

# Asian Politics: Chequebook diplomacy

By Charles Clover and Michael Peel

Cannons blasted the frigid air of Tiananmen Square with a 21-gun salute last week, as China feted Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak during a five-day visit. Mr Najib inspected a regimental colourguard on Tuesday before being whisked into the Great Hall of the People to sign USD34 billion in trade and investment agreements.

During a pause in proceedings, Liu Zhenmin, Chinese vice foreign minister, took a moment to reassure the Malaysian media that this was not the way it looked. "There is no such thing as using our financial muscle to improve ties," he replied, stony-faced, to a question on whether China was exercising chequebook diplomacy.

But it was hard to hide the glee on the Chinese side: back-to-back visits by Philippine and Malaysian leaders have marked a moment of rare foreign policy success for Beijing, which has spent more time recently alienating most of its Southeast Asian neighbours with an aggressive pursuit of maritime hegemony in the South China Sea.

In the space of a few weeks, Beijing demonstrated that a concerted charm - and cash - offensive in Asia could cause even staunch US allies to wobble in their pro-Washington orbits.

Taken at face value, it appears Beijing's foreign policy has turned a corner. First Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines' president, stunned US policymakers during a visit to China last month, promising "separation" from Washington and embracing China with his announcement that it was "springtime" in Beijing-Manila relations. The Philippines has a 64-year-old security pact with Washington and Mr Duterte's predecessor agreed to allow US ships access to five Philippine bases for the first time since the cold war.

He was closely followed by Mr Najib, who signed a naval co-operation deal - Malaysia bought four patrol boats, its first defence deal with China - and even took an oblique swipe at Washington, admonishing former colonial powers not to "lecture"



In this October 20 file photo, Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) shows the way to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte during a welcome ceremony outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

**The recent moves have given Xi Jinping a boost in domestic prestige before the 19th Communist party congress next autumn**

nations they once exploited.

"China has achieved a radiating effect within the region with the successes of the Philippines and Malaysia," says Ding Duo, assistant research fellow at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies based in Hainan.

Experts caution that nothing concrete has been taken away from the US by either country, but in diplomacy, where perception is often more important than reality, much damage has been done. That this takes place

in the midst of America's strategic "pivot" to Asia aimed at buttressing its standing in the region is another headache for policymakers in Washington.

The recent moves have given President Xi Jinping a boost in domestic prestige as China heads into a round of dealmaking before the 19th Communist party congress next autumn.

"The overall perception that many of China's neighbours are accommodating to Chinese interests will help to boost Xi's

position as he prepares for the congress," says Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, adding that the tilt by both Malaysia and the Philippines is "still more of a perception than a reality."

Since the last congress in 2012, at which he was appointed general secretary, Mr Xi has quietly pushed a foreign policy that experts say is a departure from the Deng Xiaoping-era approach known by the slogan *tao guang yang hui* - keep a low profile. Under Mr Xi, a new slogan has increasingly been heard - *fen fa you wei*, or "striving for achievement".

"There is going to be a more intensified game of influence in the region," says Paul Haenle, former China director for the US National Security Council who

is now director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing. Australia confirmed last week that it was in talks with Indonesia on joint naval patrols.

Attention is focused on Thailand, which since its 2014 military coup has been tilting towards China, and Vietnam, which has been going in the opposite direction. Vietnam looks set to allow the US navy to use facilities in Cam Ranh Bay and Danang, which would mark its first military return to the country since the end of the war in 1975.

A new US administration will have to convince sceptical allies that it is still focused on Asia, despite the distraction of crises in the Middle East and Ukraine, as well as the isolationist views of Donald Trump, the Republican president-elect.



## Asian Politics: Chequebook diplomacy (continued)

But while Washington's chief problem is an inability to focus, China has its own chronic foreign policy disorders. Beijing has struggled to win friends in Asia, where most countries depend on China for their prosperity but prefer to rely on the more predictable US for security.

Experts blame a Chinese foreign policy characterised by charm offensives that are followed by acts of aggression, which all but torpedo any goodwill. In 2014, China unveiled a new strategy for relations with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, but seven months later moved an oil rig into waters claimed by Vietnam - bringing the diplomatic effort to a halt.

