

What Kind of Policy towards Southeast Asia Does China Need for Its Peaceful Rise?

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Abstract

China's policy towards Southeast Asia needs to be initiated with the understanding of the needs of China and Southeast Asia and objectives towards each other. This paper outline the goals China has to achieve in Southeast Asia, the means to implement these goals, estimate the objectives of Southeast Asian countries' policies towards China. Whether the policy objectives and the means to achieve these objectives for China and Southeast Asia counties are compatible and how to maximize the benefits, realize win-win and promote regional common development are the questions this paper try to answer.

Key words: policy objectives, China and Southeast Asia, compatibility

Firstly, we need to define what China's policy is in Southeast Asia. It means the aggregation of China's relationships with Southeast Asia, including not only both the Chinese government's efforts to deal with Southeast Asian affairs and statements, declarations, decisions and treaties that affect Southeast Asian governments' decision-making, but also various acts of non-state actors (political parties, Chinese multinational companies in Southeast Asia, and non-governmental organizations) in this area. A proper policy in Southeast Asia for China must account for the following four issues: firstly, clarify what goals China has to achieve in Southeast Asia; secondly, develop the means to implement these goals; thirdly, estimate the objectives of Southeast Asian countries' policies towards China, and their ways to achieve these objectives; fourthly, ascertain whether the policy objectives and the means to achieve these objectives are compatible or not, as well as how to maximize the benefits, realize win-win, overcome the exclusion of any country, and promote regional common development.

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I . The Objectives of China's Policy in Southeast Asia

China is on its way to peaceful rise and needs to re-evaluate Southeast Asia, in other words, to re-evaluate the position of Southeast Asia in China's foreign policy in the future.

In ancient times, Southeast Asia had been a part of the China-Centered Tributary System in East Asia. In this system, China is the center as a leading country, while Southeast Asian countries are tributary states. Some Western scholars concoct a modern version of the tributary system based on this history, and consider that with the rise of China, Southeast Asian countries will repeat the history and become vassals of China. This is a mischief, trying to create misunderstanding and conflict between China and Southeast Asian countries for their own purposes. There is no way to re-create a modern version of the tributary system in East Asia in such an open and globalizing modern international system. China is unwilling to do that. Neither are the Southeast Asian countries. Besides, the conditions to re-build the tributary system do not exist in international environment.

In the initial period of reform and opening up, we often say we need to create a peaceful surrounding environment that helps to reform and open up. In fact, this is the overall goal of our foreign policy, including the policy in Southeast Asia. Now that China is in the process of its peaceful rise, does the overall objective of its foreign policy including its policy in Southeast Asia have changed or not? In my opinion, to create a peaceful surrounding environment is still our basic goal of the policy in Southeast Asia. However, just sticking to this goal is not enough. It has been unable to meet the needs of the rising China. So, some adjustments and additions should be made. The overall goal of new policy in Southeast Asia can be expressed as: to continue maintaining a peaceful surrounding environment, to realize regional integration, to maximize China's national interests and at the same time, to promote peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. Specific objectives can be summarized as the following six aspects:

1. To protect overseas Chinese who live and work in this area and their property. According to some scholars' estimation, currently the number of Chinese citizens living and working in Southeast Asia (not including the Chinese who have joined the local nationalities and become local citizens) has reached 2.5 million.¹⁾ In the future, as the implementation of China's "Going Out" strategy and the spread of China - ASEAN Free Trade Area's subsequent effect, China's investment in this region will continue to increase. So does the number of overseas Chinese citizens in this area and their property. Thus, how to protect its citizens abroad and their property is a new topic that China's foreign policy has to face.

