

Less Biding and Hiding

Economist

Dec 2, 2010

A Stronger China

- China is becoming more nationalistic and more assertive

China and the US

- Since early 1970s, “co-operation with America was more important”
- Now China’s behavior—most recently towards Japan, South Korea and the South China Sea—has begun to alarm China-watchers
- Why?

Why China changes?

Two possible reasons:

- China's strategy has begun to change—power changes nation
- Chinese society itself has begun to change—patriotism

China has more power

- China is becoming wealthier and stronger
 - Already China is Saudi Arabia's biggest customer
- US and the Europe are in decline
- The question is whether China's leaders agree that now is the time to assert the country's power

Nationalism

- Chinese society is changing rapidly
- Some people's assertiveness partly reflects the patriotism that the government encouraged in order to prop up its legitimacy

Compromise

- The risk is that compromise is likely to be viewed as capitulation

“If we suppose that there are two options and they use tough measures ... and the leader fails to resolve [a problem], he is justified. But if [he] uses too much honey and he fails, he is regarded as guilty by all future generations.”

Territorial issues

*“On sensitive territorial issues where the party’s credentials are at stake, China may be **uncompromising and increasingly unreasonable**”*