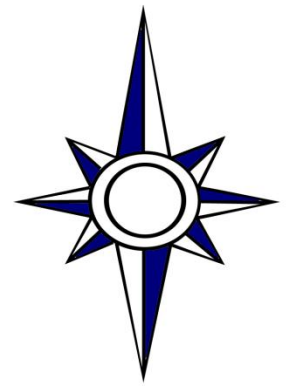


Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



China-Southeast Asia Relations:

China Reassures Neighbors, Deepens Engagement

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Following last year's strong Chinese criticisms of US and regional moves seen directed against Chinese policies in Southeast Asia, the reassuring message of good neighborliness and cooperation that Chinese leaders and commentary reverted to at the end of 2010 continued into 2011. The shift was reflected through more positive attention to Southeast Asia and other neighbors, seeking to advance extensive Chinese engagement, especially rapidly growing economic interchange, while endeavoring to play down differences over territorial disputes and other questions. Wariness remained over US policies and practices, but disputes were registered less frequently and in less strident tones than in much of 2010. The treatment was consistent with the improvement in China-US relations registered in Chinese commentary coincident with the prelude and aftermath of President Hu Jintao's January visit to Washington.

In contrast with the assertiveness and truculence seen in much of the previous year, China's handling of issues in the South China Sea remained moderate, although it showed few signs of compromise, seeking instead to "shelve" differences or engage in protracted diplomacy. China duly countered actions and positions by other disputants, notably the Philippines and Vietnam. US officials reported that the Chinese Navy had become less assertive in shadowing US Navy ships operating in contested waters along China's rim. There were few disclosures regarding the results of Chinese consultations with ASEAN representatives seeking to implement a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea. Meanwhile, China endeavored to solidify relations with neighboring Myanmar by sending a senior Communist Party leader to the country's capital in April, the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar following the establishment of the newly elected civilian government there.

China's message of reassurance and engagement

In response to a question about China's "more assertive" behavior toward China's Asian neighbors and the US, President Hu Jintao told the *Washington Post* in January that China would emphasize the positive in future relations; it would endeavor to build mutually beneficial relations that will deepen trust and allow differences over territorial and other issues to be handled according to international norms and in the spirit of mutual accommodation.

Hu's lengthy speech on building a "harmonious Asia" at the 10th annual Boao Forum for Asia held on China's Hainan Island in April stressed the importance of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and other advancing economic interchange, the development of closer Asian regionalism consistent with the principles of consensus and incremental progress, and dealing with security and territorial differences without a "Cold War mentality" or "zero-sum" approach.

Hu urged friendly negotiations, goodwill, wisdom, and patience in settling differences through dialogue. Premier Wen Jiabao similarly endeavored to emphasize positive economic and other interchange while playing down differences during a trip to Malaysia and Indonesia in late April that he characterized as “a journey of friendship and cooperation.”

A wide-ranging effort by Chinese officials and commentary in China and abroad acknowledged that China’s actions in 2010 had resulted in regional backlash and other developments contrary to China’s longer-term interests in preserving and promoting regional stability, which is conducive to Chinese development and the smooth continuation of Communist Party rule in the country. Two Chinese Academy of Social Sciences specialists noted in official Chinese media at the turn of the year that China’s stance on maritime territorial disputes in the South China Sea and elsewhere along China’s periphery caused Asian disputants to “get close to the United States,” resulting in “a deteriorating maritime security environment” for China. Another Chinese specialist published an editorial in *China Daily* on Dec. 27 advising that it was important for China to “exercise restraint against outside provocations” over territorial or other disputes in order to avoid playing into the hands of the US, which was seen as seeking to enhance US leadership in the Asia-Pacific region.

China’s biannual Defense White Paper released March 31 noted that international “suspicions about China” and “interference and countering moves against China from the outside are on the increase.” It averred that the “volatile” Asian region has seen the US reinforce “its regional military alliances and increasing its involvement in regional security trends” – trends adverse to Chinese interests.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in March, veteran American affairs specialist Wang Jisi warned against the negative results of China’s “assertive” stance on territorial issues and the “reckless” use of the term “core interest” to define China’s claims in the South China Sea. The *New York Times* on March 31 cited Peking University Professor Zhu Feng for the view that “It’s not Chinese policy to declare the South China Sea as a core interest,” along with the view that “the problem is that a public denial will be some sort of chicken action on the part of Chinese leaders. So the government also doesn’t want to inflame the Chinese people.”

