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Yovani Edgar Chávez Rodríguez Dr.  
National Air Naval Service, yovanychavez@hotmail.com

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# WING CHUN AND CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY

**Yovani Chávez, Dr.**

**National Air Naval Service, Republic of Panama**

Yovani Chavez is a Major in the National Air Naval Service assigned to the National Directorate of Teaching. He is a Doctor of Business Administration from the Isthmus University in the Republic of Panama. He got a MA in Strategic Security Studies from National Defense University in Washington D.C. He obtained a MA in Military Operational Arts and Science of Military Operations from Air University in Alabama. He is also a professor in the Metropolitan University of Education Science and Technology.

Email: [yovanychavez@hotmail.com](mailto:yovanychavez@hotmail.com)

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3170-5751

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## 1. Introduction

Before fighting a potential rival, it is necessary to understand its defensive and offensive techniques. By understanding a rival, it will be easier to defeat him. China's rise has surprised the international community not only in terms of its expansion but also in terms of economic growth, military power, and technological innovations. While other hegemonic powers try to counter China's strategy, China continues to adapt and take advantage of the international environment. There is a remarkable resemblance between China's Grand Strategy and Wing Chun, which is based on softness, speed, and a bamboo-like flexibility.

Wing Chun is a traditional martial art that originated in China almost 300 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Its five core principles are engraved in Chinese history.<sup>2</sup> Other countries need to decode China's Grand Strategy if they want to counter its expansion and interdimensional growth. Like Wing Chun, China's Grand Strategy uses five principles which are helpful in deciphering China's movements and tactics. These principles are simplicity of non-intervention policy, directness of a national cause, practicality in technological innovation, economy for international business, and minimum use of military force.

## 2. Simplicity of non-intervention policy

Since the 1950s, the non-intervention policy has been the trademark of China's foreign relation strategy with regard to other countries' internal affairs.<sup>3</sup> As a result, China is perceived as an apparent suitable international partner because it will not try to intervene in other countries' domestic issues regardless of their magnitude or context. For instance, China's voting behavior in the United Nations Security Council has shown a pattern of abstentionism, a strategy that serves to win partners that reject United Nations sanctions, while not alienating allies through the use of its veto power.<sup>4</sup> The non-intervention policy has helped China to be perceived as non-dominant. In contrast, other hegemonic powers are perceived as interfering even though such perception might not be true.

Unlike China, other regional powers like France, Spain, Belgium, and the United Kingdom are perceived as colonialist in some areas of the world because of their former colonial possessions in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. As a result, some extreme political groups and violent organizations include in their narratives the rejection of any country with a colonist past. It is not surprising why the Vietnamese fought to the death for their independence from Western powers during the Vietnam War; they perceived American and French military interventions as new colonialist operations.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, France's anti-jihadist military operations are wrongfully used by terrorist groups to portray

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Swift, "History and Lineage," *Grandmaster's Wing Chun*, 2017, accessed December 14, 2020, [https://grandmasterswingchun.com/concepts-of-wing-chun-kung-fu/yip-mans-lineage/#:~:text=Wing Chun is the name,in the other Shaolin systems.](https://grandmasterswingchun.com/concepts-of-wing-chun-kung-fu/yip-mans-lineage/#:~:text=Wing%20Chun%20is%20the%20name,in%20the%20other%20Shaolin%20systems.)

