

# The Networking Strategy of Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy

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## I. Introduction

China is expanding its international influence in various fields, leveraging its rapid economic growth. It has been actively participating in the existing international order, expanding its influence, or attracting sympathizers by asserting the need for reform in an existing order that is not in line with its own interests. China has also been creating whole new international organizations, systems, or values and using these as a springboard for expanding its influence if it determines that reform of the existing system is not feasible.

Looking at this situation from the perspective of the network, it can be evaluated that China is actively engaged in existing international networks, creating new international networks, and sometimes destroying networks of other countries. In this situation, systematic analysis of modern Chinese diplomacy from a network perspective becomes an urgent task.

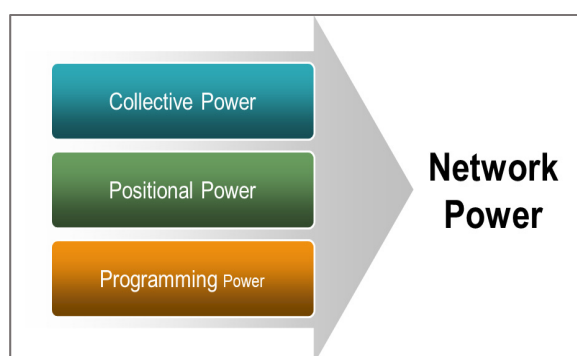
Based on the theoretical consideration of the network theory, which has recently spread in the social science field, this study analyzed how modern Chinese diplomacy is building so-called “network power,” how this is being projected on the actual diplomatic scene, what this

phenomenon means for the international order, and what implications it has for us with the concept of network power.

## II. The Concept of Network Power

Network Power consists of three components: Collective Power, Positional Power, and Programming Power.

**Figure 1. The three subordinate powers that make up Network Power**



Source: Authors

First of all, Collective Power refers to the power exerted by an actor, a collection of nodes that make up a network. In other words, it means that the actor who formed the network in groups wields power over the actor who failed

**P**ositional Power signifies the power created when an actor occupies a particular “position” node over the entire network or between two or more networks. If the above Collective Power refers to the quantitative mechanism of power that gathers strength by networking around, Positional Power is not just the amount of nodes or the number of links, but the qualitative mechanism of power formed by these nodes and links.

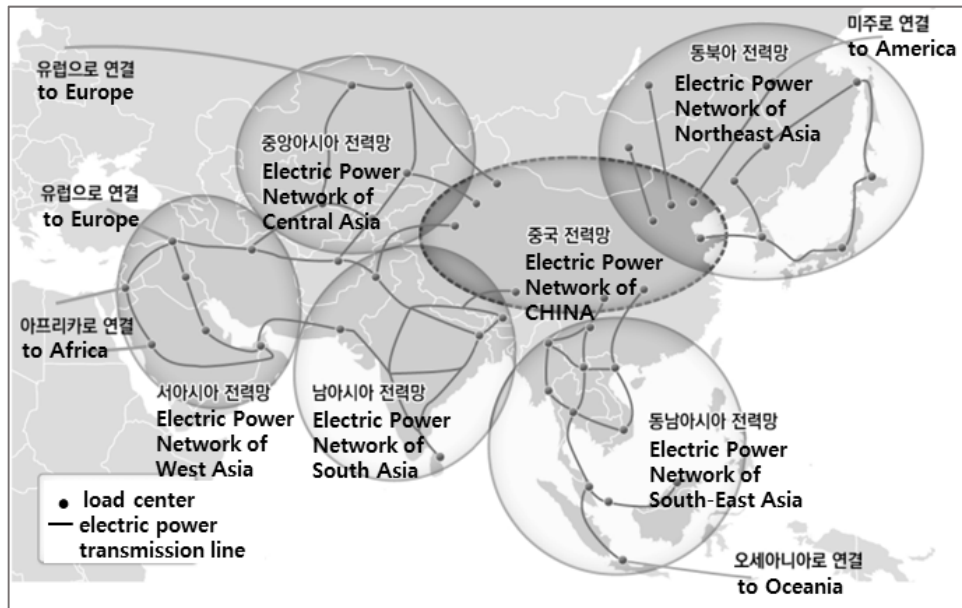
### III. Analysis Result

**I**t was also found that China actively participated in existing networks and established Positional Power by preoccupying important positions. However, China's Network Power still seems to have a long way to go in terms of Programming Power to build new systems, unlike Collective or Positional Power. This may indicate that there are problems with China's system programming capabilities and methods, and that the U.S. Network Power to keep China in check is still strong.

What is notable in the process of analyzing China's Network Power is that competition between the U.S. and China is fierce over Network Power. The Belt and Road Initiative (B&R or BRI), India-Pacific strategies, U.S.-China standard competition, Washington Consensus and Beijing Consensus all imply the nature of U.S.-China network competition.