2. To advance China's presence and influence in this region. Though there is a long

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history of China affiliating with Southeast Asia where there are 30 million overseas Chinese living in this region,²⁾ the P.R.China actually started to deal with Southeast Asia only 10 years ago. That is to say, only after the Cold War, especially since the mid-1990s, China began to become an important player which can not be ignored in this region. Compared to the United States and Japan, China's presence and influence in the region is relatively weak, which has to be admitted. We can not over-exaggerate the China's presence and influence in the region. Especially in the aspect of soft power, we are far behind the United States and Japan.

3. To safeguard the integrity and unity of China's territorial lands and waters. This is one of the greatest challenges China's future policy of Southeast Asia has to face. China and Southeast Asian countries have successfully resolved all of the division of land borders and successfully made demarcation of the Beibu Gulf with Vietnam, except the sea disputes, which is often called South China Sea issue.

4. Working together with other great powers to develop a more justice, fair and reasonable regional order. Over the years, Southeast Asia has always been an open region, and Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN have implemented the open regionalism for quite a long time, which welcomes major powers' presence in the region, and makes use of these presences to promote regional peace and development. I summed up ASEAN's regional policy as "Balance of Powers Strategy". As China, the United States, Japan, EU and India have their own interests in the region and they are competing to expand their presences and influences, how to realize the peaceful coexistence, and how to share the benefits together becomes a big problem China's Southeast Asia policy must face.

5. To speed up regional integration for the common development and prosperity between China and Southeast Asia. In this regard, China has set up an example to the world's major powers. China is the first one to work on the establishment of Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN, followed by Japan, the United States, India and South Korea. FTA is only the initial stage of regional economic integration. How to lead the regional economic cooperation to a lasting and truly sustainable development is more important and challenging for China's future Southeast Asian policy.

6. To promote the new global political and economic order together with Southeast Asian countries. In this respect, China and ASEAN share common concern and common interests. It is necessary and possible for them to carry out extensive cooperation for the establishment of a new, fairer, more just and rational international political and economic order.

II. The Compatibility and Incompatibility of China and ASEAN's Policy Objectives

How to deal with China on its peaceful rising is a new task ASEAN has to face. As China's neighbor, ASEAN must re-learn how to adapt to a rising China, how to achieve the peaceful coexistence with a rising China for the regional prosperity and stability, and how to carry out more extensive cooperation for the mutual benefit and win-win result.

ASEAN has no uniform policy toward China, and 10 members have their own policies towards China. What's more, they are all on their own ways, unlike the European Union acting correspondingly with each other. However, we also find that the policies of 10 countries in Southeast Asia have something in common. We can summarize ASEAN's China policy after Cold War, especially after the financial crisis, mainly as these words as follows: strengthening cooperation, hitchhiking the fast growing economy of China, strengthening the checks and balances, and having specific focuses.

Strengthening Cooperation

The Cooperation between China and ASEAN includes bilateral and multilateral aspects. At the multilateral level, ASEAN accepted China as the member of "the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia", signed with China the "Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China", and established the strategic partnership for peace and prosperity with China. The other cooperation channels at multilateral levels include ASEAN and China Leaders' Informal Meeting once a year, Foreign Ministerial Meeting and ASEAN-China Senior Officials Consultations. Through the multilateral cooperation, ASEAN gets rid of the misunderstanding and hostility of China gradually, and raises the level of trust. Dialogue and cooperation replaces the previous mutual suspicion, and gradually creates a harmonious, trustworthy, understanding and cooperative atmosphere between each other. The proposal and establishment of China - ASEAN Free Trade Area can be said as an important achievement of this comprehensive cooperation. In the security field, through multilateral cooperation, China and ASEAN also established a variety of confidence-building measures. The "Joint Declaration in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues" and the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" signed by China and ASEAN are two of the significant outcomes. At the bilateral level, ASEAN members have different degrees of cooperation with China. In general, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia have established a comprehensive and cooperative relations with China and continue to strengthen their cooperation in various fields, while Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines and other countries have reservations on that.

