

# Tang Jiaxuan: Mankind must achieve a 'beautiful cooperative new world'

by Mary Burdman

Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Tang Jiaxuan called for “a new international political, economic, and security order,” as the only way for mankind to “achieve its *beautiful* ideal of building an equal, cooperative, and prosperous new world,” in his speech to the opening of the Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) of the nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their “dialogue partners” in Singapore on July 27. The ASEAN series of meetings began on July 25.

The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Regional Forum is one of the two most important political meetings in Asia each year (the other one is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting). Foreign ministers participated from ASEAN's 10 members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam; and their dialogue partners, Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the United States. To this gathering, Tang brought the idea of beauty in statecraft, as a principle for saving the world at a time of great international danger and upheaval. This is an idea which Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche has presented many times in speeches in China and in other Asian nations.

Foreign Minister Tang told his international counterparts, that the transition to the 21st century puts before everyone “a common challenge and . . . a common responsibility” to “expedite the lofty cause of world peace and development.” The 20th century was one of “calamities,” especially two world wars, he said, and the end of confrontation after the Cold War has not brought “a genuine, lasting peace.”

“Hegemonism, power politics, encroachment upon the sovereignty of another country, and interference in other countries' internal affairs are still affecting, and even threatening, mankind's peace,” Tang warned. “The issue of peace has yet to be addressed, and the issue of development remains grim.”

The end of the Cold War made it possible for the question of “how to achieve world peace and prosperity” to catch world attention, and now, entering the 21st century, this issue is even more important. “These questions — which principle shall we follow to guide international relations, which yardstick shall we use to handle international affairs, and which way can promote world stability — have a bearing on whether human society can shake off the scourge of wars, achieve lasting

peace, and achieve its beautiful ideal of building an equal, cooperative, and prosperous new world,” Tang said.

Mankind must look at its history, to learn how to choose its future path, he said. “Hegemonism and power politics . . . may have their way for a short while,” but these forces “do not represent the course of human civilizations.” Despite the enormous changes in the world in the past decades, “the objectives and spirit which the founders of the United Nations put forth in the UN Charter over 50 years ago, and the norms governing international relations that Asian and African countries put forth at the Bandung Conference over 40 years ago, still have their powerful vitality and realistic significance. They are still the foundation for establishing a new international political, economic, and security order, and the hope of achieving lasting world peace,” he said.

## The principle of sovereignty

Chinese leaders have been developing and elaborating the concept, that the international political, economic, financial, and security order must be coherent, and must be based on the principles of national sovereignty and mutual benefit. This concept goes back to the early foreign policy of the People's Republic, and further, to the great republican revolutionary Dr. Sun Yat-sen. But, especially in the recent period, as the international financial crisis worsened and the British-American-Commonwealth forces launched their attacks on Iraq, Sudan, and Yugoslavia, China's leading officials have been emphasizing the just new order.

In February 1998, Defense Minister Chi Haotian called for a new security concept “to win a lasting peace.” Beginning in August 1998, Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a series of speeches to emphasize the strategic importance of “national economic security” for China. This spring, conferences were held at high-level institutes in Beijing, including the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, at which top-level economic and financial experts, veteran diplomats, and military leaders discussed the necessity to develop a “new, comprehensive strategy [that] embraces political security, military security, and economic security together as a single unity,” as the *People's Daily* reported on April 15. The strategists concluded that “the new emergence of Cold War thinking, hegemonism, . . . and the tendency toward strengthening of military alliances are intimately connected with the

imbalance in the real development of the world economy,” including the looting of the underdeveloped nations by “Western short-term speculative capital.”

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, presented by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai at the Bandung conference of African and Asian nations in April 1955, are mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality for mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence.

“All countries, big and small, strong and weak, are equal before the principle of sovereignty,” stated Tang Jiaxuan in Singapore. Globalization cannot be allowed to undermine this principle, he said. With the reality that there are serious inequalities among nations’ strengths, “upholding the principle of sovereignty has become even more essential.” For developing countries and smaller nations, “sovereignty and independence are the basic prerequisites for their subsistence and development,” Tang said. He attacked the use of so-called “human rights” issues to undermine national sovereignty.

