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China and Regional Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

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Abstract

Prior to the end of the Cold War, China's foreign policy was in large shaped by a confrontational, power-based discourse. However, since the early 1990s, China's foreign policy in general and its regional policy in particular has undergone significant change. Today, China operates in large with, and within major international and regional institutions and regimes. This is also notable concerning regional multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the mid 1990s, China has gradually changed its stand from sceptical and ambivalent, to actively and positively promoting further and deeper regional security cooperation.

By applying a social constructivist approach, this study seeks to explain and understand China's engagement and participation with regional security cooperative arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region. Social constructivism emphasises the constructed nature of actors, their interests and identities, and that norms, rules and symbols shape the way actors construct an interpret their environment. Furthermore, through the constant ongoing interstate interaction, states identities and preferences are capable of being molded and re-molded by norms through subtle and discursive processes of socialisation.

Although somehow tentative, the findings in this study point to a subtle, but gradual process of changed Chinese foreign policy interests and preferences. China is currently subjected to a transformation of identity where the engagement and participation in regional security cooperation has exposed China to a socialisation process of new norms and rules guiding regional interstate behaviour, making China sensitive to its role and image in the Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords: *China, Asia-Pacific, Security, Regional Cooperation, Social Constructivism*

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List of Abbreviations

ARF	Asian Regional Forum
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
APEC	Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CSCAP	Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
ECAFE	Economic Cooperation in Asia and the Far East
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
IGO	Intergovernmental organizations
IMF	International Monetary Fond
NSC	New Security Concept
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1. Introduction

Asia-Pacific is undergoing significant change. Since the end of the Cold War, the security of the Pacific-Asia has been subject to intense scholarly attention. For some, the region is “ripe for rivalry” (Friedberg 1993), for others, the region is on the way of forming a proper regional community (Acharya 2001). China, being a vital component of the Asia-Pacific region, plays an important role in shaping the overall regional security environment in the region.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, China has stepped forward as a vitally important political and economical actor in the region. With a new regional foreign policy, China has increased and deepened its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring states and key institutions in the region, broadening its foreign policy agenda and moved away from its former, in large confrontational stand, to a more sophisticated, confident and constructive approach toward regional affairs. This position stands in stark contrast to the Cold War era, when China’s regional policy almost was non-existent. Today, China not only participates with numerous regional multilateral institutions and dialogues, but also actively promotes further regional multilateral cooperation in the region. The course and dynamics of China’s interaction with its periphery makes China and the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region an interesting and challenging area for analysis.

2. Research Design

2.1 Aim and Purpose of the Study

Broadly stated, the overall ambition of this study is to make an attempt at analyzing the changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific with a focus on China. More specifically, the aim is to understand the dynamics and developments of regional cooperation. The empirical focus will be on China’s engagement and participation with regional multilateral security cooperation arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region. The study will use a social constructivist approach in order to make sense of, and understand, the stated empirical problem. The main research question guiding this study is thus: How can China’s engagement with multilateral regional security institutions in the Asia-Pacific be analyzed by using a social constructivist approach? Additional questions linked to the main research question are: What are the features of the Asia-Pacific security environment? How has the Chinese foreign policy changed since the end of the Cold War in general, and its regional policy in particular? What patterns of development are observable in China’s regional security cooperation behaviour?

2.2 Background Motivation to the Study

The chosen field of enquiry and the chosen theoretical approach in this study is motivated by the following arguments.

Firstly, the study is motivated by a wish to understand and explore the features of Asia-Pacific security. It will more directly try to address this issue by exploring and analyzing the theme of regional state cooperation in international relations theory. The common approaches of understanding and explaining state cooperation within international relations theory have usually applied neo-realist and neo-liberal perspectives. Although explaining state cooperation differently, both neo-realism and neo-liberalism rely on rationalistic¹ features and elements in explaining state cooperation. The body of social constructivism offers a different approach to the same theme, reaching different conclusions. Social constructivism has thus challenged the dominant positions of neo-realism and neo-liberalism within international relations scholarship, offering alternative understandings of the theme of state cooperation making an investigation of an empirical case theoretically interesting and fruitful.

Secondly, the “case of China itself” in the context of Asia-Pacific security has mostly been analyzed with neo-realists, and to some extent neo-liberal perspectives. As some scholars with realist perspectives have claimed, the Asia-Pacific seems likely to emerge as a “cock-pit of great-power conflict”² due to the regions high presence of ethnic hatreds, historical enmity and emotional memories (Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003: 4-5). Pointing more specifically to China, Tom Christensen (2003) has argued that Asia fits quite well with the realist logic of the security dilemma where the emergence of China eventually can lead to great power conflicts in the region, particularly with Japan, but also with the United States (Christensen 2003: chap. 1). This view rests on the assumption that China is seeking to assume the role of possible hegemon in the region. The position of hegemon would guarantee China more space to pursue its own interest and shape the region after its own preferences. This argument builds on the power transition theory, which holds that a rising power will seek to challenge the status of the leading power in the international hierarchy, because rising powers tend to pursue expansionist policies to promote or protect their interests (Li 2004: 24-27). This belief has giving rise to the wide spread debate among scholars and policy circles about the “China threat”, and the appropriate policy response to that threat (Christensen 1996). This kind of literature is well represented and of course deserves attention and acknowledgment. But given the fact, that there also exist patterns of development that contradict the realist interpretation, alternative modes of explanations are also welcomed.

¹ Both neo-realism and neo-liberalism are, despite their differences, considered rationalist perspectives. According to Zehfuss the key element in the rationalist position is its subscription to positivism, which means a faith in social science to explain social phenomena in the same way as natural the world can be explained, and the claim that facts and values can be separated (Zehfuss 2002: 3).

² Reference to Aaron Friedberg in Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003: 4

Thirdly, Swanström (2001) has argued that China's relations with its regional periphery is poorly undertheorized and thus needs further elaboration. By focusing on China and its relation with regional multilateral institutions from a distinct theoretical perspective, this study seeks to address that call.

2.3 Clarifying the Empirical Case – Geographical Region and Time Period

The thesis main empirical object is China and its changing regional security cooperative behaviour within the Asia-Pacific context. China here refers to the Peoples Republic of China, including the parts of Macao and Hong Kong. The Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan will be seen as a separate part of China.

The Asian-Pacific as a geographical region has been described as including all those countries connected with and by the Pacific Ocean, including such different countries like the U.S., Mexico, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, China and Russia. It is more common though, to speak of the region as the geographical area of the countries on the 'Asian side' of the Pacific Ocean, thus excluding the counties of the American continent. Due to the regions large variation in terms of historical, cultural, social and political factors, the region normally also falls into a more geographical categorisation between three distinct sub regions: The East Asia region, the Southeast Asia region and the South Pacific Region (Hettne 1996: 200). Lately, the two sub regions of East Asia and Southeast Asia have been described as constituting a single unit, simply labelled East Asia (Mingquan and Aming 2006: 143), where the forming of the region has been shaped and motivated by both a informal and formal political and economical integration in the region (Hettne 1996: 205). This thesis follows the rather broad 'Asia side' definition of the region when referring to China's regional security cooperation.

Concerning the time period, the study specifically looks at the post Cold War period until present time. However, in order to fully grasp the changing features of China's regional cooperation behaviour, a brief assessment of prior Chinese foreign policy and in particular its regional policy must also be taken into consideration. The time period here refers roughly from the founding of the People's Republic of China 1949 to the end of the Cold War.

