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## **CHINA-EUROPE STRATEGIC ISSUES**

**Abstract:** Today, a shakeup of forces and a great power competition have begun on the global geopolitical scene. This competition is mainly due to the rise of China, the deepening of globalization and the interdependence of countries, and violent movements that transcend borders, such as international terrorism. In particular, the increase in China's national power has led to a change in the world order that emerged after the Cold War, and geopolitics is once again taking a central role on the global agenda. The geopolitical focus on the Asia-Indo-Pacific Ocean complex has evolved into a geostrategic rivalry where China is seen as the main threat. This approach is reflected in the international security strategy. In addition, it also manifests itself in the practices of international organizations led by the West forces. We see the most important example of this in the European Union's view of China.

**Keywords:** China, EU, Strategy, Policy, Security

### **BACKGROUND**

China's economic rise will shape the 21st century. Over the last years, China has benefited from unprecedented economic growth averaging close to a 6% increase of its GDP per annum. [i] Furthermore; it is estimated that six of the seven largest economies in the world are projected to be emerging economies in 2050 led by China (1st), India (2nd), and Indonesia (4th). [ii] The U.S. could be down to third place in the global GDP rankings while the EU27's share of world GDP could fall below 10%. This "peaceful rise" has divided opinions as to what effects an escalating China will have on world order and stability. [iii]

The timeless power of the Chinese state is due to the parameter of its long history and culture. For most of its 5,000-year history, China was the center of civilization. A nation with a long memory for past slights, this rise in preeminence would also erase the perceived century of humiliation that the country has suffered at the hand of Western invading powers. China's grand strategy[iv] is aimed at these twin goals of restoring the country to its rightful place on the world stage and rectifying the wrongs of the past. China's decision-makers, scholars, and news media have decreed that, for the following decades, the country will be within a "window of strategic opportunity," a period of peace and stability in the world. Having embraced globalization, China's economy is now the second-largest in the world. But economic power is not China's goal; it is only a component of the country's ultimate aspiration: to have a place of power and influence commensurate with the status it believes it should enjoy in the world. To achieve this goal, the Chinese have conceived the plan until 2050 to become a prosperous, democratic, and civilized socialist country at a medium level of development. During this stage, the four modernizations will be completed:

1. agriculture,
2. industry,
3. science, and
4. technology.

China's goal is to be recognized internationally as an economic and political superpower. But to reach this stage, more than economic power is required. An element of military power is integral to achieving great power status. The People's Republic of China has been following its path for years, hiding its power and saving time. Today, however, the Chinese dragon is not hiding. Chinese President Xi Jinping is now officially claiming that we have entered a new era where the West is retreating and the East is emerging. [v] The Chinese people have developed their patriotic concept very well. From then on, China from 2015 and then, with the "new silk road" as we know, the 'One Belt, One Road initiative[vi], is a Chinese economic and strategic plan by which the two ends of Eurasia, as well as Africa and Oceania, are being more closely tied along two routes—one overland and one maritime. It is a fast-growing (in all sectors) power of the eastern region that its influence in all aspects of public action seeks to extend to the West through agreements and alliances. China is undoubtedly an economic power. When in 2002, the

Chinese state managed to enter the World Trade Organization[vii], Western powers were so alarmed by its rapid development at the international economic level that through mainly the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) (unofficially, Canada–Europe Trade Agreement) and TTIP Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (the transatlantic trade and investment partnership between the U.S. and the E.U.) to take China out of the commercial game, which they were unable to achieve, as China in a matte move founded the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIB) on the one hand through RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and promotes regional cooperation with states on the broader region, such as Indonesia, South Korea, Laos, the Philippines, and Thailand.

China, however, is not only economic power but also a state that can play a stabilizing role in the eastern part because of its allied relations with Russia and the ever-developing ties with Israel. The Chinese State and France can be the diplomatic channels between East and West, especially for Greece, let alone the present day with the rapid spread of Turkish provocation. After all, Macron's visit in 2018 to this, in a hot climate, highlighted on both sides the need to create a grand alliance between France, China, and Europe, which a few weeks ago began to take shape. At this point, we must focus and explain in what light China is creating its alliances. E.g., we saw that in 2019, the Central Bank of China supported the slump in the Turkish lira, while at the same time, there was a series of investment projects on the part of the Chinese state in the neighboring country.

