

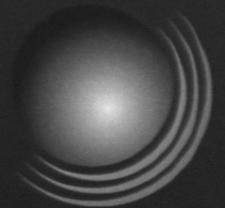
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The Chinese  
"New Security Concept":  
the Revolution in  
Military Affairs,  
Space Weaponization  
and Prospective Arms  
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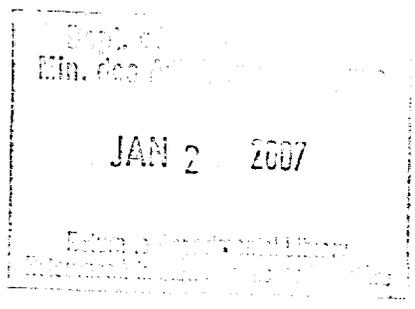
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**PRISI**  
PROGRAMME  
DE RECHERCHE ET  
D'INFORMATION  
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# The Chinese "New Security Concept": The Revolution in Military Affairs, Space Weaponization and Prospective Arms Control Cooperation



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
New White Paper Strategic Thinking.....	1
The “New Security Concept”, RMA and the Control of Space...	9
Conclusion.....	19

## PREFACE

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade or of the Government of Canada.

The International Security Research and Outreach Programme commissioned a report that will evaluate China's new security concept and the prospects for participation in arms control, notably the non-weaponization of space and the Chinese perceptions of the role of the revolution in military affairs (RMA).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the mid-1990s the Chinese have been involved in new thinking on security that reflects the rapid development of their own national economy and their adaptation to the changing post-Cold War context of world politics, economic globalization and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). The Chinese are now strategizing as to how to participate more effectively in globalization at the same time as they are engaged in a new political offensive to internationalize their own “new security concept”. Chinese diplomacy has pitted the latter against an “old security concept” premised in hierarchical alliances and allegedly absolute American military superiority. Chinese participation in prospective arms control cooperation has been rationalized from within this “new security concept” that emphasizes the mutual and relative character of inter-state security and rejects “absolute security”

Given the 13 June 2002 US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, and ongoing concern over the developing overlap of missile defence issues with the Taiwan issue, future Chinese arms control positions may reflect an even greater predilection towards conditionality whereby participation in specific arms control regimes is explicitly linked to the resolution of competing national interests and the bilateral advance of Sino-US relations, but this positioning continues to reflect more generally a new focus on multilateralism and multipolarity.

Despite what the Chinese term recent “negative developments”, they are likely to continue to highlight multilateralism and to press for a treaty to prohibit the weaponization of space. At the same time, the Chinese will continue to work on the gap between their technological development and their doctrinal aspirations by carefully highlighting select areas of high tech wherein they might begin to compete with the US in the new era of high-tech local war. Given that their “new security concept” continues to assume the policy primacy of national economic development, they are wary of the costs associated with a more widely construed arms race that would excessively burden the economy and possibly affect the legitimacy of the contemporary Party-State. Given this context, the notion of an enhanced “China threat” due to China’s domestic economic

growth and increased participation in the RMA ought to be subject to close critical scrutiny.

The US withdrawal from the ABM was done without any real consideration of its impact on the political importance of China's limited nuclear deterrence and the implications of missile defence for the Popular Republic of China (PRC)'s position on the Taiwan question. A clear international political rejection of the "China Threat" might help facilitate an improvement in the atmospherics of arms control negotiation involving the Chinese. This paper argues that given the developing challenge of RMA to established arms control regimes, and increasing anxiety over the overlapping of the Taiwan and missile defence issues, there is a pressing need for a more informed response to the opportunities for arms control diplomacy as these relate to China's adaptation to multilateral norms and confidence building in the post-Cold War era of economic globalization.

# THE CHINESE “NEW SECURITY CONCEPT”: THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS, SPACE WEAPONIZATION AND PROSPECTIVE ARMS CONTROL COOPERATION

## Introduction

In the mid to late 1990s, the Chinese began self-consciously to articulate new thinking on security in response to the rapidly changing Post-Cold War context of world politics, economic globalization and technological revolution. While some of the most important content of their “new security concept” incorporates past principles, which actually date back to the Cold War, these principles have been updated to deal with rapid domestic economic change and Post-Cold War globalization. Now the Chinese are politically recommending these principles to other states, especially the United States. This analysis will parse the conceptual development of Chinese security thinking, paying particular attention to how this thinking relates to the prospects for arms control cooperation; particularly in light of the developing Chinese response to the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), the recent American withdrawal from the AMB treaty and its impact on the prospects for PAROS (Prevention of a Arms Race in Outer Space).

