

**MOVING TO A “POSITION OF STRENGTH”:
CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN 2021**

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Executive Summary

1. The irony in Chinese foreign policy is that China is conducting its foreign policy with increasing self-confidence and assertiveness while its international image is plummeting to a record low.
2. This hardening of stance is in part associated with the regime's grim assessment of the international situation, the perceived futility of appeasement with the United States, in part with its confidence in China's continued rise and with President Xi Jinping's resurrection of the Maoist spirit and philosophy of "struggle" in the face of rising challenges.
3. The resolution on history adopted at the Sixth Plenum prescribes a greater role on the world stage for China and enhanced control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over foreign policy. In his speech commemorating the CCP's centenary, Xi proposed a set of values "common to mankind"—peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.
4. The CCP considers what it is doing in China "an important part of human progress" and has adopted a "world-wide perspective on the fate of humanity", aspiring to "lead the tide of human progress".
5. At the operational level, China will deal with the increasingly hostile West by leveraging its large domestic market, propagating its concept of "whole-process democracy" and aligning more closely with Russia.
6. In the talks in Alaska in March, China made a historic move to "set things right". Yang Jiechi, head of the Chinese delegation, told his counterpart that the United States is "not qualified to speak to China from a position of strength". Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi added that "the old habit of US hegemonic behavior of willfully interfering in China's internal affairs must be changed".

7. To counter America's "democracy vs authoritarianism" discourse, Xi introduced the concept of "whole-process democracy", arguing that China is more thoroughly democratic than the United States. Xi also touted the China model of development as an alternative for developing countries.
8. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has become a bastion of Xi loyalists and "wolf-warriors". For the first time in history, it is more hawkish than the military, criticising the latter for being "too soft and weak" when dealing with the United States.
9. The year 2022 is full of uncertainties. It got off to an ominous start when some Western states declared their intention to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics. The post-pandemic China is likely to be outspoken in its claim to global leadership. It will make its voice heard with greater determination than before and push back forcefully against any attempts to contain it.
10. There is a possibility that various domestic and international forces converge to make China close its mind and turn inwards.