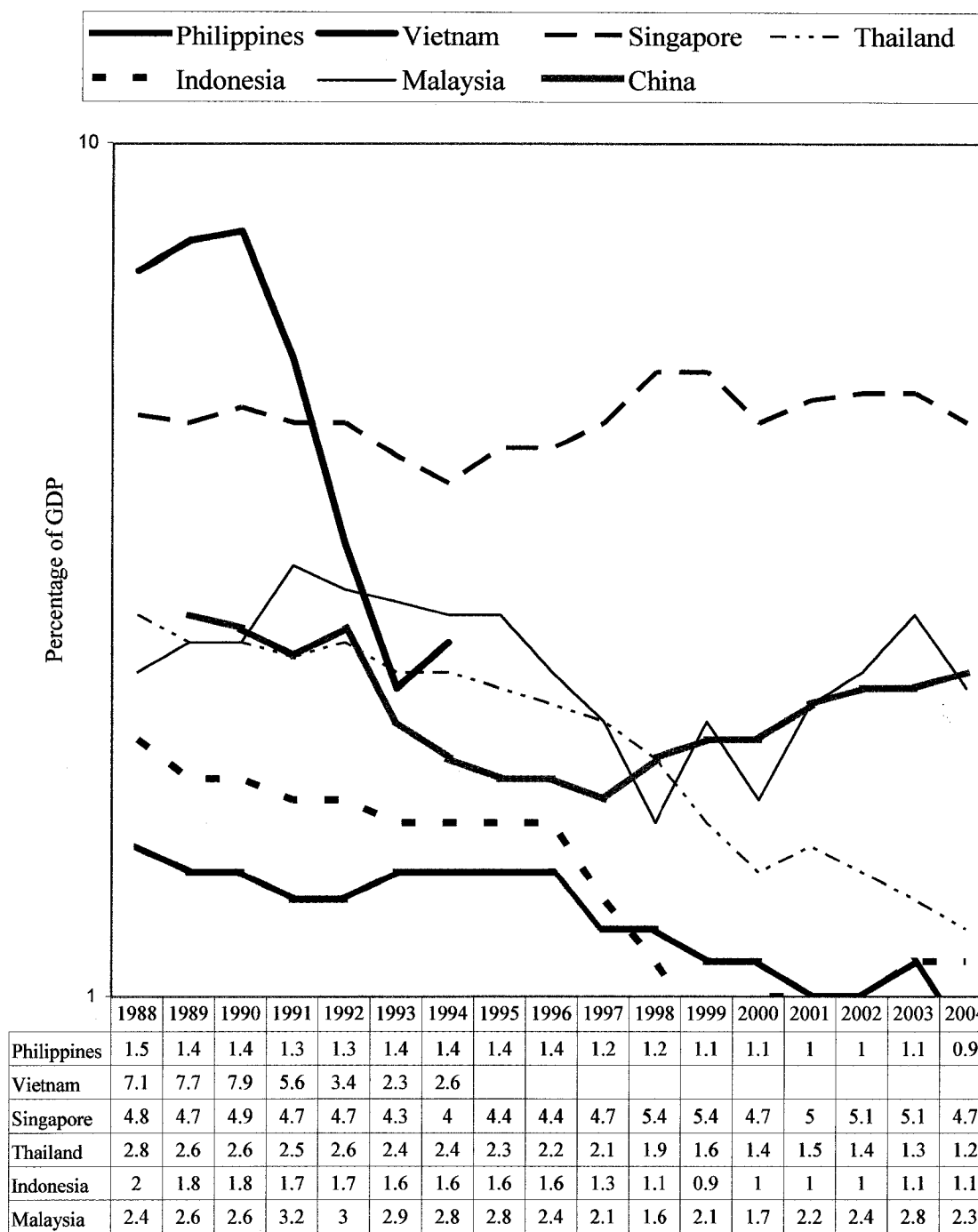


Figure 20. Military Expenditures as Percentage of GDP. Source of Data: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (SIPRI, 2006). Data for China and Indonesia are SIPRI estimates. Data unavailable for Vietnam after 1994.

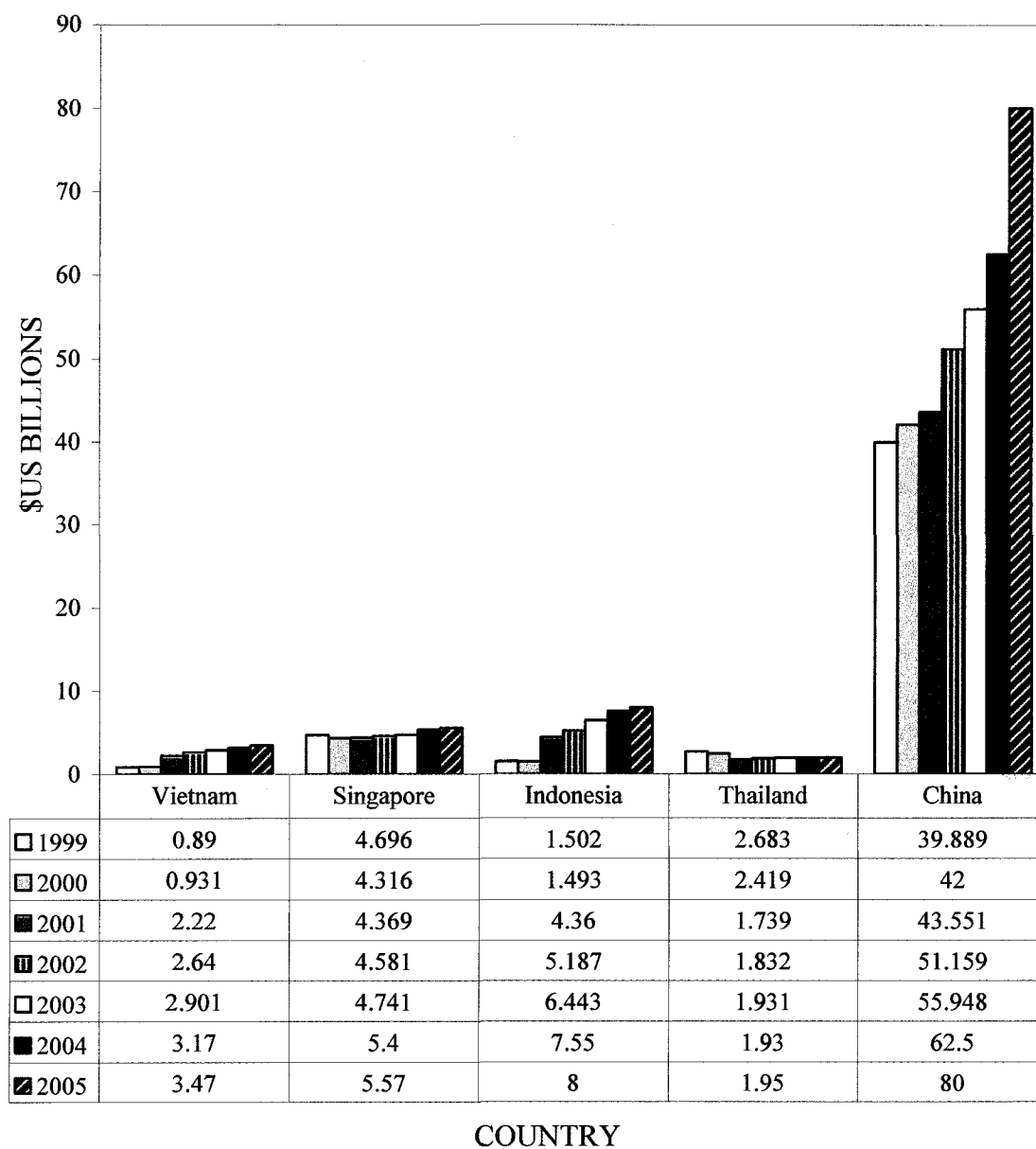


Figure 21. Military Expenditures of Asian Powers, 1999-2005. Source of Data: Cordesman & Kleiber, *The Asian Conventional Military Balance* (CSIS, 2006). Data unavailable for the Philippines and Malaysia.

China's 2003 military budget was \$ 56.0 billion (U.S.).²⁹⁸ The overall decrease in Vietnam's military spending during our study's period indicates that Hanoi does not anticipate hostilities with China any time soon. This is quite remarkable considering that of all the ASEAN states, Vietnam has the longest and most contentious history of armed conflict with China. Given the overall history of enmity between Beijing and Hanoi, as well as the more specific history regarding the territorial disputes over the Paracel and Spratly islands, it is extremely difficult to account for Vietnam's decreased military expenditures since the early 1990s unless Hanoi's threat perceptions regarding China have fundamentally changed.

The composition and capabilities of the Vietnamese Navy also indicate that Hanoi does not perceive any clear and present China threat in the maritime environment. Vietnam has only eleven major surface warships (6 frigates and 5 corvettes), eight missile patrol craft, ten torpedo and coastal craft, and nineteen inshore (river) patrol boats. None of the six frigates is armed with guided missile systems. Vietnam also has two obsolescent submarines (SS/SSK).²⁹⁹ Hanoi obviously does not currently perceive a need to strengthen its military power to any significant degree. This is not the security policy one might expect if Hanoi still perceived China as posing a national security threat to Vietnam!

Vietnam's external security policy also indicates that China is no longer perceived as being the threat it once was. Hanoi has so far not pursued either a hard balancing strategy against China nor has Vietnam moved towards bandwagoning with China.

²⁹⁸ *U.S. Military Spending vs. the World*, Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 7 February 2005. <http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/archives/001221.php>.

²⁹⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *The Asian Conventional Military Balance in 2006: Total and Sub-Regional Balances; Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2006), 73.

Instead, Hanoi is pursuing a hedging strategy of cultivating closer economic and diplomatic ties with China, while at the same time pursuing a soft-balancing strategy by pressing for a more unified and explicit ASEAN security policy vis-à-vis China and through seeking better relations with Washington. Hanoi's strategy indicates that China is no longer perceived as a likely, immediate military threat. However, at the same time Hanoi's hedging strategy also indicates that the Vietnamese remain cautious and suspicious of China's long-term goals in the region. As such, Vietnam's strategy in coping with the rise of China is to enmesh the major powers in Southeast Asia (U.S., Japan, and EU) diplomatically and economically to deepen their sense of having a stake in regional security and induce a stronger interest in maintaining regional stability. Besides limited efforts of cultivating closer ties with India and "testing" the viability of closer relations with the U.S., Hanoi's main enmeshment strategy is to focus on the "constructive entanglement" of China. As such, Hanoi's position regarding the engagement of major powers in the region is unique among the ASEAN states in that China -- not the United States -- is the main target of Vietnamese efforts. Vietnam therefore, follows a "defensive enmeshment concept" based on the notion that greater interdependence between China and ASEAN will raise the costs to China of any aggression against Vietnam.³⁰⁰ Rather than relying on American military power to balance the rise of China, Hanoi views U.S. economic power as crucial in developing Vietnam's internal balancing ability.³⁰¹

Since the normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations in 1991, Hanoi has assiduously promoted close diplomatic and economic ties with China. As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, official contacts between the two countries, such as frequent exchanges between

³⁰⁰ Goh, 33.

³⁰¹ Goh, 42. Also see Nayan Chanda, "A Balancing Act by Hanoi," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 2003.

military and civilian officials and annual high-level meetings, are well established. Beginning in the late 1990s, talks between China and Vietnam concerning disputes over the land and sea borders became almost habitual.³⁰² Military-to-military contacts between China and Vietnam also have become more frequent as well. The first visit of a Chinese naval vessel to Vietnam occurred in 2001 at Nha Rong port in Ho Chi Minh City.³⁰³ Since then, such contacts have become routine in nature. Increased interaction among Chinese and Vietnamese officials has led to a general improvement of Sino-Vietnamese relations, as well as to progress in the most difficult issue in the relationship -- the Spratlys dispute. After all, it is difficult to believe that Hanoi would have joined China and the Philippines in developing the natural resources in the Spratlys had Vietnam still perceived China as constituting a serious threat to Vietnamese national security. By signing the 2005 Tripartite Agreement, Hanoi deepened China's "enmeshment" in the region and thus lessened the possibility of any hostile moves by Beijing in the Spratlys. By 2005, Vietnam had seemingly realized its goal of constructively entangling China as articulated in 1992 by a Vietnamese foreign ministry official:

Sino-Vietnamese relations will be meshed within the much larger network of interlocking economic and political interests . . . [creating] an arrangement whereby anybody wanting to violate Vietnam's sovereignty would be violating the interests of other countries as well.³⁰⁴

In addition to Hanoi's "enmeshment" strategy directed at China, Vietnam also attempted to balance against China through its membership in ASEAN (2000). As a member, Hanoi hoped to utilize the potential collective bargaining power of ASEAN to en-

³⁰² See Lai To Lee, *China and the South China Sea Dialogues* and "China's Relations with ASEAN: Partners in the 21st Century?" *Pacifica Review* 13, no.1 (February 2001): 61-71 for an excellent discussion of Sino-Vietnamese dialogue concerning disputed sea borders in the Gulf of Tonkin, and the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

³⁰³ Goh, 21.