Beijing then declared 2015 to be the "year of ASEAN-China maritime co-operation", and then ramped up island-building efforts in the South China Sea, completing a 3,300m runway on Fiery Cross Reef.

"The question the US and the West ask is: can China win friends and win territory at the same time" says Mr Haenle. "While we see contradictions in this dual approach, the Chinese do not."

Analysts are sceptical that Beijing can keep the charm going and avoid "anger management issues" with its neighbours, in the words of one western diplomat.

The focus of China's diplomatic drive is on the South China Sea, where Beijing has laid claim via a "historic right" to maritime territory marked by its nine-dash line. Its effort with Mr Duterte started when an arbitration court in The Hague in July ruled in favour of a Philippine challenge after China occupied Scarborough Shoal, claimed by Manila. The court repudiated Beijing, explicitly denying China's historical claim.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (second from right) attends a meeting in Beijing on November 3

### In Asia, most countries depend on China for their prosperity but prefer to rely on the US for security

China sought to blunt the force of the ruling with a time-honoured strategy of what Beijing calls "shelving disputes in favour of joint development" - in other words, buying off its opponents.

Rather than pressing on with the tribunal ruling, Mr Duterte deferred to Beijing during his four-day visit, receiving \$13.5 billion in promised investment and trade deals. Beijing showed the president that he could get

what he wanted by throwing out what he called "just a sheet of paper with four corners".

Since the visit, Filipino fishermen have been given access to Scarborough Shoal again, but Beijing has made it clear that this is at its pleasure.

The lesson has not been lost on the rest of the region.

"Right now the carrots are being fed and the sticks are in the back pocket because China wants to test how far it can pull

these states into its orbit," says Prashanth Parameswaran, an expert on South China Sea diplomacy who is doing a doctorate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the US.

But Mr Duterte's rise arguably confirms that Beijing's approach of calibrating coercion and charm can work, Mr Parameswaran says. "After years of being beaten by Chinese sticks, the Philippines is now coming back begging for carrots."

Analysts are cautious about the consequences of China diplomacy. Both Mr Duterte and Mr Najib have been at least partially motivated by personal grievances against the US. Mr Duterte has railed against US criticisms of his domestic anti-drug war, in which the government has condoned the use of police death squads. Mr Najib has been stung by the US after federal prosecutors investigated 1MDB, the debt-ridden government fund. China has bailed out the fund by buying its distressed assets.

In Thailand, the ruling generals have turned towards China and away from the US after Washington's criticism of their 2014 coup. But a high-profile joint project to build a high-speed rail line from the southern Chinese city of Kunming to the Thai coast has been a stop-start affair, with questions hanging over the cost and viability of the plan.

Tang Siew Mun, head of the ASEAN Studies Centre at Singapore's Iseas-Yusof Ishak Institute think-tank, says the region's "turn" to China is not a sudden pivot but a "natural strategic

phenomenon" that dates back to the end of the cold war. He says it would be a mistake "to label Malaysia and the Philippines 'pro-China' and by default 'less friendly' to the US" because of the recent deals.

But just as China is getting better at playing geopolitics, its neighbours are getting better at playing China, and many analysts are sceptical that Beijing actually got the better deal. So far, Mr Duterte has extracted aid promises from China while not repudiating any strategic agreements with the US - which, beneath the hyperbole, looks to some analysts like a sensible strategy.

Shen Dingli, the head of the Center for America Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, says Mr Duterte's overtures to China cannot erase the "historical defeat" Beijing suffered with the ruling by the tribunal. "China allowed Philippine fishermen back, so what is the success? Success is that they would never return. Duterte made no actual concessions at all," he adds.

Carl Thayer, a Southeast Asia specialist at Australia's University of New South Wales, says: "It's almost universal in every country: make profits and benefit from the relationship with China, but don't make yourself choose between the US and China."

Another reason to be wary of predicting China's imminent hegemony over the region is that its economic muscle is waning. While Southeast Asian countries are keen to tap Beijing's money to build infrastructure, the slowing of China's construction boom and the rebalancing of its economy towards services have sent once fast-growing imports from ASEAN nations into reverse - falling 6.5 percent last year.