## New White Paper Strategic Thinking

Over a series of new white papers in the mid to late 1990s, the Chinese claimed to participate in a new trend towards arms control cooperation based upon what was perhaps for the PLA the newly discovered political utility of transparent multilateralism. These papers challenged the assumptions underlying the so-called “China threat” and countered with a “new security concept” highlighting multilateral arms control cooperation and confidence building. The white papers of 1995, 1998 and 2000 reflected new concern for China’s international image, as China sought to consolidate its position as a responsible neighbour in the Asia Pacific region and became more deeply involved in the ASEAN Regional Forum and its practices relating to defence policy and arms control reporting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Bates Gill, “Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Dynamics of Chinese Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Policy-Making in an Era of Reform”, in David Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese*

These papers generally reflect what Gill and Medeiros refer to as “critical period of transition” and the contemporary “pluralization and opening of the decision-making process inside China and the exposure of a growing cadre of specialist and specialized institutions to the international community.”<sup>2</sup>

Together the papers summed up the revision of domestic strategic thinking, and provided the basis for the related domestic allocation of resources as well as providing a new basis for participation in international political and military diplomacy regarding arms control. The papers also served as a self-conscious political rejoinder to hostile Western, and particularly American, criticism of the apparently threatening new technological dimensions of the modernization of China’s defences, filliped in rapid national economic growth.

On 16 November 1995, the Chinese issued their first white paper on arms control and disarmament.<sup>3</sup> The 1995 paper asserted China’s “positive, sincere and responsible efforts” towards arms control and disarmament and challenged any assumption of a “China threat”.<sup>4</sup> The paper reiterated existing “independent foreign policy” (*duli zizhu waiguan zhengce*) based upon the “five principles of peaceful existence” and its Cold War corollary on state-to-state relations, “seeking common ground while reserving differences”, (*qiu tong cun yi*). These principles were to facilitate the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s general line of “peace and development” and cognate defence policy summed up as: “China’s national defence policy is defensive in nature”.<sup>5</sup>

This view drew from a long established policy continuum that since at least the mid-1950s had subordinated national defence building to national economic construction. And this view has been sanctioned not only in the State Constitution, but it has been

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*Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*. Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 277-79.

<sup>2</sup> See Bates Gill and Evan S. Medeiros, “Foreign and Domestic Influences on China’s Arms Control and Nonproliferation Policies”, *The China Quarterly*, 2000, pp. 82, 86,93.

<sup>3</sup> See “White Paper on Arms Control and Disarmament”, Xinhua, 16 November 1995 in FBIS-CHI-95-221, 16 November 1995, pp. 20-31

<sup>4</sup> The paper, itself, did not refer to this threat, but accompanying XinHua commentary highlighted the paper’s rebuttal to the “China Threat”; for example, see “Report Summarize, Highlight Defense White Paper”, Xinhua, 16 November 1995 in FBIS-CHI-95-221, 16 November 1995, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> For the historical connotations of this basic terminology see Ronald C. Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai*. London: Macmillan Ltd., 1989, passim and Keith, “The Origins and Strategic Implications of China’s ‘Independent Foreign Policy’”, *International Journal*, vol. sli, no. 1, Winter 1985-96, p. 99 and Keith, “‘Strategic Ambiguity’ and the New Bush Administration’s ‘China Threat’”, *Review of International Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2, Winter 2001, pp. 8-11.

ideologically sanctified at the highest level as part of “Deng Xiaoping Theory” as it constitutes “the continuation and development of Mao Zedong Thought”. Referring to these same principles, Jiang Zeming clarified the Party-State thinking on China’s security at the key 15<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress, which set the CCP’s policy course after the death of Deng Xiaoping:

“...we should determine our position and policies by proceeding from the fundamental interests of the people of China and other countries and judging each case on its own merits. We shall not yield to any outside pressure or enter into alliance with any big power or group of countries, nor shall we establish any military bloc, join in the arms race or seek military expansion.”<sup>6</sup>

This reflected a deliberate mix of old and new principles. Chinese party leaders are arguably predisposed to building consensus on the basis of established wisdom even while claiming to adapt pragmatically to changing reality. Doctrinal revision in China, in other words, almost always takes place on a deliberate political basis of apparently principled evolutionary synthesis that incorporates new ideas without the wholesale rejection of past ideas.

The 1995 white paper highlighted China’s participation in the NPT since 1992 and reiterated support for the three goals of NPT, namely, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, accelerating nuclear disarmament and promoting international cooperation in the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy. China’s support for transparent multilateral arms control measures and its opposition to arms races was again correlated with the need for a peaceful environment in order to focus on modernization.<sup>7</sup> The 1995 white paper reiterated China’s official statement of 5 April 1995 that treated the no-first use pledge as a “negative security assurance” to all non-nuclear-weapon states, while undertaking “positive security assurance” based on all states need of sovereign self-defence. The 1995 paper also updated China’s UN statements since 1984 to the effect

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<sup>6</sup> Jiang Zemin, “Hold High the Great Banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory...”, September 12, 1997 in Beijing Review, no. 40, 6-12 October 1997, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> See “White Paper on Arms Control and Disarmament”, Xinhua, 16 November 1995, op. cit, pp. 25-6.

that “outer space belongs to all mankind and should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes”.<sup>8</sup>

The 1995 paper highlighted China’s growing interest in arms control multilateralism; however, it did not specifically cite a “new security concept”. The latter was explicitly endorsed in the 27 July 1998 “White Paper on China’s National Defence”. Economic security was again highlighted as the basis of state security. In the general context of changing world politics and in the specific regional context of the Asian financial crisis it was argued that while “geopolitical, military security and ideological factors still play a role”, the role of economic factors “are more outstanding” as countries must depend upon one another economically. While not disputing the general relevance of ideology, official Chinese policy on common development through economic cooperation seems to contemplate seriously how to adapt to the new possibilities of a neo-liberal trade agenda without sacrificing national self-determination.