2.4 Methodology and Material

This thesis is an empirical, theory-applied case study of China. The study tries to investigate, and make sense of an empirical problem. The study is thus an inquiry into an empirical phenomenon, where the empirical problem directs attention to inquiries of "how" and "why", with an ambition to make reality understandable (Lundqvist 1993: 62). Furthermore, the study is theory-applied, meaning that the thesis uses a distinct theoretical approach to address the empirical question. To some extent, the study also tests the relevance of the theory, implying some degree of theory-development (Bjereld et al 2002: 87-88).

The material used in the study is in large qualitative, secondary material, that is, primarily books, research articles, and internet sources relevant for the topic of this study. The material is of diverse character, some parts are historical surveys, whilst other parts more specifically explain a certain state or phenomena. The author is aware of the increased risk for subjectivity when using secondary material (Bjereld et al 1999: 102) and of the fact that the choice of material also affects the research results. The supply of relevant material has been unsatisfactory to some extent. Especially relevant material concerning Chinese regional foreign policy behaviour with reference to regional cooperation has been somewhat hard to find. This of course limits the scope of analysis, and thus also affects the total result of the study.

2.5 Disposition

The thesis is organized in the following way. First a theoretical section is presented. After having presented the broad themes of analyzing security and regional security cooperation within international relations theory, the main tenants of the social constructivist approach will be highlighted. Special emphasis will be on constructing an analytical framework building on social constructivist features. The theoretical framework will then be applied to an empirical and analytical study of China's engagement and participation with regional cooperation arrangements, where special attention will be given to multilateral security cooperation. The thesis will end with a conclusion.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction - Analyzing Regional Security and Cooperation in International Relations Theory

This thesis seeks to make an attempt at analyzing the changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific region with a focus on China. More specifically, it tries to explain and understand China's engagement and participation with regional security cooperation. Working within the large theoretical and empirical themes of regional security and regional cooperation in international relations theory, these concepts and themes need further elaboration in order to set the outer theoretical framework of the thesis.

3.1.1 Defining Security

The study of security is central to the study of international relations. Most writers have argued that security is largely a contested concept. Barry Buzan, a leading scholar within security studies, has listed twelve different definitions of security that important analysts have produced. The purpose has been to demonstrate the large amount of definitions of security studies available for analysis (Terrif et al 1999: 1). There seems though to be a consensus about the concept implying freedom from threats to core values (for both individuals and groups), but that there exists a disagreement about whether the main object for analysis should be on the individual, national or international security. Traditionally, most analysts tended to enquire about military capabilities of states, developed in order to deal with threats from in large other states (Balyis 1997: 194). Accordingly, the definition of security studies refers to "the study of the threat, use, and control of military force", making this analysis focusing exclusively on one instrument – the use of force (Stephen Walt quoted in Algappa 1998: 11-12).

With the end of the Cold War, there has been a rethinking of security. A disagreement has evolved around whether security enquiry should include more than the idea of national security (Baylis 1997: 194). According to Barry Buzan, the state-centric, in large military focus approach to security studies which was prevailing before the Cold War ended, is too narrow defined. Buzan has argued for a wider approach which incorporates also other aspects of importance for security studies such as political, economical, societal, environment and military aspects. Buzan has also put forward the need to perceive security in larger international terms, giving rise to important questions about the tension between national and international security (Buzan 1998: 1-20). Others have argued that the stress on the tension between national and international security is not an adequate way of understanding the post Cold War era. Due to the broad process of globalization, these scholars argue that the forces of globalization have led to a fragmentation of the nation-state and the rise of new risks and dangers which in

large are situated outside the control of the nation-state. These risks refer to such things as the breakdown of the monetary system, global warming or the dangers of nuclear accidents (Baylis 1997: 195).

The debate about the redefinition of security does not constitute a theme in this study, nor does it try to make any contribution to its theoretical development. This study works with the security concept in its more traditional sense, that is, concerning state security and security between states. It is sufficient here to give this brief outline about the complexity surrounding the study of security. As with other major concepts within social science – power, justice, the state, for example – the concept of security is in large elusive, ambiguous and difficult to pin down a clear cut definition.

3.1.2 Identifying Regional Security and Regional Cooperation

Regional security approaches refer to the orientations and predispositions of states towards the means of achieving regional security. A region's approach to security is often reflected in the way member states structure their relations among states within and outside a grouping in order to reach the goal of regional security (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 23). The notion of regional security cooperation refers to a focus on institutionalized cooperation expressed through regional security organizations. Regional cooperation is a basic concept, but in its widest sense refers to different aspects of interaction between member states. Cooperation can be defined as “a set of relationships that are not based on coercion or compliance and that are legitimized. State actors develop cooperative relationships within international organizations and within international regimes, defined as agreed rules, regulations, norms and decision-making procedures, within which states seek to resolve issues and around which actors expectations converge” (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1996: 418-419).

It is also important here to note the different meanings of the terms regionalism and regionalization. It has been suggested that regionalisation and regionalism differ from each other. Regionalization can be defined as an overarching form of cooperation that can be non-institutional and always with open borders (Swanström 2002: 13). It is further suggested that regionalization refers to a process where a potential region in growing scale becomes an authentic region with distinct features and characteristics distinguishing it from other regions (Hettne 1996: 158). Regionalism is a more narrow term that focuses on the institutional cooperation, which could, but not necessarily, be exclusive (geographically) in its character (Swanström 2002: 13-14). Furthermore, Hettne (1996) has elaborated on the idea of new regionalism as opposed to the old regionalism during the Cold War. Hettne has claimed that the new regionalism has a stronger political dimension, constituting a more multidimensional, complex process that is created spontaneously by states in a multi-polar global structure (Hettne 1996: 154-156).

In security terms, a region points to “a distinct and significant subsystem of security relations that exists among a set of states whose fate is that they have been locked into geographical proximity with each other” (Buzan 1991: 188). When states have sought to arrange regional security approaches, the region's approach to security is often reflected in how member states structure their relations among other states within and outside the

group in pursuing the goal of regional security. Caballero-Anthony (2005) has listed three useful approaches to regional security arrangements which can be used as a background when analyzing regional security cooperation in this thesis:

1. *Alliance Building* reflects a security approach exemplified by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This type of arrangement means that members within an organization are under the sphere of a dominant member, which prevents other members from forming alliances with any extra-regional power.
2. *Cooperative approach* emphasises the habit of cooperation as a mean of settling local disputes. This approach is similar to what has been labelled as “regionalism as conflict control”. This type of security approach was for example adopted by ASEAN in the beginning of the 1960s and 1970s, which reflected aspirations of regional states gain more control over the immediate strategic security environment.
3. *Market-integrative approach*. This approach is a functional approach wrapped in economic language and anchored in the thinking that economic cooperation will led to political cooperation. The assumption is that economical integration creates spill-over effects, which lead to that states and their actors eventually will learn to solve their conflicts peacefully and cooperate in the establishment of a common security community (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 26).

3.2 The Dominant Positions of Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism

The neo-realist and neo-liberal perspectives of international relations have largely influenced the discourse on regional security, particular in understanding state behaviour and the nature of regional cooperation (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 27). It thus seems appropriate to briefly outline the main tenets of these two perspectives in order to later on, more comprehensive understand the challenge from the social constructivists.