<sup>2</sup> International Wing Chung Academy, "Five Principles," *International Wing Chung Academy*, 2020, accessed December 14, 2020, [https://www.wingchun.edu.au/wing-chun/five-principles.](https://www.wingchun.edu.au/wing-chun/five-principles)

<sup>3</sup> Chen Zheng, "China Debates the Non-Interference Principle," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 3 (2016): 351, [doi: 10.1093/cjip/pow010.](https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pow010)

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Holland, "Chinese Attitudes to International Law: China, the Security Council, Sovereignty, and Intervention," *NYU Journal of International Law & Politics Online Forum* 2012, 10. [https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Christopher-Holland-China-the-Security-Council-and-Intervention.pdf.](https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Christopher-Holland-China-the-Security-Council-and-Intervention.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Muhammet Güler, "France Should Compensate Vietnam for Colonization," editorial, *Daily Sabah*, June 10, 2020, [https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/france-should-compensate-vietnam-for-colonization.](https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/france-should-compensate-vietnam-for-colonization)

themselves as victims and France as an enemy of Islam in order to get more recruits.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Taliban have passed down from generation to generation cultural narratives about how they successfully opposed military operations in Afghanistan during the 1980s and the 2000s, because they see themselves as true defenders against foreign colonizers.

In contrast, China has been able to galvanize the aspiration of countries that feel dominated by Western hegemonic powers. As a matter of fact, China is part of the five emerging national economies which include Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa. Additionally, China will not oppose countries that might bear resentment caused by Western sanctions, countries such as Iran, North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela.

Furthermore, China's non-intervention policy has weathered changing regional circumstances. For instance, China has not dislodged military dictatorships in Thailand, the Philippines, or Myanmar despite being these countries within its geographical periphery. It could be argued that China intervened with military support during the Korean War and the Vietnam War, but it only did so when these wars expanded to its borders and jeopardized its national security stability.

### **3. Directness of a national cause:**

China has been able to unify its national instruments of power under the vision of recovering its sovereignty in areas that have been lost to other regional powers. Under this vision, China has tried to reverse what is known as the Century of Humiliation, a period where a succession of hegemonic powers dominated China. Consequently, it is imperative for China to reassert its sovereignty in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea. In that regard, China clearly demands the acceptance of a One China policy to establish political and economic relationships with any country. There is no doubt about the consistency and significance of China regarding its national cause. This political mindset has gradually paid off. As of 2021, only 15 countries in the world still recognize Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> Because of its national cause, China uses any available tool to protect what it considers its sovereignty rights.

There is a lot of debate about China's compliance with the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) because its current maritime claims contradict what it signed in 1982. However, the fact that China signed and ratified the UNCLOS helps China negotiate with other Asian countries that share the same condition. As a result, China is able to discredit other contestants due to their unwillingness to sign this treaty based on national security reasons.

Although some countries have a unifying vision, many have lost consistency in a national cause that could galvanize their whole society. For instance, Manifest Destiny was a cultural belief that amalgamated the whole of American society for almost 100 years to expand territorial conquests and democratic ideas. Likewise, there was a time when the United States was unified when it refused to appease dictatorial countries but became the arsenal of democracy during World War II.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, containment was a strategic foreign

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<sup>6</sup> Laurence Bindner, *Jihadists' Grievance Narratives Against France* (The Hague, The Netherlands, 2018), 2–4, <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2018/02/Bindner-Jihadists-Grievance-Narratives-Against-France-February2018.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Hilton Yip, "It's Time to Stop Pandering to Beijing Over Taiwan," editorial, *Foreign Policy*, May 8, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/08/us-taiwan-china-relations-stop-pandering-coronavirus/>.

<sup>8</sup> Whitney Shepardson, "The United States as an Arsenal of Democracy," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 19, no. 3 (1941): 36–38, [doi:10.2307/1172331](https://doi.org/10.2307/1172331).

policy uniting Western countries in opposition to Communist expansion around the world for almost 50 years. However, it is not clear what could represent a modern galvanizing national cause for most Western countries.

#### **4. Practicality in technological innovation**

China has shown increasing pragmatism in technological development. China's political mindset has embraced technological innovation as the key to hegemony. This kind of high-tech creativity extends not only to entertainment technology but also to the military. However, China's advantage is that it can intentionally channel technological innovation into its military, international politics, and commerce. For instance, the fact that China is one of nine countries with nuclear weapons capability is a clear sign of its technological revolution.