³⁰⁴ Nguyen Hong Thach, quoted in Goh, 33.

hance Vietnam's position regarding its giant neighbor to the north -- especially concerning the Paracel and Spratly islands. Hanoi suggested that ASEAN's decision to view Vietnam as part of the group was due to "economic and defence [sic] reasons," and also reflected ASEAN fears concerning China's aggressive stance on the Spratlys dispute.³⁰⁵ Vietnam's strategy of emphasizing the China threat in the South China Sea has not met with much success, however, due to the lack of a unified ASEAN position on contentious issues with China. Beijing's diplomacy in Southeast Asia has successfully divided ASEAN on the South China Sea issue by pursuing bilateral trade agreements and economic relations extremely favorable to the individual ASEAN states. Several ASEAN states have benefited economically through their bilateral relations with China, especially Malaysia and Thailand (discussed below). As a result, these countries have reached a more "understanding" positions in certain issues important to China, such as agreeing to place sovereignty issues on hold in the territorial disputes dialogues and resisting Manila's calls to internationalize the South China Sea disputes with China. Vietnam has also benefited economically through its relations with China. Vietnam, like China, also requires regional stability during its period of reform and economic development. Moreover, Hanoi is keenly aware of the crucial role played by China in the region's economic development and security. Since the normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations, trade between the two countries has significantly increased. Between 2000 and 2004, for example, China-Vietnam trade doubled in volume (from \$2.4 billion to \$5 billion).³⁰⁶ Beijing has thus skillfully utilized China's growing economic power in its diplomacy to leverage some of the Southeast Asia states toward positions more sympathetic to Chinese

³⁰⁵ *Straits Times*, 21 July 1992.

³⁰⁶ "China-Vietnam Trade to Surpass 5b Dollars," *Xinhua News*, 1 September 2004.

interests. Thus, Beijing's strategy has successfully divided ASEAN on the Spratlys issue and thus countered any possibility of Vietnam building a unified ASEAN position on the matter. Therefore, the only other potential balancer of China is Vietnam's previous enemy -- the United States.

Since the normalization of relations between Hanoi and Washington in 1995, the Vietnamese have also quietly pursued better economic and security relations with the United States as a component of Hanoi's hedging strategy vis-à-vis China. In 2000, President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Defense William Cohen visited Vietnam, followed the next year by a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) which allowed Vietnamese goods to enter the US market under normal trading status. In addition, military cooperation between the two former enemies began in the areas of searching for American MIAs, clearing mine fields, and military medical programs.³⁰⁷ In November 2003, two significant events took place that indicate movement towards an American-Vietnamese military relationship -- an American warship made a port call to Ho Chi Minh City, and the Vietnamese defense minister visited the United States for the first time.³⁰⁸ Subsequent U.S. naval visits to Vietnamese ports (most recently on 4 July 2006, when the *USS Patriot* and the *USS Salvor* visited a Vietnamese port).³⁰⁹ The possibility of increased U.S.-Vietnamese military cooperation was underscored by Admiral William Fallon's July 2006 trip to Vietnam. In meetings with Defense Minister Colonel Phung Quang Thanh, Fallon discussed possible joint military maneuvers and more visits of U.S. Navy vessels

³⁰⁷ Goh, 28.

³⁰⁸ Nayan Chanda, "A Balancing Act by Hanoi," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 2003.

³⁰⁹ Sergei Blagov, "US, Vietnam scratch each other's back," *Asia Times Online*, 2006. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/HG21Ae02.html (accessed 23 August 2006).

to Vietnamese ports, as well as joint search-and-rescue exercises at sea in the future.³¹⁰

Thanh, however, did not give an immediate reply except to express that Vietnam did not wish to cause any “misunderstanding with regional neighbors.”³¹¹

Presently, Vietnam and the United States cooperate in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics operations, and just recently, Hanoi agreed to participate in the Pentagon’s international military education and training program with regional US allies. In addition, Vietnam and the U.S. conduct annual defense dialogues among mid-level military officers (this year will be the third such meeting).³¹² Further, it is generally believed that Washington wants access to Vietnamese military facilities, especially the former American naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. High-level U.S. officials have recently visited (or plan to visit) Vietnam for talks with their Vietnamese counterparts -- U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary Condolice Rice, and President Bush. It seems that they desire to take advantage of the 2002 Russian military withdrawal from Cam Ranh Bay.³¹³ Hanoi, however, has plans to convert the naval base into an economic hub, similar to Manila’s conversion of Subic Bay in the Philippines. In addition, there are plans to upgrade Cam Ranh Bay’s airport into an international gateway, and convert Ba Nguoi seaport into a container ship terminal.³¹⁴

Improvements in U.S.-Vietnam relations, however, must be seen and measured within the framework of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Hanoi clearly wishes to avoid offending China by pursuing relations with the U.S. too quickly or in such a manner that

³¹⁰ Blagov.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Hanoi was unprepared for Moscow’s unexpected early withdrawal from Cam Ranh Bay (Russia still had two years remaining on its 25-year contract to use the naval base without charge).

³¹⁴ Blagov.

might be perceived by Beijing as being antagonistic. For example, the BTA between Vietnam and the U.S. was reportedly delayed by Hanoi until China had reached agreement with the U.S. concerning trade, and Secretary of Defense Cohen's 2000 visit to Vietnam was postponed by Hanoi because of a Sino-Vietnamese summit and the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and a Chinese naval visit of Vietnam took place *before* the 2003 visit of U.S. Navy warships. Apparently, Hanoi will only develop relations with the U.S. at a rate determined and constrained by Vietnam's relations with China. For Hanoi, Sino-Vietnamese relations are the paramount concern, and therefore relations with the U.S. are of secondary importance to Vietnam.³¹⁵ Overtures towards Washington are useful to Hanoi as leverage on Beijing to maximize Vietnam's gains in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. By pointing to the future possibility of improved relations with the U.S., Vietnam can pressure Beijing into greater foreign aid and trade concessions as inducements to lure Hanoi away from pursuing warmer relations with Washington.

In short, Vietnam's ability to actively balance against China is relatively weak. ASEAN remains divided in its China policy, and therefore is not perceived by Hanoi as being a significant balancing force against potential Chinese aggression. As such, lacking any meaningful partners with which to balance against rising Chinese power, Hanoi has pursued a strategy of focusing primarily on improving relations with China and thus further enmeshing (entangling) China economically and politically in the region. As regional peace and stability are essential to the wider interests of both Vietnam and China, the potentiality of armed hostility between the two socialist countries over the disputed

³¹⁵ Goh, 21-23, 32-33.

Spratly and Paracel Islands appears low. As such, Vietnam's security behavior indicates that threat perceptions of China are currently low and will remain so for the near future.

The Philippines

Following the opening of relations in 1975 between China and the Philippines, the two countries experienced good bilateral relations. During the Third Indochina War, Manila supported ASEAN's tacit alliance with China against Vietnamese hegemonic ambitions in mainland Southeast Asia. Given that in the security realm the Philippines enjoyed a free ride due to the large American military presence in Subic Bay and Clark Air Base, Manila could afford to pursue relations with China. However, following the American military withdrawal from the Philippines in 1992, and the Mischief Reef Affair in 1995, post-Cold War relations between Manila and Beijing deteriorated. Given American indifference regarding the dispute between China and the Philippines in the Spratlys, Manila turned to ASEAN for assistance.

As discussed in previous chapters, President Fidel Ramos unsuccessfully attempted to internationalize the South China Sea dispute in reaction to China's provocative moves in the Spratlys, but due to a lack of ASEAN consensus on the issue, Ramos was forced to settle for bilateral talks with Beijing for the time being. These talks did result in a bilateral code of conduct concerning the disputes in the South China Sea.³¹⁶ But as discussed in earlier chapters, the code of conduct did little to ease Manila's worries about Chinese intentions in the Spratlys. Manila, therefore, continued to press for an united ASEAN position regarding Chinese territorial claims and actions in the South

³¹⁶ "Joint Statement on the PRC-RP Consultations on the South China Sea and Other Areas of Cooperation," 10 August 1995. A good overview of the "code of conduct" is given in Rommel C. Banlaoi, *The ASEAN Regional Forum, The South China Sea Disputes, and the Functionalist Option* (Quezon City: national Defense College of the Philippines, 2001). Also see Emmers, 138.

China Sea. During the informal 1999 ASEAN Summit held in Manila, the Philippines submitted a draft multilateral code of conduct for the South China Sea in an attempt to create a collective ASEAN position vis-à-vis China. Manila's draft included a proposal for joint development of the Spratly Islands, which was rejected by both Malaysia and China.³¹⁷ However, due in a large part to Manila's push within ASEAN for multilateral development of the Spratlys, Beijing accelerated its bilateral diplomacy with Manila for joint development of the Spratly Islands. During the September 2003 Manila visit of Wu Bangguo, Chairman of China's National People's Congress, and an informal proposal for joint development of the Spratlys was made. Wu's overture was followed in November by meetings between delegations from the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) and the Philippines National Oil Corporation (PNOC) to discuss joint exploration and development of oil and natural gas reserves in the disputed region.³¹⁸ This process, as discussed earlier, ultimately led to the 2005 Tripartite Agreement between China, the Philippines, and Vietnam for joint exploration and development of the Spratlys. Manila's efforts within ASEAN to pressure China towards multilateral development of the Spratlys succeeded in achieving its goal -- but through a bilateral mechanism, which became multilateral with Vietnam's subsequent entry into the China-Philippine agreement.

To a certain extent, then, Manila successfully utilized its ASEAN membership to pressure China toward a bilateral agreement for joint development in the Spratlys. Given the poor state of Philippine military capabilities and the declining rate in Philippine defense spending (Figure 4.16), some observers might contend that Manila's diplomatic feat would not have been possible without American security guarantees -- that balance

³¹⁷ Emmers, 140-141.

³¹⁸ Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle For Autonomy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 138-139.

of power explains the successful conclusion of the 2005 PRC-RP joint development agreement which subsequently became the Tripartite Agreement. Our analysis of the U.S. balancing factor, however, indicates that considerations beyond the distribution of power were responsible for this outcome. Rather, the success of Chinese diplomacy in reducing Manila's threat perception of China, as evidenced by the empirical data presented above, is responsible to a large degree for this outcome. It is inconceivable that such an outcome would have occurred had Manila still perceived China as an "enemy." Recent Philippine security behavior indicates that Manila increasingly views China not as an enemy, but as a "good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a nonthreatening regional power."³¹⁹

Ever since the incorporation of the Philippines into the American empire in 1898, U.S. military power has been the traditional source of Philippine national security. During the Cold War, the substantial American military presence in the Philippines allowed Manila a "free ride" in national security matters concerning external threats to the Philippines. Because the Philippines was a key element in Washington's strategy of forward deployment in Asia, Manila utilized and relied upon the American security umbrella for protection against external threats (1951 Mutual Defense Agreement, 1954 Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty or "Manila Pact" and the establishment of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization or SEATO). As such, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were essentially designed as a domestic security force. Therefore, when Washington refused the Philippine Senate's new lease agreement for both Subic Bay and Clark Air Base in 1991 and militarily withdrew from the Philippines the following year, the AFP inher-

³¹⁹ I borrow David Shambaugh's description of China's image in the region. Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," 64.

ited the responsibility for defending the country against external threats -- a job that it was not capable of undertaking by itself. The Mischief Reef affair of 1995 and the lack of strong American support made this point painfully clear to Manila. According to former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Joseph Nye, Washington would not involve the U.S. in the dispute between the Philippines and China except to maintain the free passage of vessels in the region should conflict in the Spratlys threaten freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.³²⁰ In fact, Washington made clear that the Philippine-claimed areas in the Spratlys were not covered by the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. In May 1995 the U.S. State Department issued the following statement:

The United States takes no position on the legal merits of the competing claims to sovereignty over the various islands, reefs, atolls and cays in the South China Sea. The United States would, however, view with serious concern any maritime claim, or restriction on maritime activity, in the South China Sea that was not consistent with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.³²¹

However, according to Sheldon W. Simon, Washington confirmed in 1999 that the U.S. would defend the Philippines if it were attacked in the South China Sea.³²² Manila's response to the 1995 manifestation of the Chinese threat in the South China Sea was to push the Philippine Congress to approve a military modernization plan and also to began working to revitalize the U.S.-Philippine alliance by negotiating a Visiting Forces

³²⁰ Mark J. Valencia, *China and the South China Sea Disputes: Conflicting Claims and Potential Solutions in the South China Sea*, Adelphi Paper no. 298 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1995): 26-27. Also see Weatherbee, 135.

³²¹ Christine Shelly, Acting Spokesperson of the U.S. Department of State, "Spratlys and the South China Sea", 10 May 1995 as cited in Emmers, 151.

³²² Sheldon W. Simon, "Theater Security Cooperation in the U.S. Pacific Command: An Assessment and Projection," *NBR Analysis* 14, no. 2 (August 2003): 38.

