Chapter Three

China's Security Perception after the Cold War

The post-Cold War era has witnessed a major change in China's security perception compared to the previous perceptions which were shaped by the Cold War mindset. With its concentration on economic construction, China has attached great importance to economic security while seeking comprehensive national security in the political, military, social as well as economic areas. In spite of its insistence on "active defense" to basically safeguard China's territorial security, China has been practising and promoting common security to address the security issues. As the international situation continues to undergo profound and complex changes in the new century, China continues to make adjustments in its security perception in accordance with these changes.

3.1 China's Assessment of Its Security Environment

Since the end of the Cold War, the international situation has experienced dramatic changes. As the bipolar confrontation disappeared due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the political multipolarity and economic globalisation started to gradually develop, the international configuration has shifted into a form of "one superpower and several major powers", which is characterised by both cooperation and competition. (Xie 2004: 413; Zhou in Hu 2003: 291-294) At the same time, this post-Cold War period has also witnessed a rapid growth of the Chinese economy, with an annual average rate of 9.3%. China's ranking in terms of economic total in the world rose from 11th in 1990 to 6th in 2004. (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2004) Under these circumstances, China has held a relatively optimistic
assessment of its post-Cold War security environment in contrast to that which prevailed during the Cold War. Furthermore, since the beginning of the 21st century, China has continued to adjust its assessment of the security environment in light of the sustained changes in the international and regional situation. According to China's government documents on security, the year 2002 seems to be a minor watershed in its assessment of the post-Cold War security environment. By emphasising the positive side of its security situation after the Cold War, from 1991 to 2002, the PRC was of the view that it was enjoying the best security environment it had ever had. However, since 2002, China has started to pay more attention to the negative elements of its security.


China's national security "can be said to be in a better condition than at any time during the Cold War." (Yan 1993: 1) First and foremost, China has been completely immune from direct military threats for the first time since the founding of the PRC in 1949. As mentioned earlier, China suffered military threats from the two superpowers at different periods and had military conflicts with them at different places. Although such external military threats started to decrease in the mid-1980s when the weakened Soviet Union adjusted its foreign policy and expressed its desire of reconciliation with China, they "did not disappear until the end of the Cold War." (Ibid) In 1992, Russia withdrew all of its troops from Mongolia and agreed with China to minimise their respective military deployments in their border area. (Zheng 2002; Qin in Liu and Hsueh 1997: 82) As a result, the confrontation between China and the former Soviet Union turned into cooperation between China and Russia. Since then, for the first time in the PRC's history, China has been able to simultaneously keep normal relations with all major powers, including the US, Russia, and the European countries.
Furthermore, the Chinese government also perceives that the international security situation has improved considerably due to the end of the Cold War. Although regional conflicts are still frequent and sometimes even shows a trend of escalation, the Chinese government under the new generation led by Jiang Zemin has constantly reaffirmed what Deng had earlier assessed, that is, "peace and development are the major themes of the present era...and the new world war is avoidable." (Jiang 1992; Jiang 1996) China has mainly put forward three arguments: First, the disappearance of the military confrontation between the two blocs has dramatically changed the logic of the outbreak of the world war. As mentioned in Chapter 2, for three decades of Mao's era, China had been preparing against an imminent third world war. In light of the tense arms race between the US and the Soviet Union and their worldwide fierce contention for influence of power, China believed that both, military adventurism by either of them and some local wars might trigger a new world war. After the Cold War, while the direct military confrontation between the two blocs, the major source of the new world war, passed into history, "the influence of armed conflicts and local wars on the overall international situation has been remarkably weakened." (China's National Defense 1998) The present regional conflicts "are relatively limited in terms of scale, intensity and region, and are under control to varying degrees."(Ibid)

Secondly, in the post-Cold War era, the competition among nations is characterised by the integrated national power rather than the military strength. (Qin in Liu and Hsueh 1997: 79) Although military factors still occupy an important position in state security, "economic development, scientific and technological innovation, and the growth of aggregate national strength remain the priorities for many countries."(China's National Defense in 2000) Therefore, "the forces for peace are prevailing over the forces for war." (Ibid)
Thirdly, coordination and cooperation among major powers are gaining momentum. Since the end of the Cold War, the relations among the major powers have been undergoing significant and profound readjustments. Relations among them are no longer zero-sum games. The major countries are checking on and competing with one another, "while cooperating with and seeking support from each other". (China’s National Defense in 2002) Especially since the terrorist attacks against the US on September 11 of 2001, "they have stepped up their coordination and cooperation.” (Ibid)

Moreover, China considers its peripheral environment also better than that during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War has not only unshackled the relations between China and its neighbouring countries from the confrontation between the two blocs, but also made the elements of ideology and political system irrelevant in their external relations. (Xiaoming Zhang 2006) In October 1992 the report of the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) stated “China’s relations with its neighbouring countries are in the best shape after the founding of the PRC.” (Jiang 1992) The Chinese government also thinks that, as one of the areas with the greatest economic development vitality in the world, the Asia-Pacific region is "relatively stable" in terms of security, because countries in this region regard economic development as “the most important task,” they rely more and more on each other economically, and most of them stand for peaceful settlement of disputes thereby. (China’s National Defense 1998)

The Chinese government is aware that the disappearance of massive military threats "does not mean that there is no longer any problem to China’s security". (Yan 1995: 3) The then General Secretary Jiang Zemin stated in his report to the 15th National Congress of the CPC in September 1997, “the world is not yet tranquil,” although
"the international situation as a whole is becoming more relaxed." (Jiang 1997) In their eyes, while the end of the Cold War has improved China’s military security, it has also brought new and non-traditional challenges to China’s security.