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Hitchhiking the Fast Growing Economy of China

If we say that ASEAN members have ever reached consensus in some areas of China issue, it should be catching the express train of China's economy. ASEAN members are highly coherent on this issue, which is taking advantage of China's booming economy to reinvigorate Southeast Asia. However, they have different opinions on catching the express train with the help of China. For those countries with higher levels of industrialization and modernization, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, they pay more attention on how to occupy the huge Chinese market, how to gain a more favorable position in the changing international division of labor in East Asia, and how to get more benefits in the economic competition with China. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand's economic booming and prosperity mainly relies on export-oriented industries. After the financial crisis, these three countries are more dependent on exports, but the traditional markets of Europe experience trade protectionism. So these three countries turn to Asia, especially to Chinese market which has a rapid economic growth. Whether they can hold more market shares in Chinese market is the key that will determine whether their economy can further develop and prosper in the future. Therefore, these three countries have a basic pursuit of their future China policy, which is to take full advantage of China, especially Chinese market. As for those countries with low level of industrialization and modernization, such as Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and other countries, they focus on how to take special account of China's rapid economic development, including aid and loans, and help in building a variety of infrastructure etc. These countries also hope that China will increase its investment in Southeast Asia, so as to help them restore and revive their economy.

Strengthening the Checks and Balances

While strengthening cooperation and hitchhiking the fast growing economy of China, ASEAN are also aware that as a powerful neighbor, China's impact and presence in the region is rising. AS ASEAN countries are all small and weak, they certainly do not want to see the domination of China alone in the region. They worry that if this situation exists, it will harm the interests of ASEAN and damage the region's peace and stability. Therefore, they want to strengthen the checks and balances in virtue of using other great powers, in order to make China become less aggressive. One ASEAN scholar has ever described ASEAN's fear of China as follows: China is like an elephant, while ASEAN is like a china shop. If one day the elephant is out of control and enters the china shop to tread, ASEAN will suffer a lot. Therefore, ASEAN must strengthen the checks and balances towards China.

ASEAN strategy can be described as balance of great powers or open regionalism.

There are two important means or tools of this strategy.

One of the important means is to bring China into the existing international regime and to use the existing international mechanism to restrict China. ASEAN encourages China to join a variety of regional cooperation arrangements, through which it tries to gradually reduce China's resistance to these existing mechanisms, to integrate China into the big family of regional cooperation, and to make China become a responsible big power that can make a positive contribution to the peace, stability and prosperity of the region.

Another important means is to use other powers' influences and presences to constrain China. ASEAN members are all pursuing balance of great powers strategy, but because of their history, geography and cultural differences, they have different understandings and different objects on their balance of power strategy, and different insights and ideas on which countries are the great powers to counterbalance China.

Having Specific Focuses

Having specific focuses here means ASEAN countries independently develop their own policy toward China, according to their national conditions and national interest. Due to historical, geopolitical, geo-economic and others factors, policies towards China of the 10 ASEAN countries are quite different in that the extent of their dependence on China varies. According to the ASEAN members' closeness with major great powers, their China policy can be divided into the following three types:

The first type is pro-American and keeping a large distance from China. (Singapore and Philippines)

The second type is maintaining a policy that equates every great power. (Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam)

The third type is pursuing a friendly policy towards China. (Myanmar and Thailand)

From the policy objectives above, China and ASEAN are compatible in great extent, especially in pursuing the regional peace, stability and development. Both the two sides have a common goal. China and ASEAN members are developing countries. They all suffered from the history of Western aggression and oppression. They are pursuing their own political stability and economic development, and hoping to get rid of poverty and realizing affluence and prosperity. They all desire for independence, freedom and equality, and are all against foreign countries' interference in their sovereignties, which are so-called humanitarian intervention.

On the aspect of the means China and ASEAN adopt to implement their policies, both sides are willing to adopt a peaceful, cooperative, consultative approach to achieve strategic goals, but not willing to resort to force. They are reluctant to expand the conflict, but willing to resolve the current territorial disputes and conflicts through non-violent

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means as well as to negotiate to solve other existing problems.