Agreement (VFA) and by requesting military assistance.³²³ Late in January 2002, Manila agreed to allow about 1000 U.S. soldiers to deploy to the southern Philippines to help in Manila's fight against the separatist terror group Abu Sayyaf.³²⁴ During the March 2003 annual U.S.-Philippines "Balikatan" joint military exercise, some training activity took place on Palawan Island bordering the territory in the Spratlys claimed by Manila. According to President Arroyo, before focusing on counterinsurgency training against the separatist group Abu Sayyaf, the focus of the U.S. training of the PAF was defending the Spratlys against China.³²⁵

However, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's withdrawal of Filipino troops from Iraq in 2004 to win the release of a Philippine hostage resulted in a marked decrease in U.S. assistance to Manila. Beijing responded by offering the Philippines *Chinese* military assistance -- and Manila *accepted!*³²⁶ In March 2005, Beijing offered the Philippines \$3 million (US) in military aid to create a Chinese-language training program for the PAF, invited the Philippines to participate in naval maneuvers, donated engineering equipment, and opened five slots to Filipinos for military training in China.³²⁷ The response from Washington was a rapid increase in U.S. military assistance to the Philip-

³²³ Carl Baker, "China-Philippines Relations: Cautious Cooperation," *Asia's Bilateral Relations*, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (October 2004), 4. Available online at <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/AsiaBilateralRelations/China-PhilippinesRelationsBaker.pdf> (accessed 4 September 2006).

³²⁴ Emmers, 150.

³²⁵ "War Games with US Targeted China: Arroyo," *The Straits Times Interactive*, 5 April 2004.

³²⁶ Beijing invited President Arroyo for a state visit and offered Manila greater cooperation and aid and subsequently aggressively wooed Philippine policy makers. Hannah Beech, "Deals and Diplomacy," *Time Asia* 165, no. 21 (30 May 2005); Dan Blumenthal, "The Impact of China's Economic Growth on North and Southeast Asia," testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, published by the *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, 22 July 2005. This was not the first Chinese offer of military assistance, however. Beijing made offers of military assistance to the Philippines in 2004. See "Defense Minister Cao meets with Brunei, Philippine guests," *People's Daily Online*, 24 September 2004.

³²⁷ Dana Dillon and John J. Tkacik, Jr., "China's Quest for Asia," *Policy Review*, no. 134 (December 2005 & January 2006), 13.

pinos amounting to \$300 million (US) over the last few years.³²⁸ Presently, there is even talk of establishing permanent American military bases in the southern island of Mindanao which would support activities of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JOSTFP), established after 9/11 to train and advise the PAF on how best to fight terrorist groups such as Abu Sayyaf.³²⁹ The recent improvement in Sino-Philippines security relations, as illustrated by the 2005 Tripartite Agreement in the Spratlys and Manila's acceptance of increasing Chinese economic and military assistance, clearly demonstrates that Philippine threat perceptions of China have dramatically decreased since the late 1990s. The recent increase in American military aid and assistance to the Philippines also indicates growing concerns in Washington that Manila is becoming too friendly with China -- and thus weakening the legitimacy of the U.S. "China threat" thesis and perhaps even making the establishment of permanent American military bases in the southern Philippines more problematic for the Bush Administration.

Thailand

Thailand does not view China as a serious national security threat. Thailand has no common borders with China, and the two countries have no territorial disputes with one another. Thailand was one of the first states in Southeast Asia to normalize relations with China (1975), and the two countries share a recent history of economic and strategic cooperation. Thai companies were the initial investors in China following Deng Xiaoping's decision to liberalize China's economy and join the world market at the end of the

³²⁸ Fabio Scarpello, "Philippines weigh new military marriage," *Asia Times Online*, 23 August 2006.

³²⁹ In February 2002, 160 US special forces with 500 support staff arrived on the island of Basilan in Mindanao. Scarpello, "Philippines weigh new military marriage," *Asia Times Online*, 23 August 2006. Also see Michael Richardson, "Joint Operation Easier to Begin Than to End," *International Herald Tribune*, 28 January 2002, and Andrew Feickert, "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia," *CRS Report for Congress* (26 August 2005), Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

1970s, and Thailand and China became strategic partners against Vietnam following Hanoi's 1978 invasion of Cambodia. In addition, Thailand was a leading proponent (along with Singapore) beginning in the 1980s for an ASEAN policy of engaging and building a relationship with China. During the 1990s, Thailand was the most fulsome of the ASEAN states in its commendation of Beijing's diplomatic and economic overtures in the region. During Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's 2001 visit to Thailand, his Thai counterpart emphasized closer and stronger Thai-Chinese cooperation in a wide range of interests, stating that in the future China and Thailand would become "strategic partners."³³⁰ In July 2005, during the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra indicated his anticipation of greater cooperation and a more dynamic strategic relationship with China.³³¹

However, China does pose several potential security problems for Thailand. First, China's increasing influence in mainland Southeast Asia, especially in Cambodia, Laos, and perhaps Myanmar, worries Bangkok as Thailand continues to value buffer areas at its borders to manage the region's strategic balance with Vietnam and China.³³² Second, there is concern that Beijing has already "won over" the region with favorable bilateral trade agreements and Chinese economic and technical assistance, and is now beginning to pursue Chinese self-interest more assiduously in Southeast Asia. Thai officials do not believe that China poses any direct security threat to Thailand, but they do have concerns about the serious economic challenge China poses as well as the possibility that Beijing

³³⁰ "Zhu's Visit Goes Off Well," *Bangkok Post*, 22 May 2001.

³³¹ "China's Quest for Asia," 14.

³³² See Muthiah Alagappa, *The National Security of Developing States: Lessons from Thailand* (Dover, MA: Auburn House, 1987).

could disrupt regional stability through political intrigue.³³³ An example that perturbed Thai officials is the free trade agreement with China that allowed a flood of cheap Chinese products into Thailand while at the same time prevented a free flow of Thai goods into China because of China's remaining non-tariff trade barriers.³³⁴ Nonetheless, Thailand has good trade relations with China and recognizes that Beijing's influence on the military regime in Myanmar is of value to Thailand.³³⁵ However, Bangkok does have some long-term strategic concerns regarding China that prevent any bandwagoning behavior by Thailand and, at the same time, encourage the continuance of good relations with the United States.

Thailand and the United States share a long history of security relations (Thailand is the first Southeast Asian country to enter into a formal defense treaty with the U.S.).³³⁶ Beginning in 1981, Thailand annually hosts the largest American military exercises in Southeast Asia -- the joint Thai-US Cobra Gold military exercise. Since 2002, Singapore participates in Cobra Gold and, starting in 2004, the Philippines participate in the U.S.-led annual military exercise.³³⁷ However, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Thai cooperation with Washington in the war against terrorism was less than enthusiastic. Sympathetic to the American position, but wary of supporting a U.S. war against Muslim countries, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra initially took a neutral stance before finally deciding two weeks later to support Washington's antiterrorism policies by offering to send troops to Afghanistan and backing the U.S. at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

³³³ Goh, 40-41.

³³⁴ Goh, 18.

³³⁵ Goh, 19.

³³⁶ In 1954 Thailand and the US join other signatories of the Manila Pact to form the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), followed in 1962 by the Rusk-Thanat Joint Statement pledging US support for Thailand's defense. In 1964 the first US military forces are based in Thailand.

³³⁷ Weatherbee, 38.

(APEC) and ASEAN forums. By 2003, Thailand's position concerning the threat of terrorism moved even closer to that of Washington's. Thaksin's 2003 "working visit" with President Bush indicated a strengthening of U.S.-Thai relations and an increased security role for Thailand concerning the war against terrorism. Thailand has been designated as a "major non-NATO ally" by Washington and Thailand's new status was affirmed by an agreement to deliver advanced medium range air-to-air missiles to the Thai air force.³³⁸

While not publicly joining the U.S. coalition to invade Iraq, Thailand pledged support of the war in May 2003 and soon after dispatched 400 military personnel to assist in rebuilding efforts.³³⁹ Even though Bangkok views terrorism in mostly domestic terms (Muslim unrest in southern Thailand) and has reservations about defining terrorism in very American terms, the importance of continued strategic relations with the U.S. is clear. However, Thailand is cautious not to strategically lean too far towards the United States for domestic reasons, as well as to preserve more room for maneuver with China.

In sum, the rise of Chinese power is not perceived in Thailand to be an immediate, pressing national security concern, but rather a possible long-term problem *if* Beijing's regional policy shifts away from the present cooperative approach toward a more self-interested, unilateral policy in Southeast Asia. Until such a shift occurs, Bangkok appears content to pursue the traditional Thai strategy of maximizing maneuvering room in Thai-Chinese relations through pursuing close relations with both China and the United States -- a modern version of the famous "bamboo diplomacy" initially undertaken by King Mongkut (Rama IV) in response to the threat posed by European and American imperialism during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. In the final

³³⁸ Weatherbee, 38.

³³⁹ Goh, 16-17.

analysis, there is little evidence that China is viewed as a serious threat in Thailand. Thai security policy indicates that Bangkok is much more concerned about domestic terrorist and secessionist threats in the predominantly Muslim areas of southern Thailand, than worried about the rise of Chinese military power.

Singapore

Singapore's small size, history, and geographic location make national security a primary concern. Beginning in 1965 with its traumatic birth through forced separation from Malaysia, Singapore became "a very small island state perpetually haunted by its sense of vulnerability."³⁴⁰ Ethnic dimensions increase Singapore's sense of vulnerability. Domestic security has always been the primary focus of Singapore's ruling ethnic Chinese elite who control political power at the expense of Singapore's Malay population through one-party electoral domination and an authoritarian application of its internal security act.³⁴¹ Singapore's external vulnerability is largely determined by its geographic location. Also described as a "Chinese island surrounded by a Muslim sea," Singapore historically has been concerned about its Malay neighbors, especially Malaysia and Indonesia. These two Muslim states have been (and remain) Singapore's principal external threat. Relations between Singapore and Indonesia have historically been strained and confrontational, and Indonesia remains a major security concern of Singapore.³⁴² Singa-

³⁴⁰ Hussain Mutalib, "The Socio-Economic Dimensions in Singapore's Quest for Security and Stability," *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 39.

³⁴¹ Weatherbee, 37.

³⁴² In 1968, a crisis in Singapore-Indonesian relations resulted from the October hanging of two Indonesian marines found guilty in Singapore of having bombed a bank on the island during the period of *Konfrontasi* (or Confrontation) when Indonesian leader Suharto opposed the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia (Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak) with a military and ideological campaign. A second crisis in Singapore-Indonesian relations occurred in 1975 during Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. Singapore was the only ASEAN state that did not support Indonesia against a United Nations General Assembly resolution condemning Indonesia's actions (Singapore abstained rather than vote against the resolution). This

pore's relations with Malaysia have also historically been less than cordiale, as Singapore traditionally feared being annexed by Malaysia. As such, Singapore possesses the most modern and capable armed forces in Southeast Asia.³⁴³ China, on the other hand, has never been viewed by Singapore's ruling elite as a primary security threat, but rather more as an opportunity.

Singapore, along with Thailand, has historically viewed China as a balancer against Vietnamese hegemonic intentions in mainland Southeast Asia. While aware of the challenges posed by China, Singapore viewed its special relationship with China as essential in limiting Vietnam's (and thus Moscow's) influence in the region.³⁴⁴ During the Third Indochina War (1978-1991), Singapore supported Thailand's strategy of forming an unofficial alliance with China in 1979 to resist Vietnamese expansionism in the region. In the face of Vietnamese incursions into Thailand, and with Singapore's insistence, the other ASEAN states closed ranks behind Thailand at the June 1979 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held in Bali and promised their support in preserving Thailand's independence and territorial integrity.³⁴⁵ However, by the March 1980 bilateral summit between Indonesia and Malaysia held in Kuantan, Malaysia, ASEAN consensus on Vietnam broke down. Malaysia and Indonesia, concerned about great power implications of conflict with Vietnam, put forth the so-called "Kuantan Principle" which opposed the Thai-Singapore led strategy of using Chinese military power to force the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. The two Muslim countries proposed allowing Vietnam a po-

angered Suharto and caused another period of strained relations between the two countries. For a good history, see J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

³⁴³ Weatherbee, 37.

³⁴⁴ Emmers, 101.

³⁴⁵ Weatherbee argues that ASEAN's collective political action linking Thailand's national security to that of the other ASEAN states during Hanoi's December 1978 military incursion into Cambodia "verged on collective defense." Weatherbee, 77-78.

litical sphere of interest in Cambodia in exchange for a peaceful Thai-Cambodian border. ASEAN solidarity thus collapsed, increasing tensions between Singapore and its two Muslim neighbors.³⁴⁶

In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War, and the 1992 American military withdrawal from the Philippines, however, Singapore (and some other ASEAN states) increasingly feared that China or Japan might fill the 'power vacuum' left in the region by the disengaging external powers. China's rising power, therefore, became one of the most critical issues facing the ASEAN states at the end of the Cold War.³⁴⁷ Since the early 1990s, Singapore has taken a leading role among the ASEAN states in promoting the economic and political engagement of China in order to socialize and manage China's rise by integrating the PRC into the regional and international economy and society. In addition, Singapore also led the drive to intensify ASEAN's external dialogues in political and security issues via the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC).³⁴⁸ The 1992 annual meeting of the ASEAN foreign ministers, held in Manila, was followed by the PMC where initial discussions on regional security were held on a serial rather than multilateral basis. Due to the American military withdrawal from the Philippines, as well as the South China Sea disputes, the ASEAN states decided to establish a new multilateral security dialogue in the region that would include non-ASEAN PMC members. The inaugural ASEAN-PMC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) was hosted in May 1993 by Singapore and became a permanent feature

³⁴⁶ A good overview of the causes and diplomacy of the Third Indochina War is Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War After the War* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), and Amitav Acharya, Pierre Lizée, and Sorpong Peou, *Cambodia - The 1989 Paris Peace Conference: Background Analysis and Documents* (Kraus Intl., 1991).