3.2.1 The Neo-realist Approach

Kenneth Waltz, together with Hans Morgenthau is one of most the prominent scholars in the realist field of international relations. He has reached such a leading theoretical position, that current theories are, to a large extent, derived from his theoretical foundation or created in opposition to it (Wendt 1994; Swanström 2002). It was Waltz who with *Theory of International Politics* (1979) advanced a radically-revised realist theory, subsequently labelled neo-realism. Neo-realism evolved as an internal defence toward the critique raised against the classical realism of E. H. Carr, Morgenthau and others in the 1970s (Reus-Smit: 2001: 210).

The basic fundament of the neo-realist perspective is that states act upon decisions of self-interest and raw power (Swanström 2002: 28). The neo-realist position portrays a rather pessimistic view of world politics, which rests on several core assumptions about the way the international system works.

The international system is best described as a realm of “power, struggle and of accommodation” (Waltz 1979: 113). This position rests on the belief that the international system is characterized by anarchy. According to Buzan “the international political system is an anarchy, which is to say that its principal defining characteristic is the absence of overarching government (Buzan 1991: 146). Because of a lack of overarching authority in the international system, states are primarily interested in securing their own survival (Alagappa 1998: 38). To secure their survival, states must maximise their power, especially material capabilities such as military power, giving rise to what neo-realists call self-help (Reus-Smit 2001: 210-211). Moreover, because states are faced with uncertainty about what other states might do, this ‘unresolvable’ uncertainty leads to a lack of trust in the international system between states. In turn, if this mistrust is mutual, there will be a dynamic action-reaction cycle, which increase the level of fear and mistrust of parties involve to a higher level (Balyis 1997: 197).

The human world history, according to the neo-realist position, has always been characterized by these features. The struggle over power is an historical enduring feature of international relations and conflict is always prevailing (Barnet 2005: 253) and has been described as the ‘security dilemma’. John Herz, who was the first to clearly articulate the notion of the security dilemma in the 1950s, claimed that the security dilemmas is: “a structural notion in which self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs, tend regardless of intention to lead to rising insecurity of others as each interprets its own gaining insecurity as defensive and the measures of others as potentially threatening” (Herz quoted in Balyis 1997: 197).

Given theses assumption, neo-realists explain state cooperation and regional cooperation rather pessimistic. First of all, there exists an outspoken scepticism towards regional cooperation, although not all realists consider cooperation to be a useless concept (Hasenclever et al 1997: 114-122). The problem with cooperation is inhibited because states tend to be concerned about relative gains rather than absolute gains. Because all states are operating in a competitive, mistrusting and uncertain international environment, states always have to be aware about how much they are gaining comparing with the state they are cooperating with. This makes cooperation difficult to achieve and hard to maintain (Balyis 1997: 198) and states will therefore only seek for cooperative approaches with other states if it increases their relative gains. Alliances and cooperation with other states can be initiated and upheld, but such cooperation is *ad hoc* and runs the risk of dissolving as soon as the tightly defined circumstances change (Swanström 2002: 28-29). Some realists claim that international cooperation only is possible under conditions of hegemony, meaning that there needs to be a dominant state which is able to use its power to create and enforce the institutional rules necessary to sustain cooperation between states (Reus-Smit 2001: 211).

This is of course also applicable to regional security cooperation. The concern of cheating and relative gains and the cost of failing to develop national capabilities inhibit and limit cooperation, particularly in the security domain. Similarly, institutions are not viewed as significant in matters of war and peace. Seen basically as reflections of the

distribution of power and the calculation of national interest, especially of the great powers, institutions are perceived as having no independent effect on state behaviour and are therefore considered irrelevant or only of marginal importance (Alagappa 1998: 52).

This logic of anarchy and self-help thus determines the nature of the international system. It is the distribution of material capabilities or power among states that determine the rules and institutions which regulate interstate relations. Neo-realist argue, as demonstrate above, that cooperative behaviour are aberrations in a world where continual conflict and power balancing between self-protective states foremost shape the international system. As states only mind themselves in a world without enforceable rules, they unintentionally reproduce a system in which self-preservation is the guiding principle and which make states fearful for survival, and therefore, prone to conflict (Ford 2003: 17).

3.2.3 The Neo-liberal Approach

The neo-realist position described above did not go unchallenged for long. Critique was launched, and the fiercest objections came from a group of scholars headed by Robert Koehane who set forward an ambitious plan to explain cooperation under anarchy. Neo-liberalism developed from theories of interdependence and international regimes and liberal economic theory, drawing assistance from microeconomics and game theory (see Reus-Smit 2001; Little 1997). With *After Hegemony* (1984), Koehane outlined a neo-liberal theory (neo-liberals are also refer to as liberal institutionalism) about international cooperation which accepted key neo-realist assumptions: the state as the main actor in international politics, anarchy in shaping state behaviour and states as being essentially self-interested (Reus-Smit 2001: 210-211). Despite these similarities, neo-liberalism makes quite different observations about the possibilities for international cooperation.

Neo-liberals claim that the anarchical system does permit a variety of interactions among states, and where and when mutual interest exists, states will engage in cooperation (Alagappa 1998: 53). States accordingly to this view, will cooperate as long as each state obtains absolute gains from interaction; whether other states gain more does not really matter³ (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 31). However, the existence of mutual interest does not itself explain the extent and nature of state cooperation. Due to the lack of an overarching authority, states still fear the possibilities of cheating and high costs. This fact, according to neo-liberals, does however not inhibit states from cooperating; in fact, it is precisely this situation that makes states seek for cooperative arrangements.

Neo-liberals argue that states construct international institutions or regimes in order to overcome obstacles to cooperation (Reus-Smit 2001: 211-212). Institutions can be

³ As mentioned above, the neo-realists argue in terms of relative gains, whereas neo-liberals argue in absolute gains. This could be described as neo-liberals characterizing states as utility-maximisers, seeking absolute gains compared to neo-realists that consider states to be rationalistic defensive and seeking relative gains (Reus-Smit 2001: 211-212).

defined as sets of rules that establish ways states should cooperate and compete with each other, and regulating both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. These rules are negotiated by states, which entail mutual acceptance of norms or standards of appropriate behaviour defined in rights and obligations. Institutions and rules are frequently formalized in international arrangements and incorporated into international organizations (Terrif et al 1999: 47). According to Koehane, institutions have the function of monitoring, enhance political transparency, reduce uncertainty and increase policy-relevant information (Katzenstein 1996: 12-13). This is so in the following way.

First, rules increase the amount of information available to states engaged in cooperation so that monitoring will be easier, thus limiting the effects of cheating. Secondly, institutionalised rules tend to increase the amount of transactions which has positive effects by increasing future gains by clearer. Thirdly, rules facilitate linking together interactions between states in different issue areas which enhancing interdependence. And finally, transaction costs of individual agreements can be lowered because the time and effort of negotiating agreements become institutionalized (Terrif 1999: 50).

Neo-liberals thus do not deny the inherent nature of conflict in the international system, but claim that through proper political conditions, international conflict can be mitigated through collective management (Katzenstein 1996: 12-13).

The opportunities for cooperation are further dependent on levels of interdependence: low interdependence means few common interests to spur international cooperation. When interdependence is high though, as has been observed since the Second World War, more incentives are created for international cooperation (Reus-Smit 2001: 211). In effect, increased trade and international commercial activity have positive effects for security (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 29-20).

Compared to the neo-realist perspective, the emphasis of the neo-liberals on institutions and regimes offer a more positive approach to security by helping maintain regional order. Furthermore, this is particularly relevant when viewed in the context of increased interdependence among states (Caballero-Anthony 2005: 29-30).