In spite of admitting that "military factors still occupy an important position in state security," (China's National Defense 1998) China has paid more attention to economic security since the end of the Cold War. The Soviet disintegration has confirmed Chinese political leaders' conviction that "national security depends more upon overall national strength based on a solid economy rather than simply upon military might". (Yan 1993: 6) The report of the 14th Congress of the CPC in 1992 states:

Modern Chinese history and the realities of the present-day world show that so long as a country is economically backward, it will be in a passive position, subject to manipulation by others...If we fail to develop our economy rapidly, it will be very difficult for us to consolidate the socialist system and maintain long-term social stability. Whether we can accelerate economic growth is therefore an important question both economically and politically. (Jiang 1992)

Moreover, as economic competition has become the core of international politics after the Cold War, economic security should become the major part of China’s security. To quote China's National Defense in 1998:

Economic security is becoming daily more important for state security. In international relations, geopolitical, military security and ideological factors still play a role that cannot be ignored, but the role of economic factors is becoming more outstanding, along with growing economic contacts among nations. The competition to excel in overall national strength, focused on economy and science and technology, is being further intensified; globe-wide struggles centered on markets, natural resources and other economic rights and interests are daily becoming sharper; and the quickening of economic globalization and intensification of
the formation of regional blocs render the economic development of a country more vulnerable to outside influences and impacts. Therefore, more and more countries regard economic security as an important aspect of state security. The financial crisis in Asia has made the issue of economic security more prominent, and has set a new task for governments of all countries to strengthen coordination and face challenges together in the course of economic globalization.

After the Cold War, the worldwide trend of national separatism has, in the view of the Chinese government, constituted a new threat to China’s national unity. The split-up of the former Soviet Union and some East European countries has created an international environment favourable to the national separatists in China. (Wu in Liu and Hsueh 1997: 225) The growing separatist forces in Taiwan are the greatest concern of China in this respect. As the new generation who were born in Taiwan took power since late 1980s, they started to adopt an evasive or even a negative attitude to the reunification of China. (Ibid: 226) Unlike their predecessors who came to Taiwan after their being defeated by the CPC in the civil war, this new generation lacked historical, social and cultural links with the mainland. Throughout the 1990s, Lee Teng-hui, the then Taiwan leader had taken a number of measures to gradually move away from the one-China principle. The last straw was his statement in July 1999 that the cross-strait relationship was a “special state-to-state relations”. (Deutsche Welle 1999) Separatist forces in Taiwan were strengthened by the fact that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) which publicly advocates “independence of Taiwan” consecutively won the “elections” in 2000 and 2004. Since taking power, the DPP leader Chen Shui-bian has even gone so far as to put forward the proposition of “one country on each side”, which means that both China (the PRC) and Taiwan (the Republic of China) are separate countries, as opposed to separate governments within one China. (People’s Daily Online 2002) As China’s National Defense in 2002 states, “the Taiwan separatist force is the biggest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits.” Greater concern arises from the American political
and military support to the Taiwan authorities. *China's National Defense in 2000* has listed the following actions by the United States which have “inflated the arrogance of the separatist forces in Taiwan”:

The United States has never stopped selling advanced weapons to Taiwan. Some people in the United States have been trying hard to get the Congress to pass the so-called Taiwan Security Enhancement Act. And some are even attempting to incorporate Taiwan into the US TMD system. The newly revised Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation has failed to explicitly undertake to exclude Taiwan from the scope of “the areas surrounding Japan” referred to in the Japanese security bill that could involve military intervention.

Moreover, the international trend of radical nationalism and activities of the separatists in Taiwan has incited the separatists of the ethnic minority groups in the mainland, “and would thus possibly bring about a danger of domino effect.” (Yan 1995: 3) The separatists have set up their camps abroad and conducted harmful political and even terrorist activities in national minority areas, like Tibet and Xinjiang. (Zhirong Zhang 2005: 239-240, 270-274)

Since the end of the Cold War, China has also attached great importance to the non-traditional security issues. *China's National Defense in 1998* states, “Terrorism, arms proliferation, smuggling and trafficking in narcotics, environmental pollution, waves of refugees, and other transnational issues also pose new threats to international security.” As the 9•11 terrorist attack of 2001 caused world-wide concern regarding the threat of terrorism to national security, China started to accentuate the challenge facing it in this regard. To quote *China's National Defense in 2002*:

In recent years, terrorist activities have notably increased, and constitute a real threat to world peace and development...China, too, is a victim of terrorism. The “East Turkistan”
terrorist forces are a serious threat to the security of the lives and property of the people of all China's ethnic groups, as well as to the country's social stability. On September 11, 2002, the UN Security Council, in response to a common demand from China, the United States, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, formally included the "East Turkistan Islamic Movement" on its list of terrorist organizations.


As "the current international situation continues to undergo profound and complex changes," "factors of uncertainty, instability and insecurity" have increasingly caught China's attention since the world entered the new century. (Jiang 2002) While acknowledging that "peace and development remain the dominating themes of the times," and that China's national security environment "has on the whole improved," the Chinese government emphasises that "uncertainties affecting peace and development are on the rise," and that China is faced with many new challenges. (Ibid) In its national defence white paper of 2004, China has listed four elements which will have a major impact on China's security. Apart from the risks and challenges caused by the development of the trends toward economic globalisation, China has expressed its deep apprehension for the rapid rise of the "Taiwan independence" forces, the technological gap resulting from worldwide Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), and the prolonged existence of unipolarity vis-à-vis multipolarity. (China's National Defense in 2004: Part I)

As the Taiwan authorities under Chen Shui-bian markedly escalated their "Taiwan independence" activities since the DPP took power, the Chinese government has started to consider the Taiwan issue as an immediate as well as the biggest threat to China's national unity. Chen's actions such as advocating his theory of "one country on each side", introducing referendum into Taiwan's political life, promoting the so-called "constitution reform", and purchasing large amounts of offensive weapons
and equipment, are regarded by the Chinese government as substantial steps designed to split China. *China’s National Defense in 2004* states:

The separatist activities of the “Taiwan independence” forces have increasingly become the biggest immediate threat to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as peace and stability on both sides of the Taiwan Straits and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

China has been closely following the profound reform, taking place throughout the world since the end of the Cold War, in the military field led by the development of high-tech weapons. It has noticed that “the form of war is becoming increasingly information-oriented,” and that “all major countries have made adjustments in their military strategies and stepped up the modernization by relying on high technologies.” (*China’s National Defense in 2002*) As a result, “military imbalance worldwide has further increased.” (*China’s National Defense in 2004*) As a developing country, China feels it a challenge to fill the gap vis-à-vis the developed countries in terms of military technology and to keep pace with the ongoing worldwide RMA. (Baocun Wang 2004: 7) Since 2002, this challenge seems to be more serious because China has started to perceive that “the role played by military power in safeguarding national security is assuming greater prominence.” (*China’s National Defense in 2004*)