Many analysts considered that these actions created new conditions for Turkish-Chinese relations. On the contrary, if we look at what sectors China invests in and what China buys from Turkey (energy, infrastructure), all this must be put under a business plan of action and not interpreted under the framework of the alliance. Reading the Diplomatic History of the Chinese State shows that it creates strategic partnerships only with states that have equivalent power in the Global System. With all the other states and the relations, we should interpret them in the business process context. At the moment, a robust opening to Europe and the West is, for example, the strengthening of relations with France and with Europe in general. Because China only creates alliances with powerful states, the answer to the question is straightforward and comes from the way it associates its traditional culture with the national interest. We must not

escape the fact that the Chinese state was one of the first imperial states in world history, a concept of state power (in what the idea of the Empire includes) that it continued to have even when it changed its political status quo. This was shown by the way it perceives its external environment. The policy of imposing power on the powerless regional environment is inspired by the "method" used by the Han Dynasty (1st century B.C.- 2nd century A.D.). Expansion by any means, without force, is how it adapts over time in its diplomacy to impose its power on the weak region.

China, however, has not only grown economically but has also made a big jump in its military support. It started with an aircraft carrier construction program; it currently has two carriers built in its shipyards. While making the third, it is expected to acquire at least four aircraft carriers shortly. Although it has expressed at every opportunity that it is not pursuing a hegemonic agenda, it has said it aims to be an effective force worldwide by opening its first overseas military base in Djibouti. The situation in the context of defense spending is much more impressive. While China's military expenditure in 1989 was about \$20 billion, it increased more than 13 times by 2019 and exceeded \$261 billion today. [viii]As a result, China has become the second-highest military power in the world after the United States.

At this point we have reached today, it seems that the great power competition between the United States and China goes beyond trade and technology as the two states are increasingly preparing for a "new cold war." Since the emergence of nuclear weapons in the mid-20th century, it is considered unlikely that two nuclear powers will clash. As a result, conflicts occur in other proxy states or the global public. Oceans, space, and cyberspace, defined as global commons, are vital for the great powers. Global commons are essential for powerful states to maintain their influence on the international political scene, the worldwide economy, and transport routes. In this context, it would not be wrong to claim that global sources will be the main ground in the great rivalry between the United States and China, which is expected to become even more severe in the coming period. In this context, we must look at the relationship it is developing with Turkey, based on the dipole of strong and powerless and not on the concept of allied status.

## **Perspectives for China's Foreign Policy**

China's international behavior is influenced by at least three historically defined perceptions of its security environment and its role in world affairs:

1. China is in the process of returning as a superpower (New Pole of International Power) and even as the great leading force in a gradually forming, new multipolar system. Chinese policymakers and analysts refer to China's rise as "revitalization" and "renewal."
2. Many Chinese see their country as the victim of the "years of shame and humiliation" at Western and other foreign powers, particularly Japan. The ideologization of China's "victim self-conception" has created all those conditions that have made Beijing extremely sensitive to any attempt at external coercion and especially to any form of violations of sovereignty.
3. China has a defensive security perspective that historically stems from fears that foreign powers will try to contain and coerce it in various areas, exploiting its internal weaknesses.

After the long-term invocation of permanent diplomatic priorities, China's international behavior is determined to protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity by promoting economic development, production, and international respect for the status quo. These three priorities have collectively shaped China's foreign and security policy since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. However, the policy manifestations for these three strategic priorities and the relative emphasis its leadership places on them have differed in recent years.

### **Chinese perceptions of the International Security Environment**

China's conception of the international security environment has two primary dimensions. The first is a widespread belief that China's success is based on its, more than ever, complex interconnection with the international community. The second is Beijing's pervasive uncertainty about the scope and severity of threats to China's economic and security interests. For some, China has never been so secure and, for others, the numbers and types of security threats are growing, motivated by their deep concerns about the future.

In general, Chinese leaders concluded that their external security environment is favorable. Over the next 15 to 20 years, it presents a "strategic window of opportunity" for China to achieve a leading position and goals of national revitalization through continued economic, social, military, and political development. As far as possible, Chinese politicians are also seeking to extend this opportunity through diplomacy. China's view of the security environment includes six main conditions:

