

## Rising China's Global Strategy Trend

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**Abstract:** In recent years, China as a rising power shows a trend of changing its overall global strategy into a more aggressive strategy, which can be analyzed through comparison between its actions at now and in the past. This article focusing on a perspective of aggressive strategy, evaluates the reasons and prospect of the trend in the respect of diplomacy. China is abandoning "Keeping Low Profile" strategy and becoming more proactive due to growth of its economic and military power and the change of Chinese diplomatic purpose. [1] China wants real achievement on international affairs. And this trend is also caused by combined forces of both policymakers and its citizens. In conclusion, this trend, which has benefited to China, can be generally regarded as a peaceful strategy at now and has little possibility to turn in a comprehensive aggressive strategy in the future because of various limitations.

### 1. Introduction

China has implemented "the Opening and Reform" policy for more than 4 decades since 1978 and China maintained a relatively immutable model on foreign affairs and economic relations with international community, which is "Keeping Low Profile" in diplomacy and introducing investment and technology in economy. However, in recently years, China has shown a clear modification in its strategic and tactic level since President Xi Jinping declaimed that China enters a "new era" at the 19th CPC National Congress [2], further more since he was in power. China is turning to be proactive at present. Theories vary about the future global strategy of a rising China. And this essay focuses on aggressive strategy. It evaluates relative factors of aggressive strategy for China and explains why a changing trend of China's strategy emerges from the respect of foreign policy. In addition, it is hard to judge that the current and future strategy of China is a typical or total aggressive strategy, so the purpose of this essay is more intended to provide the perspective of aggressive strategy.

### 2. The emergence of a new trend

Since 2012 president Xi Jinping came to the power, China's policy-making turned to be strong and aggressive within (integration of powers) and without (diplomacy) its political system. Although China has been claiming that it pursues a peaceful foreign policy in the past seventy years, a progressive ongoing transformation of China's diplomacy, [3] which is from a passive reflective policy (even an appeasement policy in some cases) to a proactive preventative peaceful policy, can be clearly perceived. China's over tolerances and unlimited restraints in coping with a series of past diplomatic conflict incidents, such as the Yinhe Incident, United States bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and Hainan Island Incident in 2001, [4] have been impossible to appear again. In comparison, China is very tough and determined in dealing with the South China Sea issue, the East China Sea issue, and the Sino-Indian border issue. Even in dealing with the Sino-US trade war, China has not ceded its own interests to the United States which is still the only superpower in the world at current. Now China has the capability to say "No" and refuse any requirement detrimental to Chinese interests.

China actively expands its influence in international societies. China is adjusting its position from a regional power to a global power and has begun to focus on global governance and gradually abandoning the “Keeping Low Profile” strategy which was formulated by the Deng Xiaoping in the beginning period of Reform and Open Policy and was implemented for several decades by his successors. On geopolitical hot issues such as the Syrian war, the Iranian nuclear issue, and the refugee crisis, China has actively expressed its attitude and position, rather than abstaining from the issue that having a less interest for itself like what China done in the past. On global issues such as climate change, global poverty reduction, disease prevention and control, China actively provides its advice and programs to other countries. Meanwhile, US operations influenced by the rise of isolationism forces and thoughts give a proper opportunity for China to involve in international affairs and shoulder international responsibilities. China is enhancing its power in existing international institutions especially the United Nations and World Trade Organization. It can be said that China is now doing the preparation for taking the place of US role in global governance when the United States retire.

At meanwhile, China tries to change the current international order. In 2013, China proposed the first practical global strategy in its history—the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for which China also proposed an ideological concept called “A Community of Shared Future for Mankind”. In addition, this strategy uses the name of Silk Road which is an old important channel connecting Asia, Europe and Africa for commerce in ancient times. However, the now strategy is no longer confined to those continents, but covers the whole world. It’s a real global strategy aimed to various aspects instead of commerce only. In order to cooperate and serve the Belt and Road Initiative, China also established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank in 2015. All these actions indicate that China are taking more important roles worldwide and is turning to be proactive. [5]

### **3. Reasons of this trend**

#### **3.1 The growth of China’s national power**

As mentioned above, China’s international strategy is indeed even more aggressive. The root cause and foundation of this trend is the growth of China’s national power in recent decades. More specifically, it’s due to rapid economic development and military growth.

##### **3.1.1 Evaluation from economic respect**

Above all, China’s confidence and capability in this trend cannot be achieved without its strong economy. China holds the record for the fastest developing major country in the history of the world. Although in recent years there has been a slight slowdown in GDP growth to approximately 6.5%, China still hold a positive development prospect while the global economic slowdown is significant. China's huge labor force and consumer market, rich natural resources, the strong industrial manufacturing level have huge attractions with other countries and can be used as chips in the international trade. For instance, one of the key elements in China's BRI that attracts foreign investment and trade is its huge dynamic market. And China's opening policy have been adjusted from relying on “Bring in” strategy to attaching equal importance to both “Bring in” and “Go out” strategies since 1992, which makes China take advantages from both import and export. [6] China's economic ties with other countries are becoming deeper, wider and tighter. Economic dependence on China can inevitably affect the political and diplomatic relations between some countries and China. For the latter, economic sanctions and threat of kicking out of the trading system with China can be used as effective and efficient weapons in some situations. At the same time, China's private and state capital are very active, which makes China have more and more overseas interests that needs safeguard from diplomacy and even military. In Middle East, the world’s most volatile hotspot, China still has investment of 29.5 billion US dollars [7]. To some extent, those overseas interests and local leverage from businesses also motivate and facilitate Chinese diplomacy to involve in international issues.