However, there is no doubt that the incompatibility of policy objectives exists on two sides, namely as the following aspects:

1. The issue of South China Sea

We should make a definition of the issue of the South China Sea and clarify confusion of some concepts. In my opinion, the issue includes the following three levels:

The first level is the safety and freedom of the South China Sea's navigable waterway. Maintaining its safety and freedom is in line with the ASEAN, China, and major powers' common interests, and is especially vital to China, Japan and South Korea. Therefore, we should emphasize the safety and freedom of the South China Sea. Thanks to China's peaceful rise, China's merchant ship will sail to the world, to the oceans. So, to maintain the safety and freedom of navigable waterways is an important goal China's foreign policy should strive for. We should always repeat and keep the goal in mind.

The second level is the disputes of demarcation in the exclusive economic zone with Indonesia and Brunei. China, Indonesia and Brunei have an overlap part in the delimitation of exclusive economic zones, and this problem should be relatively easy to be solved.

The third level is the dispute of Spratly Islands and the sea. This is the toughest issue and also the core of the South China Sea issue. There are now four countries and five-parties (including China, China Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) claiming the sovereignty of this area, and they do not give up at all. Besides, China is in a relatively passive state in the possession and development.

2. The "security dilemma", caused by China's promoting modernization of national defense

Security scholars believe that a country's various efforts of enhancing security may give rise to other countries' feel of fear and insecurity, especially the neighboring countries. That means the concept of security or insecurity is just a notion or psychological response in large part. China is not only ASEAN's largest neighbor, but also a big country on its peaceful rise. Even though now it may not be qualified as the great power of the world, for the ASEAN countries, China is definitely a bouncer, at least a regional great power. So China's efforts in strengthening its modernization of national defense will lead to ASEAN countries' suspicion and fear, which is normal. What is more important is how to eliminate this fear and insecurity. If this "security dilemma" cannot be properly handled, there may be an arm race, leading to regional tensions and even confrontation.

3. The different income generated in the process of regional economic integration

Economists believe that in the process of regional economic cooperation, the gains countries get from cooperation can be divided into absolute and relative benefit. The so-called absolute benefit is that all the partners can benefit from cooperation while relative benefit is that partners get different interests from operation. Usually one may get larger interests and the others get smaller ones. China and ASEAN get the benefits from the establishment of China - ASEAN Free Trade Area, which increases the bilateral trade significantly, and effectively promotes the economic growth and prosperity of the counties. In recent years, China's investment in ASEAN has increased significantly and China has become a major foreign investor of ASEAN countries.

However, some ASEAN officials and scholars believe that the ASEAN countries get fewer benefits than China in the process of cooperation, and China wins much more relative benefits. They think it is not fair in this cooperation. Therefore, ASEAN requires China to make more profit sharing. For example, in agricultural trade, some members of ASEAN criticize that China occupies too much of the agricultural market share of ASEAN and does damage to the interests of farmers in ASEAN countries. It may be caused by some misunderstanding. An Indonesian friend recently told me that some Indonesian officials accused China of dumping the cheap agricultural products to occupy the market of all over the island of Java and this accusation is unfair. The above situation does exist while it isn't China but Indonesia that should take responsibility of the cause of this problem. It happened just mainly because of the inconvenient transportation between the islands of Indonesia, together with the collection of a number of unreasonable taxes, which stops the circulation of goods between the islands. Plus, the agricultural products of the Outer Islands have no way out while the transportation from China to the island of Java is very convenient. That's the reason leading to the above situation.