³⁴⁷ Emmers, 112.

³⁴⁸ *The Singapore Declaration of 1992*. ASEAN Secretariat, 1992.

in intra-ASEAN relations as well as ASEAN's relations with the seven dialogue partners. At that year's SOM, Singapore's Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng played a key role in laying the groundwork for the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 1993. Keen on establishing a multilateral security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific which would secure a continuing American involvement in the Asia-Pacific and address China's rising power and influence in the region, but also wary of Washington's strategy of containing China, Singapore's security policy regarding China is based on a strategy of engaging both China and the United States instead of pursuing traditional balancing or bandwagoning strategies predicted by Realist theory.

At present, Singapore seems satisfied with the perceived success of the engagement strategy on Chinese behavior and therefore is less concerned about any possible direct or indirect Chinese threat. After 9/11, however, with the discovery of Southeast Asian networks associated with Al-Qaeda and the 2002 arrests in Singapore of members of the Islamic extremist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), terrorism has become the main security concern for Singapore's leaders. As such, Singapore increasingly worries about neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia becoming more "Islamized" and thus representing increased security threats to Singapore. According to Goh, Singaporean officials view radicalized political Islam as the most "urgent and fundamental threat" facing Singapore because the threat arises "not because of what we do, but because of who we *are*."³⁴⁹ This threat has pushed Singapore towards closer security cooperation with the United States that, according to Goh, is also indirect hedging against China: "Singapore is now maneuvering toward a closer identification of common security interests with the United States than before. This is a double-hedge: first against the possibility of fundamentalist

³⁴⁹ Goh, 14.

Islamic threats from with Southeast Asia; second, in the long term, against the potentially destabilizing effects of a stronger China.”³⁵⁰ Actually, Singapore shares common security interests with both China and the United States (threat of fundamentalist Islamic terrorist movements, desire for regional peace and stability). As such, a strategy of engagement of both China and the United States makes the most sense for Singapore. The rising threat to Singapore is not China but rather the threat of Islamic terrorist groups based in neighboring Indonesia and Malaysia. Instead of a “hedging” strategy against China, Singapore’s security cooperation with the U.S. is motivated by a desire for security cooperation with both Washington and Beijing against Muslim terrorist movements in the region. Cooperation with both powers in the war on terrorism yields maximum security benefits to Singapore. To this end, Singapore allowed a U.S. Navy logistics unit to relocate itself in Singapore after American military facilities in the Philippines were closed in 1992, and announced in January 1998 that American aircraft carriers would have access to the Changi Naval Base after its completion in 2000.³⁵¹ More recently, Singapore upgraded its defense relations with the U.S. by signing the Strategic Framework Agreement in July 2005,³⁵² and now more than 100 U.S. Navy vessels visit Singapore each year.³⁵³

Singapore’s recent security behavior indicates that China is no longer viewed as a principal security concern for the island city-state. Rather, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic-based terrorism is Singapore’s primary security concern considering

³⁵⁰ Goh, 15.

³⁵¹ Derek da Cunha, *Southeast Asia’s Security Dynamics: A Multiplicity of Approaches amidst Changing Geopolitical Circumstances*, ISEAS Working Papers, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, July 1999, 18-19.

³⁵² *Strategic Framework Agreement between the United States of American and the Republic of Singapore for a Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defense and Security*, International Relations and Security Network, available online at www.isn.ethz.ch (accessed 25 March 2006).

³⁵³ Dan Blumenthal, “The Impact of China’s Economic Growth on North and Southeast Asia,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, published by the *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* (22 July 2005).

its geographic proximity to Malaysia and Indonesia. China's worries about Islamic fundamentalism and Uyghur separatism in Xinjiang Province and Singapore's security concerns about its two larger Muslim neighboring states, bring the security policies of Singapore and China toward convergence in that they both regard Islamic movements as growing threats to their respective national security. As such, given the history of cooperative Singapore-China relations against Vietnamese and Soviet influence in Southeast Asia during the Cold War, and Singapore's leading role in formulating ASEAN's post-Cold War engagement of China, it can be concluded that Singapore currently views China more as a possible security opportunity than as a security threat.

Indonesia

Indonesia's recent security policy indicates that Jakarta no longer perceives China as a threat to Indonesian national security. In fact, recent diplomatic activity between the two countries indicates quite the opposite. During Chinese President Hu Jintao's June 2005 visit to Indonesia, China and Indonesia signed a strategic partnership agreement. Sino-Indonesian ties were strengthened the following month when Indonesian President Yudhoyono traveled to China and signed several economic and security-related agreements, including an agreement for Chinese assistance to develop medium range missiles since the Western arms embargoes had grounded Indonesia's fighter aircraft.³⁵⁴

The recent warming of relations between Jakarta and Beijing reflects quite a sea change in Sino-Indonesian relations. During the Cold War, Indonesia perceived the PRC as its main external threat due, in part, to Beijing's association with the failed *coup d'état* undertaken by the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI, or Indonesian Communist Party) in

³⁵⁴ This information is attributed to the Indonesian defense minister. See "China's Quest for Asia," 14.

1965.³⁵⁵ In 1967, Indonesia severed its diplomatic ties with the PRC as Jakarta continued to view China as the country's principal security threat.³⁵⁶ This impasse in relations continued until July 1985 when China and Indonesia signed an agreement for the resumption of direct but highly regulated bilateral trade to begin in February 1989.³⁵⁷ Sino-Indonesian relations improved further in February 1989 when President Suharto and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen met in Tokyo while both men were attending Emperor Hirohito's funeral. During their talk, Suharto indicated that he was satisfied with Qian's assurances that Beijing would not interfere with Indonesian domestic affairs and both men agreed that Sino-Indonesian relations should be normalized.³⁵⁸ Sino-Indonesian relations were normalized on 8 August 1990. However, Beijing's promulgation of the 1992 Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Waters and Contiguous Areas, as well as the 1995 Mischief Reef Affair between China and the Philippines, caused alarm in Jakarta as China's territorial claims in the South China Sea included waters near Indonesia's Natuna gas fields.³⁵⁹ In response, Indonesia conducted military exercises during 1996 in the Natuna area to assert its sovereignty and the Defense and Security Ministry drew up plans for the defense of the Natuna islands.³⁶⁰

The fashion by which Indonesia approached the rising territorial dispute with China indicates that Jakarta apparently wished to downplay the issue. As host of the annual workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Jakarta understandably wished to avoid tarnishing its impartial position as honest broker vis-à-vis the

³⁵⁵ Emmers, 88.

³⁵⁶ Lee, "China's Relations with ASEAN: Partners in the 21st Century?", 62.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Lee, *China and the South China Sea Dialogues*, 16.

³⁵⁹ *The Straits Times*, 31 May 1995.

³⁶⁰ *The Straits Times*, 30 June 1995, and 15 August 1996. Also see Liselotte Odgaard, "ASEAN's Security Concerns About China," *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 1 (March 2003): 15.

territorial disputes issue and China. The official Indonesian statement concerning its territorial dispute with China, therefore, was that no sea border problem existed between Indonesia and China and that there had never been any problem between Jakarta and Beijing over the Natuna islands. Beijing responded by agreeing that the Natuna islands belonged to Indonesia, but added that China was prepared to enter into bilateral discussions with Indonesia concerning the issue of the sea border delimitation in the area.³⁶¹

Just as Sino-Indonesian relations are improving, it seems that U.S.-Indonesian relations are becoming increasingly strained. After the fall of Sukarno in 1966 and under Suharto's rule, Indonesia froze relations with the PRC and replaced the USSR with the United States as the country's major defense supplier.³⁶² Relations between Jakarta and Washington continued to improve in the 1970s as illustrated by the U.S. support of Indonesia's 1975 annexation of Portuguese Timor in reaction to the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (DRET) by the communist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) supported by Beijing and Hanoi.³⁶³ However, relations between Indonesia and the U.S. began to worsen after the economic crash of 1997 and the political upheavals of the post-Suharto era. After the fall of Suharto's authoritarian government in May 1998, the three successive governments of B. J. Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati Sukarnoputri demonstrated marked leadership failure and

³⁶¹ *The Straits Times*, 30 June 1995.

³⁶² Weatherbee, 67-68. Also see Emmers, 11-12.

³⁶³ President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger met with Suharto in Jakarta in December 1975 and assured the Indonesian president that the U.S. would not interfere in spite of the fact that American weapons would be used in the invasion breaking American law. See *Memorandum of Conversation between Presidents Ford and Suharto, 5 July 1975, 12:40 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.*, Gerald R. Ford Library, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversations, box 13, July 5 1975 - Ford, Kissinger, Indonesian President Suharto; *The Secretary's 8:00 a.m. Staff Meeting, Tuesday, August 12, 1975, Secret [excerpt], with cover memorandum on highlights of meeting attached*, National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Transcripts of Staff Meetings of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, 1973-77, box 8, available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/#docs>.

reflected a “pervasive culture of corruption.”³⁶⁴ In the post-9/11 world, Indonesia’s relationship with the U.S. continues to be strained. Even though Jakarta supports the U.S. war against terrorism in a limited fashion, and must confront domestically the challenge of separatist and Islamic extremist groups such as Jema’ah Islamiyah (JI), the Indonesian government finds itself facing rising popular anger against the American war in Iraq and has responded by denouncing American policy while at the same time attempting to avoid an open breach with Washington. Jakarta’s brutal 2003 military campaign against the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, or “Free Aceh Movement”) and subsequent criticism from Western human rights groups and national governments, resulted in worsening relations with the U.S. as Jakarta’s actions reflect disdain for Washington’s human rights campaign which is viewed as a violation of Indonesian sovereignty. Recently, Washington’s anti-terrorism campaign was received with distrust in Indonesia. The U.S. focus on preemption and regime change has become a point of significant concern among the Indonesian public, 74% of whom worry that the United States could become a military threat to their country. These concerns were illustrated in 2003 when Indonesian Vice-President Hamzah Haz stated “who is the real terrorist? Well, it’s America . . . In fact, the US is the King of terrorists because of its war crimes in Iraq. The US condemns terrorists but itself carries out terror acts on Iraq.”³⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Indonesia continues to favor an American military presence in the region to balance China. As such, Jakarta pursues a policy of modest military cooperation with the U.S. including limited transit, refueling, and visiting rights, as well as joint training and intelligence sharing.³⁶⁶ Concerning the rise of Chinese military power and Indonesian national security, it is clear

³⁶⁴ Weatherbee, 30.

³⁶⁵ Mark Barker, “Southeast Asia turns on Bush,” *The Age*, 20 March 2004.

³⁶⁶ Odgaard, 20.

that Jakarta does not perceive any pressing need to seek closer military relations with the United States -- China is not viewed as a rising threat by Indonesia. Rather, it appears that Jakarta increasingly views the United States as a rising threat and China as an economic opportunity and a balance to American militant unilateralism.

Malaysia

Malaysian security policy of the last decade indicates that Kuala Lumpur does not perceive the rise of Chinese military power as constituting a growing national security concern, even though a final resolution of the mutual territorial dispute in the Spratlys has yet to be concluded. Of all the ASEAN states, Malaysia comes the closest in pursuing a bandwagoning strategy vis-à-vis China, although Kuala Lumpur's limited military cooperation with the United States is viewed by some as a balancing strategy directed at China. If this behavior represents balancing against China, it is extremely modest in scope. It seems more reasonable to interpret Kuala Lumpur's most limited military cooperation with the U.S. in the same light as that of Hanoi's tentative relationship with Washington -- as a means of leveraging increased economic and foreign aid benefits from China intended by Beijing to limit Malaysia's relationship with the United States. After all, Sino-Malaysian relations are less problematic than China's relations with the other states in the region, and therefore there is little perception in Kuala Lumpur of a rising Chinese threat.

Malaysia was the first Southeast Asian country to establish relations with the People's Republic of China in May 1974.³⁶⁷ However, during the Cold War Malaysia viewed China with suspicion and as a potential threat. Beijing's aggressive actions in the

³⁶⁷ See Corrine Phuangkasem, *Thailand's Foreign Relations, 1964-80* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984).

Spratlys during the late 1980s, including some brief military clashes with Malaysian naval units in mutually contested areas of the archipelago, did cause concern in Kuala Lumpur. However, Malaysia's response was far less confrontational than that of either the Philippines or Vietnam. Instead, Kuala Lumpur pursued a path of accommodation and maximization of benefits accrued through cooperation with Beijing. During the 1990s, Malaysia supported Beijing's position against any internationalization of the South China Sea disputes as well as China's position against any formal code of conduct for the South China Sea.³⁶⁸ In January 1995, Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad stated "it is high time for us to stop seeing China through the lenses of threat and to fully view China as the enormous opportunity that it is."³⁶⁹ Since the mid-1990s, Malaysia has pursued the "enormous opportunity" presented by China's growing economy. In September 2003, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi led a substantial Malaysian delegation to China to demonstrate that Malaysia -- not Thailand -- was China's natural partner in Southeast Asia. Then, following Mahathir's replacement as Prime Minister by Abdullah in October 2003, Kuala Lumpur's support of the PRC "as a stabilizing force in the region" has been articulated frequently. During 2004, a series of bilateral events celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of Sino-Malaysian diplomatic relations and served to highlight indirectly the success of Beijing's GND.