Likewise, the development of China's anti-satellite weapons is another feat that only the United States and Russia have accomplished. The pragmatism of these accomplishments has the objective of deterring any nuclear-armed state. As with Wing Chun's set of grappling techniques, China can drag any potential adversary into close quarter combat—conventional war—which could last for decades.

Additionally, China has pursued cutting-edge technologies like the Chengdu J-20 in the air power domain and new generations of submarines and air carriers to achieve naval supremacy. Similarly, China's space program is catching up with those of America and Russia, which is worth considering. Likewise, in terms of international politics, technology could have the potential to affect other countries' trust. In July 2020, the United States ordered the closure of China's embassy in Texas under accusations of supposed espionage.<sup>9</sup>

China has enhanced its technological platforms for commercial purposes. Decades ago, Chinese products were categorized as low-quality products; however, many Western companies currently outsource their products to be manufactured in China.<sup>10</sup> As a result, it is possible that China has employed benchmarking, intelligence gathering, and knowledge transfer to progressively achieve parity in international commerce. For instance, out of the 100 World's Largest Public Companies ranking, 20 of the companies are Chinese.<sup>11</sup> While the United States still dominates the international market with 37 companies in this ranking, China's closest competitors are Japan with eight companies and Germany with five. As a consequence, China's success in international business paves the way for its growing diplomatic and military power, which makes other hegemonic powers raise eyebrows.

#### **5. Economy for international business**

China knows that the currency of the world is conducting business. As a result, China is mostly interested in international business deals regardless of the type of political system a particular country might have. This principle emphasizes the reduction of time

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<sup>9</sup> John Strohm, "Years of Chinese Spying Led to Consulate Closing, U.S. Says," editorial, *Bloomberg*, July 24, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-24/years-of-chinese-espionage-prompted-consulate-closing-u-s-says>.

<sup>10</sup> Insight, "Is the Quality of Products Made in China Really That Bad?," *Insight Quality Services*, 2019, December 26, 2020, <https://insight-quality.com/quality-of-products-made-in-china/>.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Murphy et al., "Global 2000: The World's Largest Public Companies," *Forbes*, 2020, accessed December 26, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/global2000/#23f56c3d335d>.

and energy to do international business. It could be argued that China is not one of the easiest countries to do business with, but its economy for international business is focused on saving time and resources in connecting global trade with China. The best expression of this principle is the new Silk Road, which is China's strategic economic plan to invest trillion of dollars in infrastructure and loans in more than 60 countries to connect China with the rest of the world through digital, land, and maritime platforms.<sup>12</sup>

It could be argued that China's loans to Sri Lanka and Pakistan are the perfect proof of how China likes to set debt traps to convert sovereign countries into vassals.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, any state will set conditions to guarantee the repayment of substantial loans. On the other hand, even if the stories about China's alleged debt traps were true, that would not be the first time that a powerful country has taken decisive action to protect its economic interests. For instance, in 1902, Germany, Britain, and Italy sent their naval forces to conduct a naval blockade that lasted for three months to force Venezuela to repay its international loans.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the previous considerations, China's political will to expand international business deals opens new doors to increase its influence. Contrary to Western countries with little or non-existent regulation of private companies, China is able to direct its extensive networks of state-owned companies to serve its strategic long and short-term objectives. Together with its non-intervention policy, China's gradual expansion of international business deals causes it to be perceived as non-threatening to other regimes because China will focus its interest on augmenting commercial relationships and requesting guarantees of loan repayment instead of demanding changes of political systems or social reforms.