Adding to the string of reports suggesting a pullback from the tough rhetoric of 2010 over territorial and other regional disputes involving Southeast Asia was commentary in official Chinese media and other outlets by two prominent military commentators, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Maj. Gen. Luo Yuan and PLA Navy Rear Adm. Yang Yi. The *South China Morning Post* on March 22 saw the commentators as shifting from their outspoken truculence of the past year to a posture giving more emphasis to peace and greater cooperation.

China-ASEAN foreign ministers meet in Kunming

Consistent with the recent thrust of Chinese commentary emphasizing the positive and playing down differences, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi presided over a meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers marking the 20th anniversary of China’s Foreign Ministry dialogue with the group. The meeting took place on Jan. 25 in Kunming, the capital of China’s Yunnan Province, which borders Southeast Asian countries. Kunming in recent years has become an important hub of

growing Chinese trade, investment, infrastructure development, and other interchange with neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Representative of the growing webs of road, rail, pipeline, river, and electric grid connections binding Chinese bordering provinces with neighboring Southeast Asian countries is the Kunming-Bangkok Highway. The modern road passes through Chinese and Southeast Asian areas known for their difficult terrain and isolation. The Southeast Asian foreign ministers were reported by *People's Daily* to have traveled the Bangkok-Kunming road, entering Yunnan at the border crossing at Maohan, to complete the drive to Kunming.

Foreign Minister Yang and Chinese commentary stressed the importance of the meeting for China. It was the first time the annual meeting was held in China. Reflecting the salience of Southeast Asia in current Chinese foreign policy priorities, Yang notably postponed the annual Chinese foreign minister January visit to African countries until Feb. 9 to preside at the session. The Kunming meeting also marked the start of “the Year of China-ASEAN Exchange and Friendship,” with more than 30 events planned for 2011.

Reviewing the past 20 years of China-ASEAN development, Yang reminded the group of China’s many “firsts” in international relations with ASEAN. China was the first country to join ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, to establish a “strategic partnership” with ASEAN, and to support the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty. He emphasized that China’s free trade agreement with ASEAN, another first which came into effect in 2010, witnessed an increase in China-ASEAN trade volume of 38 percent in 2010. According to Chinese figures, the amount of trade that year was valued at \$292.78 billion. Yang also emphasized growing social and cultural exchanges.

On international and security issues, the Chinese foreign minister stressed a record of mutual coordination and cooperation. He noted that the two sides issued the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, which he reported as having “made important contributions to enhancing mutual trust and maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea.”

Official Chinese media portrayed the ASEAN foreign ministers as strongly supportive of deepening cooperation and engagement with China. They reportedly made “many useful suggestions” on the implementation of the second five-year action plan for the China-ASEAN strategic partnership.

Kyodo reported on Jan. 25 that the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman that day said that the South China Sea issue was not on the agenda of the China-ASEAN foreign ministers’ meeting. The spokesman also said that Foreign Minister Yang had bilateral meetings with “relevant ASEAN foreign ministers” on the sidelines of the Kunming meeting. An account in official Vietnamese media said that the Chinese and ASEAN foreign ministers “stressed the importance of effectively implementing the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea.” It also disclosed that one of the events for the China-ASEAN strategic partnership was a planned ASEAN-China summit on the occasion of the 19th ASEAN summit in Indonesia later this year. China usually has been represented by Premier Wen Jiabao at such meetings but the wording in the Vietnamese dispatch suggested the possibility that President Hu Jintao may do the honors, in parallel with US President Barack Obama’s recent summits with the ASEAN leaders.

Hu Jintao at Boao Forum for Asia

As noted above, Hu Jintao's major speech on Asian harmony at the 10th Boao Forum for Asia meeting in Sanya, Hainan reaffirmed at the highest level Chinese approaches toward Southeast Asian and other neighboring countries. The address stressed the salience of Asian integration in the 21st century and argued that Chinese and regional interests would be well served by closer cooperation. The Chinese vision promised closer economic engagement with neighboring countries including greater Chinese investment and assistance sought by several Southeast Asian countries. It promised advances in Chinese building of "transport, energy pipelines, information and communication technologies and power grids" with Southeast Asian and other neighbors. It adopted an "inclusive" view of Asian regionalism, including groups like the East Asia Summit (EAS) that involve countries beyond the scope of what is often seen as China's preferred regional group, ASEAN Plus 3 (China, Japan, and South Korea). The speech also said China was open to participation of countries outside the region in regional affairs, although it did not mention the United States in this regard.