The 1998 paper also carried over reference to “people’s war”, but it made explicitly new reference to “a profound reform in the military field led by the development of high-tech weapons” that would require many countries to adjust their defence policies, to reduce the scale of armaments and to pay greater attention to the quality of their armed forces. This was partly the handiwork of the new leadership of Jiang Zemin who attempted to upgrade Deng’s earlier formulation, “people’s war under modern conditions” and to settle internal debates concerning the significance of the Gulf War with a doctrinal synthesis which newly emphasized “Local Wars under Modern High-Tech Conditions”. In other words, the spreading RMA was deployed in the justification of China’s second large-scale demobilisation of the people’s army in September 1997. The emphasis on high-tech came with the reiteration of the “active defense” of the economic assets of China’s modernization as China moved from warfighting, on an internal continental basis, to a new emphasis on the protection of China’s littoral. Also, the new emphasis on waging high-tech local war related to the future disposition of the Taiwan question.

The modernization of the PLA was generally a matter of reducing quantity and enhancing the PLA’s technological and informational quality in the new context of rapid

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

economic growth, but it also came with a new strategic understanding of what it was that China needed to protect in the new era. The strategic issue was not so much a matter of deterring a hostile power by drawing on the resources of the Chinese people on Chinese soil, but to change China's force structure and, if need be, to project a modern military force outside Chinese territory so as to defend new coastal centers of economic growth.<sup>9</sup>

At the international level of arms control, the "new security concept", as it was enunciated in the 1998 white paper endorsed the following notion of security community as against the proven failure of allegedly hierarchical Cold War military alliances that challenged the principle of equal state sovereignty:

"History has proved that the concepts and systems of security with military alliances as the basis and increasing military might as the means could not be conducive to peace during the Cold War. Under the new situation, especially, enlarging military blocs and strengthening military alliances run counter to the tide of the times. Security cannot be guaranteed by an increase in arms, nor by military alliances. Security should be based on mutual trust and common interests. We should promote trust through dialogue, seek security through cooperation respect each other's sovereignty, solve disputes through peaceful means and strive for common development. To obtain lasting peace it is imperative to abandon the Cold War mentality, *cultivate a new concept of security* and seek a new way to safeguard peace."<sup>10</sup>

If this "new" concept was self-professedly revisionist, it was, nonetheless, a mix of old and new elements. The emphasis on transparent multilateralism and common economic development was somewhat new. The strengthening of regional and international economic cooperation, however, was to be achieved on the political basis of Cold-War state-to-state principles, namely, the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence" (namely, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang provides an excellent summary of these doctrinal issues in his "Transformation and Refinement of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection and Critique on the PLA's View", in James C. Mulvenon, Andrew Yang, eds., *Seeking the Truth from the Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, National Security Research Division, RAND, 2001, pp. 131-140.

<sup>10</sup> "White Paper on China's National Defence", 27 July 1998, in FBIS-CHI -98-209, p. 4, author's italics.

aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence). Indeed, these were the very same principles that had been used to resist US containment in the effort to enhance "non-alignment" at Bandung in 1954 as against US containment of "Red China". Premier Zhou Enlai's strategy of "seeking common ground, while reserving differences" (*qiu tong cun yi*) is still seen as appropriate to the relations between states in the Post-Cold War era. Indeed, the new security concept has more recently been recommended at the international level on the basis of contemporary success of Asia-Pacific regional security cooperation as it relates to China's "new" "good neighbourly" policy on its own borders and as it more generally reflects the progress of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Council on Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific Region (CSCAO), the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) and the the "Shanghai Five".<sup>11</sup>

As well as advancing the general cause of new security thinking, the 1998 white paper reiterated "outerspace belongs to all mankind" and specifically called for an international treaty which would be based upon the following contents:

...China stands for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of weapons deployed in outer space. It opposes the development of anti-satellite weapons. China maintains that the international community, the big powers with the capacity to utilize outer space in particular, should take the following realistic steps to prevent a weaponized outer space. A complete ban on weapons of any kind in outerspace, including anti-missile and anti-satellite weapons; a ban on the use of force or conduct of hostilities in, from or to outer space; and all countries should undertake neither to experiment with, produce, or deploy outer space weapons nor, to utilize outer space to seek strategic advantages on the ground, for example, using disposition of the important parts of ground anti-missile systems in outer space for the purpose of developing strategic defensive

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

weapons. In addition, negotiations should be held as soon as possible for the conclusion of a legally-binding international agreement with the above contents.”<sup>12</sup>

The Chinese position reflected ongoing and very serious concern as to whether space weaponization would result in the utter negation of its own modest nuclear deterrent. Also, while recommending a complete ban to the technologically advanced great powers, China declined to support an immediate prohibition of landmines: “As a country with long borders, China has to reserve the right to use APLs on its territory pending an alternative solution is found....”<sup>13</sup>

The 16 October 2000 white paper on defence came surprisingly close on the heels of the reportedly comprehensive white paper of 1998. The 2000 paper reiterated the importance of the RMA and the need for related adaptation in the modernization and of China’s defence structures and strategy; however, what makes this new paper so interesting is the fact that the “new security concept” was re-emphasized despite a deliberate list of intervening “negative developments” that the Chinese felt had operated at cross purposes to the overall trend towards relaxation of international conflict. The changing context required extended white paper evaluation, and it had seriously tested the new security concept, but the latter survived without serious qualification.