## 6. Minimum use of military force

Like Wing Chun, which avoids the employment of brute force and instead focuses on redirection, leverage, structure, and relaxation to counter any attack, China makes minimum use of military force to protect its strategic national interests.<sup>15</sup> Many hegemonic powers define war as a military confrontation with the unavoidable consequence of thousands of deaths and casualties. Contrary to this notion, China avoids the employment of brute military force to repel an adversary. To illustrate this idea, China deploys its coast guard vessels for law enforcement missions despite its capacity to conduct military operations, which helps create ambiguity.<sup>16</sup> Other global powers have done the same. For instance, the Japanese Coast Guard has been steadily conducting law enforcement

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<sup>12</sup> Anna Bruce, "China's \$900 Billion New Silk Road. What You Need to Know," *World Economic Forum*, 2017, accessed December 26, 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/china-new-silk-road-explainer/>.

<sup>13</sup> Gravitas Desk, "Debt-Trap: China's Loans to Sri Lanka Are Not Driven by Benevolence," editorial, *Wion TV Channel*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/debt-trap-chinas-loans-to-sri-lanka-are-not-driven-by-benevolence-335053>.

<sup>14</sup> Rick Chersicla, "The Venezuela Crisis Revisited," *Real Clear Defense*, 2019, accessed December 26, 2020, [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/04/30/the\\_venezuela\\_crisis\\_revisited\\_114377.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/04/30/the_venezuela_crisis_revisited_114377.html).

<sup>15</sup> International Wing Chung Academy, "Minimum Use of Brute Strength," *International Wing Chung Academy*, 2020, accessed December 26, 2020, <https://www.wingchun.edu.au/wing-chun/five-principles/minimum-use-of-brute-strength>.

<sup>16</sup> Katsuya Yamamoto, "The China Coast Guard as a Part of the China Communist Party's Armed Forces," *The Sasakawa Peace Foundation*, 2020, accessed December 26, 2020, [https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/yamamoto\\_01.html](https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/yamamoto_01.html).

operations and used deadly force against a North Korean vessel entering Japanese territorial waters in 2001.<sup>17</sup>

However, China will avoid conventional military confrontations and instead defend its interests by, for instance, warfare techniques like ramming to disable boats or aerial maneuvers to deter foreign military planes. A case in point occurred in 2009 when two Chinese trawlers stopped in front of the USNS Impeccable (T-AGOS-23) in the South China Sea.<sup>18</sup> Later, in 2014 and 2017, Chinese fighter planes flew near a U.S. Navy Boeing P-8 Poseidon and a U.S. Air Force Navy Lockheed EP-3 Ares to perform barrel roll maneuvers over those military planes.<sup>19</sup> While many war experts are analyzing the prospects of a potential war and waiting to see who takes the first shot between the military forces of China and the United States in the South China Sea, China is already at war—a war defined by different parameters, not by Western standards.

## 7. Recommendations

China's Grand Strategy is virtually dense because of its capacity to adapt and incorporate many defensive and offensive technics. Like martial arts, no grand strategy is flawless. If Western powers and Asian countries want to counter China's Grand Strategy, they should attack the only recognized weakness of this national strategy. In that regard, traditional Wing Chung has its Achilles' heel in ground fighting, which is mastered by other martial arts such as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Catch Wrestling, Judo, and Sambo. As a result, other hegemonic powers could find a weakness in China's Grand Strategy by engaging in economic ground fighting.

However, any ground game would be virtually impossible because such a technique requires the opponent to throw himself on the ground to apply a submission grappling technic. In other words, any country that dares to engage in ground fighting should be able to affect its own economic system by imposing sanctions, cutting off economic relationships, and raising tariffs, which would be counterproductive in both the short and long term for itself. The fact that many American multinational corporations are receiving exponential growth benefits by entering China's market would make an economic war undesirable. Moreover, no economic ground fighting will work if China is still the largest creditor in the world and the largest foreign holder of U.S. debt. By the same token, China needs its products to be sold in the American market.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, some countries should decode China's Grand Strategy if they want to adapt to a multilateral world order that is not based on a traditional Cold War mentality. First, military intervention is strictly necessary when territorial sovereignty is in danger. The study of modern history has demonstrated how the overextension of foreign military operations can suffer defeat when they are driven by political reasons alone and not by the

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<sup>17</sup> Mina Pollman, "The Ever-Evolving Importance of Japan's Coast Guard," *The Diplomat*, 2019, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://cis.mit.edu/publications/analysis-opinion/2019/ever-evolving-importance-japan-s-coast-guard>.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Buckley, "China Says U.S. Naval Ship Broke the Law," editorial, *Reuters*, March 9, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSPEK9458120090310>.