There exists little evidence that Malaysia seeks to balance China with American strategic power in spite of increased military and economic relations with the United

³⁶⁸ At the informal Manila Summit of November 1999 Malaysia dissented from the Philippine version of a code of conduct also supported by Vietnam proposing joint development of the Spratly Islands. Later, during the July 2002 AMM Meeting held in Brunei, Malaysia proposed a non-binding declaration for the Spratly Islands which moved much closer to the Chinese proposal, which was not approved. Finally, Malaysia's efforts toward a *declaration* of conduct for the South China Sea were realized in 2002 at the 8th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh. See Emmers, 140-142.

³⁶⁹ *New Straits Times*, 21 January 1995.

States as the level of military and economic cooperation between Malaysia and the U.S. is much too low to constitute any real balancing behavior against the PRC. Since 1984, the Royal Malaysian Navy has conducted annual joint exercises with the U.S. Navy, and since 1992 has been prepared to offer the U.S. Navy access to Malaysian facilities.³⁷⁰ Malaysia's support of ASEAN's 1992 call for continued U.S. strategic presence in the region and its low-key military cooperation with the U.S. military during the 1990s illustrate Kuala Lumpur's view that American military power remains vital for regional stability. However, this position should not be mistaken for Malaysian acceptance of American perceptions of a rising China threat. Even in the post-9/11 era, with the attendant strengthening of U.S.-Malaysian relations in response to international terrorism, Kuala Lumpur continues to reject Washington's China threat thesis.³⁷¹ Instead, Malaysia appears to be seeking "a *modus vivendi* with China" which will maximize Malaysian economic and political gains earned through cooperation with Beijing on important issues.³⁷² Kuala Lumpur's limited military cooperation with the United States must, therefore, be seen more as a strategy aimed at extracting maximum benefits from Malaysia's relations with China and less as a balancing strategy against the PRC.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the empirical evidence presented in this chapter clearly indicates that the majority of the ASEAN states do not view China as a rising threat in Southeast Asia despite China's increasing economic and military power. Beijing's GND is clearly

³⁷⁰ Emmers, 150-151.

³⁷¹ Malaysia has cooperated with the U.S. in the war against al Qaeda in Southeast Asia, but only to the extent that by doing so Kuala Lumpur can also utilize American help in its domestic battle against the fundamentalist Parti Islam Malaysia (PAS), which has ties with al Qaeda. Weatherbee, 34.

³⁷² Odgaard, 14-15.

succeeding in dispelling the China threat thesis in Southeast Asia. The primary data set obtained from our content analysis of regional newspaper articles clearly indicates that informed public opinion among most ASEAN states increasingly views China as being less likely to initiate the use of force in the South China Sea to solidify Beijing's territorial claims. For most regional journalists then, traditional Cold War views of China as an enemy or threat (as measured by the case of the South China Sea disputes) have greatly diminished as a new image of China as a cooperative "good neighbor" has steadily intensified in Southeast Asia. This positive trend is most pronounced in the Philippines and Vietnam -- the two "frontline" ASEAN states historically the most suspicious of Chinese intentions concerning the disputed territories in the South China Sea. This is undoubtedly due in part to the fact that both states held such hostile and threatening images of China as an aggressive and violent actor regarding the disputes, and as such any improvement at all in their perception of China would appear significant. However, the counter-argument is that long-held views and opinions are most difficult to change. Any positive change in China's image in these most "difficult" tests of Beijing's GND are, therefore, quite significant. Much more so than any change observed in states historically more neutral in their security perceptions of China -- Thailand, or perhaps Singapore, for example. Neutral images and perceptions are more easily influenced towards change than negative images which have, over time, become institutionalized. In other words, it should be easier for journalists in Thailand to believe that Beijing's behavior and policy concerning the disputes has actually changed in a constitutive rather than an instrumental fashion than it should be for Filipino or Vietnamese journalists who would naturally be more cautious and less trusting of Chinese motivations.

Our analysis of the primary data set indicates that China's image in the Philippines and Vietnam has indeed changed from that of a hostile, aggressive "enemy" toward a less hostile, more cooperative image as a "partner" or "good neighbor." This is indeed remarkable, considering that the territorial disputes between China and the two ASEAN states are yet still unresolved, and both Vietnam and the Philippines experienced instances of armed conflict or hostile interaction with Chinese military forces in the not-too-distant past (Vietnam, of course, has the longest history of conflict with China). Neither state has significantly increased spending to strengthen its armed forces since the mid-1990s, nor has either pursued any significant balancing strategy against China. Instead, both Manila and Hanoi have undertaken strategies of deepening relations with the PRC. This fact also holds true for most ASEAN states in spite of American warnings of a rising China threat. This trend is likely to continue during the near-to-mid future, barring any unforeseen events such as an increase in cross-strait tensions between China and Taiwan, or between Beijing and Washington. Any destabilizing moves undertaken by Beijing would bring into question China's "good neighbor" image held by most ASEAN states.

An analysis of the data obtained from public opinion polls and surveys conducted in Southeast Asia (and beyond the region as well) concerning China's image as a rising economic and military power also support this study's assertion that views and perceptions of China as a "threat" have decreased considerably since the mid-1990s. Perhaps the most striking example is the contrast between 1995 and 2005 Filipino threat perceptions of China. The 1995 *Social Weather Stations Survey* data indicated that China's image in the Philippines during the Mischief Reef incident was one of threat. Understand-

bly so. At the time, a weak and unprepared Manila found itself in an untenable position as it faced the superior military power of the PRC alone, without an united ASEAN response or the possibility of direct American military assistance. However, according to the results of the U.S. State Department's 2005 public opinion survey, *Asian Views of China*, China's national image in the Philippines is much less threatening than it was a mere decade ago. In fact, Filipinos now are substantially more concerned about American unilateral use of force as a threat to world peace in the next five years than the rise of Chinese military power (Figure 17). This metric holds true for the other ASEAN states analyzed in our study as well.

Data obtained through an analysis of recent security policies of our six ASEAN states towards China also support the assertion that threat perceptions of China in Southeast Asia continue to decrease. Certainly since 9/11, domestic terrorist and separatist threats remain the principal national security threats for most ASEAN States. As such, the security behavior and defense expenditures of most Southeast Asian countries since then have been focused on strengthening counterinsurgency capabilities and strategies -- not on defending themselves against the possible emergence of an hegemonic China. Clearly, Washington's pessimistic view of a rising Chinese threat, founded largely upon Realist analysis, is not shared by most ASEAN states. The data support this conclusion. Defense spending of the ASEAN countries during the 1990s has, for the most part, remained either relatively constant or decreased in spite of several periods during the second half of the decade of heightened tensions over the Spratlys. This observation is most salient for Vietnam and the Philippines, the two ASEAN states which traditionally held the strongest threat perceptions of China due to their territorial disputes with China in the

South China Sea. If Hanoi and Manila viewed the rise of Chinese economic and military power as a threat, one would hardly expect a *decrease* in defense spending. The security behavior of both states toward China also indicates that they no longer perceive China as constituting a serious national security threat as neither country has followed an outright strategic balancing strategy against China nor have they opted to bandwagon with China. The very fact that Hanoi and Manila have not felt the necessity of choosing either option indicates that they have a much more benign view of China's rise than does the United States. In other words, they do not feel compelled to balance with the United States against China's rise because neither Vietnam or the Philippines currently perceive China as a serious security threat. Rather, China is increasingly viewed as an economic opportunity and as a cooperative good neighbor by both Asian states. The security behavior of the other ASEAN states also indicates that threat perceptions of China in the region have decreased significantly while, at the same time, regional perceptions of the U.S. have become more reserved. The Bush administration's unilateral use of force and apparent disregard for multilateralism has raised concerns in the region about an American threat to world peace and thereby makes it easier for Beijing to promote China as a peaceful, cooperative good neighbor in Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Unfortunately, there is no single conceptual metamodel sufficient to describe the evolving Asian system; one size does not fit all. Analysts and policymakers therefore need to employ multiple analytical tools and policy instruments to effectively understand and navigate the Asian region in the coming years. Realist theory seems particularly incapable of explaining such a complex and dynamic environment, and it thus tends to offer oversimplified (and sometimes dangerous) policy prescriptions. Nor does liberal institutionalism fully suffice as an analytic paradigm. There are phenomena in Asia today that neither realist nor liberal international relations theory is able to capture, thus requiring deep grounding in area studies to be comprehended.

-- David Shambaugh, 2005 --

It is clear that the ASEAN states no longer believe it likely that China will continue to use force and divisive diplomacy in support of its territorial claims in the South China Sea, as was the case during and shortly following the end of the Cold War. Even though a conclusive settlement of the South China Sea disputes has yet to be realized, and Beijing continues to modernize China's military and increase the power projection capabilities of its navy and air force in the South China Sea, the ASEAN states no longer believe military conflict over the disputed territories with China likely. This is true for ASEAN as a group, as well for the two "frontline" ASEAN states confronting China's territorial claims in the Paracels and Spratlys highlighted earlier, Vietnam and the Philippines. Considering the history of conflict and hostility between China and Vietnam generated by conflicting territorial claims over the Paracel and Spratly islands (as well as the enmity between Beijing and Hanoi regarding the Cambodian question), it is surprising that Sino-Vietnamese relations have improved and deepened to the point that mutual dis-

putes over the land border and the contested maritime boundary in the Tonkin Gulf are resolved, and that Hanoi agreed in 2005 to participate in joint development of hydrocarbon resources in the disputed Spratly islands (the Tripartite Agreement between China, the Philippines, and Vietnam). Surprising, that is, unless Vietnamese threat perceptions of China have decreased and Hanoi no longer views its neighbor to the north as an “enemy,” but rather as a cooperative “partner” and potential “friend.” Only then, does it seem possible that Hanoi would take the risk of weakening Vietnam’s territorial claim in the Spratlys by a *de facto* recognition and acceptance of Chinese territorial interests in the archipelago implicit in Vietnam’s accession to the 2005 Tripartite Agreement.

THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTS HYPOTHESES

The empirical evidence presented in Chapter Four supports the main arguments and hypotheses of this case study. Clearly, social learning (both “simple” and “complex”) between China and the ASEAN states has affected an evolution of Beijing’s GND toward a more holistic approach to the disputes which places greater emphasis on cooperation and common or mutual benefit than during the initial post-Cold War period. The evidence presented also supports our second hypothesis that the positive change in Beijing’s GND has affected a positive change in ASEAN threat perceptions of China as well as the style and orientation of their China policies. In other words, the evidence supports the argument for our two hypothesized causal relationships: one between social learning and a reorientation in Beijing’s GND, the other between the reorientation of Beijing’s GND and a change in ASEAN perceptions of China and their China policies (Figure 4).

The empirical evidence also supports the hypothesis that Chinese actions viewed as incongruent with Beijing's promoted "good neighbor" image will cause ASEAN perceptions to become more suspicious of China. That is, besides leading toward identity convergence (collective or shared identity), social learning can also at times lead to a divergence of identities and an increase in mutual suspicion. As Wendt argues, identity formation is a constant, ongoing process which has no end point. Therefore it follows that role-identities between actors are also constantly being socially constructed and reconstructed (usually reconstituted, as culture is "sticky" and resistant to change). As such, China's traditional "Cold War" identity was reinforced during the late 1990s by Beijing's assertive policy of granting offshore oil exploration contracts in contested areas of the South China Sea to foreign energy companies. Although Beijing's actions appear to have been taken in response to Hanoi's leasing of concession areas to foreign oil companies in disputed waters, China's actions served to reaffirm (reconstruct) the "enemy-enemy" or "rival-rival" role-identities shared between China and the Philippines, and between China and Vietnam.

Our content analysis clearly indicates that threat perceptions of China specific to the territorial disputes decreased following Beijing's ratification of the 2002 Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea and accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2003. In all six of our selected ASEAN states, "favorable" images of China increased while "unfavorable" images decreased (Figures 6, 10-13). And since images of China coded as "favorable" in our content analysis represent ASEAN perceptions congruent with those associated with China's "post-Cold War" identity (cooperative, non-threatening, seeking mutual benefit), and "unfavorable" images reflect percep-

tions attributed with China's traditional "Cold War" identity (confrontational, threatening, pursuing egoistic, zero-sum, self-help policy), there is a direct correlation between "favorable" images and perceptions of China as a "good neighbor." Therefore, the trend of increasing "favorable" images and decreasing "unfavorable" images of China observed in our study reflect and evidence a weakening of China's traditional "Cold War" identity and a corresponding strengthening of China's new "post-Cold War" identity in Southeast Asia.

The observed positive change in perceptions of China concerning the territorial disputes is most pronounced in the Philippines and in Vietnam, the two "frontline" disputant ASEAN states, and less so in Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore. More importantly, all six ASEAN states indicate a correlation between the reorientation in Beijing's GND (increasing acceptance of ASEAN norms) and the positive transformation of China's regional image observed in our study. This correlation is clearly exemplified by the data points for 2002 – 2006. For 2002, the year Beijing signed the ASEAN Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea; the frequency of "unfavorable" images of China in all six states either decreased dramatically or remained low, while the frequency of "favorable" images increased.