The salience of Hu's speech was underlined by the fact that the Chinese president has not been a regular participant at the Boao Forum. Also, Chinese commentary, which focused on the annual Boao meeting, had been subdued in past years, as Beijing gave attention to senior Chinese leaders participating at the economic forum in Davos, Switzerland and other international meetings. Adding to the importance of the Boao meeting was Hu's concurrent chairing of the annual BRIC (Brazil, Russian India, and China) meeting in Hainan and the issuing of the Sanya Communiqué welcoming South Africa to the newly expanded "BRICS." Several of the BRICS leaders attended the Boao Forum, and the participation of BRICS in building Asian regional development and harmony was highlighted in Hu's speech to the Boao group.

An article in *China Daily* on March 16 featured the comments of the secretary general of this year's Boao Forum, Zhou Wenzhong, who long served as China's ambassador to the United States, and other expert commentary highlighting the need for closer "integration of Asian economies, especially East Asian economies." The integration of East Asian economies was viewed as especially important in the face of what was seen as the failure of the Doha round of trade talks and rising protectionism from the US and Europe. Consistent with ongoing Chinese criticism of the US-backed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade initiative, *China Daily* placed Chinese-fostered "inclusive growth" in the region at odds with the TPP, which was seen as a means to expand US influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Wen Jiabao in Malaysia, Indonesia

Premier Wen visited Malaysia on April 27-28 and Indonesia April 28-30. His visit to Malaysia was the first in six years; he had never before visited Indonesia.

Wen's last visit to Malaysia in 2005 was typical of senior Chinese leaders travel to Southeast Asian countries in recent years; the trip coincided with and focused Chinese attention on the first EAS and other important multilateral meetings in Malaysia. Other Chinese senior leaders' travel to Southeast Asia in recent years similarly has been prompted by the need to participate in

important multilateral meetings held in the region. This time, Wen made the trip especially to boost relations with Malaysia. His unprecedented trip to Indonesia similarly indicated the higher priority China has been devoting to dealing with Southeast Asian countries in recent months.

The themes of both visits emphasized advancing trade, investment, and leadership contacts. Chinese commentary highlighted Malaysia's position as China's leading trade partner in Southeast Asia for three years running. 2010 trade was valued at over \$74 billion and growing fast. Indonesia's trade with China also was growing fast amid many widely publicized complaints about a "glut" of Chinese products "flooding" Indonesian markets as a result of the China-ASEAN FTA. Premier Wen and Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono reached agreement to expand bilateral trade to \$80 billion by 2015.

Wen's message of cooperation and goodwill did not signal a change in China's stance on controversial issues, notably Chinese maritime territorial disputes with Southeast Asian nations. According to *Kyodo*, he told journalists in Beijing prior to his departure on April 27 that "We take the position that territorial disputes over maritime rights and interests should be peacefully addressed and resolved by the countries concerned through bilateral channels. We disapprove of referring bilateral disputes to multilateral forums because that will only complicate the issue." The premier reiterated China's support for joint development of the resources of the South China Sea by "the countries concerned."

South China Sea developments

Though generally avoiding the truculent rhetoric and high-profile military exercises that accompanied Chinese assertions last year of territorial claims in the South China Sea and other nearby waters, Chinese media this year continued to highlight Chinese resolve to protect claims and take other actions in the face of perceived intrusions by others. Chinese officials and media highlighted in January China's growing ability to crack down on illegal fishing with a fleet of "2,287 fishery administration ships, among which 528 were built in the past five years." Thirty-six new ships were to be built in a program begun in 2011; 22 of which will be over 1,000 tons.

Chinese naval affairs specialists offering ways to defend Chinese maritime territorial claims were featured in Chinese media leading up to and during the annual meetings of China's National People's Congress and the advisory People's Political Consultative Conference in March. A former deputy chief of staff of the PLA Navy said China should establish a basic law of the sea to combat "the rampant infringement of maritime sovereignty." Earlier, a PLA Navy rear admiral was quoted in January as advising that China should counter the growing US involvement with Southeast Asian countries on territorial issues by using "drastic measures in the South China Sea to take over islands and reefs occupied by our neighboring small countries."