III. The Compatibility and Incompatibility of China and Other Great Powers' Policy Objectives

Southeast Asia has historically been a region of great strategic significance that great powers struggle and fight for. ASEAN enjoys an open regionalism and pursues the balance of great powers strategy. In order to counterbalance an increasingly powerful China which is on its peaceful rise, ASEAN's strategy is to strengthen the United States, Japan and India's presence and influence in the region to counterbalance China. As an emerging power, China has to learn how to deal with other great powers in the process of becoming a world power as well as how to realize the peaceful coexistence with them so as to safeguard the peace of the world and maintain the international economic and political

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order.

United States

In the future, conflicts may likely occur between China and United States, since their policy objectives in Southeast Asia are very incompatible. From the perspective of China and American policy objectives in Southeast Asia, China is hoping to take Southeast Asia as a bridge to connect the world and a region to rely on while pursuing strategic security (some scholars call it strategic support). While the U.S. is trying to make use of Southeast Asia in order to contain China. This may be the main discrepancy between the two countries' policy objectives in Southeast Asia. American global strategic goal is to continue maintaining its unique hegemony. However, its strength is in decline. So the United States needs regional partners. Some American scholars believe that in East Asia, China is the country that is most likely to challenge U.S. hegemony in the region. Hence the United States continues to consolidate relations with traditional allies while struggling to find new partners. ASEAN and some of its members are the new partners the United States actively seek for. "Since the Cold War ended, the U.S. President's policies are maintaining continuity in Southeast Asia, and think highly of this region, as well as treating Southeast Asia as an important part of American Asian strategy. America attaches importance to the relationship with Philippines, Thailand and other traditional allies and regards these regions as an important emerging market. America is trying its best to strengthen the economic and trade relations with the region, so as to maintain and expand U.S. interests and influence. Different from the previous presidents, President Obama shows more and more interest in Southeast Asia and is looking for a way to further enhance Southeast Asian status and role in the United States' Asian strategy. He regards Southeast Asia as an important cornerstone on his way to be a 'Pacific president'".³⁾

After the adjustments of serving nearly a full term, Obama's Southeast Asian policy has taken shape, which is a type of offensive and aggressive strategy. Obama's new policy is essentially to maintain U.S. hegemony in the region. His strategic goal is the same as its predecessors', but is implemented in different ways. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech, before her sixth trip to Asia since taking office, has done the best comment. She said "I'd like to briefly discuss the steps that the Obama Administration has taken to strengthen the main tools of American engagement in Asia: our alliances, our emerging partnerships, and our work with regional institutions. And I will describe how we are using these tools to pursue this forward-deployed diplomacy along three key tracks: first, shaping the future Asia-Pacific economy; second, underwriting regional security; and third, supporting stronger democratic institutions and the spread of universal human values. So we intend to project American leadership in these three areas —

economic growth, regional security, and enduring values. These arenas formed the foundation of American leadership in the 20th century, and they are just as relevant in the 21st century. But the way we operate in these arenas has to change — because the world has changed and it will keep changing.”⁴⁾

Japan

Japan's postwar policy in Southeast Asia has undergone two major stages. The first stage is from the early days right after the war to mid-1970s. Japan returned to Southeast Asia by offering war reparations. In the mid-1970s, Japan's economic interests in Southeast Asia have been rapidly expanding, and replaced Europe and the United States as the largest foreign investors and trading partners in Southeast Asia. The second stage begins in the late 1970s when Fukuda doctrine was raised, marking a major turning point of Japan's Southeast Asia policy. In the first stage, Japan's Southeast Asia policy more focused on their own economic interests, and treated Southeast Asia as a dumping ground for their goods and a low-cost provider of resources while ignoring the interests and feelings of Southeast Asian people. Japan's policy led to strong anti-Japanese sentiment and large-scale anti-Japanese riots in Southeast Asian countries. Learning from the first stage, the Japanese Government has changed from over-emphasizing its economic interests and ignoring the interests of Southeast Asian people to stressing the comprehensive development of relations with Southeast Asia, with particular emphasis on bilateral cultural exchange and mutual exchanges between people, by establishing various funds, and vigorously promoting Southeast Asian youth to visit and learn in Japan so as to deepen mutual understanding and building trust.