The regional public opinion polls and survey data concerning China's image support the findings of our case-specific content analysis. In Southeast Asia, traditional threat perceptions of China (as an "enemy," "territorial aggressor," or "dangerous rival") have dramatically decreased as perceptions of China as a responsible, cooperative "partner" or "friend" ("good neighbor") intensify. The Philippines provides the strongest supporting evidence of a positive change in China's national image among the region's pub-

lies for two reasons. First, the 1995 *Social Weather Stations Survey* is the only public opinion study conducted in Southeast Asia concerning China. As such, the *Survey* represents the sole source of polling data for the mid-1990s available to our analysis. Therefore, public opinion data for the Philippines concerning China's image allows for two chronological points of comparison, 1995 and 2005, while corresponding opinion data for the other ASEAN states is only available since 2005. Second, public opinion in the Philippines is historically the most pro-American of all the ASEAN publics, and therefore any measurable change in Filipino perceptions of China (and of the U.S., for that matter) are more significant than those of other regional publics traditionally sympathetic and biased in favor of China (Malaysia).

Global public opinion polls and surveys conducted during 2004 – 2006 also confirm the results of both our case-specific content analysis and the regional surveys mentioned above. Global public opinion generally views China in positive terms. The 2004 BBC World Service Poll of 22 Nations revealed that large majorities in key Asian countries view China's influence in the world as positive: India (66%), Indonesia (68%), the Philippines (70%), and that a majority of Australians (56%) also perceive China in positive terms. Interestingly, the 2004 Poll also concluded that individuals with lower levels of education are less apt to view China positively (45%) than those with medium or higher levels of education (51% and 52% respectively), and that young people worldwide generally have more benign views of China than do older people.³⁷³ China is perceived as a cooperative and responsible member of the international community, Chinese economic and military power are mostly viewed in more benign and less threatening terms

³⁷³ Among young people polled (between 18 and 29 years old), 58% had a positive view of China, while only 43% of those over 60 years in age shared the same opinion of China. *BBC World Service 22 Nation Poll* (2004).

than they are among the American public, where the “China threat” thesis remains relatively strong. Gallup polls conducted in 2004, 2005, and 2006 concerning China reveal that the American public views China in less positive and more cautious terms than do most other publics. Apparently, China’s traditional “Cold War” image remains strong in the U.S. where China’s “post-Cold War” image has yet to be accepted. Although Sino-American relations fall outside the purview of this study, I believe that the current role-identity shared between China and the U.S. (“rival-rival”) reflects a different “logic of anarchy” (Hobbesian-Lockean) than that underwriting Sino-ASEAN relations (Lockean-Kantian). Studies are needed in this area.

China Policies of the ASEAN States

From our analysis of the China policies of six ASEAN states there is little indication in Southeast Asia today that China is perceived to be a military and economic threat as was the case throughout the Cold War and into the 1990s. Instead, the China policies of ASEAN and member states indicate that China is increasingly viewed as an economic and security partner as the rapidly expanding economic and political relations between China and ASEAN attest. As such, ASEAN’s enthusiastic support and concerted effort toward a further deepening of Sino-ASEAN relations must not be seen as a “hedging” strategy, but rather as a policy of “beneficial accommodation” to the rise of Chinese power. The current China policy of ASEAN is formulated in terms of *confidence* and *trust* in China as a cooperative and peaceful “good neighbor” with whom relations are based upon *mutual benefit*, rather than in Realist terms of *balance of power* and *self-help*. The ASEAN states have “learned” through interaction with Beijing over time that both parties view regional and global stability as the essential condition for continued eco-

conomic development of their respective countries. Both sides have also learned that they increasingly view national security in economic rather than military terms, and therefore view regional instability as the greatest security threat. And both sides have learned from one another that they view current U.S. foreign policy (“War on Terror”) as an increasing threat to regional and global stability. As such, American foreign policy is indirectly responsible, to some extent, for both the positive change of China’s national image in Southeast Asia as well as the strengthening of ASEAN’s policy of “beneficial accommodation” with China. In short, the success of Beijing’s GND in Southeast Asia is due in part to decreasing regional confidence and trust in the U.S. as the guarantor of regional security and as the leading economic power in the Asia-Pacific.

While the influence of American foreign policy in Southeast Asia falls outside the purview of our case study, it seems reasonable to assume that American foreign policy failures in U.S.-ASEAN relations indirectly helped lead to the significant success of Beijing’s GND in the region. Since 1991, Washington’s inattention and neglect of U.S. relations with the ASEAN states (until recently) seriously damaged the credibility of American leadership in the region. In fact, as early as the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, many ASEAN states began to question Washington’s commitment to the continuance of America’s leadership role in Southeast Asia. Washington’s insensitive and weak reaction to the Crisis indicated to many that the U.S. was at best indifferent to the economic plight of the ASEAN states, and at worst pursuing narrow self-interest to the detriment of the ASEAN economies. Since the turn of the 21st Century, Washington’s continued reliance on bilateral trade relations with the ASEAN states and avoidance of trade agreements with ASEAN as a group contrasts starkly with the 2002 China-ASEAN commitment and

ongoing negotiations to create the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) by 2010. This situation only serves to strengthen ASEAN perceptions of China as a cooperative “good neighbor” and the U.S. as a state cooperating only in terms of its own self interest. Remarks made by Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during his September 2005 address of the Asia Society in New York serve to illustrate this point.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Although the ASEAN-U. S. dialogue relations is 28 years old this year, I feel this partnership still suffers a considerable problem with expectations which do not match. ASEAN expects the United States to be an important strategic *economic* and *development* partner as much as it is an important diplomatic partner. The United States, on the other hand, gives a higher priority to ASEAN as a strategic partner for political and regional security purposes. . . . Clearly, both sides need to work hard to erase the lingering perception that, in the dialogue process, the agenda is conditioned more by the United States’ interests rather than those, which bring true *mutual benefits* [emphasis mine] to both sides. To change the situation, all efforts must be made to put more economic substance into the relations between ASEAN *as a group* and the United States *as a dialogue partner* [all emphases mine].³⁷⁴

Following 9/11, regional perceptions of U.S. foreign policy have become increasingly negative as the Bush Administration is viewed to be myopically focused on the “War on Terror” and thus unaware (or unconcerned) of ASEAN interests and concerns. President Bush’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 worsened regional perceptions of American foreign policy. Increasingly in Southeast Asia (and in much of the world) the U.S. is seen as a force of instability, while China’s image as a source of regional and global stability correspondingly strengthens. Recent regional and global public polling and survey

³⁷⁴ The Honorable Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, “Creating a Better Understanding of ASEAN – United States Relations,” formal address of the Asia Society meeting, New York, 15 September 2005. <http://www.asia.society.org/speeches/badawi05.html> (accessed 3 February 2007).

data strongly support these perceptions.³⁷⁵ From an ASEAN point of view, if the U.S. is unwilling or unable to continue to provide cogent leadership in the Asia-Pacific and Beijing appears willing and ready to do so, then the Asian countries will increasingly look to China to play a growing leadership role in Asia. Studies are needed to assess the validity of this assumed causal relation between the decline of American influence and the rise of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

The transformation of Vietnam's China policy is most spectacular. Until 1991, Hanoi viewed China as an enemy and therefore predicated Vietnamese foreign policy appropriately. This situation changed by 1991 as a consequence of the structural changes mentioned earlier. With the resumption of formal diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China in 1991, a reorientation of Vietnam's China policy began – Hanoi's "enmeshment" strategy. As Sino-Vietnamese political and economic relations improved, talks between Hanoi and Beijing concerning the disputed land border and maritime boundary in the Tonkin Gulf eventually led to a resolution of both disputes. In addition, normal mail and transportation links between the two socialist countries were resumed, as well as cross-border trade and human transit. The only remaining thorn of contention in improving Sino-Vietnamese relations was the South China Sea disputes. Hanoi's early attempt to build a united ASEAN position vis-à-vis China and the South Sea disputes resulted in failure. However, as the role-identity between China and Vietnam transformed over time from "enemy-enemy" to "competitor-competitor" or ("partner-partner") as a result of in-

³⁷⁵ The recent GlobeScan/PIPA public opinion survey of the global view of the United State's role in world affairs conducted for the BBC World Service (November 2002 – January 2007) indicates that over two-thirds (68%) polled believe that the American military presence in the Middle East causes more conflict than in prevents and only 17% of those polled view U.S. troops there as a stabilizing force. From the 25 countries polled, 18 view the U.S. as having a mainly negative influence, five view the U.S. as having a mostly positive influence, while 2 views are evenly divided. Significant to our study, the Philippines is tied with Nigeria for the highest positive view of the U.S. global role (72% each), while Indonesia has the second highest negative view (Germany the highest at 74%) of the united States' role in world affairs.

teraction and social learning, a virtual resolution of the outstanding territorial dispute between China and Vietnam in the Spratlys became possible in 2005.

The recent rapprochement in China-Philippines relations concerning the disputed territories in the South China Sea is also surprising given the history of tension and conflict in the dispute. Of all ASEAN states, the Philippines was the loudest critic and most outspoken opponent of China vis-à-vis the territorial disputes -- even to the extent that Manila was willing to forsake one of ASEAN's fundamental norms (lessening and resisting the influence of external powers in the region) during the 1995 Mischief Reef Crisis by calling for the internationalization of the dispute with China. However, Manila's critical and confrontational policy vis-à-vis China and the South China Sea disputes had by 2003 transformed into a more optimistic policy favoring increased economic and political cooperation. As we have seen, by 2005 threat perceptions of China in the Philippines had decreased to the point that a "virtual" bilateral solution of the Spratlys dispute became possible. In effect, Manila "learned" that China no longer represented a serious threat to the territorial integrity of the Philippines. Manila learned to see China as a responsible and cooperative "good neighbor," as well as an economic opportunity for the Philippines.

SOCIAL LEARNING AND A REORIENTATION IN BEIJING'S GND

It is clear that traditional threat perceptions of China in Southeast Asia associated with the South China Sea disputes have decreased appreciably from those held by the ASEAN states during the Cold War and the subsequent decade. To be sure, structural change such as the demise of the bipolar international system and the resolution of the Cambodian crisis in 1991 contributed to the transformation of China's national image in

the region from one of threat (“enemy”) to one of cooperation (“partner” or “friend”). This transformation probably could not have occurred without a corresponding restructuring of the international system. Structural change, however, only partially explains the remarkable transformation of ASEAN threat perceptions of China and the associated rapid improvement in Sino-ASEAN relations in general. Structural change associated with the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the 1991 resolution of the Third Indochina War, lessened foreign policy constraints which historically limited the extent of China-ASEAN interaction. With these constraints lifted, increased interaction between China and the ASEAN states was possible. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Beijing wished to cultivate relations with ASEAN as a means of ending China’s post-Tiananmen isolation in the international community, and the ASEAN states were anxious to “socialize” China as a means of “shaping” the behavior (and mollifying potential risks) of this rising economic and military power. Structural change, therefore, facilitated the implementation of engagement policies desired by both China and the ASEAN states. Social learning, resulting from diplomatic interaction between China and ASEAN, is the principle factor responsible for the remarkable improvement and deepening of Sino-ASEAN relations witnessed the last decade. Interaction between China and ASEAN concerning the South China Sea disputes - the pivotal issue on which the future of Sino-ASEAN relations depended - proved crucial in affecting this positive outcome. As the disputes arguably represented *the* most difficult issue in China-ASEAN relations and the most visible manifestation in the region of a possible “China threat,” the recent deepening of Sino-ASEAN relations would not have been possible without a satisfactory resolution of the territorial disputes. Therefore, ideational change must also be taken into

account in reaching a more complete, satisfying understanding and appreciation of Beijing's evolving GND and its effects on Sino-ASEAN relations.

Success of Beijing's GND directly related to the transformation of China's identity and interests via complex social learning gained through diplomatic interaction with ASEAN. During the first period (1989 – 1996), China's traditional "Cold War" identity continued as Beijing's actions concerning the South China Sea disputes reinforced perceptions in Southeast Asia of a China threat. In 1992, Beijing's promulgation of China's Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, as well as the deal signed the same year with Crestone Energy Corporation for oil exploration in waters contested by China and Vietnam, both served to reinforce China's traditional image in the region. Actions taken by Beijing in the Spratlys leading to the 1995 Mischief Reef crisis with the Philippines further intensified perceptions of China as a rising threat. However, beginning in 1995 – 1996, a reorientation of Beijing's traditional bilateral approach (Track I diplomacy) to the territorial disputes to include multilateral diplomacy could be discerned.

As argued in Chapters 2 and 3, the reorientation of Beijing's GND toward acceptance of multilateral dialogue with ASEAN concerning the disputes resulted as a consequence of social learning affecting change of China's cognitive base and national identity ("Cold War" identity → "post-Cold War" identity). This "learning" occurred as a result of bilateral as well as multilateral interaction between China and the ASEAN states. As we have seen, by the mid-1990s Beijing learned through bilateral dialogue with Vietnam and the Philippines that China would have to address the territorial disputes within ASEAN's multilateral framework as both Hanoi and Manila sought the advantage of confronting China as a group, and were therefore unwilling to seriously address the

disputes at the bilateral level. Concurrently, through participation in multilateral dialogue at the annual Indonesian-sponsored Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Beijing learned that China could safely address the disputes within ASEAN's Track I multilateral framework without compromising China's claim of territorial sovereignty. ASEAN's consensus-based approach to multilateralism -- one of the principle norms which comprise the ASEAN Way -- would allow Beijing substantial control over both the pace and the agenda of the talks, while at the same time promote a cooperative, "good neighbor" image of China by finally acceding to multilateral Track I discussion of the disputes. Within the Track II framework of the workshops, the Chinese successfully avoided discussion of territorial sovereignty issues (maintaining that this was a Track I issue) while promoting an image of China as a cooperative and responsible country through increased participation in joint development activities to evaluate the natural resources of the South China Sea, ensure maritime safety, and conduct scientific research. The Chinese also learned at the Workshops that Beijing's suggestion for joint development of the disputed territories was not well-received because the ASEAN states did not yet believe in the veracity of China's new "good neighbor" image.