- Since, according to Beijing's estimates, there is little chance of large-scale warfare between the major powers. It appears that the next 15 to 20 years are a unique opportunity for China to continue developing and modernizing.
- Globalization has redefined transnational economic and political interactions, reinforcing the importance of China and the interdependence between states on the global economic map. Globalization has imposed some restrictions on China.
- Multipolarity is emerging rapidly, although the United States, which is the dominant power globally, feels its power gradually and in relative terms diminishing. The United States sees china's revitalization as a significant power as a potential threat, but on the other hand, it is its central economic partner.
- China faces various challenges, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, human and drug trafficking, environmental degradation, the spread of infectious diseases, and natural disasters. All of this will redefine China's relations with the major powers in Asia and globally, including by creating opportunities for tangible cooperation.
- China defines energy security at two levels. Price volatility and security upon delivery. So she feels vulnerable on both fronts. Such perceptions are increasingly driving its efforts to access crude oil and gas reserves, especially from the Middle East and Africa.
- Chinese policy experts see the "rise of China" as an influence on global economic life and security issues. So more and more confidence has been created in diplomatic approaches. They believe that they have managed to allay fears of a "threat from China," especially in Asia with their influence.

## China's Foreign Policy Goals

Chinese politicians have created a foreign policy strategy to achieve six goals: economic growth, ensuring development, addressing trade restrictions, diversifying resources, and downgrading Taiwan's international role. This list of diplomatic objectives has been upgraded over the past decade, as China has begun to join the international community credibly.

**First**, China seeks to maintain a stable international environment to facilitate the continuity of reforms and development at home. This focus is achieved through a variety of external activities.

**Second**, China actively uses diplomacy to expand its access to markets, investments, technology, and natural resources.

**Thirdly**, China is trying to reassure the Asian countries and the international community that its growth potential will not economically degrade other countries and affect their interests and security.

**Fourth**, Chinese diplomacy, especially in Asia, is trying to reduce the ability or desire of other nations, individually or collectively, to restrict or otherwise hinder china's revitalization.

**Fifth**, China is building its political relations by diversifying its access to energy and other natural resources, emphasizing Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Energy security includes diversification of both suppliers and supply routes.

**Sixth**, China is seeking to downplay Taiwan's international role and limit the will of other nations to give Legitimacy to Taiwan.

## **China's Foreign Policy Actions**

China has developed and designed a series of new and effective ways to pursue the five foreign policy objectives. It has also become more persuasive, flexible, creative, and assertive about using these new diplomatic tools. It has established "strategic partner relations" with developed and developing countries and, at the same time, has initiated a high-level "strategic dialogue" with several major powers. It has embraced multilateral organizations in every region and with various operational issues. The expansion of China with a dominant role in existing regional organizations and the formation of new ones has become a beacon of its diplomacy. The use of economic diplomacy is solid and multifaceted since they include bilateral trade and direct investments abroad, financial arrangements, development aid, and free trade agreements to promote both economic and political objectives. China's military diplomacy now incorporates extensive participation in the UNITED NATIONS peacekeeping activities, high-level defense, military exchanges, joint exercises, and joint training, assuring that it is a significant objective, all these efforts.

## **Challenges facing Chinese diplomacy**

Beijing faces many challenges that will likely limit its ability to achieve the diplomatic goals it has set itself. There may be a difficulty in their ability to understand China's intentions. Firstly, China's global presence and increased influence have resulted in China and other countries' neighbors expecting more from Beijing. It is unclear whether China is ready to meet these demands, fearing an accumulation of too many burdens, but this raises questions about China's predictability and its credibility. Secondly, China's approach to the Taiwan issue, which may be rigid and aggressive at times, undermines its ability to appear moderate and well-intentioned. Thirdly, the too many pathologies of Chinese governments make it difficult for the government to manage the national problems that could spill over secondarily to its neighbors. This government deficit complicates Beijing's governance as it appears incapable of fully complying with its commitments, making China an unreliable player. A fourth challenge concerns the weaknesses of the Chinese decision-making system. The problems of excessive inflation of intelligence services and lack of coordination throughout the administrative administration,



intelligence, and military staff reduce China's ability to respond quickly and effectively to crises of international proportions.

### **Strategic Interpretation**

One element of Chinese geopolitical strategy extracted from the official and non-official military documentation available to the West is that the PLA's aims and approach are entirely subjugated to the grand political process. Political and diplomatic successes are more important than victory on the battlefields. As previously described, China wants to take full advantage of the current period of strategic opportunity. It does not foresee, nor does it seek, a conflict with the one nation it considers its main rival: the U.S. As surmised by political analysts, even on the sensitive issue of Taiwan, China will attempt to avoid a military conflict that would negatively impact its economic growth. Clearly, at present, China's leadership has made the strategic decision that economic growth will be fundamental to its foreign affairs policies. From the above study of the PRC's policies and strategies, it appears that China is focused on economic growth and developing a peaceful modern society. China is downsizing and modernizing its military forces to complement its pursuit of a place of power and influence in the world. Despite the constant pressure and requests for greater transparency from the West, particularly from the U.S., it was remarked that much is still unknown concerning China's official grand strategy and military doctrine. The information available is from sites or organizations with very close ties to the CCP. Thus its depth and interpretation must be critically considered in light of possible agenda-setting from these organizations. A better assessment of the validity of the stated Chinese policies might be achieved by studying how China projects its power and influence in the world.