The US is also still a more important source of foreign direct investment in ASEAN. Last year, it accounted for \$13.6 billion of FDI inflows to the region, according to ASEAN figures - almost double the 2013 level and well ahead of mainland China's \$8.3 billion.

But the biggest obstacle to growing its influence in the region, according to many analysts, remains Beijing itself.

"This could well be just another period of Chinese charm that will be followed by another round of coercion. That's certainly been the pattern of Chinese behaviour before, and it is difficult to see why Beijing would change now," says Mr Parameswaran.

Additional reporting by Sherry Fei Ju

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## Neighbours want good relations but at a distance

The overtures of the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand to Beijing reflect an unusual set of circumstances and personalities that have emerged among the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The oft-cited demographics of the region - which has a population larger than the EU and a combined gross domestic product less than India - mask wide variations. ASEAN's states range from Muslim-majority Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, to tiny Brunei, with fewer than half a million souls. Singapore is one of the richest countries in the world per capita while Myanmar is among the poorest.

While China's cultural ties with many ASEAN countries are strong, deep and reflected in generations of emigration, some states share the fear of being dominated by their giant neighbour. Beijing's brief border war with Vietnam

in 1979 and its support for the genocidal Khmer Rouge in Cambodia linger long in the memory. Popular hostility to China is notable in Vietnam, while Indonesia and Thailand have sought good relations with Beijing without declaring their loyalty as noisily as Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine president.

One common factor among many Southeast Asian countries is that they have looked to keep China neither too close nor too far away.

Even Cambodia, a Chinese client state in important political and commercial respects, maintains relations with the US for strategic and financial reasons.

The emergence of Mr Duterte, the 1MDB corruption scandal in Malaysia and the military coup in Thailand have all coloured the region's politics in unexpected ways. Few would bet against more twists in the years to come.

By Nirmala George in New Delhi

# With mixed progress, nations review war vs. tobacco industry

**I**N Nepal, health warnings cover 90 percent of cigarette packs, while Australia requires those packets be wrapped in drab, plain paper. Indonesia's new ban on outdoor advertising brought down tobacco billboards depicting smiling, smoking youths. And India wants scary photos of rotting lungs and mouth tumors covering packets sold in the country.

Still, national drives to discourage smoking and cut back tobacco sales haven't done enough, campaigners say. Smoking-related deaths are still rising worldwide, with 80 percent of them expected to occur in developing country populations by 2030.

"Most people in the United States think tobacco is over and done with, but it's still the largest preventable cause of disease on the planet" killing 6 million people a year — or one person every six seconds, said John Stewart, deputy campaigns director at the Boston-based lobbying group Corporate Accountability International.

Starting Monday, representatives from at least 178 countries are meeting for five days in the Indian capital to discuss how they can further the fight against smoking and push back against tobacco company lobbyists.

Since they set down stiff regulations and guidelines in a landmark 2003 treaty called the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control — the first and only global treaty dealing with public health — most of the 180 signatories have ratified it and passed laws restricting tobacco advertising or sales.

Still, many governments re-



An Indian man smokes a cigarette sitting next to a roadside vendor selling tobacco products on the outskirts of New Delhi

main entangled with powerful tobacco companies, while industry lobbyists continue attempts to stymie efforts to implement anti-smoking laws through bribery, misinformation and even suing national governments for lost profits, campaigners say.

"The tobacco industry is definitely feeling the heat," Stewart said. "They've got their back against the wall."

Indian courts are currently grappling with 62 lawsuits filed by tobacco companies or cigarette makers challenging laws requiring that 85 percent of all cigarette packets be covered with photos of medical horrors.

In Japan, a 10-percent hike in taxes on cigarettes has led to a 30-percent decline in smoking. But the country still has some of the lowest tax

rates on cigarettes among industrialized nations, while its finance ministry owns 33 percent in Japan Tobacco.

The anti-tobacco campaign has had some success. It is widely accepted, at least among national leaders, that smoking causes cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, along with a host of other harmful health impacts.

That awareness still has not

trickled down to national populations, though. And campaigners say tobacco interests have shifted their focus to poorer, less educated populations in the developing world.

India — among the first to ratify the anti-tobacco treaty in 2004 — is still considered one of the biggest battlegrounds in the fight against the tobacco industry, public health specialists say.

