



China's recall of giant pandas Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei from Japan ahead of schedule has underscored how panda diplomacy is increasingly shaped by geopolitical tensions and nationalism.

Panda diplomacy refers to China's practice of gifting (historically) or leasing giant pandas to foreign countries as symbols of goodwill and friendship. Over time, the model shifted to long-term leases involving conservation and research collaboration.

The strategy aims to project soft power, cultivate a benign global image, strengthen bilateral ties, promote cultural exchanges, and support conservation through financial and scientific partnerships.

**APSC Relevance:** Soft power, China's foreign policy tools, cultural diplomacy, geopolitics.