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## **Chinese assertiveness and the rise of Xi Jinping: ideational mobilization, elite contestation, and the struggle over regional order**

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In 2009-2010, the notion of a more ‘assertive’ China emerged in Western discourse, a viewpoint that China vehemently rejects. Nevertheless, especially after Xi Jinping rose to power in 2012, it is clear that China has abandoned its long-held foreign policy doctrine of ‘keeping a low profile.’ This Doctoral Dissertation explains this shift by examining the intervening ideas about China’s desired place in the world. CCP propaganda offers compelling evidence that there is much greater continuity between the Hu and Xi eras than is exhibited in the current literature. Moreover, the Dissertation traces the deeper ideational sources of Chinese assertiveness back to the New Left movement and the Patriotic Education Campaign of the 1990s. Agency for the turn in the late 2000s and the selection of compromise candidate Xi is attributed to the choices past leaders made, with some Party elders ‘ruling from behind the curtain.’



## About

While writing his Doctoral Dissertation at Leiden University, Friso Stevens taught at his alma mater in Amsterdam, the Vrije Universiteit, from 2017-2020. Thereafter, he started as a Subject Matter Expert at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. From 2021-2022, Friso was a Max Weber Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute. His work has been published in *The Pacific Review*, *Asian Security*, and *Asian Perspective*, and popular outlets such as *ChinaFile*, *The Diplomat*, and *The National Interest*.

CHINESE ASSERTIVENESS AND THE RISE OF XI JINPING

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IDEATIONAL MOBILIZATION, ELITE CONTESTATION,  
AND THE STRUGGLE OVER REGIONAL ORDER

FRISO M.S. STEVENS