Despite harsh laws passed more than a decade ago banning smoking in public and sales to children, smoking is still common across the country. A government survey in 2010 showed nearly 35 percent of adults were either smoking or chewing tobacco.

Meanwhile, more than 1 million Indians die each year from tobacco-related diseases that cost the country some \$16 billion annually, according to the World Health Organization.

"The revenues that the government earns from tobacco taxes are far less than the billions that are spent on health care," said Bhavna Mukhopadhyay of the Voluntary Health Association of India, a public health organization.

"Public health and the health of the tobacco industry cannot go hand in hand," she said, noting that campaigners are now pushing for countries to make tobacco companies and their shareholders civilly and criminally liable for the harm done by tobacco.

Part of the trouble in India is "the Indian consumer is spoiled for choice," she said, with cigarettes sold alongside chewing tobacco and cheap, hand-rolled smokes known as bidis.

The easy availability and wide choice means many smokers get hooked at a young age. Some are initiated early through the common, cultural practice of chewing something called gutka, which combines tobacco with spices, lime and betel nut and is widely sold as a mouth freshener.

Putting pictorial warnings on cigarette packets is an attempt to educate people about the risks.

"The idea was that even an illiterate person, or a child, would understand the message about the health risks from smoking," said Monika Arora of the Public Health Foundation of India, who runs an anti-smoking campaign aimed at young Indians. **AP**

## Hollywood studios beat lawsuit over PG and PG-13 films featuring smoking

**T**HE Motion Picture Association of America and the National Association of Theatre Owners have come out victorious in a lawsuit that insisted that tobacco imagery in films rated G, PG or PG-13 causes 200,000 children every year to become cigarette smokers and 64,000 people to die as a result. On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Richard Seeborg dismissed an attempt led by a California father of two children to hold major film studios and theater owners legally responsible.

The legal action from Timothy Forsyth on behalf of himself and others similarly situated claimed that the industry's film-ratings practices amounted to negligence, misrepresentation, breach of fiduciary duty, advertising, unfair competition and nuisance.

In response, Hollywood raised a First

Amendment defense, arguing that ratings merely reflect opinions about what's suitable for children and compelling them to give R ratings to anything found socially unacceptable could apply to films depicting activity like alcohol use, gambling, contact sports, high-speed driving and so forth.

In an order striking the complaint under California's anti-SLAPP statute, Seeborg first takes up the question of whether the claims arise from acts in furtherance of free speech in connection with a public issue. The judge tackles Forsyth's argument that the rating system represents "pure commercial speech" and that the only speech at issue are the "certification trademarks" of G, PG, PG-13 and R issued by the Classification and Ratings Board ("CARA").

"The flaw in Forsyth's reasoning, how-

ever, is that while some certification trademarks undoubtedly are merely representations of the characteristics of products and therefore arguably only commercial speech outside the purview of anti-SLAPP and entitled to only limited First Amendment protections, CARA's marks serve a different purpose and arise in a different context," Seeborg writes. "Indeed, the certification statements filed with the [Patent & Trademark Office] when each of the marks was registered plainly explain that CARA is merely 'certifying' that 'in its opinion' the particular film warrants a particular level of parental caution. Furthermore, the underlying 'product' - films - are not mere commercial products, but are expressive works implicating anti-SLAPP concerns and plainly entitled to full First Amendment protection." **Bloomberg**

# Trump victory deals blow to global fight against climate change

**T**HE global fight against climate change is likely to be derailed by Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election, a blow to the industries working to clean up the energy supply.

The next president has questioned the science of climate change and vowed to withdraw from the Paris agreement to limit global warming, while pledging to stimulate production of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel. Green campaigners and policymakers, some of whom are gathered this week in Morocco for talks on implementing the Paris deal, sounded the alarm over the upheaval they expect when Trump takes office in January.

"The presidency of Donald Trump relegates the West as we knew it to the realm of the past," Reinhard Butikofer and Monica Frassoni, co-chairs of the European Green Party, said in a statement. "If Donald Trump pursues

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the foreign policies that he announced during his campaign, this will severely undermine transatlantic relations, the international rule of law and world peace."

