

Chinese Panda Diplomacy



Have you ever wondered why there are so many pandas in zoos worldwide? The reason is more opportunistic than you probably expect: China has used its pandas to foster **international relations** since the 1950s. These **diplomatic loans** are now entering a new phase: as these cuddly creatures attract a lot of attention and have become conservation icons, China nowadays uses panda loans to pressure countries reluctant to yield to its economic and foreign politics or to 'reward' cooperative countries. Pandas, in effect, are an **economic asset** to the zoos that host them, as they attract billions of visitors every year. A team of Oxford researchers has recently quantified the new wave of panda diplomacy in a research article published in **Environmental Practice**, and has pointed out that panda diplomacy is only set to grow while underlining that, after 2008, panda loans have coincided with **trade deals** for valuable resources and technology.



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