3.3 The Response of the Social Constructivist Approach

The term social constructivism to international relations theory was first introduced by Nicholas Onuf. With *World of Our Making* (1989), Onuf presented the first constructivist approach of international relations. Soon scholars followed in the tracks of Onuf and further elaborated the term. Alexander Wendts' 1992 article 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It' has been seen as the first popularized constructivist approach in international relations theory (Zehfuss 2002: 10-12).

Social Constructivism is not a theory of international relations, but more a theoretically informed approach to the study of international relations (Ruggie 1998). Social constructivism addresses a central dilemma of social theory, namely: how does the interplay of actors and social structures and of material and ideational factors constitute, inform, and explain social life? (Burch 2002: 60). Constructivism can widely be described as an approach to social analysis which is occupied with exploring the role

of human consciousness in social life. It holds that human interaction not only is shaped by material factors, but in fact mainly by ideational ones (Hopf 1998).

The core observation in social constructivism is that the social reality is seen as constructed. This brings along certain elements. First, the socially constructed nature of actors and their identities are emphasized. This position means that individuals are produced and created by their cultural environment. Second, knowledge, that is, symbols, rules, concepts, categories and meanings, shape how individuals construct and interpret their world. In other words, the reality does not just exist 'out there', it is shaped and formed by historical and cultural circumstances and thus gives meaning to reality. This assumption has a vital impact on how individuals view themselves, define their interests, and determine what constitutes proper action or behaviour (Barnett 2005: 259).

In reference to world politics, this position means that constructivist tend to see the global political system as a social structure. Structures and agents (states primarily) are mutually related: the actors shape and are shaped by each other and their environments (Burch 2002: 23). In the field of national interest and foreign policy this has an important implication; actor's interests and preferences are not fixed or exogenous to explanation but rather originate and change during the process of social interaction. As Finnemore puts it:

“States are embedded in dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in that world. States are socialized to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live” (Finnemore 1996: 2).

3.3.1 Constructing an Analytical Framework

The focus on identity is one of the most important innovations made by the constructivist in the study of international relations. As Wendt claims: “Identity is the basis of interest” (Wendt 1992: 398). The focus on identity and interest formulation distinguishes social constructivism from the rationalistic perspective. The rationalists perceive political actors as atomistic, self-interested and rational that wishes to maximize their interest. Actors are treated as pre-social, that is, their identities and interests are autogenous. Thus, social interaction is not considered being important for determining interests. Furthermore, societies are considered being a strategic realm, where actors come together and engage in a pursuit over pre-defined interests. (Reus-Smit 2001: 213). Because rationalists treat states' interests as given, their position hampers any meaningful role for human reflection or political-ideological contention in (re)shaping actors' conception of interest. Rationalists also neglect the process of cognitive evolution and how collective understandings of cause-and-effect relationships and shared values are diffused through the political system (Herman 1996: 279).

For social constructivist, the concept of identity functions as the crucial link between environmental structures and interests. The term comes from social psychology, where it refers to images of the self, held and projected by an actor formed through a

relation with significant others. In the context of international relations study, this usage of identity may seem slightly forced, but according to Jepperson *et al*, also nations do construct and project collective identities. This then has an impact on how actors perceive themselves, define their interests, and determine what constitutes the proper action or behaviour (Jepperson *et al.*: 1996: 59).

Identity is by Wendt defined as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations of the self” (Wendt 1992: 397). Wendt further claims that social identities and interest are always in process during interaction. They may be relatively stable in certain contexts, but this stability is an ongoing accomplishment of practices that represent self and other in certain ways (Wendt 1994: 385). Wendt further distinguishes between first, corporate state identity which is pre-social, inherent to states, and second, social state identity (Burch 2002: 35-36). The social identities have both individual and social structure identities and function as cognitive schemas which makes it possible for an actor to determine “who I am/we are” according to his/their social environment. The identity of a state can only be defined with reference to ‘others’, making identification a continuum from negative (enemy) to a positive (friend) (Wendt 1994: 385-384). These role identities are products of certain relationships among countries. States may be friends, rivals or enemies, making the identity uniquely social; it only exists in relation to others (Hopf 1998:).

With reference to state cooperation, Wendt claims that the possible positive outcome of interstate cooperation stems from whether actors’ social identities generate self-interest or collective interest. State cooperation is accomplished once cooperation is initiated by a ‘group of friends’ and a socialization process takes place that is able to transform egoist actors into more altruistic actors, e.g. by altering the role perception of the self and the other (Wendt 1994: 386-387). This is further highlighted by the concepts of interdependence, common fate and homogeneity to explain how states come to alter their behaviour towards each other, and subsequently produce new generalized identities (Wendt 1999: chapter 7). States come to identify their own interests with each other by the extent in which states are similar and whether they recognize that similarity. States that recognize that they are interdependent in the sense that their actions and the actions of others affect them are more likely to form a collective identity. Finally, states reach a sense of common fate which indicates a sense of common and shared perceptions about the social environment and future outcomes (Ford 2003: 38-39).

The notion of the socialization process serves as a critical element within social constructivist thought. Social learning can be described as an active process of re-definition and re-interpretation of reality on the basis of causal and normative knowledge. It is not only mere adaptation or learning, but in fact represents the capacity and motivation of social actors to manage and even change reality by changing their beliefs of the social environment and their identities (Adler and Barnett 1998: 44). This means that states come to learn new roles, as well as imitate successful practices. In the process of social learning, actors come to see themselves as reflections of how others might perceive them. This enables states to take the perspective of the other. Over time, this interaction can create shared expectations of the social reality. Particular forms of cooperative interaction between states can lead to an evolution of a community or collective identity. When this happens, actors no longer define interest in strictly

egoistic terms, but acknowledge that their own interests are linked to those of other states (Ford 2003: 37-38).

It is also important to notice that constructivist stress the fact that institutions can socialise or 'teach' states new interest. This, again, sharply contrast to the rationalist perspective which view social institutions as primarily constraining the behaviour of actors with given identities and preferences. The constructivist approach on the other hand conceptualizes how institutions as social structures impact on agents and their behaviour, and in particular how the integration process itself affects the nature of the agent. This relates to the constitutive effect of social norms and institutions. The norms and institutions do not only regulate behaviour, they also constitute the identity of actors in the sense of defining who 'we' are as members of a social community (Risse 2004: 162-163).

Finally, it is also important to notice that by emphasising the communicative and discursive practise, the social behaviour of actors can be explained and understood. It is through discursive practices that agents makes sense of the world and attribute meaning to their activities (Risse 2004: 164).

To sum up, the focus on identity gives the social constructivist approach its main core. By shifting the focus from capabilities to identity, the analysis includes the following elements: (1) Looking at what states can do because of their position in the system, to what they want to do because of how they see themselves in relation to others (and how others perceive the self) (Kubalkova 2001: 33). (2) Explaining state behaviour in a constructivist framework requires attention to the mutually constituted character of agent and structure, that is, recognizing both the reflexive role of agents in reproducing the structure, and that social structures construct identities and interests (Finnemore 1996: 25). (3) Emphasising the identity-learning practice process of states, driven by an interaction between states which produce shared understanding of reality and defining and re-defining interests which may lead to the development of collective identities (Dongxiao 2003: 168).