The 2000 report gave more emphasis to the possibility of local wars and the possible strengthening of military alliances especially in relation to the Taiwan question. The downturn in Sino-US relations was predictably blamed on “neo-interventionism, new gunboat diplomacy and neo-economic colonialism”. The UN’s charter was allegedly violated by NATO’s action in the former Yugoslavia. Arms control and disarmament progress had been adversely affected by “a certain country” (i.e., the US) for continuing in the development of systems to support the national missile defence and theatre missile defence systems. The latter was negatively correlated with US attempts to strengthen its military presence in the Asia Pacific Region and with its bilateral security relations, particularly with Japan and Taiwan.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

The 2000 paper remarked on the rapid development of Chinese military diplomacy. It also reiterated the 1998 discussion of China's self-proclaimed responsible view on the need for closer international controls on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons purposes. Apparently increasing US intransigence on the NMD and TMD and related Japanese and Taiwanese involvement in the latter had soured the Chinese who were less amenable to US suggestions regarding fissile material, hence the following Chinese position statement: "...it is China's position that continued nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space are multilateral arms-control topics that should be given higher priority than that of the FMCT negotiations...."<sup>14</sup> The Chinese side regretted US unilateralism and characterized US argument that the amendment of the ABM Treaty was necessary in light of "so-called missile threats from some countries" as "totally untenable".<sup>15</sup>

At the same time the 2000 paper lauded China's adaptation to the Chemical Weapons Convention, its continued support for an international treaty against the weaponization of outer space, and referenced the suspended export of designated APLs in light of China's ratification of the Amended Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in 1998. But then in specific reference to new US arms sales to Taiwan, the Chinese suspended their participation in the UN Register of Conventional Arms. Illicit activities relating to the proliferation of small arms were deplored, but at the same time the sovereignty of countries apparently needed reiteration, hence the following reservation: "...the Chinese government is of the view that small arms by themselves are not the root cause of the problem. For most countries, small arms are still an indispensable means of safeguarding their national defense and social order."<sup>16</sup> Obviously, and perhaps legitimately, Chinese arms control positions varied with changing perception of fundamental national interests as these related to the Sino-US relationship.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

## **The “New Security Concept”, RMA and the Control of Outer Space**

While China’s international diplomacy contemplated the range of tradeoffs to be made in different arms control sectors, it was not conceptually deterred by the new “negative developments” associated with the shift in US strategic doctrine away from Europe to the Asia Pacific Region and US unilateralism. While the latter has been deeply deplored, the relevance of the US-inspired RMA was at the same time acknowledged as an urgent matter of fact. US-inspired RMA apparently required states generally to adopt a more “comprehensive” understanding of national security.

While acknowledging the US lead in RMA, Chinese analysis refuses to accept US single-superpower dominance of the world’s political affairs and its control of economic globalization as foregone conclusions. Chinese leaders continue to stress that the trend associated with single superpower unilateralism has to be qualified in the changing dimensions of multipolarity. The latter has become especially interesting in light of new Chinese participation in multilateralism. While the Chinese leaders in their view have been sorely tested by the recent ups and downs in Sino-US bilateral relations, they have not shown any inclination to abandon the thematic axis of their foreign and defence policy as it highlights “peace and development”. On the other hand, the development of the civilian economy may lend new support to Chinese participation in the RMA. While the Chinese insist that this does not make them more dangerous, their advocacy of a “new security concept” is in deliberate counterpoint to the development of US-led systems of military alliance. The “new security concept” is part and parcel of a new trend in Chinese military diplomacy and at a higher level, is part of a new strategy of multilateralism.

The following assessment, for example, refers to how a rules-based multilateralism can inhibit US unipolarity as it seeks to maximize American control of economic globalization. Zhong Yijun of the Chinese Institute of Foreign Affairs outlines the implications of China’s example for the developing countries more generally:

“...it is imperative to pursue an open policy and deepen reform, strive to seek advantages while avoiding disadvantages in dealing with other countries and promote what is beneficial and abolish what is harmful domestically. While observing universally

accepted international rules and making good use of all possibilities in these rules to create opportunities for their own development, it is essential to fight for greater voice in the formulation and modification of these rules at the same time, in order to make them more rational. Facts have shown that it is workable though the road is arduous.”<sup>17</sup>

Among some of the most active proponents of the “new security concept” are the senior researchers at Beijing’s China Institute for International and Strategic Studies. The latter is known for its very close ties to the PLA leadership. Senior Research Fellow, Luo Renshi, for example, argued in 2001 that the “new security concept” fosters a rational and comprehensive notion of security, which effectively includes the contemporary emphasis on economic security, and is therefore likely to gain increasing international acceptance. Luo contrasted the rationality of cooperative security with the liabilities of apparently outmoded Western realist theory that focuses on military blocs and “the equilibrium of forces”.

