

Given these conditions, China's development of forward naval facilities in the southern Guangzhou Military Region, the development of outposts on the Paracel and Spratly islands and a "historical tradition" of Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean make New Delhi suspicious of Beijing's maritime objectives towards its region.⁴¹ The warming trend in Sino-Soviet relations compounds India's insecurity because, from New Delhi's perspective, it presents Beijing with the opportunity to redeploy forces from its borders with the Soviet Union to face India. Indeed, Vietnam and India share many of the same apprehensions about Chinese expansionism into Southeast Asia and the on-going dispute over the Spratly Islands has already brought Hanoi and Beijing into conflict. As Soviet-Vietnamese ties loosen, the security matrix in Southeast Asia will undergo unpredictable changes in which a perceived power vacuum is likely to lead to greater Chinese involvement in the region. Nor is China's growing interest in Southeast Asia limited to its military presence; it is noteworthy that China and Indonesia have recently announced the restoration of diplomatic relations after a break of twenty-three years and that Singapore is also being courted by Beijing.⁴²

In combination, China's active naval presence in the South China Sea, its growing political ties in Southeast Asia and its long-standing military relationships with Bangladesh and Pakistan will continue to give impetus to New Delhi's efforts to reinforce its security perimeter in the vicinity of the Strait of Malacca. Given the emphasis in Chinese naval strategy on submarine warfare, it is perhaps not surprising that India appears to be developing a sea-denial strategy to meet future threats to its interests. The development of a sea-denial capability, rather than a sea-control capability, poses potentially serious problems for any naval power wishing to challenge New Delhi's dominance in the Indian Ocean. Even if its surface fleet is destroyed, the Indian navy will still be capable of denying free reign of the ocean to any other power. This will particularly be the case should India acquire a substantial fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.

⁴¹ "Historical tradition" might be too strong a term from a Western perspective but the ancient cultures of China and India have produced a long institutionalised memory which overlooks the fact that China deployed naval ships into the Indian Ocean only in 1985 -- the first time since the voyages of the Ming dynasty admiral Zheng He in the fifteenth century.

⁴² *Globe & Mail*, July 5, 1990.