### 3.1.2 Evaluation from military respect

The confidence of China to turn into a trend of aggressive diplomacy also comes from the growth of China's military power especially navy and air force in recent years. The Shandong, China's first domestically built aircraft carrier, has entered active service, which made China the only country to own a dual-carrier battle group in Asia. Combined with the construction on the reefs and sea features in the South China Sea, it helps Chinese navy gain more control of this area and offers initiative for Chinese diplomacy on South China Sea dispute. Meanwhile, the overwhelming superiority of mainland China over Taiwan in military enables China to effectively handle various possible crises in the Taiwan Strait area and to adopt a relatively aggressive attitude to Sino-US differences on Taiwan issue especially when Taiwan is used as a barrier to handicap China's rise. Besides, the growth of military also influences China multilateral diplomacy. According to statistics from United Nations Website (2019), [8] China is the country that sends the largest number of peacekeeping forces among the permanent members of the UN Security Council, with 2545 people on mission at present. And since 2008, Chinese navy has been conducting escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia for more than a decade. In 2017, China had the first overseas military base in Djibouti. Those increase Chinese influence in Middle East and bring more Chinese voice on hot issues. However, resorting to force is not a priority for China to solve a dispute in the past and now, which is quite different from the United States with the most powerful military force in the world. So, there is a possibility that continually growing military power might result in militarization of Chinese foreign strategy in the future.

### 3.2 Change of Chinese diplomatic aim

The direct reason for this trend is that the purpose of Chinese diplomacy has changed. Previously, the task of China's diplomacy was to create a favorable external environment for reform and opening up policies and domestic economic development. Simply put, it was to attract as much foreign investment as possible, expand more exports and obtain foreign economic preferential policies. Now, China's diplomacy focuses on protecting and expanding China's overseas interests and corrects the current western-centered international order established by the western world for centuries into a western-eastern equal international order or a favorable international order for the rise of China. In addition, more practical reason is that the "Keeping Low Profile" strategy, which guided Chinese diplomacy for many years, has been out of date. Because China's power has been far different from that of 40 years ago, it cannot keep a low profile practically and others countries also do not believe that China has a low profile because, objectively speaking, China does have considerable power which cannot be hidden by surface diplomatic rhetoric.

### 3.3 National thoughts

It is worth to mention that Chinese diplomacy transformed not only because of actual interests and top-level decisions but also the huge influence of nationalism thoughts among the people. Many Chinese even believe that China should adopt a more aggressive international strategy. This rise of nationalism should be noteworthy and vigilant. Weber Max argued that the sudden rise of a long-term weak and backward nation inevitably implies a fatal internal danger which is accelerating the exposure of the 'political immaturity' exclusively owned by such nation, and this strong contrast between rapid economic development and political immaturity will not only end up the desire of national rejuvenation, but will even lead to a disastrous ending, that is, the disintegration of the nation itself. For example, The German nation in the late 19th century launched two world wars under the impetus of extreme nationalism. A rising country with high-speed growth and big power is eager to obtain an international status corresponding to its strength. It hopes to gain more respect and recognition from the international community. Its national psychology tends to be radical, and the state mentality is often inferior and conceited. Small diplomatic compromise will be regarded as a traitorous act, and small victory will be regarded as a manifestation of state status. To some extent, it is the public that force China to adapt an aggressive strategy. How to make foreign policy neither wrapped up in nationalism nor contrary to public opinion, this problem tests the wisdom of Chinese

diplomacy.[8]

#### 4. Prospects for China's aggressive strategy

Although China's grand strategy has shown a trend of aggressiveness, at present, it is still a kind of strategy of peaceful development. It is quite different from the rising model of main western powers and Japan in modern times which utilized wars, colonization and economic pillage. China has been just increasing its capabilities which can be used by probable aggressive strategy in the future. An aggressive strategy for China will definitely face many limitations or should be limited. Otherwise, it will hinder the rising of China. [9]

From the perspective of practical diplomacy, aggressive strategy runs counter to China's peaceful foreign policy which has been upheld since the founding of People's Republic of China. This means that if an aggressive strategy is to be implemented, a complete shift will take place to Chinese diplomacy. An aggressive China' [10] image is also contrary to the international image that China has been trying to shape for a long time. Some originally friendly bilateral relations could worsen. A thorough transformation towards aggressiveness may ruin China's decades of diplomatic efforts. Then political risks China bears are going to soar rapidly. The loss may overweight the gain.

#### 5. Conclusion

A trend towards aggressiveness in Chinese diplomatic strategy has emerged in recent years, although Chinese global policy is basically peaceful at present. The appearance of this trend is an outcome of a combination of factors of economy, military, diplomatic practice and national psychology. This trend has objectively brought interests in many fields and will further benefit China a lot. However, under various limitations, the prospect for implementation of an aggressive strategy is not promising. If China adapts an aggressive strategy in the future, it must cautiously grasp the discretion. Otherwise, it is likely to be counterproductive to China's rising.

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