While insisting in its previous white papers on national defence that hegemonism and power politics remain the main source of threats to world peace and stability, the Chinese government expresses its concern over the US unilateralism in its 2004 white paper for the first time. Viewing the Iraqi War as one of the US “hegemonic endeavors” for strategic points, strategic resources and strategic dominance, China especially has some apprehensions for the following actions by the US in the Asia-Pacific region. First, the United States is realigning and reinforcing its military
presence in this region by buttressing military alliances and accelerating deployment of missile defence systems. Secondly, the United States seems to be encouraging Japan to play a bigger military role in Asia. Japan is stepping up its constitutional overhaul, adjusting its military and security policies and developing the missile defence system for future deployment. It has also markedly increased military activities abroad. Thirdly, the United States keeps playing the Taiwan card to contain China. While reaffirming on many occasions its adherence to the one China policy, observance of the three joint communiqués and opposition to “Taiwan independence,” the United States continues to increase, quantitatively and qualitatively, its arms sales to Taiwan. (Ibid)

3.2 China’s National Security Strategy

China’s national security strategy after the Cold War is qualitatively different from that which prevailed during the Cold War. Thanks to its deepening conviction especially since the early 1990s that economic strength plays a primary role in safeguarding a nation’s security in the post-Cold War era, China has formulated a national security strategy centered on a guarantee of the economic development. As factors such as the undercurrent of “Taiwan Independence”, the strengthening US unilateralism and the development of RMA increasingly raised China’s eyebrows, China started to seek a more balanced security consideration by including in its focus both the traditional and non-traditional threats. As a result, China has made some new adjustments on its national security strategy since the beginning of the 21st century.

3.2(1) Objectives of China’s National Security Strategy

Since the end of the Cold War, a major shift has come about in the objectives of
China’s national security strategy. As discussed in Chapter 2, during the most part of the Cold War, national survival and territorial integrity had served as the ultimate aims of China’s national security strategy. Overshadowed by immediate war threats, China sought for a stronger military might which would be able to “ensure the country’s victory in wars against foreign invaders”. (Yan 1995: 4) After the Cold War, with the assessment of a favourable environment which implied no likelihood of massive military invasion in the foreseeable future and the resolve to “make economic development the central task of the entire Party and the whole country,” the Chinese government made it very clear that the fundamental objective of China’s security strategy would be to safeguard a peaceful security environment for its economic construction. (Jiang 1997) Reports of both the 14th and 15th National Congresses of the CPC state that the major task of China’s foreign policy is to “improve the external environment for China’s reform, opening up and modernization drive,” and that all other work including national defence should be “subordinated to and serve[s]” the central task of economic development.

While safeguarding the country’s territorial integrity has always been one of China’s objectives for national security, the contents of this task vary in different phases of history. During the Cold War, to defend China’s territorial integrity meant that the PRC led by the Chinese Communist Party should be capable of crushing any plot by the Chiang Kai-Shek nationalists in Taiwan to overthrow the New China, on the one hand; and of getting the upper hand in its border conflicts with the adjacent countries, on the other. After the Cold War, however, the substance of this objective shifted from neutralizing Taiwan’s subversive activities towards the mainland to preventing Taiwan independence and promoting peaceful reunification. As China has insisted on solving boundary disputes by peaceful means and has respectively reached boundary-related agreements with a number of countries since the end of the Cold War, there are fewer boundary problems for China to deal with today.
As the world enters the 21st century, China affirms that economic construction will remain the central task of the country. *China's National Defense in 2004* states, “the development goal for China to strive for in the first two decades of this century is to build a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way...China needs a peaceful international environment for its own development.” Therefore, “securing a long-term and favorable international and surrounding environment” is still a fundamental objective of the present China’s national security strategy. As the Taiwan Straits situation becomes more complicated and grimmer, however, the urgency of defending China’s territorial integrity has mounted. In the 1990s, with a view to concentrating all of its resources on economic development, China’s security objective of defending its territorial integrity, like all other work, was subordinated to that of safeguarding the favourable environment for China’s economic construction. In the official document *China's National Defense in 2004*, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, “to stop separation and promote reunification” is put ahead of “to safeguard the interests of national development” on the list of “China’s basic goals and tasks in maintaining national security.” By emphasising “China sticks to keeping its development in pace with its security,” the two fundamental objectives, one of which is to safeguard a peaceful security environment for China’s economic construction, and the other of which is to defend China’s territorial integrity, have been provided with the same magnitude of importance.

3.2(2) China’s National Security Interests

In contrast to the Cold War period during which China’s security interests were considered only in terms of military and political aspects, the post-Cold War era has witnessed a broader deliberation of the national security interests by the Chinese government, with economic security and other non-traditional security being
China's economic security interests consist of the following three basic components. First and foremost is to avoid getting involved into any military conflict. In modern world history, the Western countries generally reaped great economic benefits from their victories in the war. On the contrary, China suffered tremendous economic losses in all of the wars it was involved into since the Opium War, no matter whether China was a winner or a loser. (Yan 1995: 4) During the Cold War, China was involved in six wars or military conflicts including the China-India border conflict of 1962. The frequency of wars diverted China's concentration from its economic construction. Taking lessons from its past experience, China, which is currently focused on economic development, perceives that wars or military conflicts are bound to damage its economic achievements and delay the process of its four modernisations or “building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way”. Moreover, China is still far behind the Western countries in economic development, and is aware that it will take scores of years for her to catch up with the developed countries in the world. Therefore, the longer China is capable of shunning wars, the more strategic opportunities China will get for its economic construction. (Yizhou Wang 1998) Secondly, China should be able to protect its economic rights and interests within its own territory especially in its territorial waters. (Du 2004) The mainland of China has a coastline of more than 18,000 kilometers long, a sea area of 4.73 million square kilometers, and islands of more than 80,000 square kilometers in area. (Chen 1988: 449) Thanks to its increasing demands for energy, mineral and other raw materials, China's economic activities on the sea have grown rapidly. To guarantee secure and safe exploitation and utilisation of its marine resources, therefore, is a basic task for China's economic security. Thirdly, China must protect its enlarged overseas economic interests. Overseas economic interests involve external trade of commodity and technology, foreign investment, international
tourism and external projects and labor service contracts. (Yan 1996: 120) These external economic activities operate in two directions, i.e., inward and outward, or import-oriented and export-oriented. Virtually a closed economy, China had few overseas economic interests before its reform and opening up of 1978. In the early stage of China’s reform and opening up, China’s overseas economic interests rapidly increased in the inward aspect. As China has started to expand its international market and increase its overseas investment in recent years, China’s overseas economic interests have enlarged both inwards and outwards. As a consequence of the increasing dependence of China’s economic growth on the international supply of energy, energy security has become a prominent overseas economic interest of China. (Wenmu Zhang 2003: 1-9)