In March, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson used routine language in rebuffing complaints from the Philippines and Vietnam over the South China Sea. On March 8, the spokesperson reaffirmed China's "indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea" following complaints by the Philippine president and other officials that Chinese boats harassed a Philippine oil exploration team in a contested area, and complaints from Vietnam about Chinese counter-piracy drills in disputed areas. In response to a question on March 24 about a foreign

survey of energy resources in the Reed Bank, a contested area involving the Philippines and China, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson warned that “Any activities by countries or companies to explore for oil or gas in the sea waters in China’s jurisdiction without the permission of the Chinese government will constitute a violation of China’s sovereignty and ...will be illegal and invalid.”

Philippines President Benigno Aquino appeared to show his administration’s greater resolve to protect territorial claims when he revealed on March 28 that the government would allocate \$184 million to upgrade navy and air force facilities near the disputed Spratly Islands and on South China Sea islands currently occupied by Philippines troops. The Philippines in April submitted a note to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf contesting Chinese and other claims to areas of the South China Sea claimed by the Manila government. China rebuffed the claim in a submission to the UN later in the month. Meanwhile, Taiwan reasserted its claim to the South China Sea and said it would replace the few hundred Taiwan Army personnel stationed on two of the Spratly Islands with more militarily capable marines.

Regional maneuvering, strengthening

The dispute with China over the South China Sea prompted hard-hitting media commentary in Manila targeting China, which highlighted the Philippines government efforts to gain a stronger position in dealing with China. It advised that the Aquino government was shifting from the more accommodating posture toward China of the previous government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to a more critical stance that emphasized the country’s longstanding alliance with the US. In addition to an increase in defense spending, the media coverage highlighted stronger US support following the first-ever strategic dialogue on Jan. 27-28 between the Philippines and the US, where Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell pledged to enhance support for Philippines maritime surveillance capabilities and cooperation on regional and global issues. In March, President Aquino visited Indonesia and Singapore and used the meetings to deal with conflicts in the South China Sea. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also voiced strong support for the Philippines in a phone conversation with the Philippines foreign minister in March.

Writing in the Jamestown’s Foundation’s *China Brief* at the turn of the year, Ian Storey highlighted Vietnam’s continued multifaceted methods for dealing with disputes with China over the South China Sea. They involve: 1. dialogues with China to manage tensions and reassure Beijing of Hanoi’s objectives; 2. efforts to coax ASEAN to get China to implement the Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea; 3. highlighting South China Sea issues in international conferences and meetings; 4. accelerating the Vietnamese arms buildup and military advances; 5. encouraging more international involvement in Vietnam and nearby areas, including military presence by outside powers, notably the United States.

Chinese strengthening included reporting in Chinese media on the reconstruction of the 67,500 ton *Varyag* aircraft carrier that China bought from the Ukraine in 1988. The *Xinhua* website in April showed pictures of the carrier, the first aircraft carrier for the Chinese Navy, with captions saying it was expected to sail in 2011.

Secretary of State Clinton targeted China in Southeast Asia during a congressional hearing in March, indicating that the US was in competition with China for influence among resources producing Asian-Pacific governments. Visiting Washington in March, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard seemed to align closely with the US in the region, and included remarks underlining a need to work with the US in dealing with the consequences of China's greater regional prominence. She advised "I think Australia and the US need to cooperate on all strategic challenges and what is happening in our region is largely being defined by the rise of China."

The ability of the US and ASEAN to remain engaged and resolute in dealing with the challenges posed by China's rise in the region was questioned from many sides. A leading Chinese intelligence expert averred in the journal *Liaowang* in February that the continuing crisis in the Middle East is sure to complicate and weaken the recent effort by the government of President Barack Obama to strengthen US standing in the Asia-Pacific. US Southeast Asian affairs expert Ernest Bower wrote in March that ASEAN opinion leaders are concerned that recent heightened US attention to the region could pass when leading advocates like Secretary Clinton and Assistant Secretary Campbell leave US government service. In February, *Yaleglobal* published an assessment by Geoff Wade that showed how the ever-strengthening web of Chinese trade, investment, aid, road, rail, river, pipeline, electric grid and other relations with neighboring continental Southeast Asian states serves to divide them from the maritime Southeast Asian states, making ASEAN weak and divided when dealing with China issues.