Over the years, the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy is the Japan-US alliance. Subjecting to the Japan-US alliance, Japan cannot and does not pursue an independent foreign policy. However, due to the special significance of Southeast Asia to Japan, Japan's Southeast Asian policy is not completely the same as the United States', instead of showing strong independence. For example, in promoting peace in Cambodia, Japan has played a unique role; Japan played a very important role in peace-keeping in East Timor; in recent years, Japan has laid more emphasis on countries along the Mekong River than the United States and other Western countries and has become the region's biggest donor; on the issue of sanctions on Myanmar, although it seems that Japan is consistent with other Western countries, actually it continues to provide humanitarian assistance to Myanmar, showing significantly different attitude from other Western countries. Is it possible that Japan in the near future will not completely follow the United States, and pursues more independent policy in Southeast Asia? This depends largely on Japan's domestic political situation and development, as well as on the Japan-US relations. In the future, as the

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public demands Japan to pursue a more independent foreign policy, Japan's Southeast Asia policy will be more independent and self-determined.

India

From a historical perspective, India has long-term presence and influence in Southeast Asia, mainly in religious and cultural aspects. After the Cold War, India is adherent to the Looking East policy, so as to expand the presence and influence in the region. As the Looking East policy goes further, India's influence in Southeast Asia has been far beyond the field of religion and culture, including political, economic and security fields. India's Looking East Policy is generally welcomed by ASEAN members. Because ASEAN is surrounded by China and India, it hopes to strengthen economic and trade exchanges with India, so as to promote ASEAN economic development. On the other hand, it uses India's growing presence and influence in the region to restrain China, so as to maintain its security. Obviously, the basic goal of India's Looking East policy is going beyond the Indian Ocean and getting rid of the status as "a country of Indian Ocean". India hopes to ultimately achieve their dream of world power, by taking Southeast Asia as its springboard.

In sum, the United States, Japan and India's policy objectives in Southeast Asia are to expand their influences and existence in the region. Then, when these great powers are pursuing their goals, will they have contradictions with China? If so, will these contradictions intensify, and even turn into a fierce confrontation or armed conflict? I believe that China and the USA, Japan and India and other major countries in Southeast Asia expanding their presence and influence may cause some conflicts. But these conflicts will not develop into a serious confrontation, as relevant countries will put these conflicts under control, for the following reasons:

1. The major states all wish to maintain regional peace, stability and prosperity. A peaceful, stable and prosperous Southeast Asia is in line with the common interests of major powers. In fact, if unrest or long-term economic and political instability happen in the region, there will be no good to all of them.

2. When the major powers seek interests in the region, competitions will occur to them. But it should be a win-win game rather than zero-sum game. That means competition for interests is not always the situations in which someone loses and someone gain. Actually win-win can happen. Because, in the era of globalization, the major powers are very clear that if the "lose and gain" happens in the game situation, it has no benefits for the major powers and ASEAN. For example, on the issue of South China Sea, if the relevant countries and extra-regional powers do not compromise and insist on putting their own interests at the expense of other countries' in the occasion of serious

confrontation or war leading to the block of sea route, it will do harm not only to ASEAN, but also to other major countries.

3. In the era of globalization, countries can win their own best interests through free trade and investment, while warring is at the highly cost, especially in the nuclear era. In that circumstance, countries are generally unwilling to resort to war. All in all, in today's era of globalization, China and the U.S. as well as other countries in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific, are in the same boat. Once this boat falls, or the people on board picking a fight because of dispute, this boat cannot travel towards the right direction, and will even sink in the sea. Perishing together is the outcome no one wants to see.