Other, less tangible learning also occurred at the Workshops as a result of interaction as the unofficial and informal environment of the multilateral Workshops allowed for more interpersonal interaction and discussion among the participants, many of whom were high-ranking members of their respective governments in their official capacities. Attending the Workshops in their personal capacities allowed for more frank and open dialogue among individuals than was possible in their official capacities. As such, the unofficial nature of the Workshops provided an environment more conducive to social

learning than that of Track I multilateral processes such as the ARF and APEC. In effect, the annual Workshops facilitated the development of an informal, unofficial “epistemic community” constituted by individuals acting in private capacities who are important and influential people in their respective official capacities. Social learning which occurred as a result of interaction at the Track II Workshops undoubtedly influenced the reorientation of Beijing’s GND, which subsequently led to tangible results in Chinese Track I bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. The importance and utility of multilateral Track II dialogue in facilitating cooperation between China and the ASEAN states may be higher than commonly perceived by most Western scholars and policymakers. This point was highlighted during a recent conversation with Patrick Lewis, former Antiguan Ambassador to the United Nations and the United States. Asked whether he shared the conventional Western opinion that the Indonesian-sponsored Workshops were only “talk-shops” producing no tangible results and were therefore of little or no utility in dispute resolution, Lewis gave an interesting answer:

Let me answer your question this way. In the United States and Europe there are many psychiatrists and psychologists. In the developing world by comparison, there are relatively few. This is because Westerners only feel comfortable discussing their problems in private with a “specialist,” while in many parts of the developing world an individual’s problems are addressed informally by appropriate family members and/or individuals in the community. Solutions to an individual’s problems are arrived at through an unofficial, group-oriented process rather than the official, personal process favored in the developed countries.³⁷⁶

Diplomatic interaction between China and the ASEAN states concerning the 1995 Mischief Reef Crisis with the Philippines also led to important social learning for Beijing.

³⁷⁶ Personal discussion with Dr. Patrick Lewis at Hampton University, Hampton Virginia, November 2006.

At the inaugural ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou, and the Brunei ARF-SOM and subsequent ARF Meeting in Jakarta, the Chinese learned that Manila's attempt at internationalizing the dispute with China over the Spratlys was not warmly received by other ASEAN member states which desired to deal with the crisis "in house." In short, Beijing learned that China and ASEAN held in common the norm of regional autonomy and non-interference -- Asian problems should be addressed by Asians. This knowledge impacted China's cognitive base by challenging the traditional view of multilateralism as a "Trojan Horse" of American imperialism. Beijing learned that China could discuss the South China Sea disputes within ASEAN's multilateral processes and thereby promote a cooperative, "good neighbor" image of China in the region without U.S. interference. ASEAN's style of multilateralism was compatible, therefore, with Chinese interests. This knowledge led to an important reorientation of Beijing's GND concerning the South China Sea disputes from a traditional bilateral approach to a new approach combining bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

Beijing's reoriented Track I approach to the territorial disputes became apparent at the 1996 ARF Meeting. In response to Ali Alatas' call for a regional code of conduct, Qian Qichen responded indirectly by stating that China was now ready to discuss the South China Sea situation with ASEAN *as a group*, making good Tang's 1995 promise made during the China-ASEAN Hangzhou meeting. However, while committing to multilateral discussion of the disputes, Beijing also underlined China's position favoring a bilateral resolution of the disputes by concluding a bilateral code of conduct with Manila in 1995. Hence, the first overt indications in our case study of a reorientation of Beijing's GND (reflecting the birth of China's "post-Cold War" identity) manifest themselves

solely in Beijing's new Track I multilateral approach, while Beijing's bilateral diplomacy continued to reinforce China's traditional "Cold War" identity in Southeast Asia. Additionally, while Beijing's commitment to discuss the disputes multilaterally with ASEAN did have the intended effects of lessening threat perceptions of China and promoting China's "good neighbor" image in the region, it also elevated the South China Sea issue to main agenda status in ASEAN Track I dialogue during the second period of our case study (1997 -2006). This reality led to increased interaction between China and ASEAN (now Track I *and* Track II venues) concerning the arguably most contentious and difficult issue in developing Sino-ASEAN relations.

Over time, "simple" learning led to "complex" learning which in turn caused a change in China's cognitive base and a corresponding reorientation of Beijing's GND. Beijing learned that the "ASEAN Way" of informal, consensus-based multilateral dialogue could be instrumentally utilized by China to decrease tensions with Manila, Hanoi, and ASEAN concerning the South China Sea disputes. By agreeing to discuss the disputes with ASEAN as a group (1995, China-ASEAN SOM; 1996, ARF SOM and third ARF Meeting, second China-ASEAN SOM), Beijing could promote a cooperative "good neighbor" image and lessen perceptions of a China threat, while at the same time prevent progress toward any substantive multilateral resolution of the disputes (i.e. Beijing refusing to discuss issues of sovereignty). Beijing learned at the Track II Indonesian-sponsored Workshops that ASEAN's informal, consensus-based approach to dispute resolution (a constitutive norm) would allowed China to participate in multilateral Track I dialogue with ASEAN concerning the disputes without weakening China's claims of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea.

During the second period of this study (1997 – 2006), multilateral interaction between China and the ASEAN states increasingly led to “complex” learning directly responsible for changing China’s cognitive base (and continuing reorientation of Beijing’s GND) to the extent that China’s “schizophrenic” identity -- “Cold War” identity in bilateral relations, and emerging “post-Cold War” identity in multilateral relations -- was finally resolved in favor of the later. The “complex” learning during this period mostly occurred via multilateral interaction. Most significantly, “complex” learning occurred in “Asians-only” venues such as the ASEAN-China Summits (ASEAN Plus One), ASEAN Plus Three, and ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences, as opposed to the ARF, where membership includes non-Asian states such as the United States and Russia. As discussed in Chapter 3, within the ASEAN-China Summit framework several important agreements pertaining to the territorial disputes were concluded: the 1997 joint statement, “ASEAN-China Co-operation Towards the 21st Century” outlining the basic principles for expanding China-ASEAN economic, political, and security relations and also reaffirming earlier agreements rejecting the use of force to settle territorial disputes; the 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea; the establishment of the joint China-ASEAN “Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity” and China’s accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in 2003. These agreements made China the first non-ASEAN state to become a “Strategic Partner” with ASEAN and also the first non-ASEAN state to accede to the TAC. By 2003, China essentially became a “virtual” ASEAN member as Beijing had adopted most of the norms associated with the ASEAN Way (both regulative and constitutive norms): multilateralism; non-interference; rejection of the use of force to settle territorial disputes; and a con-

sensus-based, incremental approach to dispute resolution and regional integration. As a result, regional threat perceptions of China greatly decreased as China's "good neighbor" image supplanted the China as a "threat" image. In short, China's "post-Cold War" identity first revealed itself in Beijing's multilateral interaction with ASEAN. China's new "post-Cold War" identity only fully manifest itself in Beijing's bilateral diplomacy with the Philippines and Vietnam in 2005 as represented by China's bilateral-turned-multilateral Tripartite Agreement with Manila and Hanoi. Manila and Hanoi finally accepted China's long-standing offer for joint development of disputed territories (Spratlys) because they no longer perceived China as an "enemy" or "threat" as they had during the 1990s. Instead, China became increasingly perceived as being a cooperative "partner" and "good neighbor."

China as a "Virtual" ASEAN Member

Social learning and shared knowledge of "Self" and "Other" generated by China-ASEAN interaction is responsible, to a large extent, for a convergence of interests and identity in the relationship. Over time, as social learning affected a change in China's cognitive base and thus a reorientation of Beijing's GND, China increasingly embraced much of ASEAN's normative framework – the ASEAN Way – revealing a convergence of Chinese interests and identity with those of the ASEAN states. Beijing learned that ASEAN's informal, consensus-based multilateralism is conducive to Chinese interests in the region as it allows China to "cooperate" with ASEAN and member states at her own pace and in issue areas mostly of her choosing, thereby promoting a "good neighbor" image and lessening China threat perceptions. Beijing also learned that the ASEAN norm of non-intervention ("hard" state sovereignty) coincided with China's disapproval of the

U.S. human rights campaign targeting the PRC (Clinton Administration) and Washington's more recent doctrine of preemption and regime change (second Bush Administration). In addition, China learned that ASEAN's normative position against the use of force in settling disputes reflects a shared interest of maintaining regional peace and stability conducive to economic development – Deng Xiaoping's "peace and development" strategy. This shared normative position also indicates a convergence of interest between China and the ASEAN states in opposition to current U.S. foreign policy which is increasingly viewed in the region as the major source of international conflict and global instability. Lastly, Beijing learned that ASEAN's incremental approach to dispute resolution allows China to "engage" ASEAN and member states concerning issues of contention in a cooperative but controlled fashion. Cui Tiankai, who heads the Asian affairs department in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acknowledged that Beijing's embrace of multilateralism resulted from knowledge gained through interaction with the ASEAN states: "It was a gradual learning process for us, as we needed to become more familiar with how these organizations worked and to learn how to play the game."³⁷⁷ In other words, Beijing learned that China and the ASEAN states could "agree to disagree" on difficult issues while at the same time advance cooperation in other, less contentious issue areas. This normative feature of the ASEAN Way, as we have seen, has been crucial in Beijing's application of the GND to the territorial disputes. As such, Beijing's increasing adoption of ASEAN's normative framework indicates a convergence of actor identities toward a collective "Asian" identity.

³⁷⁷ Quoted in Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia," 70.

WIDER POLICY AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

GND in Southeast Asia

Interaction between China and the ASEAN states in issue areas outside those of our case study during this period (especially trade and economic issues) also produced social learning which influenced perceptions of “self” and “other.” This is where Moore’s “economic-security nexus” comes into play. Beijing’s “New Security Concept” (NSC) campaign directly linked security and economic issue areas together by essentially redefining security more in economic terms than in military. This is significant, considering that national security for ASEAN states has been and continues to be defined mostly in domestic terms due to social unrest caused by widespread economic and political inequality. In addition, the numerous independence-separatist movements throughout the region also cause national security to be defined in domestic terms. China faces Islamic separatist movements in the western province of Xinjiang, Thailand along its southern border with Malaysia (the banned Patani United Liberation Organization, the *Mujahideen Islam Pattani*, and the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional*), the Philippines in Mindanao (*Abu Sayyaf* and the *Moro Liberation Front*), and Singapore (*Jemaah Islamiyah*). Indonesia also faces various independence-separatist movements (*Jema’ah Islamiyah* and *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*). As such, along with the authoritarian measures of maintaining political power used by many regimes in the region, economic development is seen as crucial in maintaining domestic order by mitigating sources of conflict caused by economic disparity. Therefore, for China as well as the ASEAN states, national security is increasingly defined in domestic and economic terms, rather than in terms of external military threat. China’s New Security Concept (NSC) mentioned in Chapter 3 highlights

the increasing importance of “economic security” in the Twenty-First Century, and Beijing’s GND in Southeast Asia reflects this view well, as economic relations between China and ASEAN remain the central focus of Chinese foreign policy.

Beginning with the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, Beijing began actively promoting the rise of Chinese economic power as an opportunity (not a threat) for the ASEAN states to further their own economic recovery and development. Indeed, much China-ASEAN interaction has occurred in the area of trade and economic relations, and the resulting social learning is leading to increased regional economic integration as China is viewed increasingly by ASEAN as an economic “partner” instead of an economic “rival” or “threat.” The 2005 agreement to establish the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) illustrates positive regional perceptions of China in the economic realm. Beijing’s “Early Harvest” program exemplifies China’s commitment to mutual economic benefit in China-ASEAN relations. This program grants the less-developed ASEAN countries (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar) advantageous bilateral trade privileges with China to help ease their entrance into the CAFTA. China also provides considerable foreign aid to the poorer ASEAN countries in the form of economic and technical assistance. Significantly, Chinese foreign aid loans increasingly come with little-to-no strings attached, as opposed to foreign aid from the West (World Bank and IMF loans) which comes with many unpalatable conditions and stipulations. For example, recipient country must hire many western “advisors” and follow their recommendations as to how the funds are utilized. Often this “advice” is not in the best interest of developing economies and the terms and conditions attached to foreign development aid are seen as Western interfer-

ence in the domestic affairs of recipient states. As such, Chinese foreign aid is more palatable and provides an alternative to that from the West.