4. Setting the Stage

This chapter is used to outline and set the stage for the analysis to follow. The chapter will briefly describe overall and general features of the security environment and regional cooperation features in the Pacific-Asia region. This is done in order to give a short introduction to the different developments and patterns of multilateral security cooperation in the region.

4.1 Security and Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

Pacific-Asia, seen as a whole, has throughout its long history been lacking sustained patterns of political integration that has included all nations. At the sub-regional level however, some patterns of political interaction did develop throughout history, but such relations were more or less completely autonomous, especially in Northeast and South Asia. The regional subsystems ended with European colonization, contributing to the integration of Asian states into a global system that was dominated by the European powers. Although a distinct Asian system could not emerge during the colonial rule, the colonial rule and the struggle against it help develop a concept of Asian identity (Alagappa 1998: 109-111).

With the decolonization process and after the end of Second World War, for the first time in history, distinct features of an Asia-Pacific wide-regional security system emerged. The system was shaped by the zero-sum competition between the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union. The dynamics of this regional system was driven by the rivalry and conflict not only between the two superpowers, but also by conflict, competition and cooperation between the superpowers and the regional powers (Sino-American, Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian), and between local powers themselves at the sub-regional level in Northeast, Southeast and South Asia (Alagappa 1998: 88).

This conflictual nature of the Asia-Pacific region had effects on the shape of the security cooperation in the region. In the early post-war period security arrangements primarily consisted of bilateral agreements concluded by the United States and individual countries. There were several attempts at establishing formal multilateral cooperative bodies, for example SEATO and Economic Cooperation in Asia and the Far East (ECAFE). However, these, like other institutions, were mostly initiated by external powers and loosely institutionalized and formalized (Duffield 2003: 246-248). Not until the formation of ASEAN has the region seen a more institutionalized body for regional cooperation (Hettne 1996: 200-210).

ASEAN⁴ was established in 1967 on the old foundations of Association of Southeast Asian (ASA) with the aim of accelerating economical growth, social progress and cultural development and might be seen as the most successful attempt at creating a multilateral regional institution (Kwon 2002: 39-41). The drive for further regional integration through the body of ASEAN was prompted by means to promote security and stability, where the decolonization process, the communist threat and the Cold War rivalry for 'client' states were instrumental in establishing a shared understanding of common security needs. The establishment of ASEAN was also driven by aims to create means to manage internal disputes and conflicts, notably between the larger members of Indonesia and Malaysia (Butler 1997: 415).

The process of regional integration in the Asia-Pacific region moved slowly forward during the Cold War period, where the political and institutional changes in the region were being propelled by the regions economical development and rise. However, given the nature of the region, it is inevitable that such a process has been lengthy (Kwon 2002: 23-31). Compared to Europe, during the post-war period, there was a clear lack of major collective security arrangements with a deep and stable structure. Most of the security arrangements were as illustrated above bilateral in nature, weakly institutionalized, and strongly influenced by the Cold War power-structure (Yang 1999: 229).

4.2 Patterns and Features of Regional Security Cooperation

The forming of a mature, formalized regional multilateral security cooperation has been somewhat problematic because of the region's geographically disparate nature and its diversity in culture, social systems and politics. The brand of multilateralism taking shape in the Asia-Pacific has therefore predominantly sub-regional in character (O'Brien 1999: 250-251). However, since the end of the Cold War, there has been notable change in the regions multilateral institutional development patters. The Asia-Pacific region has become a more stable, prosperous, predictable and forward-looking region. The post-war experience, both positive and negative, has indicated to the region that security and economic growth are closely connected and mutually reinforcing (Yang 1999: 229).

Multilateral security institutions in Pacific-Asia are a comparative recent development and have been supported by the growth of regional economic cooperation which took concrete form in non-governmental activities like the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) or formal ones such as the Asian Development Bank or APEC (Johnston and Evans 1999: 256).

⁴ The five countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were amongst the founding nations. Later in 1984 Brunei joined in and with the end of the Cold War four more nations became members: Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997 and Cambodia in 1999 (Kwon 2002: 39-41).

As mentioned above, ASEAN has been the most extensive institutional body in the region, and has also had decisive influence on regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (Kwon 2002: 13.32) From 1992 and onwards, ASEAN has been reorganized and functionally structured from only being a political forum to a more comprehensive forum with a series of institutions and dialogue channels, most importantly the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1992, the ASEAN Regional Forum⁵ (ARF) in 1995 to the ASEAN plus three in 1997 (APT)⁶ (Ping et al 2006: 17-26).

Concerning multilateral security institutions more specifically, the founding of the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) in 1993 and particularly the ARF has marked the beginning of security cooperation on a deeper region-wide basis. Since then, security cooperation in the region has moved ahead with accelerated speed. The drive towards greater security cooperation points to the regions aspiration for a lasting environment of peace (Yang 1999: 230-231).

Another important multilateral security arrangement, especially from a Chinese perspective not at least, is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which is a regional organisation including the states of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Formally established in 2001, the organizations main objectives is to promote economical and security cooperation between its member states (Zhuangzhi 2005: 94).

4.2.1 Asia-Styled Cooperation

The Asian-styled approach to regional cooperation differs from that of the more institutionalized Europe. These differences in the development of regional cooperation between Asia and Europe have been highlighted, and have thus led to perceptions of Asia as an unstable and conflict-prone region due to its lack of mature institutionalized regional cooperation (Friberg 1993; Duffield 2003). However, as others have argued, relations in Asia-Pacific have more been built on normative and ideational framework when handling security and interstate conflict issues (Acharaya 2001; 2003; Hacke 2003; Cabello-Anthony 2005)).

The Asian-styled regional cooperation has emerged around ideas of the so called ASEAN Way. The ASEAN Way can briefly be described as a particular mode of decision-making process which includes a non-confrontational attitude toward other members, a willingness to recognize other members' point of view, consciously refraining from exerting influence or coercion over other member states, and finally an attitude of being patient and preserve in reaching consensus (Kwon 2002: 58). These ideas were built on the foundations of norms of sovereignty that developed in the

⁵ ARF constitutes of the seven ASEAN countries, plus Canada, U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Laos, Papua New Guinea and a representative from the European Union. The forum offers a unique venue for discussing measures for enhancing collective security (Yang 1999: 231).

⁶ The APT is a regional cooperation dialogue between ASEAN and the three countries of China, Japan and South Korea to increase intra-regional trade and work for further liberalisation (Swanström 2002: 113).

aftermath of the Second World War. At the opening meetings, it was decided not to bureaucratize regional cooperation because it would undermine the hard fought sovereignty of the new states. The basic aim has been to formulate certain norms for interstate conduct and instruments for the practical application of these norms. The latter, focusing heavily on the preservation of sovereignty and non-interference, has been institutionalized within the ASEAN in 1967, and later in the ARF in 1994. As remarkable as it seems, this normative framework has contributed to maintaining a relative stable and secure environment in the region (Acharaya 2003: 159-160). The Asia-Pacific has thus established a regional community with a multilateral institutional architecture that is based on number of (steady growing) shared norms about interstate relations and security. The cornerstone of this emerging regional community is the organizations of ASEAN, but also the ARF, and the SCO are important components. The important fact to notice here is that these institutions more are forms of cooperative security, rather than collective security, built on norms and appropriate behavioural, guiding interstate relations (Shambaugh 2004: 96).