In Southeast Asia, there are so many countries in the game, in competition. However, China and the United States play a key role. In other words, it is the Sino-US relation that constrains the competitions among major countries in the region, and restricts their acts. In fact, China and the United States have common strategic interests in Southeast Asia. Many American insiders believe that in Southeast Asia, China and the United States can cooperate. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Hill has pointed out that the U.S. and China in Southeast Asia can share the benefits. On May 22, 2006 in Singapore, at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, when answering questions after a speech, he said that China's growing influence in Southeast Asia has not formed a trend that the United States and China are competitors for each other. They are not competitors. "I want to remind everyone that, do not think that the United States and China are competing in any form to win the hearts and minds in Southeast Asia. In fact, we hope Southeast Asia and China can establish a good relationship and we do not take that as a threat to the United States' interests". "The good news of Southeast Asian economy is relative to China's strong economic growth in a large extent". But he said, "China's growing influence in Southeast Asia does not mean that the impact of the United States is weakened." Hill admitted that China's "rapid economic development and its growing political influence are the challenges, as well as new opportunities, not only for the United States, but also for Asian countries". "United States can cooperate with China around the world, including cooperation in Southeast Asia."⁵⁾

The United States shares the benefits in Southeast Asia, and has important economic, security and strategic interests there. China is an emerging great power, and its economic, security and strategic interests in Southeast Asia have become increasingly prominent. China needs Southeast Asia as an important strategic support to become a world power. In Southeast Asia, how to handle the relation with the U.S., and how to deal with the U.S. presence and interests in the region are the major issues China has to face in its process of peaceful development.

The primary task of China's peaceful development in the new century is how to get

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along with the United States and how to get along with the world led by the United States. Therefore, facing the complex regional situation in Southeast Asia, China needs to think rationally and learn how to get along with the United States, and with ASEAN that is heading for integration. In the current complicated regional situation, China tries to be the important role of maintaining regional stability and promoting regional prosperity. China has to cooperate with the United States and ASEAN in order to achieve its own national interests. China has to show the world that China is a responsible country and is willing to maintain the status quo, to respect the existing international order, which is a necessary prerequisite for China's peaceful development. Therefore, China should actively cooperate with the United States and maintain a balanced Sino-US relation; it should be actively involved in multilateral cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and deepen interdependence with ASEAN countries. China needs to learn how to realize its national interests through multilateral cooperation in the region and to make a win-win situation by the maintenance of regional stability and prosperity.

The Americans have made many promises to Southeast Asia in recent years. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits Asia frequently since taking office, and always regarded Southeast Asian countries as keystones. However, what can the Americans do? How can they do it and what about its effect? People in Southeast Asia are still waiting to see. A senior Indonesian commentator's point of view may illustrate this point. "Many people speculate that American strategic or comprehensive partnerships with Asian countries, such as India, Indonesia, Japan and Korea, as well as Australia, are the U.S. policy of containing China, as China will be new economic powers with Brazil, Russia and India. China has surpassed Japan's economic power, and it may surpass the U.S. economic power too. The United States work with India, Indonesia and the Far East Asian countries by economic cooperation, so as to appear as the world's premier economic power. Military cooperation with some Asian countries seems a mean to contain China too. It chooses India, not Pakistan, as a strategic partner in South Asia, which proves that Americans fear of losing the U.S. hegemony. At all events, India is more powerful than Pakistan, and it has border dispute with China. ... We are waiting for Obama's visit to my country to establish a comprehensive partnership, otherwise, the visit will turn to be only U.S. president's journey reminiscing his childhood."⁶⁾ People in Southeast Asia have learned a lot from the past experience of dealing with the United States, and the implementation of open regionalism and the balance of great powers strategy are their best choices.