Perhaps preparing the ground for increased Chinese expenditure on qualitative military modernization, Luo challenged the underlying assumption of Western “realism” that capability is, in and of itself, the prerequisite indication of “threat”. Alternatively he argued that “threat” ought to be ascertained on the basis of a complex understanding of national and international realities. The related line between truly “defensive” and “offensive” national defence postures had, therefore, to be qualified with significant and factual reference to military strategic guidelines, actual strategic objectives and the underpinnings of foreign policy. Luo then drew attention to China’s new multilateral citizenship and support for regional security dialogues and the distinction between China’s truly “defensive” defence strategy and “forward deployment”.<sup>18</sup>

In his assessment of the impact of high-tech weapons development on the global strategic environment, Luo claimed that the National Missile Defence (NMD) and Theater Missile Defence (TMD) systems were designed to achieve US strategic

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<sup>17</sup> Zhang Yijun, “Globalization, Multi-Polarity, Uni-Polarity and Americanization”, *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Beijing, 2001 copied from “World Economy and Politics”, no 12, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Luo Renshi, “Defense for Common Security—And a Concurrent Remark on [the] White Paper: China National Defense 2000”, *International Strategic Studies*, Beijing, no. 1, 2001, p. 23.

supremacy combining defence and offensive capabilities,<sup>19</sup> and he warned that the application of new space technology would coopt new systems of detection, surveillance and communication in the deployment of new weapons technologies. Indeed, this reflected China's formal position at the UN Conference on Disarmament. China's disarmament ambassador, Hu Xiaodi, expressed his deep concern that missile defence and American RMA would engender the weaponization of space. He noted at Geneva:

“Control of Space” is, in essence, the attempt to establish domination of outer space by means of advanced technology, so as to serve one's strategic objectives. This will deprive other countries of their right to benefit from outer space through peaceful means as well as their legitimate right of self-defense.”<sup>20</sup>

The new “negative developments” were not sufficiently serious as to call for basic revision to the “new security concept”. General Xiong Guangkai, Director of the China Institute of International and Strategic Studies, has been one of the leading proponents of the latter in contemporary Chinese military diplomacy.

General Xiong took issue with US “blue team” assumptions that the China threat would be enhanced as a result of rapid economic modernization, which would fillip China's defense capabilities. In rebuttal, his analysis suggests that the rational modernization of Chinese capabilities is a natural and proportionately balanced aspect of modernization, which distinguishes present-day China from Mao's China when the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Chinese people was enlisted in any projected battle on China's own soil. While contemplating high-tech war, General Xiong reiterated certain continuities: “China does not join any military groups, nor does it seek military expansion or station any troops or set up any military bases in any foreign country, and refrains from forming alliances with any country or groups of countries.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Luo Renshi, “The Impact of High-Tech Weapons Development over [the] Global Strategic Environment”, *International Strategic Studies*, (*Guoji zhanlue yanjiu*), Beijing, no. 3, 2000, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Hu Xiaodi, “Statement at the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament”, 24 February 2000 in NTI Research Library, China Profiles, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute, [www.nti.org/db/china/spacepos.html](http://www.nti.org/db/china/spacepos.html).

<sup>21</sup> Hsiung Guangkai, “International Strategic Situation and China's Security Environment”, *International Strategic Studies*, no. 1, 2000, p. 6

On the other hand, General Xiong did not feel it necessary to apologize for China's participation in the RMA so as to achieve more rational national-defence building:

“The Chinese People's Liberation Army implements the principle of active defense in its military strategy and its strengthening itself by relying on science and technology, striving to make the transition from a numerically superior type to a qualitatively different type, and from a manpower-intensive type to a technologically-intensive type, and are being streamlined the Chinese way, so as to make proper preparations for defensive combat in the situation where modern technology, especially high technology, prevails.”<sup>22</sup>

He urged Chinese debate on the nature of “comprehensive security” in the new Post-Cold War era of economic globalization and political multipolarity:

“...national security strategies should incorporate new concepts, new thinking and new contexts. With the growing trends toward political multi-polarization, economic globalization, the use of high technology in the military field and the increasing flow of information, international relations are no longer purely political and military contacts and exchanges, but comprehensively contacts in all areas including political, economic, military, science and technological and other fields.”<sup>23</sup>

It is perhaps a profound irony, if not a great misfortune, that just as the Chinese are articulating a new approach to security and arms control cooperation, that there is continued US propensity towards ambivalence on the question of whether China's economic modernization is filling the “China threat”. The current Bush administration initially struggled with its China policy. The EP-3 “spy plane” controversy had already threatened a downturn in US relations when on 16 April 2001 George Bush broke with previous presidential administrations and indicated that he would do “whatever it takes”

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<sup>22</sup> Hsiong, “The International Strategic Situation...”, op. cit., p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Xiong Guangkai, “Moving with the Trend of the Times and Looking at the New Developments and Issues in the International Strategic Situation Dialectically and Comprehensively”, *International Strategic Studies*, no. 1, January, 2002, p. 5.

to defend Taiwan in the event of conflict with the PRC. Instead of boldly moving forward in exploring arms control partnership with China, on the basis of the new opportunities, informing Chinese policy, American policy chose to dwell on the nature of China's "rogue" status as a potential strategic rival.