China’s military security interests lie in the ability of the Chinese armed forces to deter war in time of peace, to win wars of self-defence in time of war, and to crush any attempt to split China at any time. In accordance with the needs of the national development strategy, the PLA is first and foremost required to deter “local wars and armed conflicts so as to keep the country from the harm of war.” (China’s National Defense in 2002) This deterrent derives from the “preparations to win self-defense wars”. (China’s National Defense in 2000) The PLA, therefore, aims at “winning local wars under modern, especially high-tech conditions.” (China’s National Defense in 2002) As the danger of the “Taiwan independence” is rising, the Chinese armed forces are expected to play a larger role in safeguarding the country’s unity. China hopes that its unwillingness to renounce the use of force on the Taiwan Issue would deter the foreign forces from interfering in China’s reunification and the Taiwan separatist forces from “Taiwan independence”. (Jiang 2002) Whether this strategy works or not depends on the credibility of the PLA’s deterrent capability. Moreover, “should the Taiwan authorities go so far as to make a reckless attempt that constitutes a major incident of “Taiwan independence””, the Chinese armed forces
should be able to “crush” it. (China’s National Defense in 2004)

After the Cold War, the worldwide trend of radical nationalism and political liberalism has constituted a new threat to China’s national unity and political stability. China’s political security interests, therefore, involve the capacity of the Chinese government under the leadership of the CPC to cope with these threats so as to ensure the endurance of the socialist system and the core values of China. (Long-term Group on Strategic Studies in Hu 2003: 110) As mentioned before, the international trend of radical nationalism has an agitating effect on the separatists of the ethnic minority groups in China. Their separatist activities not only sabotage China’s social stability and national unity but also damage the image of the CPC and challenge the latter’s legitimacy of rule in China. Political liberalism has gained momentum since the end of the Cold War, during which period multi-party politics have developed in Eastern European nations, former Soviet republics and many Third World countries. “Export of democracy” has become a strategy of some Western countries to expand their sphere of influence. As one of the several socialist countries left after the Cold War, China has naturally become a significant target of this strategy. By providing financial and political support for Chinese anti-government individuals and organisations on the one hand, and by accusing the Chinese government of bad human rights records on the other, these Western countries have put a lot of pressure on China and tried to force it to “change its domestic policies in regard to family planning, prison management, news and publication regulation and the Tibetan political system.” (Yan 1993: 12)

Apart from economic security, China has many other non-traditional security interests to defend. Lacking experience in this regard, China, like many other developing countries, is facing various challenges in dealing with these new threats. First, non-traditional security threats are no less harmful to China than traditional
security threats. (Xiong 2005: 50-51) For example, international illicit drug trafficking is just like a protracted smokeless war against China. It has not only undermined China’s economy but also caused social problems. Secondly, non-traditional security issues sometimes are intertwined with traditional security issues. (Yongsheng Tang 2004: 35) The current terror threats facing China derive mainly from the separatist forces both inside and outside China. Thirdly, there are so many forms and types of non-traditional security threats that it takes time to identify, especially when a new form or type has just emerged. (Yizhou Wang 2003) The 2003 outbreak of SARS in China has taught the Chinese leaders a lesson that epidemic diseases could pose a threat to national security. Due to the Chinese government’s ignorance of the threat from this disease, the disproportionate steps it took during the first stage of this public health accident have led to a series of damages, from social panic to economic slowdown and then to face-losing in the international community. Fortunately, the Chinese government later adjusted its policy so that it could check the further spread of SARS and bring it under control. (Ibid)

In sum, since the end of the Cold War, China has been seeking “a comprehensive national security in the political, economic, military and social areas.” (China’s National Defense in 2004) In the re-assessment of China’s security environment and re-definition of China’s national security objectives, the priority of China’s national security interests has also been adjusted. Before 2002, economic security interests preceded military and political security interests as China’s primary or first security interests. Since 2002, military security interests have been upgraded to the same level as economic security interests. In other words, economic security interests and military security interests are the dual primary security interests of China, preceding all other security interests.
3.2(3) China’s National Security Policy

China’s national security policy of the post-Cold War period has in the main retained the essence of Deng’s approaches or theory with regard to safeguarding China’s security interests in 1980s, in spite of some adjustment. Primarily defensive in nature, this policy is represented as a four-in-one combination—a combination of independence, economic cooperation, security dialogue and cooperation, and defence modernisation.

Independence means China adheres to non-alignment and the principle of balance in its foreign policy, seeking friendly relations with all countries, especially with its adjacent countries. With the conviction that “the best policy (for security) is to make peace with others,” (Yan 1996: 13) since the end of the Cold War, China has not only established various strategic partnerships with all major powers® and regional powers®, but also cemented good-neighbourly relations with its neighbouring countries. Both the strategic partnerships and the good-neighbourly relationships are different from the “comradeship-plus-brotherhood”, a relationship advocated by the Chinese government during the Cold War. While the latter signifies a military or political alliance, the former two are a normal state-to-state relationship based on non-alignment. (Yan 1995: 12-13) The strategic partnerships and the good-neighbourly relationships are established on the basis of national interest, disregarding the differences in ideology and social system, and not directed against any third party. (Baojun Li 2005) Since the end of the Cold War, China has also been seeking a balance in its relations with the developed countries on the one hand and with the developing countries on the other. This reflects a departure of the Chinese foreign policy from the Third World-ism during the Cold War. As a result, the

® Like the US, Russia and the European countries.
® Like Brazil, Egypt, India and South Africa.
developed countries like the US, the neighbouring countries and the other Third World countries have become the three hubs or focal areas of China’s current foreign relations. (Jiang 2002)