In short, Beijing's trade and economic-development assistance policies in Southeast Asia have only served to reinforce and iterate China's "good neighbor" image in the region. The success of Beijing's GND in facilitating strengthened China-ASEAN economic and trade relations and promoting an image of China as an economic "partner" had a positive "spill-over" effect on the South China Sea disputes. During the second half of the 1990s, as tensions over the disputed Spratlys were increasing yet again, considerable progress in China-ASEAN trade and economic relations reinforced China's "good neighbor" image among the ASEAN states and served to refute views of China's economic rise as an economic threat to the regional economies. Thus the resultant strengthening of China's image as a "good neighbor" or "partner" in economic-trade issues helped to mollify China threat perceptions among the ASEAN states in security issues – especially concerning the territorial disputes. It seems unlikely that Manila and Hanoi would have signed the 2005 Tripartite Agreement for joint oil exploration and development with China in the contested Spratlys if they still viewed China to be a territorial threat and economic rival. Instead, the Tripartite Agreement reveals an increased level of confidence in the Philippines and Vietnam that China can be trusted to live up to her "good neighbor" image in both economic and security issues.

GND in the Asia-Pacific and Beyond

Several key elements or aspects of Beijing's current GND in Southeast Asia can be discerned in the wider application of Chinese foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Beijing's initial embrace of regional multilateralism in Southeast Asia has ex-

panded to Northeast Asia as exemplified by the Chinese-sponsored Six-Party Talks, to Central Asia in the form of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) established by China in June 2001. The SCO is the first regional multilateral cooperative organization established in the twenty-first century and represents the first multilateral security organization in which China has played a leading role from its inception. This is a remarkable event in Chinese foreign policy considering that Beijing historically has preferred bilateral rather than multilateral diplomacy. While China's Southeast Asian multilateral diplomacy has argued against the establishment of a formal and institutionalized security regime in the Asia-Pacific (multilateral security dialogue and consultation are considered sufficient to address states' security concerns), Beijing surprised the world by doing so with former enemies in Northeast and Central Asia. China's experience of multilateralism in Southeast Asia must have played a major role in Beijing's 2000 decision to expand the scope and institutionalization of the bilateral, informal "Shanghai Five" mechanism into the multilateral, formal SCO. Most interesting is the fact that Beijing advocates much the same norms for governing relations among SCO members as those advocated by ASEAN: mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, joint consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and the desire for common development. Further, Beijing intends the SCO to constitute a model of cooperation in which large and small powers can collaborate on a basis of equality. One mechanism advocated by Beijing for promoting equitable relations among SCO member states is consensus building in decision making – a key ASEAN norm! Beijing "learned" from interaction with ASEAN that multilateralism is viable and applicable to China's periphery foreign policy strategy.

China's embrace of regional multilateralism in Northeast Asia has also been in the area of conflict resolution on the Korean peninsula. Although initially reluctant to get involved in the Korean nuclear crisis, and disapproving of the U.S. call for multilateral talks, Beijing began to shift its position in favor of a multilateral approach in early 2003. In a March 2003 telephone call between President Jiang Zemin and President George Bush, Jiang advised that the form of dialogue was not of paramount importance. What really mattered was "whether both sides have sincerity, whether the dialogue has substantial content and result."³⁷⁸ By the second round of the Six-Party Talks held in early 2004, Beijing strongly advocated the institutionalization of the talks through establishing a permanent working group and by stationing specialists from all parties in Beijing.³⁷⁹ Obviously, through interaction with the ASEAN states, Beijing came to realize the merits of both informal and formal multilateral dialogue as a means of dealing with difficult issues, and also recognize the utility of such an approach to difficult problems in other geographic regions.

Another aspect of Beijing's GND in Southeast Asia discernable in China's wider foreign policy is the strategy of mutual benefit and "win-win" scenarios in inter-state relations, so crucially important for China's "good neighbor" image in Southeast Asia. China's trade, diplomatic, and security relations around the world are now predicated on mutual benefit. This is well-illustrated by Beijing's considerable effort (and success) in concluding trade and investment agreements with states worldwide. China has been offering debt relief, low-interest loans, and other incentives to many of the world's poorest countries, in exchange for access to their natural resources so necessary for China's

³⁷⁸ "Jiang, Bush Talk over Phone on DPRK, Iraq Issues," *Xinhua News Agency*, 10 March 2003.

³⁷⁹ "Six-Party Talks Should Become Mechanism: FM Spokeswoman," *People's Daily*, 24 February 2004.

booming economy. Hu Jintao's current eight-nation African tour exemplifies China's "win-win" strategy. In his 7 February Pretoria speech, Hu made it clear that "China has never imposed its will or unequal practices on other countries and will never do so in the future," and that China would "certainly not do anything harmful to the interests of Africa and its people." He continued by stressing that China lives in "cooperation and harmony among nations and we hold that the strong and the rich should not bully the weak and the poor." While visiting Sudan, Hu offered the government a "no strings attached" aid policy which has angered many Western nations who want China to use its economic leverage to induce Khartoum to end human rights abuses in the Darfur region. Hu did, however, make it clear that China hoped that the Sudanese government would soon implement the peace agreement it had agreed to with the African Union and the United Nations.³⁸⁰ China's current global strategy of pursuing mutual benefit in economic and diplomatic relations reflects the effect of social learning and shared knowledge on Chinese foreign policy gained from Beijing's earlier diplomatic and economic interaction with the ASEAN states. In short, much of China's current foreign policy is the result of lessons learned earlier by Beijing in its regional GND in Southeast Asia.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study support the utility and validity of a constructivist approach in analyzing recent Chinese foreign policy and the meteoric improvement in Sino-ASEAN relations since the early 1990s. Neo-realist and neo-liberal approaches fall short in explaining the phenomenal change in Sino-ASEAN relations which began during the mid-1990s, because of their relatively narrow parameter for explaining change in interna-

³⁸⁰ "China's Leader Says Investment Will Not Hurt Africa," *New York Times*, 7 February 2007.

tional relations. Neo-realism is the most skeptical of the possibility for peaceful change because change is viewed as a consequence of shifts in the balance or distribution of power. International institutions are viewed as having only marginal influence on the behavior of states as they reflect great power self-interest. Neo-liberalism is somewhat less skeptical of the possibility for peaceful change as international institutions are given a more influential role in regulating state behavior. In this theoretical paradigm, institutions facilitate cooperation among states by providing information and reducing transaction costs, and by reducing the likelihood of actor defection or cheating. However, neo-liberalism accepts the basic neo-realist premise that institutions reflect and are affected by the distribution of power in the international system, and that they are created by self-interested states. As such, institutions only constrain state behavior and do not change state interest or identity. Both neo-realism and neo-liberalism take state interest and identity as a given as they are viewed to be exogenous to the process of state interaction. Hence, mainstream IR theory holds that state interaction does not fundamentally alter the condition of anarchy.

This narrow focus on the distribution of material power and reliance on a narrow “self-help” definition of anarchy handicaps both neo-realism and neo-liberalism in their ability to offer any insightful explanation for the precipitous rise of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. The neo-realist approach can not adequately explain why the relatively small and weak ASEAN states have neither balanced against or bandwagoned with China, as neo-realism predicts. The best neo-realist explanation for ASEAN’s apparently aberrant China policy is that ASEAN is pursuing a “hedging” strategy of engaging China while at the same time balancing against China through military ties with the U.S. Neo-

liberal approaches also fall short in explaining the intensity and rapidity of Sino-ASEAN rapprochement this past decade or so because of ASEAN's "weak" form of institutionalism. Given that neo-liberalism only grants institutions limited power in regulating the behavior of states, ASEAN's relatively "low" level of institutionalization would logically be less able to constrain actor behavior than that of the European Union which represents "strong" or "high" level institutionalization. The constructivist approach, on the other hand, views power politics as being socially constructed and also sees cooperation among states as a social process that can sometimes reorient or transform state interest and identity. As such, the recent habit of conflict avoidance between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines illustrated in our case study can be better explained as a result of interaction, socialization, norm formation and identity building, rather than the result of forces exogenous to these social processes (such as the distribution of power in the international system). This is especially important in our case because the rise of Chinese economic and military power has apparently not constrained or limited cooperation between China and the ASEAN states, or had a detrimental effect on Sino-ASEAN relations. By focusing on the constitutive effects of norms and social learning (shared knowledge), a constructivist approach allows interaction and socialization a greater role in regulating state behavior than do neo-realism and neo-liberalism, as state interest and identity are viewed as being endogenous to social interaction. This approach allows an analysis of Beijing's GND in Southeast Asia that moves beyond the impact of material forces alone. By granting intersubjective factors such as ideas, culture, and identity a determining rather than a secondary role in our analysis of Sino-ASEAN interaction, a more insightful understanding and explanation of China's rising influence in Southeast Asia is possible. Shambaugh

concur: “one reason for the increase in the number of institutions in Asia has been the growing acceptance of common norms within the region. Such ideational agreement must precede the formation of institutional architecture; but once norms are institutionalized, they can become binding on member states.”³⁸¹

Our study also supports Wendt’s assertion that anarchy is “what states make of it” by illustrating the social processes involved in the reorientation of Beijing’s GND and the positive transformation of China’s identity in Southeast Asia, and their cumulative effect on Sino-ASEAN relations. Our case study illustrates a change in the “culture of anarchy” between China and the ASEAN states, from that of a “Hobbesian” or “Lockean” culture (actor role-identity of “enemy” or “rival”) toward a “Kantian” culture (actor role-identity of “partner” or “friend”). Clearly Vietnam and the Philippines no longer perceive China as an enemy or immanent threat as they did during the Cold War and into the 1990s. As such, the rise of Chinese economic and military power (material factors) has become less of a concern for Hanoi and Manila (and ASEAN as a group) because they no longer perceive China as a threat, but rather as a responsible and cooperative “good neighbor,” an economic opportunity, and increasingly as a revitalizing force in ASEAN’s commitment to establish the ASEAN Community by 2020 (ideational factors). As such, the ASEAN states view the rise of China’s economic power both as an incredible opportunity to accelerate their respective national development and economic growth, and as an opportunity to push forward ASEAN economic integration, while they increasingly view the rise of Chinese military power in less threatening and more benign terms. “Hobbesian” (Realist) culture of anarchy is becoming largely irrelevant in China’s rela-

³⁸¹ Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia,” 96. Also see Alagappa, *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), chapter 6 by Amitav Acharya.

tions with ASEAN and member states as the likelihood of military conflict or the outbreak of trade wars between China and the ASEAN states in the foreseeable future is minimal.

China's recent successful test of an anti-satellite weapon system (ASAT) illustrates this point. In contrast to Washington's loud protest against China's missile test and dire warnings of China initiating an "arms race in space," there was relative quiet in Southeast Asia. Among the ASEAN states, Beijing's demonstrated ASAT capability does not represent an increased China threat because the culture of anarchy has changed – China is no longer viewed as an aggressive and hostile power (as remains the case in Washington). Increasing Chinese military power is no longer the concern that it once was, because the ASEAN states now view China to be a cooperative and vital partner actively (and genuinely) pursuing a foreign policy predicated on peaceful relations and regional stability, multilateral dialogue (ASEAN-style), and mutual benefit in economic and security relations. Instead, the ASEAN states believe it very likely that economic and political cooperation between China and ASEAN will continue to expand, and the process of regional integration will move forward as Sino-ASEAN relations increasingly become underwritten by a "Kantian" culture of anarchy. This is not to say that Sino-ASEAN relations are currently based on a "Kantian" culture of anarchy, but rather that they are increasingly moving toward such a reality. Wendt's categorical representation of differing cultures of anarchy ("Hobbesian," "Lockean," and "Kantian") however, must not be viewed in mutually exclusive terms (i.e., Sino-ASEAN relations based solely upon either a "Lockean" or a "Kantian" culture of anarchy). Rather, these categories should be understood as reference marks on a gradient scale moving from conflictual relations

(“enemy-enemy” role-identity) at one end to cooperative relations (“partner-partner” or “friend-friend” role-identities) at the other end of the scale. In addition, the “culture of anarchy” underwriting state relations can vary in intensity and scope in different issue areas at the same time. For instance, China’s “good neighbor” image among the ASEAN states progressed faster in trade and economic relations than it has in security relations. Usually, an economic relation between states sharing a troubled past progress faster than security relations, but this is not always the case. As mentioned above, the SCO first addressed security issues before widening the dialogue to include economic relations.

This study’s findings also support China’s “peaceful rise” thesis by challenging realist (especially the “offensive” realism of John Mearsheimer) assumptions that rising powers seek to establish hegemony and thus must challenge the established power. Historical analogies of rising powers are insufficient and do not fit contemporary China. In fact, these realist assumptions do not fit with China’s past either. This is not the first time in history that China has risen, but rather the fourth such occurrence. In each instance, external pressures, combined with internal economic, social and demographic pressures led to dynastic decline.³⁸² Indeed, there is not a significant history of coercive Chinese statecraft. As Shambaugh points out, China’s tributary system, which constituted the Asian regional system for more than two and a half millennia, “was characterized by a combination of patron-client ties; economic interdependence; security protection for those closest to China (especially Korea); cultural assimilation into Confucian customs (*lai Hua*); political ritual (*koutou*); and benevolent governance (*wangdao*). The tribute system may have been hegemonic, but it was not based on coercion or territorial expansion.

³⁸² China was a rising power three times before this current ascendancy (Qin, Sui, and Ming dynasties). See Wang Gungwu, “The Forth Rise of China: Cultural Implications,” *China: An International Journal* 2 no. 9 (September 2004): 311-322.

sionism. These are essential points to bear in mind when considering China's new ascendance in Asian affairs."³⁸³ Our case study of China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea further evidences the possibility that China's fourth rise to great power status will also prove to be peaceful.

³⁸³ Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia," 95.

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