The U.S. under President Barack Obama rescued a two-decade old process the United Nations promoted to rein in pollution damaging the climate, forging a the Paris deal last year. Along with China and more than 190 other countries, the ac-

cord set out a framework for all nations to cut emissions. Trump has said he will cancel that work.

"Trump's election is a disaster," May Boeve, executive director of the anti-fossil-fuel campaign group 350.org, said in a statement. "Trump will try and slam the brakes on climate action. Our work becomes much harder now, but it's not impossible, and we refuse to give up."

Envoys drawn from envi-

ronment and energy ministries are gathered for two weeks off talks on climate

**Trump will try and slam the brakes on climate action.**

MAY BOEVE  
ENVIRONMENTALIST

organized by the United Nations, aiming to make progress implementing the Paris deal. They have a round of technical meetings this morning and are due to finish their work on Nov. 18 with a set of rules on how Paris will be implemented.

Trump's victory "will be unfavorable for the global pollution fight, though the trend to combat climate change may not change worldwide," said Zheng Xinye, associate dean at the School of Economics at the Renmin University of China in Beijing.

The Paris deal, which saw 197 countries agree last year to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and work toward net zero greenhouse gas emissions, came into force last week after being ratified by almost 100 countries, including the U.S.

While U.S. officials have said it would be difficult for Trump or any other president to walk away from the Paris agreement, it's not impossible for the next administration to unpick it. The U.S. is the richest among the top six polluting nations, and its support for the deal is essential to keep China and other developing economies working for cleaner industry. **Bloomberg**

## ASK THE VET

by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester



### LUNG CANCER IN CATS

**L**UNG cancer in cats is often a life-threatening medical condition, but the chances of survival are much better when the cancer can be detected in its early stages. The two types of feline lung cancer are primary and secondary, and in order to ensure that treatment is received promptly, it is imperative that cat owners be aware of the signs and symptoms and know when to seek veterinary attention.

#### PRIMARY LUNG CANCER

Cases of primary lung cancer in cats begin in the lung tissue. Although there are several different types of tumors that can eventually lead to lung cancer, the most common primary tumor is known as a carcinoma. It is not known whether there is any breed predilection for primary lung cancer in cats, but there does appear to be some correlation between exposure to air pollutants and secondhand smoke. This type of cancer is seen most commonly in cats 10 years and older, but it can occur in younger cats as well.

#### SIGNS OF PRIMARY LUNG CANCER INCLUDE:

- Persistent coughing or hacking
- Weakness and tiring easily
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of appetite
- Excessive weight loss
- Secondary Lung Cancer

**SECONDARY LUNG CANCER** in cats is also known as metastatic cancer, meaning that the cancer actually originated in a different area of the body and migrated to the lungs. Secondary lung cancer in cats is different because by the time it has been detected, the cat has likely already been battling cancer for quite some time. It is still more common to see this type of lung cancer in older cats, 10 and over, mostly because geriatric cats are more susceptible to primary cancers in general.

The signs of secondary lung cancer in cats are generally the same as primary lung cancer. While most cat owners have already initiated cancer treatment by the time lung cancer is diagnosed, the persistent, hacking cough usually alerts cat owners to the possibility that it may be infiltrating the lungs.

#### METHODS OF DIAGNOSIS

Whenever either primary or secondary lung cancer is suspected in cats, the first diagnostic test to be performed is usually a blood test. Because cancer can affect the balance of things like protein, blood sugar and liver and kidney function, a blood test is always the best place to start. The next diagnostic measure will be a chest x-ray. If any tumors are present in the lungs, they will be detected on this x-ray. The x-ray will not be able to make the differentiation between



a tumor being benign or malignant, but it will alert the veterinarian to pursue further testing.

Once the tumor has been realized, the next step will be to complete either a biopsy or a needle aspiration. If fluid is seen filling around the lungs, a needle aspiration can be done to draw out the fluid and help the cat to breathe easier. This fluid can then be tested for malignancy. In cases where lung fluid is not present, the best option would be to do a biopsy of the tumor to determine whether it is malignant or benign.

Any questions regarding the health of your pets please e mail us at [info@rv-cmacau.com](mailto:info@rv-cmacau.com)

Hope this helps  
Till next week  
Dr Ruan

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