5. Empirical and Analytical Assessment

The following chapter consists of a closer elaboration on China's foreign policy behaviour concerning regional policy and regional cooperation, with special attention given to multilateral security institutions. The chapter begins with a general assessment on China's foreign policy from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 up to present time. The chapter proceeds with an elaboration on post Cold War developments in regards to China's regional cooperation behaviour. In the final sections of the chapter, there will be a focus on China's interaction and involvement with multilateral regional security cooperation. The chapter also elaborates on why and how the changing Chinese behaviour toward regional security cooperation can be understood.

5.1 Foreign Policy Behaviour during the Cold War Period

With the inception of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tried to consolidate and reconstruct the country in accordance with communist ideology based on the interpretation of the party's paramount leader Mao Zedong (Swanstöm 2001: 49). Due to the newness of the Chinese revolution and the poor condition of the country in terms of economical and social development, the foreign policy of China during the Mao Zedong era was in large shaped by an economical and military build-up policy determined by the primacy of politics, the weight of the past, and the importance of ideology (Robinson 1994: 555).

Throughout much of the post-war era, China adopted a balance-of-power, state-centric approach to international politics and security, where China especially developed a foreign policy strategy against what it perceived as efforts from the United States and the Soviet Union to coerce Beijing into geopolitical submission (Tow 1994: 120-122). China formed cordial relationships with very few countries, establishing close ties only to those countries with common ideology, common security interests or with countries willing to endorse Chinese foreign policy positions. It showed great ambivalence and its policy were both selective and volatile, not at least towards the United States and the Soviet Union (Harding 1994: 398). Concerning international and multilateral cooperation, the Chinese were highly suspicious about international cooperative relationships with other states and international institutions. During the period from 1949 to 1970, China was practically excluded from the world of international organizations due to China's antagonistic foreign policy (Kim 1994: 405).

With the death of Mao and with the inception of his successor Deng Xiaoping's market-orientated economic reforms, the importance of ideology declined and lost its leading role in dictating the Chinese foreign policy position (Zhao 2004: 8). China's foreign policy in the 1980s reflected Deng's preoccupation with rebuilding the regime legitimacy due to the turmoil created during the Cultural Revolution by quickly

enhancing the nation's wealth and prestige in the world. In the view of Deng, the best way to meet this goal was economical modernisation which demanded close cooperation with the developed countries of the West (Hamrin 1994: 103). During the 1980s, the Chinese also began to argue that the worldview from the 1950s and the 1960s, preoccupied with power politics, corresponded badly with the current reality and which led to missed opportunities for China to use economical and diplomatic tools to reshape a more benign environment (Hamrin 1994: 98).

By the mid 1980s, the PRC thus actively promoted democratic socialism along with international *détente* and mutual dependence as means to promote Chinese national interests. In 1984, Chinese officials stressed the importance of global peace and development of China's national purpose by revitalizing the formulations of the 'five principles of peaceful coexistence'⁷ formulated in the 1950s. Most notable was the emphasis from Premier Zhao Ziyang and other high senior officials to emphasize practical cooperation and mutual dependence rather than ideological competition. This thus signalled for the first time China's willingness to become part of the interdependent global capitalist economical system, a willingness reflected in China's entry into numerous international economical organizations (Hamrin 1994: 104).

The international isolation that followed the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 led to economic sanctions by, and diplomatic deterioration of relations, with western countries. However, the Tiananmen incident had little or none effect on the relations with Asian countries, and China moved forward in normalizing or establishing diplomatic relations with its periphery. Slowly, China also managed to normalize its relations with the western countries. More importantly, China began to more decisively loosen its previous aversion to multilateral institutions, giving rise to participation in various international and, notably, regional institutions (Medeiros and Fravel 2004: 389).

5.2 More Specific on China's Regional Policy

During most of the post-war era, China's Asian policy and its relation with Asia can be described as being highly contradictory. China's image and role in Asia was affected by its own behaviour and by Asian countries perceptions of that behaviour. China was generally taken serious, but not liked or trusted, in Asia. The Chinese quest for domestic modernisation was coupled with a desire for international security and stability, but the Chinese never really seemed to make any bigger efforts by them selves in establishing a security environment in the world, or in the Asian region for that matter (Hinton 1994: 370-371).

China was thus never really able to make any integrated policy towards its neighbours. According to Zhao, this was a result of the following factors. First of all,

⁷ In 1954 China's Premier Zhou Enlai and India's Prime Minister Jawaharla Nehru issued the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" which became the cornerstone for all of China's foreign relations, especially up to 1976 and with revitalization after 1989 (Swanström 2001: 54). The policy of "Five Principle of Peaceful Coexistence" constitutes of the following policy directions: mutual non-aggression; non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence (Kirby 1994).

due to the frequent domestic turmoil and policy change, China's ability to make any coherent foreign policy, including regional policy, was limited. The second factor was China's traditional cultural complacency and the legacy of Sino-centrism, which took China as the centre of Asia for granted. Thirdly was China's unique position in the bipolar Cold War setting, which forced China to see its security in global rather than regional terms (Zhao 2004: 256-257).

The official regional policy that nevertheless was formulated during the Mao-period followed the concept of a unique revolutionary model which was valid for the rest of Asia, and the whole of the third world for that matter. The assumption was that there lay great opportunities for communist revolutions in Southeast Asia after 1948. This belief turned out to be over-simplistic and unable to support more than in some few cases – Vietnam between 1950 and 1974 and later Cambodia (Hinton 1994: 360-363).

With Deng and the launch of the market-oriented reforms and the opening up to the outside world in the early 1980s, China's regional policy changed. From the early 1980 and onwards, Beijing started to develop an integrated regional policy, known as the "periphery policy" (*zhuobian zhengce*) or "good-neighbour policy" (*mulin zhengce*). This policy change came along side with the general change of foreign policy noted above where China slowly started to abandon the primacy of ideology as the determining guide. The new regional policy was aimed at establishing a common ground for issues of economical and security issues with Asian countries. The policy also included conveying the image of a responsible power willing to actively contribute to stability and cooperation in the region. Of course, much of the regional policy was formulated in close accordance to China's modernisation drive and to share the potential of economical growth in the region. The Tiananmen massacre in 1989 and the subsequent end of the Cold War marked yet again a new phase. As noted above, the Tiananmen incident led to economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation with the western world, but had little negative impact on China's relation with its Asian neighbours (Zhao: 2004: 257-264).

Although the adjusted policy after the Tiananmen incident in the beginning can be seen as a tactical adjustment, the regional policy has by gradually gained significance in the entire Chinese foreign policy. The adjustment was first implemented through a series of bilateral diplomatic moves, such as improving relations with Russia and establishing diplomatic relations with a number of Southeast Asian countries (Wang 2005: 166-167).

5.3 China's Engagement and Participation with Regional Security Cooperation

Leading and influential analysts are now openly advocating increasing Chinese 'identification' (*rentong*) with, and 'fusing into' (*rongru*), the regional and global community where China should proactively pursue a strategy of common development and security. Apart from involvement in leading bodies such as the UN, WTO, and APEC, Chinese leaders have also sought to strengthen regional institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and further strengthen multilateral cooperative arrangements centred on ASEAN which would promote a comprehensive cooperative

security (Dong 2005: 63). Relations with ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions and the SCO play a key role in this process.