<sup>19</sup> Ryan Pickrell, "7 Times the Russian and Chinese Got Dangerously Close to the US Military," editorial, *Business Insider*, November 5, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/seven-times-the-us-russian-and-chinese-militaries-came-close-to-disaster-2018-11#russian-su-27-flanker-intercepted-a-us-air-force-rc-135-reconnaissance-aircraft-on-july-19-2017-3>.

<sup>20</sup> Investopedia, "How Much U.S. Debt Does China Own?," *Investopedia*, 2020, accessed January 10, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/080615/china-owns-us-debt-how-much.asp>.

necessity of protecting territorial sovereignty. For instance, some hegemonic powers have made the mistake of flexing their military muscles to show off their power. If sovereignty is not in jeopardy it will be difficult to assemble all the national instruments of power to win a war.

Second, although it is difficult to define, political leaders need to delineate a long-term national cause based on the precise protection of the homeland. The spiritual unity of the whole of society under the flag of protecting the country is something that should always be desirable because the concept of country is tangible enough to galvanize minds and souls. Events like the Holocaust, the Pearl Harbor attack, and the September 11 attacks are examples of how tragic and historical events can galvanize societies for a period of time and provide the motivation to protect the country against potential attacks.

Nonetheless, the national cause should focus on protecting and recovering what is legally under the control of the state. Without a true national cause, the military can experience unintended consequences. For instance, the 1982 Argentine military junta wrongfully decided to fight for sovereignty in the Falklands islands without acknowledging that the British government had already been governing it for 141 years. That is the reason why France's military operations are wrongfully called 'Françafrique'; it is because they are perceived as a modern French intervention and subjugation of its former colonies in the African continent.<sup>21</sup> As a result, any country should strengthen a national cause through the protection of its air, naval, and land domains.

Thirdly, while developing their own technology, countries should improve their international business relationships. If a country continues to depend on other countries' technologies, it will not evolve to become a global power. As a result, gradual knowledge transfer should be a promoted policy for multinational companies operating in any country. Without knowledge transfer, multinational companies will only gain millions of dollars and leave a country in a state of continuous dependency. Although governments should incentivize the operation of multinational companies in their territories, they should encourage functional mechanisms that secure the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge.

At the same time, governments should allocate great amounts of money for research and development through projects in state institutions and partner with the academic and private sectors. However, many countries make the mistake of not investing in technological innovation, which opens the door for continuous foreign dependency. While developed countries in North America and Western Europe spend nearly 2.5 percent of their GDP in research and development, Latin America, Arab states, and Sub-Saharan Africa invest less than 0.5 percent.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, Latin American and Arab states have a military expenditure equivalent to 3.3 to 4 percent of their GDP.<sup>23</sup> China's Grand Strategy demonstrates that investing in technological research and development is the foundation for economic, military, and political success.

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<sup>21</sup> Boubacar Diop, "Françafrique: A Brief History of a Scandalous Word," *New African Magazine* (London, United Kingdom, March 2018), <https://newafricanmagazine.com/16585/>.

<sup>22</sup> UNESCO, "How Much Does Your Country Invest in R&D?," *UNESCO Institute for Statistics*, 2021, accessed January 15, 2021, <http://uis.unesco.org/apps/visualisations/research-and-development-spending/>.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth González, "Weekly Chart: Military Spending in Latin America and the Caribbean," *Americas Society / Council of the Americas*, 2017, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/weekly-chart-military-spending-latin-america-and-caribbean>; Florence Gaub, "Arab Military Spending: Behind the Figures," *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, 2014, accessed January 16, 2021, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert\\_27\\_Arab\\_military\\_spending.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_27_Arab_military_spending.pdf).