Like Deng Xiaoping, who promoted the political normalisation of China’s relations with some of its neighbours and many Western countries by establishing and strengthening economic cooperation in 1980s, Chinese leaders of the new generation see economic exchange and interaction as “an important avenue to a lasting security.” (China’s Position Paper 2002, Internet Source) They are convinced that, in a world under globalisation, the best way to achieve security is to grow “common interests”, i.e. to “seek common security through mutually beneficial cooperation,” rather than to pursue the zero-sum and one-sided security which was popular during the Cold War. (Ibid) The more common security interests countries share, the more interdependent they are for security. (Ibid) Since the end of the Cold War, China has expanded its economic cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels. As China’s foreign trade volume increased by 438% during a 13-year period, from US$115.4bn in 1990 to US$620.8bn in 2002 (State Council 2004: 98), the role economic cooperation plays in national security has become more and more conspicuous. For example, the huge common economic interests constitute an effective stabiliser in China-US relations, although the US is not satisfied with the large amount of trade surplus in China’s favour. (Chen 2004: 20-23) In recent years, China has also actively participated in regional economic cooperation of various kinds, like APEC and the ASEAN+3. The development of the mechanism of ASEAN+3 has “not only brought real and tangible economic benefits to the countries concerned, but also enhanced the mutual exchange, mutual trust and cooperation between all parties involved, thus contributing to the security and stability of the region.” (China’s Position Paper 2002)
Apart from economic cooperation, China regards security dialogue and cooperation as another “fundamental” approach to security “in the era of globalization”. (Ibid) First, China insists on the peaceful settlement of disputes. In its five-point proposal for building Asia-Pacific security mechanism, which China put forward at a regional conference held in 1993 on national security and building of confidence among nations in the Asia-Pacific region, it suggested:

Resolving by peaceful means all international disputes, problems left over by history and problems that might occur in the future. Leaving in abeyance the territorial and boundary disputes which cannot be resolved at this moment until conditions are ripe for their settlement through negotiations. Before the disputes are resolved, countries concerned should take security and confidence-building measures to maintain normal state-to-state relations and economic cooperation. (Xinhua 1993)

Under the guidance of these principles, China has resolved the land boundary question with most of its neighbouring countries since the end of the Cold War. It has also signed a Beibu Bay demarcation agreement with Vietnam and the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea with ASEAN. As the 2002 Position Paper on the New Security Concept pointed out, “disputes over territorial land and water are no longer an obstacle for China and its neighbours to develop normal cooperation and good-neighbourly relations and jointly build regional security.”

Secondly, believing that “frequent dialogue and mutual briefings on each other’s security and defense policies and major operations” may contribute to better mutual trust (China’s Position Paper 2002), China has established various bilateral mechanisms of strategic consultation and dialogue with many countries in recent years. For example, China and Russia have a senior-level meeting mechanism between their political leaders and a consultation mechanism between their armed forces. China and the US have a strategic dialogue at the vice-foreign-ministerial
level and the Defense Consultative Talk at the vice-defense-ministerial level. China has respectively established such mechanisms of security consultation and strategic dialogue with its neighbouring countries like India, Pakistan, Japan, Mongolia, Thailand and Australia and other countries like France, UK, and South Africa. (China’s National Defense in 2004)

Thirdly, China vigorously supports the building of a regional security dialogue and cooperation mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region, believing that “the key guarantee for Asian-Pacific security comes from a regional security framework featuring dialogue instead of confrontation.” (China’s Position Paper 2002) To this end, China has paid great attention to and taken an active part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Since the launching of “Shanghai Five” process in 1996, the SCO has been evolving into an important multilateral security mechanism with “a relatively complete organizational structure” and “a sound legal basis”. (China’s National Defense in 2004) In this framework, the member states have not only peacefully and properly resolved their border issues, made joint efforts to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism, but also worked steadily for greater regional economic cooperation. (China’s Position Paper 2002) China attaches great importance to the role of ARF, the only pan-Asia-Pacific official multilateral security dialogue and cooperation forum at present. To promote its development, China has put forward many suggestions on confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy. China also supports ARF to “highlight cooperation in non-traditional security fields such as counter-terrorism and combating transnational crimes.” (China’s National Defense in 2004) Moreover, China has actively participated in other activities for multilateral security dialogue and cooperation, both governmental or non-governmental, like Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region (CSCAP), Northeast Asia Cooperation...
Although growing common interests and mutual trust through dialogue and cooperation is regarded as the fundamental approach to security in the post-Cold War era by the Chinese government, “active defense” is still “the basic guarantee” for China’s national security and modernisation drive. (Jiang 1997) According to the earlier introduction and discussion, the so-called “active defense” means a sufficient self-defence capability of China to deter the enemy from launching a military attack or keep the flames of war outside China’s territory. (Yan 1995: 8-9) In light of the increasing military imbalance caused by the RMA worldwide since the end of the Cold War, defence modernisation has become the central task of China’s active defence strategy. Therefore, the guideline for China’s defence construction has turned into “building a smaller but better army with Chinese characteristics with a view to raising the quality of the army and reinforcing the country’s defense strength”. (Central Committee 1995) Since the end of the Cold War, China has pushed forward various reforms in the military field. On the basis of the 1980s’ demobilization of 1 million servicemen, China has twice downsized its military by another 0.7 million. (China’s National Defense in 2004) China wants to maintain the size of the PLA at 2.3 million. (Ibid) Aiming at “building a strong military through science and technology,” the PLA has accelerated the R&D of defence weaponry and equipment, trained high-quality military personnel of a new type, established a scientific organisational structure, developed theories for military operations with Chinese characteristics, and strengthened its capability for joint, mobile and multi-purpose operations. (China’s National Defense in 2002)

As the Chinese government insists that economic construction must be taken as the centre and believes that economic development is the basic premise of defence modernisation, till the 16th National Congress of the CPC of 2002, national defence
work had been placed subordinate to and in the service of the nation’s overall economic construction, and the armed forces had been required to actively participate in and support the nation’s economic construction. (Jiang 1997) As the urgency of defending China’s territorial integrity has mounted due to the rising risk of “Taiwan Independence”, China has upgraded the significance of defence construction. The report of the 16th National Congress of the CPC, for the first time, accentuated the principle of coordinated development of national defence and the economy, but without mentioning the subordinate position of the former to the latter. Again for the first time, this report put the national support for the defence and army building ahead of army’s support for national construction. Moreover, China’s National Defense in 2004 requires the PLA to “step up preparations for military struggle.” It is also the first time that the Chinese defence white paper lays stress on the PLA’s “war-fighting capabilities”. (China’s National Defense in 2004)

3.3 China’s India Perspective

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, among other things, implied the ending of the Indo-Soviet alliance, Deng’s perception towards India since 1982, that India was one of China’s natural and close neighbours rather than an enemy, was reinforced. After the end of the Cold War, in view of the fact that India was both a great neighbour in the southwest of China and a rapidly rising power, the Chinese government under the leadership of new generations recognised that the relevance of India to China’s security was increasing. (Han 2002) Based on the Dengist perspective, China started to seek a new-type partnership with India. It defined India as neither an ally nor an enemy but a partner with which China may have both cooperation and competition at the same time. (Sun in SIIS 2002: 152-153, 165) In spite of the brief hiatus after the Pokhran II, the 1998 Indian nuclear tests proved to have little impact on China’s perspective of India. Since the world entered the new
century, China has been working on the establishment of a strategic partnership with India.