The 5 November 1999 conference, sponsored by the National Intelligence Council and Federal Research Division, "China and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Implications for the United States" reviewed arms control prospects without serious reference to the Chinese white paper emphasis on a "new security concept". The Conference, nevertheless, came to a number of interesting general conclusions. Chinese nuclear doctrine and force structure, for example, was not to be understood in terms of American neo-realist and organizational theories, but in terms of domestic political, technological, historical and cultural factors. The aforementioned theories had apparently failed to predict China's nuclear posture over time, and indeed the Chinese have objected to misinterpretation of their policies, based upon "neo-realism". The Conference acknowledged that the Chinese had for a long time lived with the technological gap between themselves and the US, but that recently they were beginning to close the gap "between real capability, on the one hand, and what one might call 'aspirational doctrine' on the other". Indeed, there is obviously great controversy in the West as to how fast the Chinese might be able to close the technological gap so that they can actually fight a high-tech war.

Chinese international relations and security analysis has stressed that it is not in China's interest to participate in an arms race that would serve as a drag on national economic development and possibly result in domestic political crisis as had happened in the final years of the Soviet Union's competition with the US. Also, one might consider historical Chinese patience in reacting to extraordinary American and Soviet nuclear superiority. The Chinese sought in response a limited nuclear deterrent and did not consider full parity as either feasible or necessary, even in the context of extreme Cold war tension. Contemporary analysis, in fact, still differentiates between "strategic

balance”, as for example the balance between a small nuclear-weapon state and a nuclear superpower” and “strategic parity”.<sup>24</sup>

Contemporary analysis emphasizes the gap between the US and China in high tech, and has suggested that the American growth of high-tech arms may well upset international stability, but rather than focusing on inevitable arms race, Chinese policy has pursued selective development of high tech and explored the cheaper and perhaps more rational political alternatives of multipolarity and mulilateralism.<sup>25</sup>

The Conference, however, scrutinized the doctrine and force structure of China’s Strategic Rocket Forces (or the Second Artillery) as it relates to several different missions including “a credible minimal deterrence vis-à-vis the US”, “a more offensive-oriented posture of ‘limited deterrence’ with regard to China’s theatre nuclear forces”; and “an offensively configured, preemptive, counterforce warfighting posture of active defense”, based on the Second Artillery’s conventional missile forces. This last became the subject of speculation as it connected PLA adaptation to the RMA and the Second Artillery’s development of preemptive theatre missiles and supporting space-based surveillance with the Taiwan question. Apparently the Chinese RMA was threatening Taiwan’s previously assumed viable defence against the mainland; however, given the extraordinarily disproportionate technological advantage that the US has, American concern over Chinese RMA still seems excessive.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the question arises as to whether US policy has effectively dealt with the domestic political exaggeration of the so-called “China threat” and as to whether it is currently responding to a sufficiently well informed understanding of the qualified shifts in Chinese foreign policy and strategic thinking as it relates to new opportunities for arms control cooperation. Both sides have stressed the importance of bilateral trust as necessary to forward movement in arms control, but the forceful US position on

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the Ottawa statement by Ambassador Sha Zukang, Director-General, Department of Arms Control and Disarmament, PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs at [www.wagingpeace.org/articles/01...ang\\_Chinese-Ambassador\\_SpeechonABM.html](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/01...ang_Chinese-Ambassador_SpeechonABM.html).

<sup>25</sup> See Luo Renshi, “The Impact of High-tech Weapons Development over Global Strategic Environment”, *International Strategic Studies*, no. 3, 2000, p. 43; Xie Guang, “Impact of High Tech on International Strategy and Security”, *International Strategic Studies*, no. ,2000, pp. 17-21.

<sup>26</sup> For example of how to use speculation to inflate the Chinese technological threat see Mark Stokes, “Weapons of Precise Destruction: PLA Space and Theatre Missile Development”, 106-29, in “China and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Implications for the United States”, [http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/conference\\_reports/weapons\\_mass\\_destruction.html](http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/conference_reports/weapons_mass_destruction.html)

withdrawal from the ABM Treaty so as to facilitate missile defence has complicated the prospects for trust based upon clear mutual understandings.

The possibilities for mutual trust and understanding were, for example, explored in the “Track 1 ½” Third and Fourth US-China Conferences on Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation” in Beijing in September 2000 and Washington, D.C., March 2002. At the Third Conference, US commentators had insisted that limited missile defence is not destabilizing and rejected Chinese critical assessment of “rogue” missile threats and linkages between non-proliferation cooperation and the state of Sino-US bilateral relations as it relates to US arms sales to Taiwan and the general content and tone of Sino-US ties. The US side objected to the Chinese preference for the linkage of non-proliferation initiatives to bilateral Sino-US relations, and hence: “By contrast, US participants universally argued that nonproliferation should not be viewed through the prism of bilateral cooperation and it should not be used as ‘the whipping boy’ of the Chinese to demonstrate their displeasure with US foreign and national security policies.”<sup>27</sup>

While the reported Chinese commentary did not refer directly to the “new security concept”, it drew from the underlying principles of this concept, hence the Chinese again rejected alliance-based politics and called for cooperation based upon dialogue, equal treatment and mutual trust rather than “coercive techniques such as pressure and sanctions”.<sup>28</sup> And indeed, the Chinese side certainly did express its displeasure with American desire for “absolute security” (*juedui anquan*) and the American “tendency of arms expansion to the neglect of arms control”.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Sino-US bilateralism was contingently linked to arms control particularly as it related to any attempt to foster Taiwan’s perpetual independence through the inclusion of Taiwan in TMD. For their part at least, the Chinese could see no reason why their national interests ought not to be legitimately linked to specific positions on arms control, and they reiterated the importance of a healthy Sino-US bilateralism to international arms control cooperation.