China normalized all its relations with ASEAN countries in the early 1990s. Official relations with ASEAN started in 1991 when China became a consultative partner of ASEAN. In 1996, China was upgraded to a full dialogue partner of ASEAN. While starting with foremost economic cooperation, the range of issues covering the relation between China and ASEAN have gradually expanded to also include security issues such as promoting confidence-building measures, peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy, and non-proliferation. With the start of the new century, China-ASEAN relations have gradually moved from “dialogue cooperation” to “institutionalized cooperation” (Wang 2005: 168). Overall, these established links make it possible for China and ASEAN to strengthen relations and express and exchange views on prospective issues and problems. China wants to reassure ASEAN countries that its intention in the region is purely non-military in nature and its principles of peaceful coexistence are valid and reliable. ASEAN, on the other hand, has reciprocated and maintained an approach of constructive engagement with China (Ho 2004: 297-300).

Concerning regional security cooperation more specifically, China’s attitude toward multilateral security cooperation has dramatically changed and has become more positive (Li 2004: 41). As noted above, the Chinese perceptions of regional multilateral institutions in general have taken a major turn since the mid-1990s. Before the 1990s, China had viewed especially security organizations as potential tools of the United States to contain China. However, after a short time of mistrust, the Chinese line toward multilateral security forums has changed.

Having first only participating in mostly observatory ways in the ARF, the CSCAP, and non-governmental track two meetings, the Chinese soon became aware of that the U.S. did not control these organizations, and thus developed a more open and active approach about to learn about the function and meaning of regional institutions (Shambaugh 2004: 69).

Moreover, China has not only participated, but also actively tried to promote and contribute to the ongoing process of security building in the region. For instance, taking the ARF as an example, in 2003 at the Inter-Sessional Group and ARF foreign ministers’ meeting, China introduced a concept paper that included a large number of proposals for improving the security environment in the Asia-Pacific. In the paper, China showed a willingness to address a series of issues that it before had been agnostic about to discuss in a regional forum. The issues included issues such as: future challenges to regional security, military doctrines and strategies, defence modernization, and civil-military relations. The proposal was welcomed, and soon the ASEAN formally adopted the initiative at the 2004 meeting in Indonesia (Shambaugh 2004: 87-88).

Lately, Chinese security specialists have also worked on ideas of forming an East Asian security community, built on the foundations of the ARF (Wang 2005: 175-176). China sees the ARF as a potential catalyst of establishing a regional cooperative security community. President Hu Jintao has declared that China “will give full play to existing multilateral security dialogue mechanisms with other Asian countries to actively promote confidence-building cooperation in the military field” (Hu Jintao quoted in Shambaugh 2004: 87).

The other important framework for regional security cooperation is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) formally established in 2001. The SCO was built on the old foundations of the “Shanghai Five” mechanism from 1997. The SCO includes the states of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Majie 2003: 63). The SCO is interesting because it is the first regional security organization largely promoted by China, and where China has had the leading role from the start.

Initially, the regional cooperation between the included states was designed to be bilateral rather than multilateral. However, during the process, the organization has gradually transformed into a full-fledged multilateral mechanism for addressing security issues. After its formal establishment in 2001, the organization has moved towards even broader and deeper cooperation, promoting especially regional cooperation within the economical domain, which now is seen as the second pillar of the SCO (Wang 2005: 178-180).

In the beginning, under the mechanism of the “Shanghai Five”, the focus of the cooperation was rather narrow defined: to address border security issues, such as terrorism and separatism. The cooperation is guided by the so called “Shanghai Spirit”. The “Shanghai Spirit” has been described as a set of norms constituted of mutual trust, mutual advantages, equality, joint consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and the desire for common development. These norms are consistent to the norms that also govern ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions and mechanisms (Zhuangzhi 2005: 95-97).

As with the interaction with ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions, the participation with SCO, reflects China’s interest in both following and establish a norm and rule-binding order of security in the Asia-Pacific. Although these norms still are somehow diffuse, there is an increasingly acceptance by China to accept these norms as guiding interstate behaviour (Wang 2005: 183-185).

5.4 Multilateralism in China’s Foreign Policy

As observed above, during the Cold War era, China was a strong opponent toward multilateral diplomacy, especially in the domain of security multilateralism. China strongly advocated practices of the Westphalia international system of nation-state and national sovereignty, where China was more comfortable dealing with other nations on a bilateral rather than on a multilateral basis (Wang 2005: 159). However, as stated, there has been a major shift in the Chinese perception towards multilateral cooperation in general and regional cooperation in particular.

Needless to say, China considers multilateral diplomacy as motivated by instrumental considerations. The new multilateral approaches toward regional cooperation is perceived as a more effective and less alarming way of pursuing China’s national interest, and advance the country’s influence in Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, this preference for multilateral regional policy is not only driven by pragmatism. It also reflects China’s intention to coordinate interstate relations and establish a regional order based of generalized norms of conduct. China now strongly believes that there is a new reality of world politics and that this new state needs different norms and principles that guide interstate relations. China’s engagement and participation with regional

cooperation arrangements point to an increasingly weight of norm-and rule making in China's foreign policy (Shambaugh 2003; Wang 2005).

According to Kim (1995), there has been an ongoing process of socialisation in China. Although more referring to international institutions, Kim's arguments are valid also here. As Kim argues, China's participation with global economic IGOs has prompted changes in policies, polity processes, and institutions within China by a process of mutual adjustment and mutual legitimation between China and key international economic organisations, e.g. the World Bank, IMF, and GATT. The IGOs have played a vital role in shaping the Chinese international organizational behaviour, by enforcing a variety of global socialization roles in Chinese foreign policy learning process. Some IGOs have served as training-ground for negotiating skills and institution-building or domestic restructuring in the Chinese foreign policy establishment. Other IGOs affect Chinese national law and regulations through their capacity of enact binding rules for member states. IGOs have also reshaped Chinese foreign policy by making rule-defying behaviour more detectable and costly, by creating transparency and in the behaviour and expectations of China. Most IGOs have also shaped Chinas agenda by the means of their own global agenda through information giving and receiving, thereby gradually affecting Chinese foreign policy-makers perceptions of self-interests and their calculations of cost and benefits of norm-abiding or norm-defying behaviour. Kim concludes by stating that the participation and compliance with the norm and rule system of the IGOs inevitably calls for a readjustment or restructuring of certain values, principles, norms, and institutions of Chinese foreign policy (Kim 1995: 432-33). This process of socialisation has also been noticed by others.

Referring more specifically to regional multilateral security cooperation, Johnston (2003) has lengthily argued for a socialisation process of China trough its participation with the ARF. According to Johnston, the Chinese involvement with the ARF has over time reshaped Chinese official's view towards multilateral cooperation on security matters. Johnston has observed that the Chinese engagement with the ARF and its nearby security dialogues and mechanisms have reformulated the way China has defined its own security and the way to best promote regional security and stability within the larger Asia-Pacific security setting. Prior to the entry into the ARF, the Chinese were highly sceptical about the value of the ARF, claiming that cooperation within the ARF as a mean to achieve security was irrelevant because the ARF was primarily dominated by the U.S. or Japan. Furthermore, the Chinese worldview of international politics was still rooted in deeper realpolitik assumptions which in large induced zero-sum competition among sovereign states requiring unilateral security strategies. Since the entry, however, there has been remarkable change. Johnston notes that the Chinese began to rethink the discourse and meaning of realpolitik and replace it with ideas, concepts and perceptions of multilateralism, common security and later on mutual security. This new line of thinking was first stated in unofficial and informal circles, but soon moved into more official and formal and public affirmation of the concepts, having the effect that regional security issues now increasingly are discussed within the framework of multilateralism (Johnston 2003: 123-131).