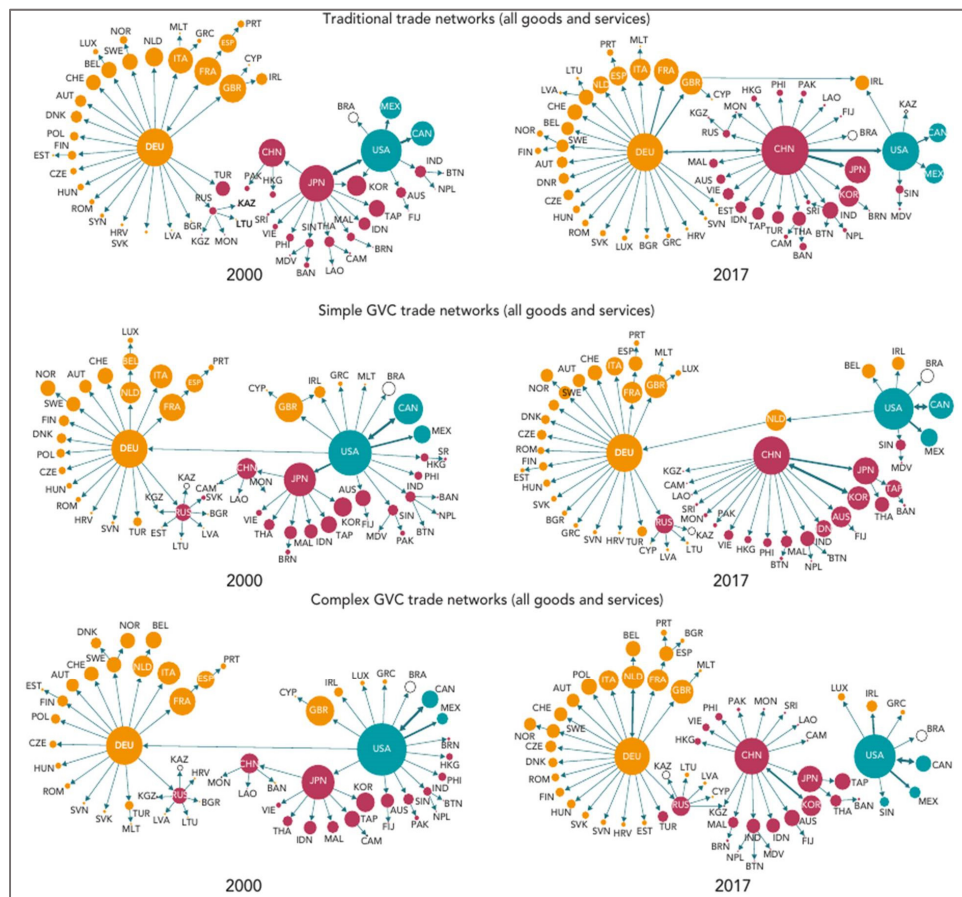
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Figure 3. Linkage between BRI and GEI(Global Energy Interconnection)



Source: Heo et al. (2019), Figure 5-16.

Figure 4. Supply hubs of trade in value-added in various networks at the aggregate level



Source: WTO(2019), p. 27.

## IV. Implications

As such, the networking strategy of China's diplomacy gives us a variety of implications.

First, the U.S.-China competition over standards, which is part of the network competition, is likely to put companies around the world in a situation where they have to choose between the two.

Second, it is necessary to prepare for the risk caused by China's efforts to build its Network Power, along with the pressure to choose that will accompany the U.S.-China competition. China is now busy expanding the network, or increasing its own side, emphasizing the openness of the networks it builds. However, if the network programmed by China reaches a certain level in size and establishes an internally robust system, the possibility of exclusively operating its own network against nodes outside the network cannot be ruled out. This is the essence of Network Power.

Third, China has shifted its policy direction from the “trade market for technology” (以市场换技术) to “independent innovation,” (自主创新) and is selectively accepting only foreign-invested companies that need to develop their own industries, through continuous revision of the “catalogue of foreign investment industry guidance” (外商投资产业指导目录). Through these policies, which can be called a cross-section of Positional Power, China is inducing leaks of technology possessed by foreign companies to China.

Fourth, China is also taking active steps in the field of energy networks as well, which could cause certain difficulties in the foreign energy strategy of countries competing with China. In

particular, as in the U.S.-China standard competition, many countries may be forced to make inevitable choices in the energy sector because of the conflict between the U.S. and China over Programming Power.

Fifth, while preparing to deal with the negative effects of China's Network Power, it will also be necessary to actively utilize China's Network Power. One good example is co-entering another country with China by utilizing its programming and Positional Power built up through the BRI.

Sixth, systematic and continuous monitoring of China's Network Power, which is gradually strengthened in economic and traditional security and non-traditional security areas, is required. To this end, it is necessary to establish and operate a system which we could tentatively name the “China Network Power Monitoring System” on a trial basis, which would allow governments or public organizations to observe China's diplomatic capabilities from the perspective of the network. **KIEP**

## References

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