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<sup>27</sup> Evan S. Medeiros, “US-China Arms Control and Nonproliferation Cooperation: Progress and Prospects”, 3rd US-China Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Relations, October 2000, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Medeiros, 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Arms Control, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Medeiros, 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Arms Control, op. cit., p. 12.

Despite shared generalizations about the relative importance of intentions, as distinct from capabilities, the mutual distrust was possibly even more palpable at the 4-5 March 2002 Fourth Conference as the US was in the midst of pulling out of the AMB Treaty. As the two sides searched for a “New Strategic Framework”, they debated arms control issues, referencing two competing paradigms of international security. The two sides could not agree on the substance of what constitutes a threat. Moreover, the Americans rejected a “one-size fits all” approach to deterrence and reiterated the new importance of dealing with “rogue states”. They criticized the Chinese for “an implicit hierarchy of non-proliferation concerns based on geographic proximity.” While the Conference proceedings reported that US and Chinese officials appeared “to be moving toward ‘professionalizing’ negotiations on arms control and non-proliferation topics”,<sup>30</sup> the latter criticism failed to take into account how China’s response to its neighbours and particularly how Chinese participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum had already facilitated a new Chinese political interest in professionalism and multilateral cooperation.

The Fourth Conference was reportedly an improvement over the Third, as the two sides “actively discussed the value of specific reassurance and confidence-building measures.”<sup>31</sup> Notwithstanding such reassurance, each side disparaged the other’s strategic thinking as hopelessly out-of-date. In dealing with “rogue states” that were thought to be armed with WMD, the US was not going to be tied down by apparently antiquated Cold War doctrine about nuclear force structure. The Americans were frustrated by the Chinese inability to comprehend the changing modalities of deterrence in the light the changing range of threats to national security.

For their part the Chinese, while they, with certain reservations, were prepared to accommodate US emphasis on the international war on terrorism, reiterated the contrast between old and new security concepts. The Americans were apparently mired in the confrontational politics of the Cold War era. While the Americans used to accuse the Chinese of Cold War polemics, it was now the Chinese turn to decry US “polemics”.

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<sup>30</sup> Evan S. Medeiros and Phillip C. Saunders, comp., “Building a Global Strategic Framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, Fourth US-China Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Fourth US-China Conference, op. cit., p. 14.

Moreover, the Chinese were troubled by the ambiguity in the American view of China. As one Chinese participant reportedly put it: "...the Chinese are looking for indications about whether the United States will 'put China in a proper place in its nuclear equation either as a small Russia, or a large rogue nation'".

While the Chinese are perhaps more known for their historical critique of the hidden agendas of American neoliberalism, they alleged that US strategic thinking had actually neglected the strategic implications of the rise of economic interdependence. Globalization had accelerated "trends toward economic security as a key component of national security". Not only was the American quest for absolute security at odds with global trends, but the Americans were allegedly threatening to undermine the stability that had come with successful international arms control treaties. They were faulted for their intended deployment of missile defence and their unilateralist "pursuit of strategic leverage through the revolution in military affairs". This leverage was especially destabilizing in that it threatened to facilitate the uncontrolled weaponization of outerspace.<sup>32</sup>

There can be no doubt that the PRC viewed the prospect of US withdrawal from the ABM with grave concern. Moreover the growing American focus on missile defence threatened the modest "strategic balance" which they had enjoyed on the basis of their dated, but politically important limited nuclear deterrence.<sup>33</sup> They responded by attempting to internationalize their own "new security concept". Jiang Zemin, in a speech at Moscow University on 17 July 2001, highlighted the content of the latter as it related to the signing of the Sino-Russian Good-Neighbourly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. His remarks underscored how Russia and China had moved beyond the "old type of alliance and mutual confrontation". Their "new style of state-to-state relations" was predicated in the five principles of peaceful coexistence and their corollary, "seeking common ground while reserving differences".<sup>34</sup> Referring to how countries must reject

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<sup>32</sup> Fourth US-China Conference, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>33</sup> James Miles at the International Institute for Strategic Studies has suggested that this limited deterrence was of little value in that China's missilery are housed in vulnerable silos, the missiles themselves are powered by volatile liquid fuel and the Chinese lack credible early warning capability. This does not appear, however, to take into account the central political importance of this "deterrent". See James Miles, "US Missiles: China's View", BBC News, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/worldasia-pacific/822277.stm>.