As discussed in chapter 2, during the most part of the Cold War, China had based its perception of "India threat" on the prism of ideology and the two-bloc confrontation. It was Deng Xiaoping who suggested in 1980s that the China-India relations should be thought out of the box, i.e., India is nothing more than a close neighbour of China and there is no serious problem between China and India. This perception shift happened at a time when the Chinese government was determined to concentrate on its economic modernisation and rapprochement started to develop between China and the Soviet Union. After the Cold War, there appeared to be no further reason for the Chinese government to treat India as a threat. On the one hand, China did not consider that India had sufficient capability to constitute a threat to China. Following what Deng Xiaoping said in 1981, the Chinese leaders of new generation believed that India could not be a threat to China by itself. Since the Indo-Soviet quasi-military alliance disappeared due to the disintegration of the latter, the military balance between China and India started to shift in China's favour. Although India had more troops and military equipments than China in the border areas between them, China enjoyed the superiority over India in the general sense. (Han 2002) Moreover, as history indicated, the Great Himalayan Ranges could serve as a natural barrier. It would continue to make "large-scale and long-lasting military maneuvers and confrontation in that area impossible". (Ye in SIIS 2002: 176) On the other hand, China did not think that India had the intention to threaten China. First, the ending of the Indo-Soviet quasi-military alliance meant that India was no more under any obligation of international treaty to antagonise China. Secondly, in light of the fact that economic security has drawn more and more attention of many countries since the end of the Cold War, China noticed that India, as a populous developing country,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{ See Chapter 2, p. 56.}\]
also needed a peaceful environment including tranquil border areas to develop itself. (Han 2002) Thirdly, since the concept of power has greatly changed in today’s world, “status and influence is not just made by military capability and economic wealth but also by responsible and respectable roles in international affairs.” (Sun in SIIS 2002: 154) Therefore, there is reason to believe that India would be very cautious in using force, because “to solve problems and difference by using force or other irresponsible means would obviously damage” its international image. (Ibid) During his 1996 visit to India, the then Chinese President Jiang Zemin repeated to his Indian host what Deng said 14 years back, “neither of us poses a threat to the other.” (Hongwei Wang 1998: 367)

Since safeguarding a peaceful security environment has been a primary objective of China’s national security strategy in the post-Cold War era, in the opinion of the Chinese government, a friendly and cooperative relationship with India is in the major security interests of China. (Ye in SIIS 2002: 180) As the largest neighbour in the southwest of China, India constitutes a significant link in the chain of China’s surrounding environment. In view of the fact that there is an undefined border of thousands of kilometers between the two countries, that India is still providing an asylum for the so-called Tibetan Government-in-Exile, and that the mutual distrust due to their decades of rivalry cannot possibly disappear overnight, China does have concrete security concerns with regard to India. (Han 2002) Moreover, the emergence of India will also bring on China some impact beyond the bilateral level. (Ibid) Therefore, without good relations with India, China cannot really achieve a peaceful environment required by its economic development. (Zhao 2003)

During his 1996 visit to India, President Jiang stated that “to develop with India in a long-term good-neighbourly friendship and a mutual-benefit and cooperative relationship is an essential part of China’s good-neighbourly policy.” (Lin in Zhang 2004: 47-48) He also believed that the common interests between Ch
India "far outweigh” their differences. (Ibid: 48)

In the opinion of the Chinese government, in addition to their amicable ties in history including the so-called period of “Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai,” some new grounds for China-India cooperation have come into being since the end of the Cold war. (Xia in SIIS 2002: 110-112) First, as the two largest developing countries in the world, China and India face a common task to develop themselves after the Cold War. This not only implies that "we all need a peaceful environment and many more friends,” (UNI 1996) but also means more opportunities and demands for bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, culture, science and technology. (Hongwei Wang 1998: 355-360) Secondly, China and India share a common stance on many international issues such as the new world order, economic globalisation and human rights. (Du 2001) During the then Chinese Premier Li Peng’s visit to India in 1991, China and India agreed to pursue a new international political and economic order on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (i.e., the Panchsheel) and jointly agreed to observe the right to subsistence and development as a basic human right. (Sino-Indian Joint Communiqué 1991)

Despite the short chill which developed in the bilateral relations after Pokhran II, the Indian nuclear test itself and the allegations of “China threat” by the top Indian leaders did not lead China to change its tune. While expressing its outrage against India’s “groundless accusations” against China and concerns regarding the damage to the global non-proliferation regime by the test, China maintained that it did not take India as a threat and was still keen on establishing a constructive and co-operative partnership with India.

Indian scholars on their part, admitted that China’s initial reaction to the Indian nuclear tests was “relatively muted”. (Mohan 2003: 146) On 12 May, the day after
the first round of tests, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesman only expressed China's "grave concern" over the test's harm to the international process of nuclear disarmament and the peace and stability of South Asia. (Shirk in Frankel and Harding 2004: 82-83) Yet China's mild response changed after a letter from Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Bill Clinton was leaked in the United States on 13 May (the same day when the second round of tests took place), which cited China as a reason for India's decision to test. In the letter, Prime Minister Vajpayee wrote:

I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, especially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years." (Vajpayee 1998a)

Additionally, the then defence minister, George Fernandes, made a statement to the effect that China was India's Enemy No.1 in the weeks before the tests. The Chinese government was infuriated at this "irresponsible" and "immoral" "political tactic" used by India to justify its nuclear adventure. (Raman 1999) On 14 May, the MFA issued a formal statement to strongly condemn the tests. (Shirk in Frankel and Harding 2004: 83) In the following weeks, China started a barrage of vigorous criticism of India.