5.5 Changing Perceptions about Security

Security has always been foremost among China's interest and objectives. As a large power in the Asia-Pacific region, China has had to consider the possibilities of attack from foremost the superpowers, but also consider disputes with its neighbouring countries. Next to security, sovereign dignity plays a vital role for China. The memory from the humiliations inflicted on China from the West and Japan before 1949 still remains a strong source for foreign policy considerations (Hinton 1995: 348-349). However, with the on-going process of interaction with regional cooperation, Chinese foreign policy interests and preferences has been subjected to change through a subtle and discursive processes of socialisation of international norms and rules guiding interstate behaviour (Dongxiao 2003: 167-168). This has affected the Chinese perception about its own security objectives and security policy.

As Moore argues (2005), China has come to, if not substitute, then at least complement prior power-interest discourse as the main basis for foreign policy with considerations about globalization, regionalization and interdependence. This has been reflected in the recently promoted effort to establish a "New Security Concept" (NSC). The New Security Concept started to be articulated in the beginning of the 1990s. In 1997, China openly advocated its meaning as it was introduced at the ARF conference on confident building measures in Beijing the same year. In 1998, the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) issued a paper on the concept (Thayer 2003: 90-91). The NSC aims at building a more progressive security order in which bilateral relations and multilateral institutions are characterized by mutual trust, benefit and cooperation (Moore 2005: 139).

The releases and content of the White Papers on security and national defence issues have also lately changed. Although not reaching global standards, these White Papers still reveal increasingly more information about China's military and security thinking. The latest White paper on National Defence reveal much more information than before as it addresses issues such as PLA defence policy, domestic defence mobilization and PLA's international cooperation (Shambaugh 2003: 88-89).

To some extent, the releases of Chinese White Papers and the formulation of a New Security Concept, are just familiar Chinese realpolitik-influenced ideas about the international system. On the other hand though, they also indicate a subtle but significant difference in doctrine and security thinking. Clearly the founders behind these new approaches have been influenced by regional norms and concepts including ideas about multilateralism, the use of non-force in settling disputes and the importance of creating a regional consensus around common issues. Moreover, there seems now to exist an belief that peace and stability in the region must be build mutual rather than emerging from bilateral relations (Johnston and Evans 1999: 260-261).

5.6 China as a Responsible Regional Power

Regional cooperation, the "New Security Concept" and the larger transparency in the White Papers have enhanced China's image in the region, particular insofar as it

dovetails with ASEAN's own normative approach to cooperative security and security management (Shambaugh 2003: 89)

As argued, the Chinese engagement and participation with regional security institutions can not only be seen as instrumental or led by strategic or pragmatic reasons. As Johnston and Evans have observed, the image-building and role-defining process of China concerning regional cooperation is important (Johnston and Evans 1999). China's increased cooperation is further linked to image and reputation, which is also related to China's transformation of identity (Dong 2003: 176).

The traditional Chinese belief that actors should act in accordance with their ascribed proper roles mean that the issue of identity is rather important for China in international affairs; for China's proper role can only be defined in relation to others. Key referents for Chinese identity have especially been other socialist countries, notably the Soviet Union. Other important referents have been the United States and other late developing countries like Japan and India (Hamrin 1994: 75).

However, in line with its new regional stand, China has emphasised its regional position. This role is much more built on a constructive role which is aimed at consolidating its regional role in a non-threatening way. To this end, China's good neighbouring policy entails attempts to adopt confidence-building measures, project a responsible image, strengthen economical ties, and advocate regional institution building. This 'spirit' has led China to create a sense of economical and security community with the East Asia region (Dong 2005: 64)

The intensified multilateral diplomacy between China and regional cooperation arrangements has in recent years had positive effects. For example, according to Wang, ASEAN countries' perception of, and attitude, toward China has been changing. China is now more perceived as an opportunity, rather than a threat. Former Filipino president Ramos wanted China to be "a big brother" of the Asian family, ascribing China a role as both a market for Asian countries, but also as a major actor in the settlement of conflicts within the "family" (Wang 2005: 172).

As seen, before the 1990s, China had been fundamentally disinterested in participating in regional cooperation, mainly because of its distrust to multilateralism. There has though been a gradual change in this remark. China has redefined the strategic relationship between itself and the region, culminating in the doctrine of China's "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*). In 2004, at the Boao Forum in Hainan, President Hu Jintao said that China's relations with Asian countries should build on five pillars: enhancing friendship; trust and good neighbourliness; increasing bilateral economic cooperation; accelerating regional cooperation; promoting cultural interaction; and facilitating security dialogue and military exchanges (Kerr 2004 :87-88). Hu also made the following comments: "China's economy will integrate still more closely with the Asian economy, giving rise to a new type of partnership characterized by mutual benefit, mutual complement and mutual assistance...China's development cannot be achieved in isolation of Asia, and Asia's prosperity also needs China. China will follow a peaceful development path holding the high banners of peace, development and cooperation, join other Asian countries in bringing about Asian rejuvenation, and making greater contribution to the lofty cause of peace and development in the world" (Hu Jintao quoted in Kerr 2004 :87-88).

7. Conclusion

The last decades have witnessed significant change in terms of China's attitude and behaviour toward regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Today China's has formulated an official regional foreign policy which puts emphasis on regional cooperation and institutional-building, based on a perception of common interests and mutual trust. In line with this, China has increased and deepened its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring states and key institutions in the region. The first actual sign of China's changing regional policy was noticed in the mid 1990s, as China normalized its relations with all ASEAN countries. Since this move, China has further accelerated its involvement with regional security cooperative settings, observed in the participation and active involvement with regional security institutions such as the ARF and the SCO. This change stands in stark contrast to the position of China during the Cold War era, where China strongly advocated practices of the Westphalia international system of nation-state and national sovereignty, and was more comfortable dealing with other nations on a bilateral rather than a multilateral basis.

By applying a social constructivist approach, this study has tried to understand the dynamics and developments of regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific with a focus on China. The social constructivist approach emphasises ideational and normative, as well as material factors in shaping world politics. Moreover, the social constructivism approach emphasises the constructed nature of actors, their interests and identities, and how knowledge, that is norms, rules and symbols shape the way actors construct and interpret their environment. Furthermore it is stated that under the constant ongoing interstate interaction, states' identities and preferences are capable of being molded and re-molded by norms through subtle and discursive processes of socialisation.

In relation to these theoretical elements, the findings in this study indicate that China's increased engagement and participation with regional security cooperation institutions and mechanisms has changed its foreign (regional) policy interests and preferences. China has undergone a socialisation process under the regional cooperative framework through engagement and participation with ASEAN led multilateral security cooperation institutions and mechanisms, and through the involvement and development of the SCO. Through the interaction with regional security institutions, China has been subjected to new norms and rules that guide interstate behaviour, the positive meaning of multilateral cooperation, and ideas and concepts concerning regional security, to the extent that China now is sensitive to the normative image effects generated by participation in institutions. Furthermore, the ongoing interaction with its regional environment, has also meant that China gradually has been subjected to a role-defining and image-building process where it has come to promote and emphasis its role as a responsible regional power. In sum, this process points to a gradual transformation of identity.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out, that findings in this study are still highly tentative and diffuse. The results in this study need to be supported by further empirical research in order to fully grasp and understand the dynamics and challenging developments concerning China and regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

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