On the other hand, countries should redirect their interest in boosting international relations and design economic and political reforms to avoid trade deficits. Unlike China, many countries have become mere consumers because the trade gap is the wrongfully accepted norm. Despite the devastating effects of COVID-19, China's economy has been resilient and has a trade surplus of \$535 billion, which represents the best economic performance in the world during the year 2020.<sup>24</sup> Also, economic success should translate into benefits for the whole of society. A case in point is the Gini Index, which indicates that China has a better wealth distribution than countries like Brazil, Turkey, and South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, many governments measure the success of their international economic relationship in terms of free trade agreements with other global powers—agreements which, in some cases, have the negative effect of flooding local markets and destroying national production. Consequently, countries can experience a reduction in tax revenue, destruction of natural resources, substandard working conditions, crowding out of local companies, and inability of small farmers to compete with industrialized companies.<sup>26</sup>

Fourth, countries should be politically conscious and massively invest in the branches of their armed forces that can serve dual purposes. Coast guard and police units, for example, can simultaneously perform law enforcement and military functions, and this can serve the interest of states. For instance, the U.S. Coast Guard is not a second-class armed service; instead, it is one of the five components of the American armed forces, and it is employed for power projection. Additionally, well-prepared coast guard units and modernized police could combine with air and naval military forces to achieve power projection and deter potential adversaries.

Nonetheless, many countries do not pursue that path, and police forces and coast guard units are therefore relegated to a position of secondary importance in terms of recognition, budget, and command. If a nation wants to achieve maximum maritime operational effectiveness, it should understand that a navy, which is designed for warfighting and protection from foreign aggression, cannot replace a coast guard.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, if this is not understood, nations will have gargantuan but inefficient and slow armed forces which absorb massive economical resources without any tangible results.

## 8. Conclusion

Wing Chun is a Chinese traditional martial art which reflects the spirit of modernization, expansion, and growth of China among different global powers. There is a remarkable resemblance between Wing Chun and China's Grand Strategy. However, many countries should decode China's Grand Strategy. In that regard, the components of China's Grand Strategy are simplicity of non-intervention policy, directness of a national

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<sup>24</sup> James Mayger et al., "China Ends 2020 With Record Trade Surplus as Pandemic Goods Soar," *Bloomberg*, 2021, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-14/china-s-trade-surplus-hits-record-as-pandemic-fuels-exports#:~:text=The trade surplus of %2478.2,and the highest since 2015.>

<sup>25</sup> Peter Westfall, "Gini Index," *Investopedia*, 2020, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gini-index.asp#:~:text=The Gini index%2C or Gini,wealth distribution among a population.>

<sup>26</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, "Free Trade Agreements With Their Pros and Cons," *The Balance*, 2020, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://www.thebalance.com/free-trade-agreement-pros-and-cons-3305845.>

<sup>27</sup> Prabhakaran Paleri, *Coast Guard Of The World And Emerging Maritime Threats* (Tokyo, Japan, 2009), 49, [https://www.spf.org/\\_opri\\_media/publication/pdf/200903\\_ISSN1880-0017.pdf.](https://www.spf.org/_opri_media/publication/pdf/200903_ISSN1880-0017.pdf.)

cause, practicality for technological innovation, economy for international business, and minimum use of military force. Although China's Grand Strategy could have a disadvantage in economic groundwork, any nation will need to throw down its entire commercial system, which would produce an ineffective result due to China's robust economic system. Consequently, it is important to decipher China's Grand Strategy because of its flexibility, adaptiveness, and efficacy to defeat multiple contestants.

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