Much of the criticism was devoted more to refuting India's groundless accusations against China rather than denouncing the nuclear tests themselves. Vice Premier Qian Qichen said that "the most unacceptable thing" was India's justification that it was conducting the nuclear test in response to China's threat to India. (Ibid) In an
interview to the *Newsweek* on 21 June 1998, President Jiang Zemin said, “I was very surprised that they conducted the nuclear tests. I was even more surprised that they cited China as a reason for their nuclear testing.” (Weymouth 1998) Therefore, China’s strong response to the Indian 1998 nuclear tests cannot be assessed in a traditional way, that a country will feel threatened when a neighbour strengthens its military might. The specific cause of China’s outrage must be fully considered in this case. Just as an eminent American China hand noted, China’s initial restraint “might have continued...had the Indian government not deflected responsibility for the recent tests onto the China threat.” (Shirk in Frankel and Harding 2004: 83)

In mid-July 1998, China started to mellow down its criticism of India. Its ambassador to New Delhi, Zhou Gang, made a series of conciliatory remarks, indicating that China had not changed its perceptions towards India. On 9 July, he told *The Hindu* that Beijing would like India to provide a responsible explanation for the totally “unreasonable and groundless” accusations against China so as to put the bilateral relations back on track. He also stressed that “It was China’s set policy to develop a ‘constructive and co-operative partnership’ with India towards the new millennium.” (Cited in Raman 1999) In his speech at the India International Center on July 25, 1998, Zhou Gang attributed the deterioration in the Sino-Indian relations to “some personalities” in India, and assured that “India’s nuclear tests had led to ‘temporary difficulties’ in Sino-Indian ties, but had not diluted Beijing’s commitment to building a long-term friendly relationship with New Delhi.” (Ibid) In his later speeches in New Delhi, he further explained China’s India perspective as follows: “There exist extensive common interests between China and India and our commonalities far outweigh our differences;” “The two countries share similar or identical views on many major issues such as economic development, human rights, environmental protection, combating drug trafficking and crime and population control;” “The outstanding issue between China and India is no more than the
boundary dispute left behind by history. The Chinese Government has maintained that while positively seeking a solution to the boundary issue, the two sides should work hard to develop bilateral relations in various fields so as to create a favourable atmosphere for the final solution of the boundary issue.” (Ibid)

Some experts attributed China’s unchanged threat perceptions and policies toward India after the tests to the former’s disrespect for the latter’s capabilities. (Shirk in Frankel and Harding 2004: 93) They argued that China did not consider India as a security threat because Beijing viewed New Delhi “as a much less powerful competitor.” (Ibid: 94) Taking into account the fact that China had already factored in India’s capability to produce nuclear weapons since its first nuclear tests in 1974, Pokhran II “said nothing new about India’s capabilities.” (Ibid: 89) According to Jane’s Defence Weekly, the Chinese authorities had assessed that India would take at least 10 years to establish an operational nuclear strike capability and, hence, India did not pose an immediate threat to China’s security. (Cited in Raman 1999)

It is evident that these experts have developed their arguments on the basis of the more popular and traditional security perspective, i.e., the Cold War mindset as discussed earlier in chapter 1 and chapter 2. Although this explanation seems plausible to some extent by emphasising China’s military superiority over India, there are some contradictions even in the traditional sense. In the logic of the Cold War mindset, China must have taken it as a great threat when a neighbour like India, which made hostile remarks against China, strengthened its military build-up. Even though India will pose a real threat to China’s security ten years later, China should take some preventive steps, such as assuming an active military posture toward India or/and reactivating its traditional alliance with Pakistan. As history has witnessed, China has done neither. China did not move nuclear weapons to Tibet or enhance its launch sites in Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan, nor develop tactical nuclear weapons
and a missile defence system against India, as some security scholars have expected. (Shirk in Frankel and Harding 2004: 89-90) Apart from taking an identical stance toward India and Pakistan after their respective nuclear tests in May 1998, calling on both to stop all further nuclear tests and adhere immediately and unconditionally to the NPT and CTBT, China assured the US that it would not provide any assistance to non-safeguarded nuclear facilities in Pakistan or transfer missile technology to it. (Raman 1999) Moreover, to show its neutrality between India and Pakistan, China reiterated its “consistent” position on the Kashmir issue. On August 11, 1998, Tang Guoqiang, spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Office, said that “Kashmir is an outstanding issue between India and Pakistan,” (Ibid) indicating that China favoured that the issue be solved bilaterally.

By carefully examining the statements and remarks made by the Chinese officials during this period, this researcher has found that China’s determination to continue its friendship with India despite the nuclear tests is in accord with its national security strategy after the Cold War. In other words, the fundamental reason of China’s insistence on its positive perception toward India after Pokhran II is that there is no adjustment in its post-Cold War general security perceptions. First of all, as China gave top priority to economic construction, it was keen to avoid any confrontation with its neighbours. In an interview to the Al Ahram of Cairo on July 26, 1998, Prime Minister Zhu Rongji said “Beijing had no time to threaten or scare other countries, as it is busy with its own economic development.” (Ibid) Although this remark aimed at clarifying that there was no China threat to India, it also explained the fundamental cause underlying China’s stance of “tolerance” rather than one of quid pro quo. In his speeches to the Indian businessmen in the following months after the Pokhran II, Zhou Gang expressed China’s reluctance to bypass the great economic opportunities which had emerged across its southwest border. He said that “differences between the two countries should not be seen as an obstacle to
fostering trade,” because expansion of economic relations, trade and technological co-operation between China and India serve the fundamental interests of the two countries. (Ibid) Secondly, after the Cold War, China believed that the best way to safeguard a nation’s security was to make peace with others or to increase mutual interests rather than to start arms race. China’s good- neighbourly policy is established on basis of this perception. As long as China holds to this framework, it will be firm on its policy “to develop with India a long-term good- neighbourly and constructive partnership of co-operation for the 21st century”, which had been repeated by many Chinese officials during this period. Thirdly, since the end of the Cold War, China has put its strategic focus on its east side. Compared to the potential problems of the possibility of “Taiwan Independence”, the US hegemony and the Japanese militarisation, the risk of war with India is far lower given the limited nature of the disagreements between China and India. Therefore, China has been facing more strategic pressure from the east than from the west, and obviously, it is not in China’s interests to have a two-front threat.

