

withdrawal has become a political necessity if nothing else.

Whether this reflects the first substantive stage of a tide of American neo-isolationism, as many believe, is not yet entirely clear. But withdrawal is by definition a retreat from the policy of containing China, which in very large part was the essential rationale of involvement from the early 1950s. Of those who persist in believing that China does have to be contained, some are hopeful that their Southeast Asian allies are themselves now sufficiently strong to play part of this role, while others look more directly to Japan to fill the vacuum created by the American pull-back. Others, however, have come to realize that the only long-term alternative is accommodation with the People's Republic of China.

On the Chinese side, so far as the events of recent months reflect a significant change in China's foreign policy, it would appear at this point to be more of a change in priorities than in principles — although, in the long run, shifts in priorities often have the effect of changing principles. Essentially, I would argue that the "warming trend" in Chinese foreign policy has been the result of China's reaction to the shifting balance of power in Asia and its implications for China's national security interests and influence in the region. At least in relative terms, China perceives the position of the United States as a receding threat to both these areas of concern, while, on the other hand, it has viewed with alarm the increasing threat of the Soviet Union and, particularly since the autumn of 1969, of Japan.

#### Sino-Soviet conflict

To do justice to the Sino-Soviet conflict one would have to trace its development since at least the late 1950s, and in fact probe much more deeply its distant historical roots. However, in the past five or six years, the full thrust of the Soviet threat to China's national security and regional influence has become obvious to even the casual observer. Important ideological and other differences aside, the millions of square miles of disputed territory along the Sino-Soviet border sustain a potentially explosive dimension to China's relations with the U.S.S.R. that is entirely absent from Sino-American relations.

Although the border dispute went back to the negotiating table after the March 1969 border clashes, it remains a volatile area fortified by more than a million Soviet troops. Moreover, the physical and cultural topography of much of this disputed area of grasslands and nomadic

minority groups makes it a socially fluid region difficult to define in a permanently viable settlement. It is conceivable that the advantages Moscow had in presenting its case on the 1969 border clashes to the international community encouraged the Chinese to view more favourably the returns they would receive from increased diplomatic relations and membership in the United Nations.

China's concern with the Soviet threat has been overwhelmingly focused on the border. Yet the Chinese have also been sensitive to the diplomatic offensive launched by Moscow since the mid-1960s throughout the area from Japan in the northeast to India in the south. Moscow has signed new airline, trade, aid and diplomatic agreements with several nations on China's periphery. Although the Soviet call for a collective security agreement in the region fell on deaf ears, it accentuated Peking's concern with what China has called the attempts of "the new Tsars in the Kremlin to contain China". In the south, rapidly accelerating Soviet influence in New Delhi, capped by the recent Soviet-Indian treaty and reinforced by Soviet naval power in the Indian Ocean, has encouraged China to tighten its bonds with Pakistan. In the northeast, improved economic and diplomatic links between Tokyo and Moscow, including discussions on the possible joint exploitation of Siberian resources, led to repeated Chinese charges of "collusion between Soviet revisionism and Japanese militarism". The main Chinese concern, however, remains the Sino-Soviet border.

Thus, as the American threat to China's national security and regional interests can be interpreted as having begun to recede, the Soviet threat has continued to grow and is both more pervasive and potentially explosive. At the same time, Chinese attention has also begun to swing decisively to Japan and what it calls the "revival of Japanese militarism". China's mounting concern with Japanese power can be traced back to the Korean War years, when American policy on Japan shifted from reform to accelerated reconstruction. However, the most serious developments in the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations have occurred since Prime Minister Sato assumed office in 1964.

Sato has been much more clearly identified with the right wing of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) than his predecessor, Hayato Ikeda. As Prime Minister he also more clearly aligned Japanese foreign policy with that of the United States. The famous Yoshida Letter, by

*China sensitive to Soviet goals in diplomacy*