China-Myanmar relations

Jia Qinglin, one of the nine members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and the chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, traveled to Naypyitaw in April to congratulate Myanmar's newly elected President U Thein Sein. A *Xinhua* report of April 4 said that Jia "is the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar following the establishment of the new government." It quoted the Chinese leader affirming interest in pursuing "a series of important cooperation projects" in Myanmar. In an apparent allusion to Chinese interests in a stable frontier with Myanmar and in the fostering of good conditions for Chinese economic enterprises there, Jia expressed confidence that "Myanmar's new government will make utmost efforts to safeguard the peace and stability in the border area and create a stable environment for Myanmar's economic development."

Other developments

Vietnam-China. The completion in January of the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam saw messages of support from Chinese leaders and media comment and remarks by Vietnamese representatives stressing close relations. Chinese media highlighted remarks by Vietnam's ambassador to China underlining the "special relationship" between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist parties, and his optimism about resolving bilateral issues including disputes in the South China Sea. *China Daily* forecast "broad policy continuity" as a result of the decisions made at the Vietnamese congress, noting that closer economic ties with China, Vietnam's leading trading partner, would develop in coming years. It also reported remarks from a Vietnamese embassy representative in Beijing that the newly elected Vietnamese Communist

Party Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong will visit China in 2011, marking the first visit of a Vietnamese party secretary general in three years.

Philippines-China-Taiwan. The decision by the Philippines government in February to deport 14 Taiwanese fraud suspects along with 10 Chinese criminal suspects to China prompted a strident reaction from Taiwan. The Foreign Ministry said that the deportation of the 24 suspects came at the request of the Chinese government despite Taiwan's protests involving the 14 people from Taiwan. The issue prompted threats of restrictions regarding the ability of Philippine people to work in Taiwan and other measures. The visit of former Philippine President Fidel Ramos to Taiwan in March helped to ease tensions over the incident. The Philippine government also replaced its immigration director in a move seen designed to assuage Taiwan. Meanwhile, China on March 23 executed three Philippine citizens convicted of drug trafficking. The execution came despite repeated pleas for clemency by the Philippine government.

Indonesian president on China. In a wide-ranging interview with *Asahi Shimbun* in February, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono forecast Indonesia's dealing with China bilaterally and in its role as leader of ASEAN in 2011. He stressed the ever-growing economic cooperation with China and added that Indonesia would work to persuade China to join multilateral talks to resolve disputes in the South China Sea. He said that Indonesia as host of the EAS in November will ask the participants to engage in "political security dialogue, including regional cooperation over the South China Sea." The president also said that having Russia and the US participating in the EAS was a positive development so that all the "main players" in regional security issues are included.

Outlook

Regional officials and opinion leaders and others with an interest in China and Southeast Asia will be watching in the following months for signs of resolve in the policies and practices of Chinese, US and Southeast Asian leaders. Focal points of interest remain:

- Evidence of Chinese leaders pursuing an approach of moderation and reassurance or following a more assertive approach regarding regional concerns.
- Signs that the substance and implementation of the Obama government's widely touted reengagement with the Asia-Pacific will continue to meet expectations prompted by its rhetorical promise.
- Indications of the balance that Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN strike in maintaining cordial and mutually beneficial relations with China, while the regional leaders collaborate with one another, the US, and other outside powers in efforts to strengthen their positions as they deal with China's rising influence.

Chronology of China-Southeast Asia Relations January – April 2011

Jan. 9, 2011: Chen Zhili, vice chair of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), visits Bangkok and meets Chai Chidchob, speaker of the House of Representatives, and other senior parliamentary members of Thailand. The two sides agree to

increase parliamentary exchanges and visits to help strengthen bilateral relations, especially in such areas as investment, culture, tourism, and education.

Jan. 18, 2011: Alongkorn Ponlaboot, deputy commerce minister of Thailand, presides over the opening ceremony of the inaugural meeting of the ASEAN-China Business Forum convened in Bangkok. Senior Chinese and ASEAN member states officials attend the launch of the new forum that will help expand regional business, trade, and economic dialogue.