As China-India relations gradually moved back on track in 1999 as a result of the efforts from both sides to mend fences, China was more confirmed in its post-Cold War perceptions and policies toward India. In his speech at the India International Center during his second visit to India in January 2001 (this time as Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China), Li Peng, the No.2 top leader gave his Indian counterparts a comprehensive and unambiguous explanation of China’s India perspective as follows: (1) China considered India as an important neighbour rather than a threat. (2) Developing good- neighbourly and friendly relations with India was a consistent guiding principle and an essential part of China’s foreign policy of peace with surrounding countries. (3) China and India had extensive common interests in keeping a peaceful and stable surrounding environment for their respective economic development and building a multi-polar
world. (4) China agreed that China and India were still lacking in mutual understanding and trust and efforts were required to solve this issue therefore. By preventing the problems and differences between the two sides, such as the boundary dispute, from standing in the way of the growth of the bilateral ties, they could help reach the ultimate resolution of all these difficulties. (5) China accepted and welcomed India’s emergence as an economically strong and active player in regional and international affairs. (Peng Li 2001) In his 2002 visit to India, apart from reaffirming this stance of China in its relations with India, Premier Zhu Rongji especially expressed China’s keenness on expanding trade and economic cooperation with India. He proposed that the two sides “in the near future” should raise their bilateral trade level from US$ 3bn of 2001 to US$ 10bn. (Zhu 2002)

3.4 Nature of the Change in China’s Security Perception

According to the above analysis, China’s security perception has transformed considerably since the end of the Cold War and continues to make partial adjustments. Compared with the Cold War period, China’s post Cold-War security perceptions have changed in the following respects:

First of all, since the end of the Cold War, China has defined its national security in a much broader sense. During Mao’s era, China narrowly confined national security to external military threats. The China of this period had been staying in a shadow of an imminent Third World War as well as a possible military invasion by the superpowers, i.e., the United States in 1950s, both United States and the Soviet Union in 1960s, and the Soviet Union in 1970s. Although Deng Xiaoping in 1980s tried to dilute China’s security concerns by drawing a conclusion that the new world war was avoidable and the external military threat to China’s existence was rapidly decreasing, he still looked at national security from a traditional angle. His emphasis
on economic modernisation as the central task of China originated from his national
development consideration rather than a security one. As the Western countries
started to increase their political and ideological pressures on China in late 1980s,
Deng warned against the new-type threat of “a third world war without gunsmoke”,
i.e., the conspiracy of the Western countries to promote “peaceful evolution” in the
socialist countries. This kind of political threat is still affiliated to the traditional
approach.

Economic security made a formal appearance in China’s national security
consideration only after the Cold War. In light of the fact that the post-Cold War
competition among nations is characterised by the integrated national power rather
than military strength alone, China attributes its sense of insecurity mainly to its
backward economy. This stands in vivid contrast against the Cold War period when
China regarded its inferior military strength as the main cause of its being threatened.
By identifying economic setbacks and underdevelopment, national secessionism,
terrorism and other non-traditional issues as the major threats facing China in the
post Cold-War era while admitting decreased military pressures beyond its border,
China is applying a modern approach to its national security and defines threats in
both military and non-military aspects.

The second change of China’s security perception is manifested in terms of security
categories and their prioritisation. During the Cold War when China looked at
security issues through the prism of “war and revolution,” national security fell into
two categories: military security and political security, with the former preceding the
latter in importance all the time. Strictly speaking, there were no types of security at
all at that time, because China, like the rest countries in the World, took the military
and political characters of security for granted. After the Cold War, however, China
started to seek a comprehensive national security, including economic security,
military security, political security and non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, transnational crimes, environmental degradation, drug trafficking and epidemics. In the first decade of the post-Cold War era, China gave priority to economic security, because it set economic development as the central task of the whole country and required all other work including national defence to be subordinated to and serve this strategic objective. When the urgency of defending China’s territorial integrity has mounted due to the rising risk of “Taiwan Independence” since the beginning of the new century, China has made some adjustment in the priorities of its national security. Taking into account the fact that economic construction remains the central task of the country in the 21st century, since 2002, China has upgraded military security to the same level as economic security. In other words, economic security and military security are of equal importance. They are the dual top security concerns of China, preceding all others like political security and non-traditional security.

Thirdly, China has made a great transformation in its approaches to security since the end of the Cold War. During Mao’s era, China adopted alliance security along with self-help security as the major means to safeguard its national security. Believing in the vital role of military strength in the international power games, China concentrated almost all of its resources on building a strong army including the establishment of its own nuclear arsenal. Meanwhile, China forged alliances with the two superpowers at different periods, as well as exploring a moral alignment with the Third World countries. In 1982, Deng Xiaoping started to drop alliance security on the basis of his new understandings of China’s national security. Since the end of the Cold War, this trend has been reinforced when China lays stress on common security. China has been trying to achieve its national security by growing common interests through cooperation, increasing mutual trust through dialogue, and developing strategic partnerships with all major powers and good-neighbourly relations with
surrounding countries. In light of the fact that China has been working for defence modernisation since the end of the Cold War, self-help security continues to be an important approach to security for China. As China started to re-emphasise military security in 2002, the importance of self-help security has also been upgraded ever since.

As a consequence of the transformation of its general security perception, China’s India perspective has also changed after the Cold War. Apart from the short-lived positive perceptions towards India in 1950s, China represented India as a threat or a rival in the rest of Mao’s era. At a time when Cold War mindset prevailed around the world, India’s quasi-military alliance with the Soviet Union, China’s then major enemy, as well as the ideological difference between China and India, had contributed to China’s protracted negative India perspective. As China under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping was determined to concentrate on economic modernisation and implemented an independent foreign policy to create and safeguard a peaceful security environment for its economic construction, China started, in 1982, to regard India as a natural and close neighbour of China rather than a threat. Since the end of the Cold War, guided by the “new security concept” which lays stress on integrated national power and common security, China has believed that a new-type partnership with India is in the fundamental interests of China. With the good-neighbourly policy becoming an important approach to security, even the Indian 1998 nuclear test did not change this perspective. Although China started to give equal priority to economic security and military security in 2002, the rising threat in the east has consolidated its determination to strengthen peace and stability in the other directions including the west. Therefore, in recent years, China has started to seek a strategic partnership with India.