“Human rights” and “democracy” have been used repeatedly by the British-American-Commonwealth powers to launch one political and military attack after another against other nations during the recent years.

Tang stressed the importance of settling disputes peacefully, in the new international order. The role of the United Nations must be respected in this context. As a “conglomerate of sovereign states,” the role of the UN is “irreplaceable by any other international or regional organization, or country blocs,” he said — clearly referring to the dangerous, unilateral NATO onslaught against Yugoslavia.

“World peace also depends on establishing the international new economic order,” Tang said. While Asia’s economy “appears” to be recovering, he cautioned that the world economy is still in turmoil, and the developing nations, especially, face “harsh” conditions. All nations are involved in economic upheavals, he said, and the economic powers should reflect on the fact that “without the development of the vast number of developing countries, the development of developed countries can hardly last long.”

The policies of a “just and rational international new economic and financial order,” in all aspects, should reflect the interests and rights of developing nations, he said. It is very important to strengthen what is “mutually beneficial” to all nations, especially cooperation in the scientific-technological sector, which he called the “power of the world’s economic development in the 21st century.”

Regional economic cooperation is also a good means for developing smaller nations, he said, pointing to such ASEAN programs as the development of the international Mekong River basin and its Vision 2020, adopted in 1997. Tang concluded by stating that China, which this year will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic, is moving forward with its economic reform and programs to build its physical economy, and its efforts to develop benefi-

cial relations with its neighboring nations and to play a constructive role internationally.

### **ASEAN-China ties**

Tang also addressed the ASEAN-China Dialogue in Singapore on July 27, where he emphasized the tremendous potential of ASEAN-Chinese relations. These ties have grown rapidly, from a relatively low level only a few years ago. ASEAN’s government leaders held their first-ever summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 1997, and issued the China-ASEAN Joint Statement, to establish a partnership oriented toward the 21st century.

The useful experience being gained in “strengthening mutual trust and cooperation, and expanding good-neighborly friendship,” between ASEAN and China, contributes not only to peace and stability regionally, but also internationally, and can help establish the “new, just and rational order of peace and cooperation,” Tang said. The two sides have to develop and open up economic, trade, and scientific and technological cooperation, including in efforts to reform the international financial and economic order. Tang announced that Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji will attend the third ASEAN-China-Japan-Republic of Korea informal summit, in Manila in November.

Tang expressed China’s “joy and admiration” that ASEAN had realized its long-cherished vision, 30 years after it was founded, of the “ASEAN-10,” by bringing in Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia as new members.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar, coordinator of the ASEAN-China Dialogue, expressed ASEAN’s appreciation for China’s efforts to counter the Asian financial crisis. China kept “its promise not to devalue its currency despite the tremendous pressures and difficulties faced by China. This has contributed significantly to maintaining stability in the region’s currencies and assisted ASEAN in its recovery efforts. . . . As we have seen, China stood by ASEAN throughout the whole recent turbulent period. By its actions, China has, indeed, proved to be a real friend of ASEAN in times of need,” he said. He added that China’s stimulation of its economy through massive infrastructure development programs will give many opportunities for ASEAN countries to benefit from trade and investment with China.

### **Regional security**

Foreign Minister Tang also announced that China will support ASEAN’s 1995 agreement to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in the region. The next day, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said that India would also endorse the treaty. A member of the Indian delegation said that his nation, although now a nuclear weapons power, is “committed to no first use of nuclear weapons and non-use against non-nuclear weapons states.”

An article in the Hong Kong *Ta Kung Pao* on July 7, noted the favorable impact of ASEAN’s increasing internal military cooperation on the Asia-Pacific region, and on China. It said,

“ASEAN, an alliance of developing countries, . . . is a major force acting as a counterweight to big-power hegemonism. Its security cooperation will be useful to the establishment of a multilateral security mechanism in the Asian-Pacific region.” Although the so-called “China threat” has been raised by some ASEAN members at various times to promote their military cooperation, “overall, ASEAN’s military cooperation remains limited in scale and constitutes no big threat to either the Asian-Pacific region or China. . . . ASEAN is not an opponent, much less enemy, but a friend to China. It is a partner with whom we can carry out cooperation for a long time to come. It is also an indispensable shield that helps stabilize China’s surrounding environment,” including as a friendly counter to China’s other, much more powerful neighbors.