The following section will look at China through the lens of its foreign affairs endeavors.

For the most part, China's actions follow its stated policy of peaceful rise, economic development, and learning to become a responsible global citizen. But as some pundits have rightfully pointed out, there are some dissonant notes between China's peaceful search for its rightful place of power and influence in the world and its authoritarian stance on a few significant issues. The perceived lack of freedom and civil liberties, the development of its military force at a rate more important than the U.S., and its unyielding position concerning the

status of Taiwan have been taken as warning signs that China's increased power and influence could and should be viewed with concerns.

## CONCLUSIONS

China's economic rise is shaping this century. China uses its growing economic power and influence to rise peacefully within the current world order. Indications are that, for the most part, a realistic China has chosen to take advantage of an environment that rewards multilateralism and engagement at the international level to further its economic and strategic interests. It intends to ride this wave of economic growth to maximize its status in the world. China has shaken off its isolationism tendencies and is building with growing confidence a web of bilateral and multinational agreements that have solidified its power and influence in Southeast Asia and, of course, with Europe.

Still, there are issues such as human rights, military expansion, and repression of secessionist movements that have raised apprehension concerning China's true intentions.

A global view of China's actions should be taken, and consideration should be given to how much progress China has achieved on issues of concern to the West. China is now a more open society and more critical information about what is happening. Yes, the military forces are modernizing and becoming a more capable institution, but not unreasonably so for a large country that relies on trade and exports for its wealth. At the same time, the soft power persuasion is slowly pulling Taiwan towards closer ties with Mainland China.

If China is increasingly using soft power on the international scene, it has yet to apply the same level of sophistication when dealing with internal issues. Still, this inner struggle should not completely erase China's increasingly positive involvement in world affairs.

It was positive to see the European Commission published a blueprint for transatlantic cooperation, which touched on many issues related to China. That document received an unqualified endorsement from Germany and France. We do have in European capitals a readiness to sit down at the table with the incoming administration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden to discuss China. Beijing's image has taken a severe hit in Europe due to its aggressive coronavirus pandemic diplomacy, its crackdown in Hong Kong, its repression in Xinjiang, and its recent trade war with Australia. There is a recognition on both sides of the Atlantic that there

is no hope of influencing China through joint action. This provides a reason for optimism. But Europe still needs to show that it is willing to go beyond words and defensive measures when dealing with China. Various European countries have expressed a willingness to forge standard policy approaches toward China. But this political will does not immediately translate into a capacity for transatlantic cooperation. The fault lines emerging during the past four years are deep. Moreover, the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic will continue to shape the diversity of European countries' relations with the United States and China in 2021. Further imponderable concerns are existing divisions among E.U. member states on approaching China. Trade, investment, and debt exposure to China set institutional limits for European countries' readiness for transatlantic cooperation. The European Parliament's desire to freeze the significant investment agreement between the European Union and the People's Republic of China, some days ago, is the result of objections and disagreements within the E.U. concerning relations with China. It seems that cooperating with the U.S. on this issue is the only way. Europe understands it needs to get tougher on China, treating it as a systemic rival and a security challenge, not just a trade partner. But the position is not homogenous—Europe needs to forge a common approach within. Europe's trade competitiveness—and Germany's in particular, given its export and investment exposure to China—cultivates economic dependency and geopolitical shyness. Europeans realize they cannot claim strategic autonomy if they are dependent on China for health supplies and become dependent on Chinese 5G. A.I. They recognize that Beijing's expanding economic influence through targeted strategic investments could translate into rival geopolitical power. Europe is ready to work with the United States on China, but not precisely on U.S. terms. The United States also has to take some steps toward the E.U. For instance, they recognize that China is a necessary partner for global, multilateral objectives like climate. Europe is right to insist that a Cold War rhetoric—from the United States toward China—could quickly escalate into self-fulfilling prophecies and confrontations that all sides should wish to avoid.

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