Jan. 22, 2011: Liu Jianchao, Chinese ambassador to the Philippines, says resolving territorial claims in the South China Sea will take time, patience, and that negotiations should be conducted with greater accommodation and understanding of all parties involved. He reiterates Beijing's opposition to any external intervention from such parties as the US in the South China Sea.

Jan. 24-25, 2011: Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi meets ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan and other ASEAN foreign ministers in Mohan Port along the border between China and Laos to mark the opening of the newly completed highway that links Kunming to Bangkok.

Jan. 29, 2011: Wu Bangguo, vice chair of the National People's Congress, visits Jakarta and meets President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. They agree to deepen bilateral relations, particularly in such areas as energy security, technology, agriculture, fishing, and tourism.

Feb. 11, 2011: Beijing issues a statement calling for calm and restraint from Thailand and Cambodia to prevent an escalation of border tensions as it continues to maintain contact with officials in Bangkok and Phnom Penh to help resolve the conflict through consultation.

Feb. 17, 2011: Chinese Minister of Public Safety Meng Jianzhu visits Vientiane and meets President Choummaly Saysasone. They pledge to improve bilateral cooperation, especially in the areas of border security, drug and human trafficking, and other cross-border crime.

Feb. 17, 2011: China and Myanmar sign a new deal that paves the way for the development of the Kyaukphyu economic zone in Myanmar and other related port and railroad infrastructure projects. According to Chinese statistics, bilateral trade reached nearly \$4.5 billion in 2010.

Feb. 18, 2011: Defense Minister Liang Guanglie meets Indonesian Vice Minister of Defense Sjafrie Sjamsoedin in Beijing to discuss bilateral defense and security cooperation. They agree to step up military-to-military relations and to work to provide regional stability and security.

Feb. 21, 2011: Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Fu Ziyang arrives in Phnom Penh and meets Prime Minister Hun Sen for the second round of the China-Cambodia Strategic Economic Dialogue. Fu announces that China will continue to encourage more Chinese entrepreneurs to invest in Cambodia, especially in the agricultural, mining, and manufacturing sectors.

Feb. 21, 2011: Senior Chinese and Malaysian officials meet in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the challenges of cross-border crimes. They agree to address problems such as telecommunication fraud, economic crimes on the high seas, human and drug trafficking, and money laundering.

March 3, 2011: Deputy Director of the Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce Sun Yuanjiang attends a seminar on East Asia Free Trade Area in Hefei and announces that China work toward simplifying application procedures for preferential certificates of origin and customs clearance for both Chinese and ASEAN-based companies.

March 21-24, 2011: Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Ma Xiaotian visits Jakarta for the fourth round of the China-Indonesia Defense and Security Consultation. *The Jakarta Post* reports that China and Indonesia agree to begin joint arms production, beginning with C-907 missiles that are part of the weaponry for *Sukhoi* jet fighters.

March 30-31, 2011: The 17th annual ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultative Meeting is held in Hangzhou, China.

April 2-5, 2011: Jia Qinglin, chairperson of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, arrives in Myanmar for a four-day visit and meets senior members of the new government in Naypyidaw. The two sides sign a number of cooperation pacts, particularly on the economic front.

April 13, 2011: Guo Boxiong, vice chairperson of the Central Military Commission (CMC), meets Vietnamese Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh, in Beijing. They agree to strengthen the strategic partnership and enhance military-to-military cooperation.

April 23, 2011: Chinese Foreign Ministry issues a formal statement calling upon counterparts in Thailand and Cambodia to continue to stay calm and to resolve their differences on the border dispute through dialogue and consultation.

April 25, 2011: China and Laos celebrate 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

April 27-28, 2011: Premier Wen Jiabao visits Malaysia. Wen and Prime Minister Najib Razak agree to expand bilateral trade and strengthen cooperation in infrastructure, finance, scientific research and development, as well as in cultural and educational areas.

April 29, 2011: Vice Chairperson of the CMC Guo Boxiong, meets Thai Defense Minister Prawit Wongsuwan in Beijing to advance bilateral cooperation between the two armed forces.

April 28-30, 2011: Premier Wen Jiabao visits Jakarta and meets Indonesian officials to discuss ways to strengthen coordination and cooperation on regional and international security issues.