In fact, in the eyes of people in Southeast Asia, great powers outside the region competing to expand the presence and influence in Southeast Asia is not for the well-being of people in Southeast Asia, but for their own interests. They have their own national interests to consider. The people in Southeast Asia know that the United States is far away

from Southeast Asia, as the Pacific Ocean standing among them. In history, America had also helped Southeast Asian countries. Besides, the U.S. market and capital are essential to Southeast Asian countries. Therefore, the United States is a more useful, gentle hegemony for Southeast Asia. After the world war, Japan ran a long-term business in Southeast Asia, and they are sharing a high degree of economic interdependence. "Fukuda Doctrine" promoted the relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia, and people in Southeast Asia no longer regard Japanese as a threat. India is emerging as a great power around Southeast Asia, who can be used to push the economic development of Southeast Asian countries and as an important balancing force towards China. China is a neighbor, and indeed there were some unpleasant experiences in history. In the current rapid development of China - ASEAN trade and economic relations, there are some competitions, especially in market sharing and resource possessing. At present, China's influence and presence in Southeast Asia is rising rapidly, while the U.S. is on the defense. In this situation, Southeast Asians in the next period of time may be more inclined to strengthen ties with the United States, Japan and India.

Conclusion

China is changing. So are the Southeast Asia and the world. Besides, China's Southeast Asian policy will also make adjustments with the times. However, the basic principles of China's Southeast Asian policy remain the same, which is the spirit of good-neighborhood, friendship and cooperation. China's Peaceful rise needs the peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia, and vice versa. In other words, the interdependence between China and Southeast Asia is deepening and indispensable. China's Premier Wen Jiabao said in the China - ASEAN Summit in 2010 that China - ASEAN's total trade will reach \$ 500 billion in 2015. By then, both sides will be each other's largest trading partner. It can be imagined that the two sides will be much interdependent.

Powers outside the region have always had different levels of presence and influence in Southeast Asia. China's future policy in Southeast Asia must take other great powers into consideration. I believe that China's future policy in Southeast Asia will not be exclusive. That means China neither has the capacity nor the desire to exclude the influence of other powers and it will not seek for hegemony in Southeast Asia. On the contrary, China's future policy in Southeast Asia must be democratic, open and inclusive. China welcomes other major powers outside the region to actively participate in the affairs of Southeast Asia, and jointly safeguard the regional peace, stability and prosperity. Building a peaceful, stable and prosperous Southeast Asia is Southeast Asians' long-term aspirations, which is in line with interests of both China and other major powers outside the region.

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There is no doubt that China and other major powers outside the region have different levels of competitions, as the major powers are all pursuing to maximize their own interests, which will cause exclusion or incompatibility. There is no need to be afraid of this. The key to deal with this situation is to make leaders and their people clear that in the era of globalization, an era of interdependence, countries in the pursuit of their own national interests, do not do damage to the interests of other countries. We encourage competition, but we resolutely oppose the kind of selfish or vicious competition. Each country has to develop, no matter big or small. China's future policy in Southeast Asia must be a policy of seeking harmony, win-win relation, common development, mutual benefit and cooperation.

Notes

- 1) Zhuang Guotu. "The New Calculation of Southeast Asian Chinese", *Transaction of Xiamen University* (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2009, Vol.3. In this article Zhuang said that there are at least 2.5 million Chinese immigrant and their relatives in Southeast Asia since 1980s.
- 2) The quantity of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia is a controversial issue. In fact, in addition to Singapore and Malaysia that have accurate vital statistics, the rest countries do not count the Chinese as a single ethnic to vital statistics. Therefore, the various claims found in text are just estimates. The popular one is that there are 40 million overseas Chinese around the world, of which about 70% are living in Southeast Asia.
- 3) Cao Yunhua. "The Situation in Southeast Asia: 2010", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.2, 2010.
- 4) Hillary Rodham Clinton. "America's Engagement in the Asia-Pacific", Kahala Hotel, Honolulu, October 28, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/150141.htm>.
- 5) Hill, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, May 22, 2006 in Singapore, <http://www.state.gov>.
- 6) Ikrar Nusa Bhakti. "How to think about President Obama's Visit to Indonesia," *Compass Reported*, Nov. 11, 2010.