

Recently, BBC World Service announced an annual opinion poll by GlobeScan, an international opinion research consultancy that was conducted across 28 countries, asking more than 29,000 adults whether they considered the influence of different countries in the world to be mostly positive or mostly negative.

About 34 percent of respondents said they had a positive view of China's influence in the world.

The figure has declined steadily from about 50 percent since the annual poll was launched in 2005, showing that the world does not really recognize Beijing's claims that its growing strength is a "peaceful rise."

The poll results support the "balance of threat" theory in international relations.

The theory was proposed by Stephen Walt, a Harvard University professor who studies alliances between countries.

He believes that the question of whether or not countries should create an alliance when dealing with a rising power depends on the degree of threat that they feel.

The threat consists of four elements: Aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions. Among the four, aggressive intentions play a significant role.

Following his study of cases across the world over the past century, he believes that if a rising nation has a lot of "hard power" such as population and industrial and military capabilities, and if it often demonstrates its strength or even intention to invade neighboring countries, then it would force the neighboring states to form an alliance in order to safeguard themselves and counterbalance the threat.

Today, China is following precisely this path in East Asia. China's hard power is on the rise and it shares borders with many East Asian countries.

Its invasion capabilities are being demonstrated by its deployment of missiles targeting Taiwan, but are also manifested by the warships China sends to the disputed islands in the East and South China seas, causing tensions with neighboring countries.

As for the last element, aggressive intentions, the poll results show that negative views of China are rising around the world.

Perhaps these actions do not yet mean that China intends to invade its neighbors. However, as the exchange rates for the Chinese yuan remain stagnant, Chinese products are entering international markets on a massive scale, eating into the market shares of not only the US and European countries, but also China's neighboring developing countries.

China's rise could land Taiwan in hot water

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Sunday, 25 April 2010 13:02

From a perspective of trade and economy, Beijing's aggressive business policies may well cause a lot of concern among these countries.

This lends to evidence that China's rise is not a friendly one and it may compel other countries to form alliances to resist China.

Given this situation, Taiwan needs to consider whether its unheeded pro-China policies are wise.

If, for example, the Southeast Asian countries in the future form an alliance to restrain China, which side should Taiwan be on?

At a time when the international political situation in the East Asian region is unclear, Taiwan should make sure that it makes friends with those countries that are more concerned about Beijing's rise.

If Taiwan continues to expand its pro-China policies without restraint, it may well be lumped together with China and come to be seen as a regional enemy.

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□ TRANSLATED BY EDDY CHANG

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2010/04/25](#)