

China engages Asia - a new regional order?

Addressing a joint meeting of the European Institute for Asian Studies and the European Policy Centre, in Brussels, on 7th July, Professor David Shambaugh offered four principles which, he proposed, signalled a new regional order emerging in Asia, with China at its centre. Countries around China are adjusting their relationship towards Beijing because of economic interdependence, the interaction between sub-regional groups (in North East Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia and Australasia), the growth of regional multilateralism and institutionalism and, finally, the receding threat of conflict.

Over the last decade, China has changed its regional and international outlook, to accommodate its growing economy and role in world affairs. Professor Shambaugh highlighted six events that laid the framework for this change. China arrived at the new posture following the muted Asian reaction to the 4th June 1989 incident (Tiananmen Square), the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, between 1997-2001 the evolution of Beijing's view of regional institutions, the 1997 new security concept, the attack on the Belgrade Embassy during the Kosovo war and, finally, China's view that its national security environment is non-threatening.

Responding to questions from the audience, Professor Shambaugh outlined a radical vision for the future of the Taiwan. While many of the principles he elaborated upon in his presentation noted the peaceful intent of China in its relationships with its regional neighbours, this does not apply to Taiwan. The procurement and deployment of military systems is part of a plan to have a range of options available to Beijing for dealing with Taipei. Beijing, Shambaugh said, feels the need to demonstrate a red line to Taiwan, but China is not sure how to signal this. Taiwan's future lies in accepting a federal link to the mainland, although China will have to offer something better than the one country two systems principle.

This summary of Professor Shambaugh's presentation was prepared by John Quigley. A fuller version will appear in a forthcoming issue of *EurAsia Bulletin*. David Shambaugh is Professor of International Affairs and Political Science and Director of the China Programme at the George Washington University.