### **The strategic triangle**

The ASEAN meetings were also a forum for discussions among the three pillars of the “survivors’ club of nations”—China, India, and Russia—both with the ASEAN nations and among themselves.

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said, in the dialogue among ASEAN leaders, that sharing science and technology would be the platform for India’s future cooperation with ASEAN, to create the “knowledge societies” of the future. He identified advanced materials, biotechnology, and information technology as key areas of cooperation. Singapore Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar pointed out that since March, eight ASEAN scientists from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have been working on advanced materials in Hyderabad, India.

Singh met his Chinese counterpart on July 25, when they discussed both bilateral relations, and the potential to peacefully settle such critical situations as Kashmir, which affect all of Asia.

Tang said that Singh’s recent visit to China represented a step forward in the improvement of relations between their two countries. They have reached some important consensus, which will provide guidance and impetus to the improvement of bilateral ties. Tang said that China is ready to do its part in promoting exchanges and cooperation between the two peoples, in the spirit of enhancing mutual trust and clearing up misunderstanding.

Singh emphasized that India attaches great importance to its relations with China, its biggest neighbor and a major partner in economic relations. India is willing to develop a constructive and cooperative relationship with China, and to strengthen their coordination and cooperation in regional and international affairs on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. At a press conference, Singh said: “I certainly do not see ourselves being drawn into any strategic alliance against China. Some of the past misunderstandings with China are now behind us. We have told each other that India does not see China as a threat and China does not see India as a threat.”

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said that Russia will further strengthen its coordination and cooperation with China on international issues, after his meeting with Tang, also on July 25. Both ministers announced that they had discussed their preparations for the second “informal” Russian-Chinese summit on international issues, which will take place when Russian President Boris Yeltsin visits China this September. The informal summit will especially discuss issues of the Asian-Pacific region.

The two nations’ leaders will also meet as early as August, at the meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgystan, of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, and Tajikistan. In 1996, in Shanghai, these five nations signed an agreement on enhancing cooperation, especially in lowering security along their very long borders. They have met yearly ever since.

On July 28, Foreign Minister Ivanov told the ASEAN forum that Russia is activating the “Asian direction” of its foreign policy, and wants to have long-term and productive cooperation with the ASEAN nations on all issues. He said that the ASEAN nations welcomed this policy of Russia, and want to cooperate with Russia as a major player in the Asian-Pacific region.

Ivanov also attacked hegemonism, and warned that the developments in Kosovo could encourage separatist movements in Asian countries. Ivanov was probably the first high-ranking political figure to call attention to a trend that became apparent at the time of NATO’s strikes against Yugoslavia, reported Moscow Interfax. During the NATO war on Yugoslavia, tensions worsened drastically between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Pakistan likely hoped to attract NATO’s attention to the Kashmir problem, and broke with the status quo, he noted. Hostilities along the line of control separating Indian Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistani-controlled Azad Kashmir, could have resulted in a new war between the two South Asian countries. There is also indirect evidence of rising separatist trends in China, in particular in Tibet and the Xinjiang-Uigur Autonomous Region, where Muslims also make up a majority, as well as in Inner Mongolia, he noted.

While Ivanov did not add that the NATO operation would also encourage separatist groups within the Community of Independent States, clearly he understands this problem, Interfax commented.

Ivanov also met with his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, on July 27, and told him that the stage could now be set for the formalization of a “strategic partnership” between the two countries. A document reflecting the range and diversity of this “very major initiative” is likely to be signed when President Yeltsin visits India later this year, Ivanov said.

The contours of the “strategic partnership” were outlined in a paper Singh had taken to Moscow during his visit earlier this year. The document “has now been finally examined in Moscow,” Singh said. Ivanov told Singh that “everything is clear,” and that the process could be carried forward for a formal agreement. In Moscow’s reckoning, the “documents are now complete.”