<sup>34</sup> Full Text of Jiang Zemin Speech at Moscow University, (Part 1), Xinhua, 17 July, 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0717, 17 July 2001, p. 2.

alliance systems in favour of “the new security concept with mutual trust, mutual benefit equality and cooperation as its core”, Jiang sought to consolidate a Sino-Russian political alignment at the UN on arms control cooperation:

“Both history and reality show us that peace cannot be achieved through force, much less can it be maintained by relying on a military alliance. Any attempt to break the existing international strategic balance by developing sophisticated weapons systems by developing sophisticated weapons systems cannot but spark new rounds of an arms race and jeopardize world peace.”<sup>35</sup>

On 10 October 2001, the PRC co-sponsored a UN resolution together with Russia and Belarus supporting the integrity of the ABM. The Chinese subsequently condemned US resistance to PAROS (Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space) at the Conference on Disarmament. On 13 December 2001, the US gave Russia formal notice of its intention to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty in six months time. On 28 May 2002 the Chinese and Russian delegations co-sponsored draft language for a treaty on the prevention of weapons in outer space that included treaty based obligations with respect to confidence building and dispute resolution. Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Russia and China together with Central Asian partners issued on 6 June 2002 a joint communiqué insisting that the ABM was a key condition for the development of arms control in the Asia Pacific region.

Actual US withdrawal from the ABM, was accomplished on 13 June 2002. In that it threatened to undermine China’s minimal nuclear deterrent, this withdrawal possibly constituted an much greater “negative development” than those originally cited in the 2000 white paper, but what is interesting is how the Chinese tended to “roll with the punch”. On 23 July 2002 the *Washington Times* reported that China’s Second Artillery successfully launched from a mobile launcher in Jiangxi a DF-21 (CCS-5) medium range missile with multiple dummy warheads, designed to defeat missile defence.

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<sup>35</sup> Full Text of Jiang Zemin Speech at Moscow University, op. cit., p. 3.

## **Conclusions**

In dealing with the US withdrawal from the ABM, the Chinese are likely to continue to press for a treaty to arrest the weaponization of space. US resistance to the priority of such a treaty will likely be cast as opposition to the UN struggle for collective security. At the same time the Chinese have even less reason to be generous in their approach to American arms control initiatives and may impose an even stricter bilateral conditionality on such initiatives. Also, the Chinese will likely choose carefully selected areas of high tech where they might begin to compete over the long term with the US in the new era of high-tech local war. Given such strong and continuing emphasis on national economic development, they are wary of the costs associated with a more widely construed arms race that would excessively burden the economy and possibly generate domestic political instability. There is nothing extraordinary in their view that interests have to be squared with cooperation. What is perhaps odd is the extent to which a partial role reversal has taken place as the Chinese and Americans consider the neoliberal underpinnings of economic globalization. China's "peace and development" has been pitted against a "China threat", which the Chinese see as utterly polemical in nature.

The new Chinese multilateralism will attempt to encourage multipolarity and to consolidate political alignments against US "unilateralism" in the context of arms control diplomacy. Chinese foreign policy and strategic thinking has historically developed on the dialectical understanding of the positive and negative forces at work in any domestic or international political context. For sound national economic reasons, the Chinese prefer politics to an arms race. The underlying sophistication of Chinese dialectical analysis is not always appreciated, but this analysis is used to dealing cool headedly with contradictions between national interests and is capable of handling competing events and circumstances. Having said this, it is remarkable how coherent Chinese policy is even in the new pluralized context of developing professionalism, and it is still striking how rapidly the Chinese are adapting to globalization and multilateralism in international relations based on their relatively brief experience of regional security cooperation in the Asia Pacific.

While the RMA may challenge established arms control regimes,<sup>36</sup> and it threatens to outstrip the political capacity of nation-states to develop politically new prospects for arms control cooperation, there is an unhelpful lag in US policy perception of, and adaptation to the potential implications of China's "new security concept" which may adversely impact on the future of arms control cooperation. It may seem bizarre that the Chinese constitute such an extraordinary challenge to overwhelming US technological superiority. Dated Cold War argument calling for containment of a high-tech China can seriously and needlessly complicate the atmospherics of arms control negotiation; and one might even consider whether the so-called "China threat" is as real as what the Chinese call the single superpower's quest for "absolute security".

Currently, the Chinese are strategizing as to how to participate most effectively in globalization and they are involved in a new political offensive to internationalize their own "new security concept". In these latter developments one might see a tantalizing new opportunity for new arms control initiatives that might well include the Chinese as responsible partners in new arms control negotiations. Despite recent "negative developments" and the significant setback relating to US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the Chinese are continuing to emphasize the need for a treaty against space weaponization. The "new security concept" offers new opportunities for cooperation with the Chinese, but the gratuitous reference to a "China Threat" and the overlap of the Taiwan issue with missile defense could potentially sour the prospects for effective Chinese participation in American-led arms control initiatives. The Chinese are likely to continue with their own selective and limited RMA while politically and diplomatically projecting their "new security concept" on to the international stage. They are not likely to accept a politically passive position in the post-ABM context of space weaponization. They are not, on the other hand, ready to engage in a costly arms race that will sacrifice their own deep aspirations for "peace and development".

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<sup>36</sup> Joel Sokolsky takes the two sides of the coin at once when discusses "the susceptibility of the RMA itself to credible and verifiable arms control measures" as well as "the possible adverse impact of the RMA on existing efforts to control Weapons of Mass Destruction". See Joel Sokolsky, "The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Future of Arms Control and Verification", International Security Research and Outreach Programme, February 2001, *passim*.

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